History of the upper Musselshell Valley to 1920

Harold Joseph Stearns

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A HISTORY OF THE UPPER MUSSELHELL VALLEY TO 1920

By

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CHAPTER I
IN THE BEGINNING

During the morning of May 21, 1805, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, enroute by land and water to the Pacific Ocean, recorded the first mention of the Musselshell. The Musselshell River was on of the major tributaries which the expedition passed by on their river trip up the Missouri River. Lewis wrote in his journal,

the Missouri in it's course downward makes a sudden and extensive bend to receive the Muscle shell river, the point of country thus formed tho' high is still much lower than that surrounding it, thus forming a valley of wavey country which extends itself for a great distance in a Northerly direction; . . . .¹

Clark wrote of the Musselshell in more explicit terms.

Muscle Shell River falls in on Lard Side 2270 miles up contains a greater perportion of water than Rivers of its size below, I measured it and find it to be 110 yeards wide, the water of a Greenish Yellow Colour, and appers to be nagavable for Snail craft. The Minetarres inform us that this river heads in the 1st of the rockey Mountains & passes through a broken Countrie; its head at no great distance from the Yellow Stone River . . . .²

The historic expedition reached the Three Forks in late July, 1805. They reached the Pacific in November of the same year. After wintering at their camp, Fort Clatsop, near the mouth of the Columbia River, they began the return journey to St. Louis. The company split near the mouth of Lolo Canyon. Captain Lewis went north. Captain Clark.

²Ibid., p. 54.
proceeded southward back to the Beaverhead for their stored cache of provisions and boats. Clark reached the Three Forks again on July 13, 1806, proceeding across the Gallatin Valley and down the Yellowstone. He passed through the area forty miles south of the Musselshell Valley during that month of July. This was the closest penetration white men had ever made to the Musselshell region.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition named a number of locations which they passed during the course of their travels. The Judith Gap and Judith River were named in honor of Miss Judith Hancock of Faircastle, Virginia. She later married Captain Lewis. The Smith River was named for Robert I. Smith, then Secretary of the Navy. The Musselshell itself owes its name to the expedition though the various journals of the expedition do not give a precise reason for the explorers designation of the river, "Muscle Shell." The name probably originates with the Indians. The Minnetaree Indian name for the river was Mahtush-ahzhah. In the Cheyenne tongue, the river was called the Ihko won'iyo'he. One early western traveler, Maximilian, Prince of Wied, said the French-Canadians called the river the Coquille. A French to English translation of the term Coquille shows it to mean shell, husk, egg shell, sea shell and fresh water shell. Indians, and later, the white men, found large number of unios or fresh water mussels in the bed of the river.\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Merrill G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier (Helena, Montana: State Publishing Company, 1942), p. 5; Spiers' & Surenne's French and English Pronouncing Dictionary (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1908), p. 131; Place Name files, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana. In 1904 a letter was written to Robert N. Sutherlin, editor of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, White Sulphur Springs, Montana, asking whether the term Musselshell came from the word mussel. Editor Sutherlin wrote an explanation which would appear to be tenable. "The Musselshell river takes its name, we think, from the great reef of shells and sand which exists there in the form of a cement. There is all manner of shells in these reefs and extensive. . . . There is no doubt but that the name Musselshell river came from the cement deposits of shell and sand." Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 14, 1904.
Map makers identified and located the river in various ways over the next half century. An 1818 map of the western half of the Northern American continent made the "Muscke Shoal" a short, straight-flowing river between the Missouri and an unidentitied larger river to the south, presumable the Yellowstone. This map was referred to in the syllabus as "probably the most correct Map of the Country now extant." Other early maps gave an inadequate description of the river and area of its headwaters. Not until the W. W. DeLacy maps of the 1860's to 1880's was the river properly shown through the center of a large open country between mountain ranges and the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. DeLacy spelled the river "Muscleshell." This spelling persisted until November, 1879. From that time on, the river and valley were spelled "Musselshell." Few white men would have argued or cared about the spelling of the Musselshell until the 1860's. The Musselshell had been and was exclusively Indian Country until then.

The Musselshell drainage is abundant with indications of Indian occupation, prehistoric and historic. An atlatl, or Indian throwing spear, has been found in the Snowy Mountains along the northern border of the Musselshell Valley. In historic times, Indian life and activity have been found in great abundance. Buffalo jumps, pictographs, arrowheads and Indian rings attest to occupation by various tribes. At least

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1 Rector's & Roberdeau's Compiled Map, 1818, Sketch of the Western Part of the Continent of North America (General Land Office, January)

2 W. W. DeLacy was the cartographer of the Montana Territorial Legislative Assembly, expressly hired to draft the official maps of the Montana Territory.

3 Rocky Mountain Husbandman. Prior to November, 1879, the Husbandman spelled Musselshell as "Muscleshell." The two final issues of the Husbandman of November, 1879, are not included in the newspaper files of the Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana. Most likely the change in spelling was made by the U. S. Post Office Department.
six definite occupation sites have been located within the area of one ranch near the Musselshell River. Tools and chippings give an indication of the Musselshell's use as a hunting and passage area by Plains Indians. Buffalo jumps of the region attest to the Indians' use of natural cliffs and mountainous outcrops as a means to kill the powerful buffalo. In and around the occupation sites and at the foot of the buffalo jumps, arrowheads have been found which have helped to identify the tribes frequenting the Musselshell. Each specific tribe had its own method of construction and distinctive style of patterning arrowheads. The numbers and types of arrowheads and other tools indicate the importance of the Musselshell to the Indian.\(^1\) The buffalo was the life blood of the Plains Indian and the Musselshell drainage provided excellent hunting grounds for securing them. How extensively the Musselshell was used as a buffalo range can only be theorized from the testimonies of white men who frequented the area. Lt. John Mullan, a young army officer with the Isaac I. Stevens' railroad survey of 1853, wrote of his travels through the Musselshell. "Innumerable herds of buffalo were feeding near the mountains, and the small ponds swarmed with geese and ducks."\(^2\) In a mining report of 1870 the author reported "immense herds of buffalo, much sought after by the different Indian tribes. . . ."\(^3\) Captain William

\(^1\)Interview with Harlin Lucas, Harlowton, Montana, December 19, 1965.

\(^2\)U.S. Congress, House, Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economic Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, Cong., 1st Sess., 1860, House Doc. 56, p. 123.

\(^3\)U.S. Congress, Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains 41st Cong., 2d Sess., 1870, House Doc. 207, p. 293.
Ludlow wrote in his "Report of a Reconnaissance from Carroll, Montana Territory, on the Upper Missouri, to the Yellowstone Park," of "scattered herds of buffalo ... on the prairie south of Snowy Mountains."\(^1\) Martin T. Grande was a pioneer to the Musselshell region. He arrived in about 1877 and worked as a big game hunter. Grande was reported to have seen one herd "so large it took three or four days for the animals to file through the pass" (near the headwaters of the Musselshell).\(^2\)

Indications further testify to the Musselshell as a hunting and fighting ground between the Crows and Blackfeet. A rock line "fence" crosses east-west between the base of the Snowy Mountains to the Crazy Mountains. The fifty-mile fence cuts through the Musselshell valley in a diagonal pattern. Theories among archaeologists account for the fence as being a line of demarcation mutually established by the Crows and Blackfeet. At least two fights have been recorded as having occurred between these tribes. Both involved horse stealing.\(^3\) Other tribes also frequented the Musselshell, usually traveling through the valley because of its fine natural passes or on their occasional

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\(^3\)Interview with Harlin Lucas, Harlowton, Montana, December 19, 1965.
hunting forays. The tribes included the Gros Ventre, Siouz, Northern Cheyenne, Nez Perce, Red River Half Breeds, Flatheads and Shoshones.¹

Trappers did not frequent the Musselshell area to any extent. The Musselshell River was not a navigable stream. Further, the main river and various streams in the area were sporadic, often running dry during the middle of the summer. Thus, trappers worked streams closer to the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. The early fur company forts attest to hunting and trapping activity near the main rivers. The various fur companies, the Hudson Bay, Rocky Mountain Fur, American Fur, built forts and trapped through the Missouri and Yellowstone regions to the early 1850's. The forts constructed by the companies were along or at least proximate to the large, navigable rivers. Among these forts, Lisa, Union, Piegan, Cass, William, Van Buren, Alexander, Chardon, Lewis and Campbell (which became Fort Benton in 1847) followed this pattern.²

The white men tended to follow a "hands off" policy in regards to the Musselshell in the first treaty dealings with the Indians. The Treaty of Fort Laramie was negotiated by D. D. Mitchell and Thomas Fitzpatrick on September 17, 1851. The Crow, Blackfeet and Assiniboine tribes had the Musselshell within their general boundaries.


²Burlingame, 75-77, 385-386.
The Assiniboines were given the country from the mouth of the Yellowstone, up the Missouri to the Muscleshell; thence to the headwaters of Big Dry creek; down that creek to the Yellowstone, and thence down the Yellowstone to its mouth. The Blackfeet country commenced at the mouth of the Muscleshell; thence up the Missouri to its sources; thence along the Rocky mountains to the head-waters of the northern source of the Yellowstone, down the Yellowstone to Twenty-five Yard creek; thence across the head of the Muscleshell, and down that river to its mouth. The Crows were to occupy the country commencing at the mouth of the Powder river, up Powder river to its sources, along the main range of the Black Hills and Wind River mountains to the Geyser park or head-waters of the Yellowstone, down the Yellowstone to the mouth of Twenty-five Yard creek; thence to the head of the Muscleshell, down the Muscleshell, to its mouth; thence to the head of Big Dry creek, and thence to its mouth.

By 1853 the U. S. Government was already beginning to note the development of the West. Consequently, a series of four railroad surveys to find the most practical route to the Pacific was started. General Isaac I. Stevens was in charge of the northern survey, passing through that area which would make up Montana. He made arrangements with various Indians to meet on his return trip East. Lieutenant John Mullan was sent into the Musselshell region to find the Flatheads and tell them of the proposed meeting. Lieutenant Mullan's account of his mission described the early Musselshell in September 1853.

Thirty miles from the Judith range (to the north) he crossed the Mussel Shell on the morning of the 14th, the stream being fifty yards wide, and from two to five feet deep, with a very rapid current. It winds through a beautiful valley, ten miles wide, covered with excellent grass, and the drift wood showed that the river in high floods reached a width of one hundred and twenty yards. Not finding the Flathead camp, or any signs of their trail, he followed up the stream four miles, and found traces of their having gone down. ... taking only the Piegan guide (he) started.

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in search of them, and after getting about fifty miles south of
the Muscle Shell . . . found the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles,
150 lodges, fifty of them Flathead and spoke of a great meeting to
be held west of the Rocky Mountains to make firm peace.¹

General Stevens met with the Flathead Indians on July 16, 1855 and a
reservation was consented by the Indians near Flathead Lake.² The
treaty with the Blackfeet took place on the Judith River, north of the
Musselshell Valley. The treaty stipulated that

the hunting grounds allowed the Blackfeet nation were bounded
by lines drawn from Hell Gate or Medicine Rocky passes of the
Rocky mountains east to the nearest source of the Musselshell
river; thence to the mouth of twenty-five Yard creek; thence
up the Yellowstone to its northern source, and thence along the
main range of the Rocky mountains to the point of beginning.
PROVIDED, That the Western Indians named in the treaty may
hunt on the trail leading down the Musselshell to the Yellow­
stone; that no permanent villages shall be located on this
permanent hunting ground; that the right of the Western Indians
to a whole or part of the common hunting grounds secured to
them in the treaty of Fort Laramie shall not be protected.³

The Blackfeet were much more active than the Crows. Invading bands
of these northern Indians raided the Crows mainly in the Yellowstone
region throughout the 1850's and early 1860's. The Musselshell was
used as a hunting area. White Indian relations were not affected in
the Musselshell until the Montana gold rush of the 1860's.

¹U. S. Congress, House, Reports of Explorations and Surveys . . .
was considered in the proposed routes for two of the proposed railroads.
One route led from Fort Clark (near the Minnesota-North Dakota border
of today) across Montana in the path essentailly followed by the Milwaukee
Railroad fifty years later. Another route was surveyed from St.
Joseph, Missouri. It went through the southern area of South Dakota,
skirted the Black Hills and north to the general area of Hardin and
Billings and thence into the Musselshell Valley. The route was then to
pass through the Deep Creek Canyon to Helena and west to Fort Owen.

²Burlingame, p. 34.

³Leeson, p. 102.
The Territory of Montana was created May 26, 1864.\(^1\) Prior to this, all of the area east of the Continental Divide had an unsettled political existence. Originally included in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the area became a part of the Territory of Indiana. In 1805 it was included in the Territory of Louisiana when it was reorganized from the District of Louisiana. Louisiana became a state in 1812. The northern portion of the original Louisiana Purchase territory was governed as part of the Territory of Missouri. Missouri was admitted to statehood in 1821. Again the northern area took on a new heading. It was designated "Indian Country," and set aside for this use "forever."\(^2\) Forever was a flexible term with the white man, however. By 1854, the Territory of Nebraska included the remaining area of the northern plains. In 1861 Dakota Territory was designated. The land which would later be Montana's eastern plains was part of Dakota Territory. For the most part, these political subdivisions were boundary lines rather than cohesive political units.

Idaho Territory was created March 3, 1863. The first legislative assembly meeting was held in 1863. Eight counties were created in the area which would be Montana. The area of the Musselshell was generally included in Jefferson and Madison counties. Three Judicial Districts were provided for by the Organic Act for the Territory of Idaho. The eastern district comprised Montana. The chief Justice of Idaho Territory, Sidney Edgerton, was the only representative of organized government in the Montana area. Since the area had limited settlement,

\(^1\)U. S., Statutes at Large, XIII, Ch. 95, 85, 91.

\(^2\)U. S., Statutes at Large, IV, 735.
and most of that in the mining camps around Virginia City, Bannack and Grasshopper Creek, Edgerton found law and order at a low point. He further found himself in a situation where his office was no more than titular. He received such little support from Idaho Territory that he firmly backed the organization of Montana Territory. In 1864, Montana Territory came into being. The first territorial assembly of Montana approved the creation of nine countries on February 2, 1865. The Musselshell Valley was included in Gallatin County. For the next two years, however, the Musselshell Valley was part of counties created and seemingly created. This situation came about because of errors due to the lack of adequate topographical information.

W. W. DeLacy was directed by the First Legislative Assembly of Montana Territory to draw maps of the areas of the new Montana counties. County creation was an active element of Montana's legislative history as early as the Second Legislative Assembly. On March 10, 1866, the fifth day of the session, H. B. No. 6 was introduced in the House of Representatives. The bill called for the creation of the county and county seat of Vivion County. The bill was passed and sent to the Council. On March 23, 1866, the House was informed that the Council had changed the name of Vivion to Missouri and had made changes in the boundaries of the county. On April 10, 1866, the act was approved by


Governor Sidney Edgerton. This act created Muscleshell County. The county seat was designated Kercheval City located near the confluence of the Missouri and Musselshell rivers. In the third session, held during the fall of 1866, H. B. No. 8 was approved by the governor. This bill was passed and the new law redesignated Muscleshell County as Vivion County. The county seat was relocated at Smithton. DeLacy's maps of the period place parts of the Musselshell Valley within the boundaries of these counties. The political organization had one more uneasy spell before a final defined county embraced the upper Musselshell. Meagher County was created on March 26, 1866, but declared invalid. The following year Meagher County was formed, taking the northern half of Gallatin County and smaller parts of Chouteau, Edgerton and Jefferson counties. The original creation date, March 26, 1866, was reassigned. The mining camp of Diamond City was designated county seat. The county was named for General Thomas Francis Meagher, acting governor of Montana Territory during portions of 1865-67.

Diamond City, county seat of Meagher County, was located in December, 1864, across the Prickly Pear Valley. It was on the east side of the Missouri River, about thirty-five miles east of Last Chance.
Gulch (Helena). A rich deposit of placer gold was discovered by a group of Southerners and given the name Confederate Gulch.\footnote{Burlingame, p. 91.} Diamond City was the eastern-most Montana gold camp in 1864.

The Missouri River offered water transportation between the East and Montana Territory. Steamboats came up the Missouri from St. Louis through the Dakotas and docked at Fort Benton. From here ox and horse teams were used to transport goods to Last Chance, Virginia City, Bannock and the other settlements. The only other route into the territory was the Corinne-Virginia City Road. It followed a trail from Corinne, Utah, located on the Utah Union Pacific, to Fort Hall over the Monida Pass and through the Big Hole Basin to Virginia City. This road was a long, expensive one. The Missouri River furnished the earliest route to Montana and continued to be used most often. But the Missouri was subject to low water, a condition with which the steamboats could not contend. Further, with the increasing gold rush traffic, merchants and passengers demanded better steamboat service. The best answer was a wagon road from a point further east than Fort Benton.

The Montana Post at Virginia City reported the first mention of the Muscle Shell Road in late 1865. Captain R. W. Andrews, a U. S. Army officer, and a party of twelve or fifteen started a road survey from Virginia City to the mouth of the Musselshell River. The editor gave the reason for the decision to build the road.
The circuitous route by which goods have been hauled this summer, from Cow Island and other points on the Missouri, around the bend of the river, by Fort Benton, and the fact that boats have been unable to reach Fort Benton, have demonstrated the necessity of fixing a permanent landing at a point lower on the river, and opening a good road to such point. The mouth of the Muscle Shell is said to be the head of navigation for a large portion of the year, and can be reached by a good wagon road on the south side of the river. It is to be hoped that this enterprise, undertaken by some of our business men, will be crowned with success. Quick and cheap communication with the States is a problem every person in the country is interested in solving.

In December the Post editorialized that "existing methods seem to be, upon examining a map of the country, unnecessarily tardy and expensive." The article went on to point out that the Missouri River was navigable six months of the year to the mouth of the Musselshell, between three and four hundred miles below Fort Benton. The mouth of the Musselshell to Helena was estimated at two hundred miles by land. Quoting these distances the editor decided freight could be brought over this road at four cents a pound, making the total cost of bringing freight from St. Louis, "the great source of supply for the Western country" to Helena for two hundred dollars, or only ten cents a pound.

Two weeks later the Captain R. W. Andrews expedition was reported to have returned from their survey of the road to the mouth of the Musselshell. Andrews estimated the distance from the Missouri to Helena at two hundred miles. The Missouri River and Rocky Mountain Wagon Road & Telephone Company planned to spend from $10,000 and $12,000 to build the road. It would pass through an area which would have "wood, water and grass along the line (which was) splendid;"

1The Montana Post, November 11, 1865.
2The Montana Post, December 2, 1865.
3Ibid.
the level(s) are low, and only one easy crossing of the Belt Range of mountains (would be) encountered.

The Missouri River and Rocky Mountain Wagon Road & Telephone Company was granted a charter by the Montana Territorial Legislature in 1865. The company consolidated with two other like companies, with the express purpose to survey. Within a year certain roads between the principle towns of the territory were located. Among the routes to be built under terms of the charter was one from Cercheval City (near the mouth of the Musselshell) via the south fork of the Musselshell and Twenty-five Yard Creek (Smith River) to the Gallatin and Virginia City. Officials of the company decided to build a branch from Helena to the South Fork and thence to the mouth of the Musselshell. They had in mind the view of one experienced freighter who felt six yokes of cattle could draw a load weighing six thousand pounds with only four days travel. The Post reasoned that this wagon route like others would be of great importance. Roads, according to the Post editor, "between the great quartz and placer mining centers of Montana and the head of navigation, will do more to establish their permanent prosperity than anything that could be devised, short of railroad communication with the East."

The road was finished between Helena and the mouth of the Musselshell in May, 1866. It was little used during that first summer because Fort Benton had a longer high-water season than normal. The

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1 The Montana Post, December 16, 1865.
2 The Montana Post, January 13, 1866.
3 The Montana Post, December 16, 1865
4 The Montana Post, April 14, 1866.
Helena Weekly Herald had great plans for the Helena and Muscleshell Road during the 1867 travel season.

It would prove of great benefit to the territory. It would not only save for use in the Territory a quarter of a million dollars annually on the mere matter of freights but it would tend materially to the speedy development of a mineral district not surpassed in extent and richness on the whole continent of America.¹

The mineral district in mind was located in the Musselshell. These mining interests and the Indians influenced and were influenced by the road in 1867.

The first mineral discovery in the Musselshell was made in the summer of 1866. J. H. Hall, William M. Jenkinson, and two others, Hawkins and McLaughlin were in the employ of the Rocky Mountain Quartz Company. On July 5, 1866, these miners found a number of copper lodes near the North Fork of the Musselshell River.² The discovery was made in the low natural pass between the Musselshell and Smith River valleys. It was only six miles from the head of the Musselshell River and the hunting grounds of the Crow and Blackfeet nations.

The miners named their find Copperopolis. Two patents were immediately taken out on the properties. One was the Ohio. The second patent was the St. Johns, the forty-eighth mineral survey granted by the Territory of Montana.³ Miners throughout Montana Territory watched the tiny camp with considerable interest. Copperopolis soon had an influx of other miners from White's Gulch and the Helena area. The miners included Jenkerson, Blocklin, Newlan, C. W. Cook, James Grub

¹Helena Weekly Herald, May 2, 1867.
²Burlingame, p. 83, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 23, 1896.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 23, 1896.
Through the joint efforts of the group, a shaft was sunk to a depth of seventy feet. According to a Helena writer, a ten point ore sample was sent to New York for assaying. The results showed forty dollars worth of gold, six dollars worth of silver and one hundred and sixty-five dollars worth of copper. The newly-formed Muscleshell Mining Company estimated that "with a work force and labor and extraction costs, a year's work would give a profit of $303,000 on thirty per cent ore, or if forty per cent ore was worked, a total of $531,000 would be realized."  

The Muscleshell Mining Company was most optimistic. The mines were in the low narrow pass between the Crazy and Girdle (Belt) Mountains. They were also on the route of the new Rocky Mountain Road & Telephone Company's road. The road passed from Helena to the mouth of the Musselshell. Fort Benton was the steamboat port of Montana Territory. However, low water often delayed steamboat traffic to Fort Benton. Consequently, a number of Helena merchants considered the mouth of the Musselshell as "substantially the head of steamboat navigation on the Missouri river." Reports of the mining activity at the Copperopolis mines strengthened efforts by the established mining camps to open this region for travel. Further, being a link between the Missouri and the mining camps, plans for the development of Copperopolis were also entertained.

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 23, 1896.

2George W. Ware, "The Copper Mines of Muscleshell," manuscript in Montana Historical Society. Helena, Montana, January 17, 1867.

3Ibid.


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Besides the small amount of copper at Butte City, a consider­able shipment of copper ores has been made from the mines at the head of the Muscleshell river. These properties, owned by capitalists of St. Louis, carry carbonates, etc. . . .In this connection it may be permissible to state that a postal route has been established from Helena to St. Paul, Minnesota, along the Muscleshell river and past these mines. Efforts are now being made to divert the carriage of freight from Fort Benton to a point at the mouth of this river. Should these mines prove of value, this route would offer for the copper ores a cheap and expeditious means of transport to a market.  

The camp was forced to close in the winter of 1866-67 since supplies could not be carried from Helena through the snowdrifts by ox team. In spite of the delay, the miners went back to the established camps for the winter, fully anticipating activity the following spring. However, any plans for developing the mines or the postal route came to an abrupt halt. The Indians began to dispute the invasion of their lands by the whites.

Under the terms of the Laramie Treaty of 1851, the eastern plains of Montana Territory, Wyoming Territory and part of Dakota Territory had been included in the area labeled Indian Country. The Gallatin and Musselshell valleys were the defined borderline separating the lands of the Indians and whites. But in 1851, the treaty had not been contested. The white treaty makers had been willing to give this vast expanse to the Indians. Mountains, valleys and plains abounded with buffalo and grass. In 1851, the land was of little interest to the whites. To the Indians, however, the plains were home. The Musselshell, the Gallatin and Yellowstone valleys were favorite hunting and living areas for the Indians. In the 1860's the whites began to look at the

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Indian Country with some interest. Mainly, it was due to the white man's lust for gold.

At the end of the Civil War, many veterans and deserters from both sides crossed the plains bound for the new bustling gold camps. They joined many other fortune seekers. There were good men and bad—settlers and gamblers and outlaws and family men. They picked and shoveled their way through Alder, Last Chance, Bannack, Virginia City and many other short-lived communities. First, these men mined Western Montana. Then they turned east. New York, Diamond City, and White's Gulch in Meagher County, were three of the eastern-most gold camps. Farmers followed right behind into this Missouri River Valley. The fertile Gallatin Valley, to the south, was also settled in rapid order. Its first role was food supplier for the booming mining towns. Settlers were planning to move into the Yellowstone Valley. Thought was even given to settlement of the Musselshell.¹

The Indians of the eastern plains of Montana were enraged at this settlement. The Gallatin was their land; likewise was the Musselshell. War parties ambushed wagon trains, killed pony express riders, raided ranches and stole horses. John Bozeman, one of the earliest pioneers in the Gallatin was among the settlers killed in the early summer of 1867. On the Musselshell problems also ensued. In May, the Helena Weekly Herald reported:

"A war party of the Blackfeet and Pieans visited the Musselshell mining district (Copperopolis) three days since, and run off deliberately, in broad day-light, even at dinner time, every hoof of horse flesh in the valley. Quite a number of miners were in the vicinity, but resistance was useless."²


²Helena Weekly Herald, May 14, 1867.
Governor Green Clay Smith was in the east when Bozeman was killed. Excitement in the Territory reached a fever heat. Acting Governor Thomas F. Meagher called for the organization of the Montana Volunteer Forces. He called for the enlistment of three hundred men from Helena and two hundred more from Deer Lodge for the campaign in the eastern Montana valleys.

By July 14, 1867, General Order No. 1, Headquarters Montana Volunteer Forces, was issued from the territorial capital, Virginia City. It read in part:

"There are to be nine companies. . . . Major Howie is to take Captain Hereford's Company and one section of artillery and go from Helena down the Muscleshell one hundred miles or so and there establish camp and safeguard that region."¹

Major Neil Howie was a Scotsman by birth, raised in Wisconsin and arriving in Montana Territory by 1863. He was appointed sheriff of Madison County in the spring of 1864 and by early 1867 was U. S. Marshal for Montana. Within weeks of the first Montana Volunteer Forces General Order, Howie was elevated by Gov. Meagher to the rank of Colonel with full command of the 1st Regiment Montana Volunteers.²

A fort was needed for the Musselshell for two reasons. The Helena and Muscleshell Road, over 180 miles in length, was built as a military supply route. Of late it had been used to haul mail and goods from the mouth of the Musselshell on the Missouri River to Helena and Virginia City by four-to-eight teams of oxen. This was the case especially during low water when the river steamers could not reach Fort Benton. This


²Helena Weekly Herald, May 2, 1867, and Helena Weekly Herald, June 18, 1874.
road would later be replaced by the Carroll Road. The second reason for establishing the fort was to protect the miners at Copperopolis.

Fort Howie was built on the North Fork of the Musselshell River, at the head of the Musselshell Valley, between the natural pass formed by the Crazy and Girdle (Belt) Mountains. It was within nine miles of Copperopolis and on the route of the Helena and Musselshell Road. The view to the east at the head of the valley was especially adaptable for quick movement.

Construction began on the fort in mid-August, 1867. The Montana Post at Virginia City recorded some of the activity around Fort Howie. "Captain Hereford's company will camp for a few days on Prickly Pear Creek (in the Helena Valley), and as soon as the necessary arrangements are completed will start for the Musselshell, taking with them a section of artillery."¹ One week later, Captain Mattock's Company of Montana Volunteers, numbering one hundred and twenty-five men, with a section of artillery, took several mining engineers, investors and two scientists to Copperopolis.

The scientists went to explore the region and gather fauna for their botanical studies of the Rocky Mountains. The investors were Helena businessmen. The mining engineers were connected with the St. Louis & Montana Mining Company. This company had its own plans for development of the region. They planned to make use of the new road to the Missouri River.²

Newspaper editors in Helena and Virginia City saw Fort Howie as the key to the opening of both the Musselshell and Judith Basin for

¹The Montana Post, August 3, 1867.
²The Montana Post, August 10, 1867.
mining and settlement. Colonel Howie, in his later report to the Regular U. S. Army on the Montana Militia, wrote:

"Another consideration prominent among the troops, was the hope of being able, when disbanded in the spring, to find it not only being safe, but practicable and remunerable to occupy and develop the new and rich regions of the Yellowstone and Muscleshell, as citizens and actual settlers."1

Such was not to be the case. In early October, 1867, Governor Smith ordered the Montana Volunteers mustered out of active duty. The reasons were many and complicated. General Alfred H. Terry, in charge of the Department of the Dakota which included Montana Territory, made a report to the U.S. Government pointing to the false alarm of the entire call-up of Montana civilians. His report mentioned that Indian outbreaks had "during the past year been less frequent than they ordinarily have been; nothing which has happened within this territory during this spring and summer, in my judgment, justified the alarm which has been felt."2

The Military campaign was officially over. Financially, however, it went on for three more years. Warrants by the volunteer soldiers totaled $980,313.11, for the five months' total service of 500 men and officers. Finally, in 1870, a Federal inspector, scaled down the warrants to an amount of $515,343.00, and the troops were paid. The 1867 Indian Campaign was finished.3


2Annual Report of Secretary of War for 1867, pp. 32-33.

3Burlingame, 125.
Fort Howie likewise suffered an infelicitous end. The fort was abandoned by troops within three months of its construction. It was used by passing travelers for several years and by a few military scouting parties into the early 1870's. In 1874, a Helena Weekly Herald correspondent described the fort. "At the foot of the canyon, and at the head of the valley, we came upon the old site and now ruins of Fort Howie, located during the threatened Indian War of 1867. An old stone fireplace and stockade trenches are about all that remain to mark this once important frontier post."\(^1\)

The fate of Fort Howie was not justified by the happenings of 1868. Pony express riders traveling from Fort Hawley, near the mouth of the Musselshell, towards Helena by way of the Judith Gap, the upper

\(^1\)Helena Weekly Herald, July 2, 1874. The entire campaign was marked by jealousy, feuds, fears, rumors and ambitions. Acting Governor Meagher was trying to build his own political fortunes. The general populous let the killing of John Bozeman and the scattered depredations by the Indians on farmers and miners become emotional issues. It very nearly caused an all-out Indian War against the whites. The Montana citizen soldiers were, for the most part, dissatisfied Civil War veterans. They had come to Montana to make their fortunes and more often than not, failed. They joined the Montana Volunteers for sixty-day enlistments. They looked for excitement and hoped to gain from the spoils of war. Instead they fought with each other. Commanding officers bickered and Col. Howie was faced with mutiny in his own ranks. When the command for mustering out was given in the early fall of 1867, Howie left Virginia City to inform his troops on the Yellowstone of the orders. After hearing the news, several officers and 180 men followed Captain Robert Hughs, commander of one of the companies. The mutineers took the entire cache of arms, ammunition, supplies and horses and began their own war on the Sioux and Crows. Howie was able to find only twenty-six troops willing to follow him in quelling the mutiny. Outnumbered, he was forced to give in and take his few faithful men back to Virginia City. The insurrection had mainly been the result of the failure of the Montana Territorial government to guarantee pay for the sixty-day enlistments. Captain Hughes and his Indian fighters soon gave up fighting the Indians. Check Burlingame, 115-126, and General Report of Colonel Neil Howie.
Musselshell and Diamond City were hard-pressed by the Indians. In February, 1868, the *Helena Weekly Herald* reported:

Serious fears are entertained that there has been trouble on the Musselshell. No word has been received from Fort Hawley, the eastern end of the route, for two months. During that time three parties have left here for there all of which should have been back before this. The first of three, second of four men and third of twelve. We have already given in our columns reports of numerous robberies which have been perpetrated by the savages that they would force the abandonment of the line and that they would scalp any who might, in future, attempt to travel it.¹

By March part of the mail came through from Fort Hawley. "It consisted of 8 sacks that were packed through on two horses and that were accompanied by five men on foot, from the fact that the Indians had stolen all the horses belonging to the Fort."² Helena merchants were not to be daunted by this Indian scare.

Two large warehouses and several other buildings were completed by Messrs. Brewer, Jenkerson, Whitson & Co., at the mouth of the Musselshell River by early April.³ Fort Benton residents were uneasy about the building program lower down the Missouri River.

There is a feeling of apprehension amongst the people that the low water of the present season will be the means of building up the gran entrepot of the Upper Missouri for Montana freight and passengers, at a point much lower down. It now looks quite probable that the mouth of the Musselshell will be that point.⁴

The Musselshell was fast becoming an area of contention, both to white men and to the Indians. Thirty men were at the new town of April and the commander of Camp Cook (on the Judith River) promised

¹*Helena Weekly Herald*, February 20, 1868.

²*Helena Weekly Herald*, March 5, 1868.

³*Helena Weekly Herald*, April 9, 1868.

⁴Ibid.
to station one hundred regular troops there on and after the first of May. At the same time, Indian raids were commonplace in the Musselshell mining districts. Three hundred Sioux, Blackfeet and Bloods were said to be "just in back of Diamond and New York camps, or commanding the Musselshell road."¹ The Indians killed several miners, stole twelve horses at Diamond and ran off stock on the few ranched between these mines and Helena.² But the white men persisted.

Captain R. W. Andrews returned from three months of road building on the Musselshell Road in late May. A letter signed Sureka promptly appeared in the Herald from a Diamond City writer on Andrews accomplishments.

The road is now finished, and in good condition for trains and coaches. The valleys of Keep Creek and the Musselshell, which have up to this time scarcely been noticed, will by the opening up of this route be rendered accessible to those desiring good stock and grain ranches.

Mr. Higgins, of this place, (Diamond City), went to the Musselshell a short time ago, with two four-mule teams, and is now returning, loaded with freight and passengers from the steamer Cors. There are several stations now on the road, and others will soon be located, which will supply the traveling public with all necessary accommodations.³

Traffic was heavy over the road during the summer of 1868. One writer to the Herald gave the reasons why the Musselshell route was better than the Benton route. Freighting, he wrote, was two cents a pound cheaper. There was no worry of low water. The total distance was 220 miles less by way of the Musselshell and was much faster. Most important to the Helena and Virginia City merchants, steamers could make only two trips a year to Fort Benton and only during high water. On the other hand,

¹Helena Weekly Herald, April 23, 1868.
²Ibid.
³Helena Weekly Herald, May 29, 1868.
two to four steamers could reach the Musselshell in any season. R. R. Gates, representative of the Montana Hide and Fur Company, wrote the Herald from the town of Musselshell and stated that about forty men planned to stay at the post during the winter of 1868-69.

One letter reached Helena during that winter with news of Musselshell. The writer said about one hundred people were at the post. The men were spending their time however best they could. Captain R. W. Andrews, the road builder, had a busy off-season. "Captain Andrews, the ubiquitous, is practicing law, medicine, surgery and dentistry, whacking bulls, poisoning wolves, chopping wood, killing buffalo, building houses, and making himself generally useful."

The military took an interest in this road during the summer of 1869. General W. S. Hancock, making a survey of Montana Territory during that year, decided to open a military road from some point near Fort Ellis in the Gallatin and the Musselshell. Captain E. W. Clift of the 13th Infantry and one hundred men conducted a two months' survey of the proposed route. Only one trip was recorded over the route during 1869. Twenty-five wagons from Helena were hauling coal oil, stoves and assorted hardware from the Steamer Tempest. Indians were very likely the reason for lack of use of the road during 1869. In late October, for example, "Musselshell was attacked

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1 Helena Weekly Herald, October 1, 1868.
2 Helena Weekly Herald, November 5, 1868.
3 Helena Weekly Herald, February 25, 1869.
4 Helena Weekly Herald, July 1, 1869, and Burlingame, 214.
5 Helena Weekly Herald, November 18, 1869.
by about 100 mounted Sioux, who charged into town and up to within a
short distance of the stockade of the trading post. . . .The Indians.
.. commenced leisurely to fall back, their movements directly expedited
by a few shells from a mountain howitzer."1

A month earlier, a hunting expedition from Diamond City had been
attacked. One man was killed, prompting a letter to the Herald, "How
is it--can we get protection? Can we get a fort over here?"2 On
November 30, 1869, General W. S. Hancock, commander of the Department
of Dakota, established "a camp of one company at a post about thirteen
miles in front (east) of Diamond City, Montana, near the entrance to
the pass in the Little Belt Range of mountains, through which hostile
Indians were in the habit of coming on their raids upon the settlers.
.(which was built) at the solicitation of the people."3 In August,
1870, the new army post of Camp Baker was moved ten miles further
south. Fort Shaw was about seventy miles northwest and Fort Ellis, one
hundred and twenty miles south. A general view of the area and local
conditions were described in one official report in 1870.

The post was established in November, 1869, to protect Diamond
City and other mining camps of the vicinity from Indian depredations,
this being considered one of the most dangerous localities in the
Territory. . . .Game is abundant. . . .A portion of the stores of
the post have been received, and when all arrive the supply will
be ample. They are procured from St. Louis, Missouri, and are
either shipped up the Missouri to Benton, Montana Territory, by
steamer, or by the Union Pacific railroad to Corinne, and from
thence by wagons to this post. . . .A mail is received twice a
week. It takes about fourteen days for a letter to reach department

1Helena Weekly Herald, November 18, 1869.
2Helena Weekly Herald, September 23, 1869.
3Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1870, p. 70, quoted
in Burlingame, 212.
headquarters. . . The inhabitants of the vicinity are engaged in gold mining or grazing. . . The prevalent diseases are neuralgia and rheumatism.¹

Colonel Eugene M. Baker conducted one major campaign against the Blackfeet during the winter of 1869-70. He surprised a band of Piegons and Bloods on the Marias River and won a complete victory. The Helena Daily Herald stated that 173 Indians had been killed and 300 horses captured. Colonel Baker and his command sustained one killed and one wounded.² Some accusations were made against Colonel Baker about the unnecessary killing of women and children but, in the main, public sentiment was in favor of the actions. The Helena Daily Herald commented:

... While we cannot help feeling deep regret that a necessity, like that which called forth this extreme measure, should exist, it is impossible to conceive how it could have been avoided. To let things continue as they were, was beyond the remotest bounds of reason. And all peaceable means to put an end to the robberies and murders, that these savages were daily committing, had been tried and failed. It was the last step; a terrible, but also a just and effective one.³

General William T. Sherman wrote a letter to General Philip H. Sheridan concerning the recent battle between Colonel Baker's command and the Blackfeet. The letter appeared in the Daily Herald; in it, General Sherman defended Baker's personal report that the Indians were not killed wantonly. Sherman also referred to the increasing problem of

³Ibid., February 2, 1870, quoted from Twichel.
white settlement into Indian Country, thus giving the army a two-fold problem of protecting the whites and the Indians' land.\textsuperscript{1} Settlers did not wait for Washington's nor the Department of the Dakota's solution to this increasing Indian-white problem.

The winds along the Musselshell have received few compliments but a goodly number of curses over the years. However, the much denounced gales were directly responsible for the first permanent white settler's decision to come into the Musselshell Valley. William Gordon, an Irishman by birth, came west from his adopted home of Baltimore to seek his fortune in the early 1860's. He carpentered and dabbled in mining in Colorado for several years. In 1864 he drove a bull team to Alder Gulch. Like most of the miners, he soon followed the rush to Last Chance Gulch and finally ended up at White's Gulch.

Gordon panned enough gold dust to buy 100 cows recently trail-driven from Oregon by two men named Holingsworth and Riddle.\textsuperscript{2} Gordon grazed his small herd on the open range around White's Gulch while he worked his diggings. This was an easy operation for Gordon during the first two years. But the winter of 1871-1872 was a bad one. Temperatures were below zero from November 22 until mid-February. Three feet of snow covered the ground for four straight months.\textsuperscript{3} All the stockmen suffered, especially men like Gordon. He had neither shelter nor prospect of obtaining hay for his livestock. A deep coat of crusted snow covered the ground early and Gordon was faced with the problem of feeding his cows. Just as his cattle-feeding problems were becoming

\textsuperscript{1}Twichel, 10.  
\textsuperscript{2}Lewistown Daily News, December 21, 1958.  
\textsuperscript{3}John and Perry Moore, "Notes of the Moore Tribe" (notes in possession of Jum Moore, Twodot, Mont.).
serious, he heard a report of a traveler who had recently passed through one of the contested hunting grounds of the Indians, the Musselshell. The traveler reported patches of open ground where the snow had blown clear.

About the first of January, 1872, William Gordon, William Alanzo Smith and William C. Swett combined their herds. They decided to make a move into the Musselshell as a final attempt at saving their six hundred head of cattle. Pack and saddle horses were procured and a number of men enlisted to help, among them Len Lewis, Ed Sayre and J. H. Freezer. The first night was spent with the herd at the mouth of Confederate Gulch. After leaving Confederate Gulch, their troubles began. Smith, on snowshoes, piloted the group. Several of the men drove ox-drawn sleds to make a trail for the herd. Strong winds and drifted coulees hampered travel through each succeeding valley. Prod poles were used by the men to check snow-covered low spots. Cattle tried to fight their way back. The men were forced to sleep in snow-banks. Finally, the men ran out of food during the two-week journey. But the efforts were worth it.

When the group arrived in the Musselshell, the ground was clear. The continuously blowing wind had freed much of the high benchlands of its snow cover. Tall, brown grass was exposed. The men left their cows and returned to their mining activities at White's Gulch. The next spring the cattle surviving the hard winter were rounded up for branding. Losses were much lighter than in the Smith River Valley. William Gordon decided to forget mining and remain in the broad Musselshell Valley. He

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1John and Perry Moore, "Notes. . .", Swett was also known as Sweet. See Helena Weekly Herald, March 7, 1872.

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 18, 1897.
proceeded to build a log cabin and lean-to stable for his horses. The cabin was built of cottonwood logs with a dirt floor and roof. Gordon had an ax and a half-inch auger for his building work. One end of the structure was built in a V-shape with a rock fireplace and chimney. The little ranch was established at the head of the valley. Other ranchers followed Gordon's example. Perry and Sanford Moore, Ed Sayre, E. J. Hall, William Smith and J. H. Freezer drove cattle into the bare Musselshell Valley later that same winter. In the next two years, they moved their cattle back into the Smith River Valley for branding and summer range. In 1874 they too, settled permanently in the Musselshell.¹

A writer to the Helena Weekly Herald in 1872 noted that in the Smith River Valley "stock in large numbers are roaming the hills, and improving daily."² He reported a number of ranchers from the Gallatin and Missouri valleys who had moved their cattle to this isolated range country. At the end of his article he wrote of the Musselshell Valley to the east of the Smith River.

While 'doing' the stock items, I will mention of the fact that Mr. Sarter and his 800 head of cattle have gone to the Muscleshell country, where the feed is flush and storms have stopped. Other parties, with nearly 1,200 head more of cattle, have also gone to the Muscleshell country.³

In March, William C. Swett, who was one of the pioneer stockmen of the Musselshell was interviewed by the Weekly Herald.

Mr. W. C. Swett, an extensive stock-grower of this Territory, and well known in this city (Helena), arrived from the Muscleshell last night, where he has a large herd feeding and fattening on the rich and nutritious bunch-grass of that valley. Mr. Swett says he has traveled through all portions of Montana, but has found no region so favorable to stock as the Muscleshell. The heaviest fall

¹John and Perry Moore, Notes.
²Helena Weekly Herald, January 25, 1872.
³Ibid.
of snow there during the past severe winter, has not been over 4 inches, and that did not remain but a day or two. Timber and brush is abundant, thus furnishing good shelter, while the grass has been fresh and green during the whole winter.

Stockmen, already accustomed to severe losses through the long Montana winters, received further affirmations of the Musselshell Valley in May. A correspondent from Deep Creek wrote:

"...Over the divide, in the valley of the Muscleshell, there seems to be a perennial summer. One or two sagacious ranchmen of the Missouri valley had the foresight to take advantage of this remote but favored section, and by driving over their stock and wintering there, have suffered none of what others have called ill luck in the loss of cattle."

An Indian encounter was responsible for a partial survey of the Musselshell during the summer of 1872. Dr. F. V. Hayden, an oft time traveler through Montana, was in charge of a Northern Pacific Railroad survey through the Yellowstone Valley. The party was attacked near the present site of Billings by Cheyennes, estimated to number from 400 to 1,000. Colonel E. M. Baker was in charge of a large military support which was able to drive off the Indians. However, Dr. Hayden, against the wishes of the military, turned his surveyors to the north. The group struck the Musselshell and made a survey to the head of the Musselshell Valley and the forks of the main river. The Helena Weekly Herald interviewed one of the party. "The country presents no obstacle to a railroad. The valley of the Muscleshell looks very well."

1Helena Weekly Herald, March 8, 1872.
3Burlingame, 226.
4Helena Weekly Herald, September 12, 1872. In 1873, copper ore was selling in Salt Lake City from $25 to $110 a ton for 15% to 40% ore.
The Copperopolis Mines were active again during 1872 and 1873, prompting the Herald to remark: "The fifty and six per cent ores of the Musculshell would be valuable to their owners if we had railroad communications to give them a market."¹

Another sign of prosperity was the sudden interest in the hot sulphur springs in the Smith River Valley. These springs were ten miles east of Camp Baker and about seventy-five from Helena. They were the property of the first settler in that area, James Brewer. Brewer preempted a quarter section of land around the springs in 1870. Major R. C. Walker purchased a half interest the following year and a patent was issued to the two men. They promptly erected dwellings, bath houses, stables and a general store.² Brewer's Sprilgs was the nearest post to the few Muscelshell ranchers. One pioneer wrote of the place; "Jim Brewer built a log cabin at the springs, cleaned out the spring, built a house over it, charged the boys 75 cents each for a bath, sold whiskey and ran one hell of a place."³

"Judge" Van H. Fisk, one of the Fisk Brothers who were the owners of the Helena Weekly Herald, acted as the traveling correspondent of the paper. He traveled through Smith River Valley during 1873 and to the mining camps of the area. The only news from the Musselshell dealt with the trip with the trip of an M. Robbins of Salt Lake City to the Copperopolis mines.⁴

¹Helena Weekly Herald, June 12, 1873.
²Leeson, 806.
³John and Perry Moore, "Notes. . .".
⁴Helena Weekly Herald, August 14, 1873.
Captain Henry B. Freeman, commanding officer at Camp Baker, stated in September, 1873, that his command had had no contests with the Indians since there had been no depredations. The Blackfeet and Piegans had not been in the region in the past three years. The Flatheads passed through occasionally.¹

The Helena Weekly Herald hinted at another attempt to make use of the Helena and Musselshell Road in December, 1873.² A week later, the Herald announced post office department proposals included two new routes. A weekly run was proposed from Helena to Fort Buford (in Dakota Territory) via the mouth of the Musselshell. Another route would run between Bozeman and the mouth of the Musselshell. The Herald predicted "a direct and good wagon road will undoubtedly (sic) be constructed before the 1st of May next between Helena and the Musselshell, and over this route a tri-weekly coach will doubtless ply during the boating season at least..."³

Readers immediately began to write letters to the Herald proclaiming the need of the route and the settlement of the Missouri and Musselshell valleys. Miners at Washington Gulch, on the west side of the Big Belt Mountains, volunteered nearly 300 work days to help in the road construction.⁴ The road was completed to an extent that on March 16, 1874, the first Diamond "R" mule train left Helena bound for the mouth

¹Burlingame, 213, quoting Captain H. B. Freeman, Camp Baker, September 18, 1873, to Army Adjutant General.
²Helena Weekly Herald, December 18, 1873.
³Helena Weekly Herald, December 25, 1873.
⁴Helena Weekly Herald, January 15 and 23, 1874.

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of the Musselshell. (See map on page following). Other mule trains were to follow immediately. The Weekly Herald stated that "the government will furnish ample protection for trains on the new route, and no danger need be apprehended from hostile Indians."\(^1\) A new town, Carroll, was established at the confluence of the Missouri and Musselshell. By the fall of 1874, Carroll had "about 20 log cabins and 150 souls, 2 good stores, 3 restaurants, one hotel and one blacksmith shop, no saloons, but for him who need to wet his clay, can usually find a way."\(^2\) Carroll was named for Matt Carroll, one of the officials of the Diamond "R" Overland Freight Company, and immediately given the honor of being described as "one of the 'to be' best towns of Montana."\(^3\)

Arrangements were made by the Diamond "R" Company whereby goods were to be hauled by the Northern Pacific Railroad to Bismarck, North Dakota. The Kountz Line Steamboats, operating on a weekly run, were to deliver the freight to Carroll where the overland Diamond "R" would deliver freight to points in the Territory.\(^4\) The Herald blasted the Fort Benton route since "a good portion of the freighting has fallen into the hands of Mormons, who have yearly drained from this country for the benefit of their own, money enough to have made good times here had it been earned and expended by and among our own people."\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Helena Weekly Herald, March 5, 1874.

\(^2\) Helena Weekly Herald, September 3, 1874.

\(^3\) Helena Weekly Herald, March 5, 1874.

\(^4\) Helena Weekly Herald, February 26, 1874.

\(^5\) Helena Weekly Herald, March 5, 1874.
THE CARROLL ROAD
The Helena Weekly newspaper was pleased with the Musselshell route.

Low grade (and) no doubling up with teams. Neither alkali flats, sand prairies or swampy bottoms, to traverse, but through a country well watered and timbered, covered the year round with a luxuriant growth of bunch grass, possessing a hard natural roadbed. . .and no toll gates to swallow up the profits of the freighter.¹

A letter from "Occasional" to the Herald published the sentiments of one resident of the area traversed by the Carroll Road. "Besides bringing us into closer communications with the outside world, this road will help a great deal towards settling up. . .the Smith River valley."² The Herald also foresaw a bright future for the Musselshell area since the road went through the valley and very near the Copperopolis mines. "A new era, and a cheering one will. . .dawn upon the Musselshell and the localities of which it is contiguous."³

The military insured adequate protection for the route. At least four companies of the Diamond "R" trains. Troops were shuffled between Camp Baker and Fort Shaw (on the Sun River).⁴ The military and commercial interest in the road seemed to be justified by the distance and time saved with the Carroll Road. Mail was carried over the route in four and one-half days. Freight was moved from Carroll to Helena in twelve to fifteen days. One merchant estimated a minimum of thirty days and a maximum of thirty-seven days for a Chicago shipment. Another estimate was an average of thirty-five days from either Chicago or St. Louis. Over 4,000 tons of freight were expected to be moved during the first year.⁵

¹Helena Weekly Herald, March 5, 1874.
²Helena Weekly Herald, March 19, 1874.
³Helena Weekly Herald, April 9, 1874.
⁴Helena Weekly Herald, April 16, 1874.
⁵Helena Weekly Herald, March 26 and Helena Weekly Herald, May 28, 1874.
One of the most important aspects of the Carroll Road was the further link between the inhabited western valleys and the military posts of eastern Montana. The Herald reported the contract received by Colonel Charles A. Broadwater for his company, the Diamond "R". The contract called for the delivery of beef for $3.60 per hundred at Forts Buford and Stephenson. This was "the lowest price ever paid for beef at those Missouri River posts. So much may be credited to the opening of the Muscleshell route."¹

The Peninah, loaded from Bismarck with an assorted cargo, was the first steamer to reach Carroll. The steamer had difficulty even arriving at Carroll because of low water. It was forced to land downriver, discharge half of its goods and proceed to Carroll, unload, and return for the rest of the cargo. The Diamond "R" freight left for Helena on the Carroll Road on May 12, 1874.² The first four wagons arrived in Helena on June 4, a total overland time of twenty-three days. Heavy rains slowed the teams considerably.³ In spite of the obstacles heavy traffic continued throughout 1874.

The following year, stages coaches were added by the Diamond "R". Way stations were set up along the route, at the main stops of Diamond City, Camp Baker, Brewer's Springs and Carroll. The vast area of the Musselshell Valley and Judith Basin became vital links with the addition of the stages. At Copperopolis, "General" Ben Stickney had established a small camp and stables. Travelers referred to the place as Fort

¹Helena Weekly Herald, May 7, 1874.
²Helena Weekly Herald, May 21, 1874.
³Helena Weekly Herald, June 4, 1874.
Ben Stickney. The Musselshell's pioneer rancher, William Gordon, who had settled near the Forks of the Musselshell River, provided a regular stop for the stages. The Carroll Road turned north from here toward the Judith Gap. Fred Bosch had established an outfitting store and corrals midway between the Gordon Ranch and the Judith Gap. In the Judith Basin, Camp Lewis was established as a combination military and stage stop.

Captain William Ludlow traveled over the Carroll Road on his reconnaissance from Carroll to Yellowstone Park. Ludlow's description of the Musselshell in 1875 showed him to be an interested and perspective observer. He and his party were traveling south and west.

August 4, 1875.—Pulled out at 6 a. m. The road led directly through the gap (the Judith Gap). From the southeast extremity of the Little Belt Mountains rises a fine spring, flowing from east at first, and then doubling back through the gap into Ross's Fork (a tributary of the Judith River to the north).

The gap is formed by a depression five or six miles in width between the timbered Snowy and Belt Ranges. It constitutes the head of the Judith Basin; to the south appears a broad, level stretch of prairie, sloping down to the Musselshell, twenty or twenty-five miles distant. The Crow camp at the time we passed was said to be seven or eight miles to the eastward, on the southern slope of the Snowies. We also heard that a fight had taken place two nights before between the Crows and a party of Sioux, and that a war-party of one hundred Sioux had passed subsequently through the gap, going northward.

Emerging from the gap, the road led west and south over a dry, sterile, and dusty prairie, in the teeth of a blistering southwest gale, across Hoppley's Hole and Haymaker's and Daisy Dean Creeks, into the valley of the Musselshell, whose fresh, cool water of timber afforded the strongest contrast to the country behind us. The hired teams were mortally weary, and had been with the greatest difficulty urged all day against the strong, hot wind. Released from harness, they ran to the bank and leaped bodily into the stream thrusting their muzzles deep into the cool water with great contentment. The river is twenty-five or thirty feet wide, and on the average seven or eight inches deep, of clear, rapid flow, over a gravelly bottom; the valley level, wide, fertile, and richly

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1Helena Weekly Herald, July 2, 1874.

2Ibid.
grassed, with heavy clumps of timber on the low banks of the stream.

August 5. - Made an early start, and at two or three miles from camp came to the "forks" of the Musselshell, where the north and south branches unite. Here a ranchman had established himself, raising cattle, and, by means of an irrigating ditch, cultivating some seventy-five or eighty acres in oats and wheat. Throughout Montana, owing to the very thorough drainage, the general altitude above the sea, and the prevailing dryness of the atmosphere, irrigation is essential to successful agriculture.

A stage-station of the Carroll road is made at this ranch, sixty-five miles from Lewis and fifty-six miles from Baker. The road followed west and north up the North Fork, passing through a rocky, wooded canon of considerable beauty. Here the road, overlooking the stream, whose windings it followed, and deeply shaded by pines, made a very agreeable drive, the more so that we were now beyond any danger from Indians. Emerging from the canon, the road led west and south over a high rolling, and hilly prairie. At the foot of a long downgrade lay Copperopolis, which was found to consist of a mining-shaft and a deserted shanty. The North Fork of Deep Creek was reached at 4 p. m. and camp made. The creek abounded with trout, and the wood, water, and grass were plenty and good.

August 6. - The road led down the valley of Deep Creek west and south to Brewer's Springs, where the luxuries of a hot bath, followed by a generous breakfast, were enjoyed. . . . A small hotel has been built for the accommodation of visitors. At this point unite the two forks of Deep Creek, which, bearing the name of Smith's River, flows here north and west past Camp Baker to join the Missouri. The Carroll road bifurcates, one branch going west over the mountains, the other following the rich and fertile river-valley, which supports thousands of cattle on its lush pasture, until at sixteen and three-fourths miles from the springs the road reaches Camp Baker, where it deflects to the west, towards Helena.

The post is an irregular-looking cluster of buildings planted in the midst of a level and stony plain, surrounded by mountains, upon which frequency patches of snow appear. An irrigating-ditch brings a current of water through the garrison, but hardly appears able to vivify the arid soil. The troops at Baker are two companies of the Seventh Infantry, Major Freeman commanding. I found here my party awaiting me, and without loss of time made preparations for the trip to Ellis.¹

When Captain Ludlow made his return journey through the Musselshell, he wrote in his report a sentiment with which the few settlers of the Musselshell, Smith River and Missouri valleys wholeheartedly agreed. Captain Ludlow passed near Copperopolis and proceeded through the low pass between the Castle and Little Belt mountains to the Forks of the Musselshell. Near the headwaters of the Musselshell River he saw "many hundreds of cattle ... grazing in this valley, which is an excellent stock range." He met troops of the Second Cavalry and Seventh Infantry at their camp between the two Forks of the Musselshell.

This camp is just on the border of the Indian range; is well supplied with all the principle requisites of wood, water, and forage; and would be an admirable location for a permanent post for the protection of the Carroll road and the thriving settlements to the westward. These districts are threatened almost every summer with forays by the Indians, from which garrisons far in their rear could scarcely avail to guard them. These hostile invasions are always sudden and generally unforeseen, and only the promptest movements of troops can be of effect. It is not difficult to see that such movements would be greatly expedited and their effect by (sic) so much increased by meeting the Indians at the very door, as it were, and punishing them there, rather than by trusting to the uncertain chance of overtaking them after the depredations had been committed. The garrison and post of Camp Baker, for example, moved forward and established anew at the forks of the Musselshell, would make almost secure the whole country behind them, and, in addition, would afford a most favorable point from which to send out scouts and reconnaissances, or, on occasion, to initiate a campaign into the Indian country. Another consideration would be that the farther east such a post was established the cheaper and easier it would be to supply.1

Captain Ludlow's analysis of the protective needs of the Musselshell were justified by the Indian depredations during the summer of 1875. The Helena Weekly Herald devoted a half-page of its August 5, 1875, issue to letters from settlers in the valleys to the east of Helena. Mentions were made of attacks on the wagon trains of the Diamond "R"

1U. S., War Department, Report of a RECONNAISSANCE From Carroll. ___, p. 32.
and individual travelers making use of the Carroll Road. One ranch in
the area of Deep Creek was attacked. Lieutenant Nelson and twelve
troops from Camp Baker and a Major Cooper and twenty-nine citizens went
to the ranch's aid. In the skirmish which followed, two men were killed.
This single attack, plus the scouting patrols out from Camp Baker, left
the one military post in the three valleys of the Musselshell, Smith
River and Missouri with a total of three men. One letter demanded
"an additional, full regiment of cavalry...to guard the exposed
frontier from the incursions of the hostile Sioux."1 The military
question was only one aspect. The settlers of the valleys had
another plight.

The state of affairs, even though it should prove only
a bad 'scare,' is truly deplorable. The farms in the
beautiful Missouri valley, one of the choicest garden
spots of Montana, has been abandoned--crops, horses,
cattle and poultry left to take care of themselves.
A few days' absence of the farmers from their homes will
cause a serious loss of property; and, at this season of
the year, a protracted absence would materially damage
the prosperity of the settlement.2

Roving bands of Sioux Indians seemed to be the cause of the
numerous attacks. The Herald reported peaceful buffalo hunts by
the Bannacks and Crows during the winter of 1875 in the Musselshell.3
The Crows, Bannacks, Flatheads, Nex Perce and Gros Ventre combined
to rid the Judith Basin of the Sioux during the summer. The Herald,
however, felt most of the attacks were made by bands of Sioux who
had traveled north and west from the Yellowstone.4

1Helena Weekly Herald, August 5, 1875.  2Ibid.
3Helena Weekly Herald, January 21, 1875.
4Helena Weekly Herald, July 15, 1875.
Two peaceful events gave an added dimension to the area in 1875. A post office was established at Brewer's Hot Springs in July, 1875. More important was the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, a newspaper published for the first time on November 25, 1875, at the county seat of Meagher County, Diamond City. It was started by the former Meagher County sheriff, William N. Sutherlin. He was soon joined by his brother Robert N. Sutherlin who edited the paper while Will was traveling correspondent. The paper was unique in its role. Besides being the purveyor of news of the valleys, it was "a journal devoted to Agriculture, Livestock, Home Reading and General News." When the Husbandman entered the ranks as the eleventh Montana newspaper, the Madisonian at Virginia City announced, "As that paper knows lots about vegetables we take it for granted that 'garden sass' will be plentiful and cheap next summer."3

The first issues of the Husbandman reported that eggs sold as low as 16 2/3 cents at Bozeman; Carl B. Plummer, "the great artist" performed at Diamond City; Sam Ickes, the village blacksmith, received a bushel of coal from the Musselshell; the trapper, Smith of Virginia City, passed through town from a hunt in the Yellowstone and Musselshell valleys, and farmers enjoyed themselves during the winter by having social dances, balls and grange-feasts. The Fourth of July Celebration at Brewer's Springs was the affair of the year.

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1Helena Weekly Herald, July 22, 1875.

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 25, 1875, masthead. This line was run at the top of page one in all later issues.

3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 30, 1876.
The gathering at the Brewer White Sulpher Springs was probably larger than at any point in the county. The day was spent in testing the speed of various horses. Considerable money changed hands. The evening was spent in dancing. Not satisfied with one day, they kept up the festivities the whole week, racing, bathing, fishing and roaming over the green hills in the daytime, and joining in the giddy dance at night. A number of ladies were in attendance from Helena and the Missouri valley, who added much to the enjoyment of the occasion.

The Smith River Valley took on other influences of advancing civilization. The stages began to run three times a week from Helena to Diamond City to Brewer's Springs and through the Musselshell to Carroll. But civilization came to the Smith River and Musselshell valleys, in the main, because of increasing stock interests.

In its first issue the Husbandman reported that George Lyons and the Moore Brothers had driven 1,200 head of cattle to winter quarters on the Musselshell Valley. In December, Ed Sayre, another pioneer stockman in the Musselshell, visited Diamond City. He informed Editor William Sutherlin that the Musselshell had about 10,000 head of cattle and more were coming in for winter grazing, mainly from the Jefferson, Boulder and Pipestone valleys. In March, 1876, Len Lewis and the Moore Brothers returned to the Musselshell from their ranches in the neighboring Smith River Valley. They "propose spending the month in a general roundup of their stock... They propose to roundup and drive their cattle to their summer range before the green grass begins to grow."

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1 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 13, 1876.
2 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 30, 1876.
3 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 25, 1875.
4 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 2, 1875.
5 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 24, 1876.
Other ranchers also moved their cattle to the Musselshell for winter grazing during 1875-76. Two stockmen, Fred Miller and Snawl, brought their herds from Jefferson County. Miller ran about 700 or 800 head. Snawl was reported to be so pleased with the Musselshell that he decided to move his ranch from Jefferson county, locate a summer ranch in the Smith River and winter his stock cattle in the Musselshell. Miller and Snawl planned to drive their shippers to Cheyenne, Wyoming, during the summer season.\(^1\) William Mills, the Moore Brothers, Perry, John and Sanford, Len Lewis and George Lyons, all ranchers in the Smith River, joined together in 1876 to conduct the first summer roundup made in the Musselshell Valley. The men jointly ran over 2,000 head of cattle. Even working together, their roundup was a difficult one. "Movements of stock have been rather risky in that region for sometime past, occasioned by owners driving to their summer (and winter) range. The country is so large that this is quite an undertaking, and most men unavoidable leave more or less of their cattle behind."\(^2\)

The summer of 1876 found other changes in the Musselshell. George Lyons, had hopes of raising hay in the valley for use the next winter. He found grasshoppers had destroyed most of the grass cover in the upper end of the valley.\(^3\) Buffalo also hurt the cattle raisers. They moved from the Yellowstone range to the Musselshell and Judith Basin as a consequence of the increasing activity

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 4, 1876.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 27, 1876 and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 27, 1876.

\(^3\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 17, 1876.

-44-
of the Indians and military. Frank Gaugler, a small rancher and miner in the Musselshell, decided to build a general outfitting store near the Forks of the Musselshell and the permanent ranch of William Gordon. The new store was blessed with the name Gauglersville and within a month had a hotel to go with the store. Gaugler took up a 160-acre homestead and added 640 more acres under the desert land act, thus becoming the first man to procure government title to land in the Musselshell Valley. Then Husbandman noted the most recent addition to the Musselshell.

The citizens of Muscleshell valley are taking steps to have a post office at the Forks of the Muscleshell. Their petition for the same will be forwarded. There are now about thirty residents in this section, and were it not for the fear of Sioux raids three times this number would winter upon that valley. A post office located at Mr. Gaugler's store will be of great benefit to the residents.

Indians were still very much a threat to anyone planning to take up permanent residency. The thirty residents of the valley had a serious and continuing problem with raids by marauding bands of Indians. The Carroll Road was abandoned in the late summer of 1875 because of Indians. One army officer who was in charge of military patrols through the Musselshell during the summer of 1875 analyzed the reason why the road was abandoned. Captain W. Cliffort, United States Army, wrote in the Husbandman in 1879.

The summer of 1875 was prolific with stories of the depredations committed by the Sioux in revenge for their wrongs. Miners attempting to explore the Black Hills, Big Horn mountains, and the valley of the Yellowstone, had been murdered; the Judith Basin and Musselshell route from

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 31, 1876.

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 2, 1876, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 6, 1876.

3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 30, 1876.
c entral Montana had been abandoned through fear of them, and now they announced their intention of making a determined effort to recover some of the many advantages they claimed to have been deprived of.¹

Many potential settlers did not enter the Musselshell because of the Indians. Editor Sutherlin gave his opinion in the Husbandman "The prospect of the building of the new military post upon the Muscleshell valley does not seem to have increased the desire for ranchers in that section of the country."² Consequently Sutherlin and residents of the Smith River and Missouri valleys and Helenans petitioned Delegate Martin Maginnis to intercede for a fort at the Forks of the Musselshell. In July, 1876, Maginnis telegraphed Governor Benjamin F. Potts, stating that his bill asking for an appropriation for the erection of military posts at the Forks of the Musselshell and on the Yellowstone River had become law. The amount of the appropriation was not given, but it was stated that President Ulysses S. Grant had signed the bill into law.³ The Custer Massacre on the Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876, however, brought pressure from the military to build both new posts in the Yellowstone. One was to be built at the mouth of the Tongue River and the other at the junction of the Big Horn and Little Big Horn rivers.⁴

The Musselshell Valley was used extensively by ranchers during the winter of 1876-77 and the following summer. The Moore Brothers, Len and

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 27, 1879.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 23, 1875.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 20, 1876, and Helena Daily Independent, July 16, 1876.
⁴Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 3, 1876.
John Lewis and George Lyons branded "over 400 head of cattle within the past week (mid-July), and were not through at last accounts." Alex Proffitt, a rancher from the Gallatin Valley, summarized his cattle in the Musselshell. The Bozeman Times noted, "Alex, is enthusiastic over that section, and says, 'It is the finest cattle range on earth,' and judging from the specimens he brought over we think he is about right." The Musselshell stockmen had their first experience with cattle rustlers during the summer of 1877. The steamer Benton moving upriver came across a herd of cattle being pushed over the Missouri River toward the Canadian border. The steamer slowed their movement and some of the cattle turned back. The drovers killed several of the cattle. Some of the travelers, thinking the cattle were wild, killed fifteen or twenty more. The cattle belonged to Musselshell ranchers, Collins, Freezer, Schnall, Gordon, Miller and the Coopers. A rustler, with the handle "Blue Dick, and a half dozen other names," was one of the culprits who the Musselshell men chased to the Canadian border to no avail.

The ranchers also had to contend with Indians killing cattle in the Musselshell. Crow Indians killed ten or twelve head belonging to the Coopers. The Husbandman blamed government officials rather than the friendly Crow Indians for the cattle losses.

Not long since, we published a statement from the Bozeman Times to the effect that the Crows around the agency were in a starving condition, and that parties of them were starting on a hunt to the Musselshell. Being afraid to venture into the buffalo country lest the Sioux should pounce upon them and being destitute, it is

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1 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 26, 1877.

2 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 15, 1877, quoting The Bozeman Times.

3 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 9, 1877.
quite natural that they should subsist upon the settler's cattle rather than seeing their squaws and papooses die of hunger and feel the gnawing of the same demon upon their own vitals. . . . The Indians, under the circumstances are not to blame, but the Government is in fault for placing in charge of their annuities men who will rob them of their means of existence.¹

In September, 1877, Sutherlin, and residents of the Smith River, Missouri and Musselshell valleys were witness to the retreat of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce and their ill-fated dash to freedom in Canada. On September 19, 1877, a small party of Nez Perce ran off a number of ranchers' horses near the Forks of the Musselshell. Citizen volunteers went with one officer and one troop soldier from Camp Baker in pursuit. Six companies of cavalry were also after the Nez Perce as the Indians went through the Judith Gap on their way to Canada. The main body of Indians did not approach the small settled area around Gauglersville and Gordon's Ranch.² Still, the fright was enough to make the settlers continue to demand a fort in the Musselshell.

In August of the same year, Richard Clendennin, a merchant at Carroll, moved his family to the Forks of the Musselshell. He built his buildings near the North Fork of the River. Directly across from it and to the west on the South Fork of the Musselshell was Frank Gaugler's Gauglersville. Clendennin and Gauglersville were nothing more than a store, hotel, stables and a garden in the back in 1877, but they combined

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 1, 1877. Editor William H. Sutherlin of Husbandman observed a tolerant and understanding attitude in regard to the Indians of Montana. Still, he like most newsmen of the Territory, called the Indians "Mr. Lo and family . . . ." Ibid., February 24, 1876. The term was taken from Alexander Pope's Essay on Man. Epistle I, Line 95. ""Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor's mind Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind; His soul proud Science never taught to stray Far as the solar walk or milky way.""

²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 27, 1877.
to make the Musselshell community near the Forks of the Musselshell.\textsuperscript{1} For instance, Clendennin assured the \textit{Husbandman} of his efforts to insure the reopening of Carroll the next spring. This news prompted interest by Editor Sutherlin and people in the Musselshell to get up their first petition for a post office at one of the two trading post towns.\textsuperscript{2}

Richard Clendennin was a hustling businessman. He immediately changed the name of his town to Martinsdale, in honor of Montana Territory's Delegate to the United States Congress, Martin Maginnis.\textsuperscript{3} He made a further bid for a postal route to the Musselshell in the spring of 1878 and was successful in his mission.\textsuperscript{4} Clendennin also made a proposition to the settlers in the Smith River and Musselshell valleys to furnish them with families supplies, direct from Chicago. His conditions were stated by the Husbandman:

"... ship whatever goods they may order, purchasing the same in Chicago at the lowest wholesale prices, and transporting them to Carroll at the best terms obtainable for 5 per cent, above cost, the order payable on delivery at Carroll or interest at the rate of one per cent per month to commence from that date."\textsuperscript{5}

By July, 1878, the \textit{Husbandman} was able to report, "There has been ten or twelve new ranches located on the Muscleshell within a short space of time. Some farming, some dairying, some for beef, and some for wool-growing. We know of four or five taken for wool-growing."\textsuperscript{6}

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\textsuperscript{1}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, August 23, 1877.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, November 15, 1877.
\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Meagher County News}, December 30, 1953.
\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, May 9, 1878.
\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, March 21, 1878.
\textsuperscript{6}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, July 18, 1878.
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The sheep men were led into the Musselshell by William A. and John M. Smith. He located several miles south of Martinsdale and Gauglersville. He arrived sometime prior to December, 1877, and was quickly followed by a number of other sheep raisers.¹ J. H. Severance, located on the Smith River, moved his sheep operation to the high benchland just west of the Judith Gap. His ranch was on the route of the Carroll Road.² A. McGregor and a Clifford also located on the high benchland between Martinsdale and Gauglersville.³ I. N. Godfrey and C. W. Cook settled on the South Fork of the Musselshell.⁴ Ed Sayre began his sheep ranch in the Musselshell by organizing a wool growers stock company. He purchased 2,000 sheep to begin his operation two miles east of the ruins of Fort Howie.⁵ A sheepman came into the Musselshell Valley in such rapid order that by April, 1878, the Husbandman told of Frank Gaugler's getting up of a wool train to carry the clips to Carroll on the Missouri during that summer.⁷

The sheepmen went into business with a zeal. Within six months of coming into the Musselshell, J. H. Severance "erected a dwelling, a large sheep shed and corral, a lambing shed, and a number of other

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 13, 1877.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 18, 1878, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 6, 1879.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 18 1878.
⁴Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 11, 1878.
⁵Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 10, 1878, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 28, 1878
⁶Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 7, 1878.
⁷Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 18, 1878.
important improvements. He is highly pleased with husbandry. His loss
will not exceed three per cent." A. McGregor completed his sheep sheds,
making them 150 feet long, with wings 140 feet long and 40 feet deep and
covered with hay. Henry Klein of Helena sold a number of sheep to men
in the Musselshell in 1878. R. H. Clendennin, the Martinsdale merchant,
purchased 1,130 head. J. H. Severance, bought 1,500 head and took out
1,000 more on shares with Klein. Each purchaser paid $3.25 a head for
the sheep, all ewes. Captain Clifford of Camp Baker also bought 600
head, letting them out tax on shares to Severance. The Ed Sayre wool
growing stock company proved to be an immediate paying enterprise. A
one hundred dollar stock share paid a forty-six dollar dividend to
each investor during the very first year of operation.

In 1875, the Husbandman claimed Meagher County had a total of
20,000 head, insuring a revenue of at least $20,000 for the fleece
alone. Sutherlin decided, "At this rate, the wool product of the
county will, in the course of a few years, bring into our midst a greater
revenue than that at present received from the mines." Four years
later, the Husbandman was able to editorialize:

The sheep and cattle men of Meagher county get along
harmoniously. There are 60,000 head of sheep and 15,000
cattle in Smith river valley, and yet we hear of no
disturbance . . . . Musselshell cattle growers, though
the prior settlers by ten years, do not offer resistance

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 6, 1879.
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 9, 1879.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 17, 1878.
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 16, 1879.
5Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 16, 1875.
to sheep, but look upon their coming as an inevitable
consequence of progress. Many of them say that they had as
soon be crowded by sheep as cattle, and we very much
regret that the same feeling does not prevail in the
Gallatin.

The early sheep and cattlemen in the Musselshell valley came
from a number of backgrounds. William Gordon, the pioneer settler, was
a native of Ireland and spent his early life in Maryland. He was a miner
before becoming a stockman. The pioneer wool growers in the Mussel-
shell were William A. and John M. Smith. They were Ohio natives,
coming to Montana as miners. The two brothers started with 900 sheep in
1875 and in twenty-two years ran 20,000 head. A Norwegian, Martin T.
Grande, came to the Musselshell with the Smiths. He immediately located
his own ranch. J. E. Hall was an Ohio school teacher. He was mining
at Alder Gulch in 1864 and came to the Musselshell in 1878. Hall home-
steaded 160 acres of land, ran a sawmill and the Half-Way House between
Copperopolis and Martinsdale. Ed Sayre, the organizer of the joint stock
sheep company, was from New Jersey. He came to Montana as a miner.
George Lyons was a Massachusetts-reared Irishman. He prospected at Last
Chance Gulch and Nelson Gulch for ten years, settling in the Musselshell
in 1876. Lyons located 320 acres under homestead and pre-emption and
80 acres under the Timber Act. George R. (Two Dot) Wilson came to
Montana in 1864 from Elmira, New York. He made a living hauling wood

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 23, 1879.
2Great Falls Tribune, September 8, 1935, and Leeson, 1286.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 18, 1897.
4Leeson, 1286. 5Ibid.
6Ibid., p. 1291. 7Ibid., p. 1288.
at Virginia City, gained enough capital to buy an interest in a claim which paid off, and promptly invested in cattle. Wilson moved into the Musselshell in 1877. His peculiar brand of two dots earned him his famous nickname.1

A number of the Musselshell pioneers were from Missouri, including Perry, John and Sanford Moore, J. H. Freeser, Al Van Camp and the Shoemakers. They were among the troops of Jeff Davis who had tried to run to the Mexican border to carry on the confederate cause.2 The Musselshell also had an influx of "State-of-Mainers." The Godfrey Brothers, Oscar G. Smart, Melzer N. Stevens and Ralph Berry, were from Maine. They tended to be sheep raisers.3

In 1878 the Musselshell had only three women. They were Mrs. George Wilson, the wife of a rancher; Mrs. Richard Clendennin, whose husband was the Martinsdale businessman, and Mrs. J. E. Hall. Her husband had the Half-Way House between White Sulphur Springs and Martinsdale.4

Increased settlement resulted in a growth of Brewer's Springs. James Brewer sold his property to H. B. Brainard in the mid-seventies. In 1876, after continued pleading by settlers in the Smith River and Musselshell, the post office department established local service. Since the property changed hands the post office department ordered the name

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 31, 1939.
2John and Perry Moore, "Notes . . .," and The Meagher Republican, November 2, 1900.
3Ibid.
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 31, 1878.
changed to White Sulphur Springs. The townsite of White Sulphur Springs was located in August, 1878. Jonas Higgins was the first man to build in the town. The Husbandman forecasted great things for White Sulphur Springs. "The place is so situated as to command the trade of a large section of country. A town up here would occupy the same position to Smith River and the Muscleshell that Bozeman does to the Gallatin and Yellowstone valleys."  

As early as January, 1879, the Husbandman called for the movement of the county seat from Diamond City "to a more central location in the county." The Sutherlin Brothers had White Sulphur Springs in mind as the best replacement since the Musselshell and Judith Basin were gaining population to the point that they "will exceed that of the Missouri valley within the next eighteen months." The main contention of the Husbandman, however, was the rapid decline of Diamond City as a mining center.

There can no longer by any hope for Diamond, for Diamond has been dying by inches for years and still continues to grow worse. The Springs are coming to the front. Two stores do more there than three in Diamond . . . . Meagher County is too large, possessed of too many resources, too much wealth, to be allowed to pay tribute to her sister counties, but it will continue to do so unless we awake from our lethargy and make an effort to retain the trade in our midst.  

Recent happenings in the valleys bore this fact out. Diamond City

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 21, 1876.  
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 22, 1876.  
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 16, 1879.  
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 6, 1879.  
5Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 1, 1879.
merchants were selling out their wares. Several moved their stores to White Sulphur Springs. Still others left the county. But the Sutherlins saw yet another potential candidate for county seat honors other than White Sulphur Springs. The Sutherlins noted the rapid growth of the Musselshell and concluded:

... the day will come when the people of the Springs will regret their inaction now, and the people of the Missouri valley their short-sightedness, for with the military post on the Musselshell, Martinsdale may claim prestige over any other point in the county, and in less than two years make effort for the county seat, with a population sufficient to back its claims.

The Sutherlins wanted the county seat removed to White Sulphur Springs. They called for a vote for the Springs when the special election was to be held on the first Monday in May, 1879. Their final plea was encompassing, "Let every man study the question as if the destiny of nations depended upon it, and go to the polls and vote accordingly to the dictates of his better judgment."

As the results of the special election were made known, the totals showed no votes cast from any point outside of Diamond City. The old mining camp was looking out for itself. Diamond City remained the county seat by the popular mandate of no other voters than its own. The Sutherlins, whose newspaper was still in Diamond City, were very displeased. The livestock interests in the Smith River and Musselshell were described as indifferent and "follow pastoral pursuits almost entirely and they don't want the country settled up. They don't want any neighbors

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 20, 1879.

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 1, 1879.

3Ibid.
They want a free, boundless prairie,"¹

In November, 1880, however, White Sulphur Springs became the county seat of Meagher County. Diamond received 357 votes to the Springs' 592 votes. The Musselshell gave White Sulphur Springs 57 votes to the former mining camp's 16 votes. The Husbandman followed the move of the county seat into the Smith River Valley.² It, too, took up new residence at the Springs.

The increasing settlement of the Musselshell and Judith Basin brought a continuing battle by the settlers for the establishment of a military post somewhere in this vast east territory. General Nelson Miles recommended the post at or near the mouth of the Musselshell in December, 1877.³ The Husbandman agreed with this location, pointing to the economic necessity of protecting settlers and the Carroll Road.

There will be 200,000 pounds of wool clipped in this county this spring, which would go to Carroll, the nearest shipping point, if it was safe, otherwise it will necessarily be freighted to Benton, which will increase the distance to Boston from 200 to 300 miles. We certainly think our wool interests are entitled to as much consideration from the general government as was accorded to the Diamond R transportation company two years ago, when Camp Lewis was established. A large military post on the Musselshell, near its mouth, would afford ample protection to the vast region lying along the base of the mountains between the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.⁴

In October, 1878, the Husbandman made another hopeful prediction of a post within a year, because of the increasing population within the Musselshell Valley.⁵ The next fall, the editors could do no more than

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 8, 1879.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 11, 1880.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 28, 1878. ⁴Ibid.
⁵Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 3, 1878.
report an increase in raids by the Sioux Indians in the Judith, Musselshell and Yellowstone valleys. The establishment of Fort Assiniboine in the north-central area of the territory was viewed as "fallacious reasoning" as a means of protecting the Judith Basin and Musselshell. The Husbandman editorialized on the necessity of a post closer to these two valleys.

The settlements of the Musselshell and Judith are rapidly pressing further out, men or families are settling in, and the necessity of some sort of security is hourly increasing. Will the authorities in Washington hear our entreaties in behalf of these people or will they turn a deaf ear as in the past, and, in act, if not in word, say to these industrious farmers, who are purchasing the government lands and trying to build up homes and bring a wild region under the yoke of husbandry, fight your own battles.

In the same issue the Husbandman reported a government order for curtailment of all improvements on Fort Logan, the former Camp Baker. The Sutherlins felt this was a first step in the removal of the post to the Musselshell. Optimistic as ever, the two editors told their readers that the new post in the Musselshell would be of regimental size.

Fort Logan received its name from Captain William Logan, an honored hero of the Battle of the Little Big Hole against Chief Joseph and the retreating Nez Perce. Recommendations were made for its removal from the Smith River to the Musselshell countless times during the 1870's, by the Sutherlins, many settlers and military leaders. In simplest terms, its location was at least one valley away from the potential Indian difficulties just to the east.

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 30, 1879.

2Ibid.

3Burlingame, 2:3.
The U. S. House of Representatives finally passed a measure appropriating $50,000 for the construction of a new post, using much material from Fort Logan as could be utilized. H. R. No. 5894 was passed with the endorsements of General Alfred H. Terry and General William T. Sherman. In the Senate, the bill passed "after a spirited discussion" with a $10,000 appropriation cut.

General Thomas H. Ruger promptly arrived on the scene to look for a suitable location. Careless Creek, Flat Willow Creek, McDonald's Creek and Big Spring Creek were mentioned as sites. On August 5, 1880, Fort Maginnis was established on Ford's Creek on the southeast slope of the Judith Mountains. The location was about sixty miles from the entrance to the Musselshell, the Judith Gap. The Husbandman was elated.

There will be a steady stream of settlers into the Musselshell and Judith country from now until cold weather sets in. The location of a company of soldiers at the site of the new post makes the country safe and will furnish employment for many, while all are aware that now is the golden opportunity to possess a choice home, and that any other year there will be much less to choose from.

The Musselshell Valley did not settle up quite as rapidly as the Sutherlins prophesized, but the establishment of Fort Maginnis did end the problems with Indians throughout the Musselshell and Judith Basin. Fort Maginnis had more than outlived its usefulness by the time it was abandoned in 1890. Other military posts on the eastern frontier of Montana went to the same end. Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, was abandoned in 1886 and Fort Shaw in 1891. After 1891, four major

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 15, 1880.
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 20, 1880, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 24, 1880.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 9, 1880.
posts guarded the state, Missoula, Assiniboine, Keogh and Custer. The Musselshell forget about anything more than an occasional Indian hunting party or a few stolen cows after 1880. Instead, stockmen occupied their time with the hayday of the cattle and sheep business, mail routes started, part of the Musselshell was surveyed and settlements began to spring up.

In 1879, a mail route was inaugurated between White Sulphur Springs and Martinsdale. It was soon extended to Lewistown, passing near the sheep ranches of A. McGregor and Jacob and Al Severance, and through the Judith Gap. Several stage stops were built along the now-shortened Carroll Road. Alfred J. Stephens built a hotel and stables near the Musselshell Valley entrance to the Judith Gap. He started groundwork in the early summer of 1880. By June 24, of that year, the *Husbandman* reported:

> ... His location is a beautiful one ... Being just halfway between the Musselshell and the Judith (30 miles to either Martinsdale or Lewistown), this is a good stand for the hotel business. The buildings being erected are substantial and commodious, and will be conveniently arranged. Already Mr. Stephens accommodates many travelers with good meals and lodging room.²

Stephens named his stage stop Oka. A post office was established at the location almost before the buildings were started. Mrs. J. E. Severance, the sheepman's wife, was postmistress.³ Business immediately boomed.

The Yogo Mines just to the north in the Judith Basin enjoyed a considerable rush in 1880. Mail routes and stage routes soon crossed and criss-crossed each other. One mail route went from Martinsdale to Couslon (later Billings) and Fort Custer. Another went from Miles City

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¹Burlingame, 261.

²*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, June 24, 1880. ³Ibid.

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to Fort Benton and yet another from Martinsdale to Fort Benton, Fort Maginnis, Wilder, Carroll and the Flat Willow.\(^1\) With this sudden rush of activity through and around the Judith Gap, Ubet came into being.

In 1879, A. R. Barrows decided to build a sawmill near the Judith Gap. His intention was to furnish lumber for the many new settlers to the Judith Basin and the northern Musselshell Valley. At the same time, Barrows had an opportunity to note the business of Alfred Stephens' Oka. He brought his wife and family from Martinsdale where Mrs. Barrows had been running the hotel. John Barrows, one of the sons, wrote of the beginning of the family's stage stop.

... and I rode it (his new saddle) to our new home in Judith Gap, which was in process of construction. The location finally decided upon was about half a mile down the valley from the original claim cabin which my father had put up in '79. The place was an open, grassy, intermountain valley, the Belt Mountains being two miles to the eastward. In the meadow to the south of the location, there was a large spring of good water . . . . The new home as well planned and eventually well built. The first building constructed was the ice-house, and in rapid succession the barn, the saloon, and the hotel were put up.\(^2\)

The stage journeys were so common among the early settlers that a typical trip on the Billings and Fort Benton stage is illustrative of the traveling of the pioneers of Central Montana. Again, John Barrows writes of Ubet, this time in 1886.

In the crisp air of early morning the four-horse Concord stage reaches a point where the little settlement can be seen, less than half a mile away. The road enters the place from the east.

\(^{1}\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 11, 1879, Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 20, 1880, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 27, 1880, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 21, 1881.

At the left there are the stage stables, and just beyond them the capacious barn, both being substantial frome buildings. At the right, at some distance from the road, is the blacksmith shop. About opposite the stage stable on the north side of what might be called Main Street, is the post office, stage and express office, both in a building originally intended for a store. Beyond it is the saloon, next to that the ice house, and last, diagonally opposite the barn, is the Ubet Hotel. The mail sacks are thrown out, the express matter for the local office or for transfer to other lines is unloaded, the male passengers go to the saloon, which under our management was the local club, the stage driver turns over his horses to the stock-tender and, with the dust of travel removed, almost everybody in the hamlet proceeds to the hotel dining room . . . . the Ubet dining room was the very heart of Ubet, the prime source of its profit and its title to fame. . . . (and) in those days of which I write, it was so very exceptional, that travelers arranged their schedules so that they might eat at Ubet.\footnote{Barrows, 254-255.}

The unusual name Ubet came from the exclamation of Barrows' father when he was asked if he desired a post office at the stage stop. Assurances were given for a post office and being asked for a name for the post office, Barrows was said to have made the quick reply, "Ubet." John Barrows described the name as having "the advantage of being unique and short; it had the disadvantage of being undignified, but it served."\footnote{Barrows, 135.}

Schools and churches were uncommon to the frontier as such, but their services were rendered, however difficult. Children often went to three and four-month schools which were held at one end of the valley and then moved further on for another short session. The teachers were often housewives or young, unmarried women. J. E. Hall, proprietor of the Half-Way House near Martinsdale, conducted a school for a number of years. One of the Sutherlin daughters was also a school teacher. She, like many others, taught several years, then married and settled down to raise a family. One news item described the school situation in the
Musselshell in 1886. "The district school at Martinsdale has discontinued. A school, however, is being taught at Hall's ranch, which is in the same district, but too far away to accommodate part of the children."¹ In 1882, Meagher County had a total of thirteen teachers, nine log school houses and paid an average of $9.29 for the education of each student.² Churches were non-existent in the small communities of the Musselshell until the mining camp of Castle came into its own in the mid-1880's. Missionaries or circuit riders made visits to each community at one time or another during the year. In the Judith Basin, Musselshell and the Smith River, the most famous traveling reverend was the Methodist, "Brother Van," Reverend W. W. Van Orsdel. The Husbandman wrote of one of his trips.

Rev. W. W. Van Orsdel has just made a circuit of the Musselshell and Judith valleys, returning via Barker and Montana districts. He is much pleased with his reception and the prospects in this new field of labor. He preached here (White Sulphur Springs) last Sunday and will hold forth again Sunday next, assisted by Rev. M. J. Hall, who is expected to arrive this week.³ Barrows described a church service held at Ubert.

In those days the people of eastern Montana would have been characterized as irreligious, but whenever we were visited by an itinerant missionary, we gave him something more than a respectful hearing. One evening the stage from the west brought beloved Bishop Brewer, en route for Lewistown, and that night he conducted services in our parlor. There were ten or twelve men in the saloon, a serious poker game was in progress and billiard balls were clicking, but when the hour of divine service came, cues were put up, the poker players left their cards and chips on the table, we all trooped up to the hotel, after locking the saloon doors.⁴

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 21, 1886.
²Leeson, 806.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 14, 1882.
⁴Barrows, 257.
The 1880 census of the Musselshell Valley points to the domination of the livestock industry and the still very much evident frontier. The population included twenty-two from Maine, six from Illinois, five from Wisconsin, eleven from Pennsylvania, nine from Missouri, seven from New York, eight from Canada and the rest of the total 127 people from a scattering of states and foreign countries. There were eight families, ten married women and twenty-one children. The various occupations included four cattlemen and twelve sheepmen. Thirty-four were listed as laborers, eleven keeping house, nine tending sheep, three carpenters, cooks and lumbermen, two farmers, retail grocers and mail carriers, and one each a school teacher, hotel man, ox driver, teamster, trapper, hunter, retired probate judge, druggist, servant, butcher, reporter and miller.

Gaugler's Store was the polling place for the first election held in the Musselshell. Twenty-one votes were cast in that election of 1878. At the Meagher County Democratic Convention, the Musselshell was not represented since a delegate did not attend. The Republican Convention had one of the twenty total county delegates. By 1882, the Musselshell had thirteen voters at Merino in the center of the valley, twenty-two at Oka, sixty-seven at Martinsdale, sixteen at Ubet and twelve at Big Elk. Republicans carried almost every office. This one-party ballot was the general rule of the area throughout the rest

1Montana, 1880 Census, (Original), n.p.
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 12, 1878.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 21, 1878.
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 19, 1878.
of the century. Martinsdale was the only precinct which occasionally deviated from this rule. In the time up to the turn of the century the major issue was the location of the permanent state capital. In the three elections which included the question of locating the capital, Helena won each time by a landslide vote. The silver question did not attract voters in the Musselshell. By the time the issue was a strong one, the mining activity in the Musselshell had completely died out.

Populism was another issue which did not sway the political thinking of the ranching elements in the Musselshell. Populist candidates didn't run in the area, nor was there a delegation sent to the Montana Populist Convention at Boulder. By 1896 the Musselshell had just over two hundred total voters. This was only about one-tenth of the county vote. The reason for this sparse population and the lack of local political interest was a result of the dominant sheep and cattle industries.

The Musselshell was stock country, first, foremost and last.

The period from 1880 to 1886 was one marked by a tremendous increase of stock and capital investment in the range business. Cattle and sheep crowded the Musselshell valley as never before. The first reason for the increase in the stock business was the result of the Musselshell's convient location to the Carroll Road and the eastern military outposts.

In 1878 the Husbandman's editors wrote:

The fact that the cattle growers of the Musselshell valley are able to realize better prices for their beef cattle than those of any other part of the country--which is due to their convenience to Carroll, an excellent shipping point--is attracting the attention of the stock growers of Beaverhead and Madison counties, and since not ½ of the Musselshell region is yet occupied, we may expect a

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 16, 1882, Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 24, 1892, Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 15, 1894, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 12, 1896.
number of herds from the above mentioned counties to be moved to this section, and several prominent stock men of those counties intend prospecting this region the coming fall for locations.¹

On the same page The Bismarck Tribune hinted at the possibilities of Montana becoming "a great stock centre from which vast herds of cattle would be distributed" to the east.² The Musselshell cattlemen were able to do very well as a supplier for the Carroll Road buyers and points east. In 1877 they were offered twenty five dollars per head of the range. A year later the cattlemen were receiving twenty-seven dollars and better for their cattle at Carroll.³

Sheep owners were also increasing their herds to meet the demands of Boston wool markets. Burt and Klein shipped in 12,000 head of sheep from Red Bluff, California, in 1878.⁴ The Husbandman reported 17,500 head of sheep driven in from California and Utah during the fall of 1878, with another 3,200 enroute.⁵ Ralph Berry, a "State-of-Mainer," located on his ranch in the lower Musselshell in the fall of 1880. He drove his initial investment of 4,500 sheep from southern Utah.⁶ A ranchman named Bryan brought in 11,000 sheep from California at the same time.⁷ W. A. Hedges and P. I. Moule located in the Careless Creek area forty miles east of Martinsdale and east of the Judith Gap. This area was

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 8, 1878.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, quoting The Bismarck, North Dakota Tribune.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 16, 1878, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 27, 1878.
⁴Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 10, 1878.
⁵Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 31, 1878.
⁶Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 23, 1880.
⁷Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 4, 1880.
on the edge of eastern civilization at the time. To the east were the remaining herds of buffalo which were rapidly being depleted by ranchers, trappers and hunters. The Husbandman told of the buffalo in the Musselshell in 1880.

The herd-men and sports-men of the Musselshell have had plenty of sport this fall hunting buffalo. The lower portions of the valley has been with this species of the bovine race all this season. Last week several thousand head made their appearance on the upper valley, a number within the vicinity of Martinsdale, and some as far up as old Fort Howie, 25 miles from this place (White Sulphur Springs). Quite a number were killed and some of the ranchmen got a winter's supply of meat. Several parties passed thro' here well supplied.¹

Thus by 1880, newspapers were filled with mentions of the numbers of settlers moving into the Musselshell. After one 1880 journey through the area, an observer wrote: "The Musselshell valley is settling rapidly. Ranchers are being strung along down the river as close as they can conveniently for a distance of 50 miles. Another year the settlement will extend a hundred miles below Martinsdale."²

The settlers in the area were stockgrowers. Sheepmen and cattle ranchers located ranches adjoining each other, though the sheepmen tended to maintain their herds on the huge bench north of the Musselshell River. The cattle range necessarily took in considerably more land for grazing purposes. Because of the joint usage of land, the local cattle and sheepmen co-operated in the handling of some of their mutual operation. This was the case in the use of common corrals, in hunting wolves and coyotes, cattle thieves, in group protection against the small, roving bands of Indians and the roundups. The Musselshell

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 4, 1880.

²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 29, 1880.
ranchers considered themselves partners within their own local association. The range, being so important, was of the highest priority to the association, and by it, the Musselshell cattlemen endeavored to control the entire valley. The associations became distinctive features of every valley. Newspaper items and word of mouth were the two main ways of letting outsiders know where one association's range started and stopped. The Musselshell's was a large one and the various owners guarded it as their own. Notices very often appeared in the papers. The Husbandman warned neighboring ranchers and potential settlers of the Musselshell range and to whom it belonged in 1883.

At a meeting of the stockmen, owners of stock on the Musselshell, said range being defined as follows: to wit, Beginning at the mouth of Box Elder Creek, on the Musselshell River, thence up the Box Elder and Flat Willow to the head of same, thence westerly along the divide to Judith Gap, thence westerly along the divide to Copperopolis, thence southerly along the divide to the divide between Fish Creek and Sweetgrass Creek, thence easterly along the divide between the waters of the Yellowstone and Musselshell rivers to a point opposite or south of the mouth of Box Elder Creek, thence north to Box Elder Creek. We, the undersigned stock growers of the above described range hereby give notice that we positively decline allowing any outside party, or any party's herds upon the range, the use of our corrals not will they be permitted to join in any roundup on said range from and after this date.¹

The roundups were conducted in the spring for branding and in the fall for shipment. The Musselshell Association took in the entire valley, the upper Musselshell, and to the east, the Flatwillow country. Roundups conducted by the association were usually subdivided into two groups covering these two regions. Additional riders were sent to the neighboring roundups, the Judith, the Moccassin and those conducted

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 19, 1883. This area generally included all of the area within the Musselshell Valley, bounded by the Crazy, Castle, Little Belt and Snowy mountains on the north and west to the Yellowstone River to the south and the Big Bend of the Musselshell to the east. Cattle roamed over an area up to seventy-five miles wide and one hundred and fifty long.
on the Yellowstone. J. H. Freeser was the captain of the early Musselshell roundups. He was in charge of the overall operation and designated the workings of the gathered cowboys. In 1878, the first large roundup in the Musselshell, Freeser had sixty men and about 300 head of horses.\(^1\)

Cattle were allowed to graze throughout the Musselshell Valley. Thus, to handle the roundups, the cattlemen had to follow a pattern of fanning out in all directions from one area, gather cattle, move them to a designated location and carrals, then start the same process the following day until the entire range was covered. The area covered and problems which characterized by the roundup in 1880 was indicative of the Musselshell roundup and its work.

The Musselshell roundup reorganized last week, J. H. Freeser, the ruling spirit, who has so long governed the boys, was prevailed upon to accept the position again. Mr. Miller was selected as his assistant. The party at the time our informant left numbered about 75 men and 400 horses. They crossed to the south side of the river (Musselshell) and united with the round-up from the Yellowstone a few days since in the vicinity of American Fork, and started down the river to pay their respects to camp of fifty lodges of Bloods and Piegan Indians somewhere in that region, and demand the return of the horse stolen from the Yellowstone this spring, which had been seen in their camp, and to also ask them to desist from killing cattle.\(^2\)

The Husbandman referred to the Musselshell roundup as "the largest round-up in Montana." In 1884 the roundup had eighteen night herders, had $1,700 in the treasury and sold $6,000 worth of mavericks in two months. The planned steer shipment was for between 2,500 and 3,000 head of cattle, bringing the roundup over $100,000. The roundup had nine bands of cattlemen. Expenses paid out included $1,900 for horse herders; $800 for beef; $1,800 for corrals; $900 for cattle inspections

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\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 6, 1879.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 27, 1880.
and Captain J. H. Freeser was paid $300 at a rate of $5 a day for handling the operation.¹

The Musselshell enjoyed a peak livestock period during the early and mid 1880's. However, unlike the Yellowstone, Judith Basin, Lower Musselshell and Flatwillow regions, most of the ranchers in the upper Musselshell drainage were the same early settlers who had come into the area within the past five and ten years. M. A. Leeson's History of Montana, published in 1885, listed the main cattlemen of the area. They included Schmall, McGaric & Johnson, F. M. Dennis, George W. Wilson, Collins & Klein, J. H. Freeser, D. Blackear, the Moore Brothers, William Gordon and M. J. Settle.² Further downriver were the Montana Cattle Company and the Northwestern Cattle Company. The N-F Ranch, located east of later Roundup, was the nearest operation ran by foreign capital, in that case, English money. To the north was the D-H-S and the Judith Cattle Company.³ The Mineral Argus of January 7, 1885, reported the extent of these ranches and others included in their roundups. The Flatwillow Roundup ran 46,800 head of cattle. The Cone Butte and Mocassion Roundup had 20,300 cattle and the Judith Roundup brought in 25,000 head. The Lower Musselshell River Roundup, with the Montana Cattle Company controlling 20,000 head itself, had a roundup of 32,200

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 24, 1884.
²Leeson, 595.
³Toole, 142-144, and personal interview with Dave Lake, Harlowton, Montana, December 21, 1965. Lake rode with the John T. Murphy's Montana Cattle Company. It was better-known as the "79" Ranch, ran both sheep and cattle, and carried on profitable until 1910. In later years, the main ranch was located in the Big Coulee, twenty miles south and east of Harlowton.
cattle.\(^1\) Part of the upper Musselshell roundup extended into the normal range area of the Lower Musselshell. Other cattle grazing areas. Thus, the size of the herds of ranchers from upper Musselshell fluctuated according to the roundup and area covered by the riders. Editor R. N. Sutherlin, of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, rode on several of the roundups conducted by ranchers from the upper Musselshell. Whether approximate or not, his figures attest to the size of the cattle herds in the short period of settlement in the headwater region of the Musselshell. Sutherlin wrote of his first experience on a Musselshell roundup in 1875. At that time, Sutherlin estimated "only one outfit of ten or fifteen men and represented less than five thousand cattle and rode a range of less than fifty miles in extent."\(^2\) Of the 1884 roundup by ranchers from the upper Musselshell, the editor took part in a major business enterprise.

... Now it has grown to a mammoth concern composed of about 100 men, 85 riders, 1,000 saddle horses and nearly a dozen tents, and represented over 100,000 head of cattle. Yet this did not embrace it all as they had sent twenty-five men to the Yellowstone, some to the Judith, and some to the Flat Willow round-ups. The range traversed is over 150 miles in length, extending from the head of the valley to the big bend of the Musselshell, and is from 40 to 70 miles in width.\(^3\)

Most of the cattle brought into the Musselshell came from one of two directions. From the west, the trail extended from the Gallatin to the South Fork and Bozeman Fork of the Musselshell River, crossing the low point between the Castle and Crazy mountains. From the south and east, the trail followed from a point near later Roundup from the Coulson

\(^1\)The Mineral Argus, January 7, 1885.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 19, 1884. \(^3\)Ibid.
Area. Another south and east route was from Big Timber and Melville.\textsuperscript{1} Cattlemen often worked and rode together to bring their herds into the area, and like the necessary organization for the roundups, cattlemen, as well as sheepmen, found associations to be of the utmost importance. Unhappily, they never worked as well as many people wanted.

The \textit{Husbandman}, as the voice of agriculture and stock raising in Montana, often expressed its opinion on Musselshell associations of cattlemen and sheepmen. Ranchmen tended to be too independent. Thus typical comments by the \textit{Husbandman} was one like the following:

Wouldn't it be a good plan for the Neagher County Wool-growers' Association to hold a meeting. It has been a long while since they came together, and a meeting now would be advantageous. We move that the president issue a call for a meeting. Who will second it?\textsuperscript{2}

Because of this lack of unity, pleas by the \textit{Husbandman} and the various ranchers who took an active interest usually went unheeded. For instance, in 1881, the roundup called for one bull to every six calves branded by each individual stockman. The ordinance was passed by the roundup captain, J. H. Freeser, and went unheeded.\textsuperscript{3} There was one area, however, where stockmen all rode together. That was cattle rustling. The problem was a never-ending one and demanded quick action.

Cattle stealing was at its height in 1884. James Fergus, from the eastern area of Meagher County, wrote a long letter to the \textit{Husbandman}. He argued that the military at Fort Maginnis and local organized government had failed to check the problem of cattle rustling.

\textsuperscript{1}Interview with Dave Lake, Harlowton, Montana, December 21, 1965.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, January 6, 1887.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, June 2, 1881.
decided: "We must either gather up what stock we have left and leave the
country or gather up these desperadoes and put them where they will kill
and steal no more; there is no alternative, and we choose the latter.
It is now simply a state of war."\(^1\)

The war against rustling was carried on very effectively. The
Husbandman reported the one area where organizations were workable
units and actions quickly carried out.

Nec-tie (sic) parties are becoming very fashionable in eastern
Meagher county. Horse thieves are usually the most conspicuous
participants. The farmers, stock growers and cowboys of the Judith
and Musselshell are having some rare enjoyment at these parties
nowadays. There is certainly something very fascinating about
horse stealing and having the people turn out en masse and show so
much respect to the thieves. It is an "elevating" pursuit to say
the least.\(^2\)

The cattle industry was not the only stock business enjoying a
large and rapid expansion. Sheepmen increased the size of their herds
and home ranches in the same proportion. Beef was selling for $27.50
to $30 in the 1880's.\(^3\) Wool, sold at the Big Timber outlet on the
Northern Pacific Railroad after its completion in 1882, brought 19 and
20 cents a pound from Boston buyers by 1884.\(^4\) Two years later, the
price was 27 cents, more than justifying the forty-mile or more drive
to a railroad.\(^5\) Charles Severance sold 2,000 sheep in one transaction.\(^6\)

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 21, 1884.
\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 31, 1884.
\(^3\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 11, 1881.
\(^4\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 17, 1884.
\(^5\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 2, 1886.
\(^6\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 18, 1886.
The Smith Brothers had a 125,000-pound clip in 1886.\(^1\) The Elk Valley Sheep Company increased its stock from $25,000 to $50,000 within five years of its organization.\(^2\) In 1881, Meagher County had 97,426 sheep out of the entire Montana Territory total of 260,402 sheep.\(^3\) Six years later, Severance ran 24,000 sheep himself. The Smith Brothers and Alfred Stevens, P. I. Moule and W. A. Hedges nearly doubled his total.\(^4\) Severance also had six log and frame buildings and three barns.\(^5\) The Musselshell Valley even had the distinction of having the "sheep queen of the Rocky Mountains," Miss Jennie Corson. Miss Corson was a former newspaper woman from the East. She came West, fell in love with the sheep business and became a most distinctive feature of the entire livestock business.\(^6\) The livestock business had had plenty of room for expansion during the late 1870's and early 1880's. With the entire eastern plains offering an unlimited grass land, open, unfenced prairie, and plenty of water, the Musselshell Valley was an ideal stock range. In the beginning there were only buffalo. By 1880 they were pushed out of the valley. Cattle and sheep men saw every reason to increase the size of their herds and expand their ranches. Raising hay and overcrowded ranges were meaningless expressions to stockmen. Instead they ever-extended their investments and increased their herds. But as the

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 22, 1886.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 5, 1886.

\(^3\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 25, 1882.

\(^4\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 13, 1884, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 8, 1887.

\(^5\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 7, 1883.

\(^6\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 19, 1884.
stakes rose higher, the risks became greater.

The winter of 1880-81 had been a long, cold one. One storm accounted for 3,000 dead cattle.\(^1\) The *Husbandman* estimated a total 7% loss in stock in the Musselshell during the winter. Its estimate for the whole Montana Territory was 5%.\(^2\) Stockmen did not worry much about the losses. A small percentage such as 5 or 7% was a slight risk. The lack of organization and lackadaisical attitude of stockmen was well shown by the complete failure of a half-hearted effort to organize a patrol to keep weak cattle out of boggy places. The *Husbandman* reasoned that considerable stock would have been saved, but no one cared.\(^3\) They cared later on.

By 1884, the Moore Brothers were raising grain for their horses and numerous ranchers and small gardens and harvested several acres of hay.\(^4\) That was the entire farming practice in the Musselshell Valley. The summer of 1886 was very dry. One stockman rode in from the roundup to tell the *Husbandman* editors that saddle stock was in bad condition and many fillies were in such poor shape that they could not be worked. The rancher said the range was dryer than ever before.\(^5\) The Smith River was reported as carrying less water than had been the case since the first settlement. Lower Musselshell area people sent word to the *Husbandman* that their area had suffered a drought.\(^6\)

\(^1\text{Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 15, 1880.}\)
\(^2\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^3\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^4\text{Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 7, 1884, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 18, 1884.}\)
\(^5\text{Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 29, 1886.}\)
\(^6\text{Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 12, 1886.}\)
The first news concerning the winter of 1886-87 was reported in January, 1887. A traveler from Big Timber to White Sulphur Springs said he saw "at least one thousand dead sheep upon the prairie." The Bozeman Chronicle was quoted by the Husbandman as saying, "Cattle on the range are weathering the storms so far with remarkable success. It is the month of March which will test their endurance." February told the tale.

Some stockmen called the winter "an average Montana winter." But one Martinsdale resident told the Husbandman that the Musselshell situation was a very uncomfortable one. "Stockmen generally are very reticent and sheepmen likewise keep their business to themselves." One rancher lost 1,500 sheep in one storm. Another lost 700 in the blizzard and yet another lost 500 in one snow slide. By April, the results were better known. Conservative losses varied from 20% to 25% of the total stock in the Musselshell Valley. The hayday of the open range, overcrowding and fence prairies came to an abrupt halt. George R. Wilson, the man known as "Twodot" Wilson, summed up the future of the entire stock business when he told the Husbandman a view that

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1 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, January 27, 1887.
2 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 3, 1887.
3 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, quoting The Bozeman Chronicle.
4 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 24, 1887.
5 Ibid.
6 Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 2, 1887.
the editors had long advocated. "The day is not far distant when cattle
men will have to prepare hay and winter pasture."¹ The summer round-
up in 1887 proved to him that his prophecy of the future was a correct
one. The early roundup that summer was not held. Calf branding and
beef gathering were both done in the fall of 1887, simply because the
roundup was so small.²

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 23, 1886.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 9, 1887.
CHAPTER II

CASTLE, AND THE "JAWBONE," RAILROAD

The Musselshell belonged exclusively to the sheep and cattle raisers and the few stage lines during its early years. It took a mining discovery to change this exclusive pattern. In the late 1870's, Hanson H. Barnes, settled at the old mining camp of Diamond City. Later he moved to White Sulphur Springs. By 1881, he was postmaster at the Meagher County Seat. But Barnes, a veteran miner, could not forget his first love. He found outcroppings of ore in the Castle Mountains on one of his many off-duty treks in the area east of White Sulphur Springs. His first real strike was made in 1884.

F. Lafe Hensley, an experienced miner in his own right, made his own discovery during the late winter of 1883. Hensley was on a hunting trip in the Musselshell Valley when he found a small piece of carbonate iron float. He began to search for the lead of his find by searching the headwaters of the Musselshell River. For two years he prospected from gulch to gulch. In June, 1885, he found the outcrop and staked the Yellowstone Mine. Hensley left his find until the following year when he returned with his brothers, Ike, Joe and John. The four brothers worked their mine at 7,200 foot elevation during the following two years. Eventually they sold their property for $75,000. In time, the Yellowstone was one of the three major producers in the district.

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The Hensley Brothers also helped in the opening of other mines in the region. These included the Morning Star, Lamar, Chollar, Belle of the Castles, California, Iron Chief, Great Western, American, Golden and Gem. Lafe and Ike Hensley made the major discovery of the area. This was the to-be famous Cumberland Mine. The Husbandman recorded the find during the summer of 1886.\(^1\)

Hensley Bros., of Castle mountains, have one of the most flattering prospects that has been struck in this region. They are getting out ore and shipping by horse and mule teams to the Toston smelter. The ore runs from 100 to 150 ounces in silver and 65 per cent in copper, and there seems to be a large body of it, but owing to the difficulty of hauling to the smelter the pay is large, but it is sufficient to justify them in continuing the work. They are now engaged in cutting a wagon road from their mine to this place (White Sulphur Springs) which is only 15 miles distant. Their present outlet is via Copperopolis.\(^2\)

Throughout the period 1885-1887, numerous other mines were located and worked. One of the miners was George K. Robertson. Most of his searching centered in the area above the Yellowstone and Cumberland properties. Small camps were started, among them the Robertson, Blackhawk, Giant, Bonanza and Smith's Camp.\(^3\) The towns were shortlived because most of the ore was of a low grade. Their importance was mainly due to their bringing in an influx of miners to the Castle Mountains.

In April, 1887, a tent town named Castle came into existence near the producing mines, the Yellowstone and the Cumberland. Lafe Hensley and George H. Higgins built the first cabin in June.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 1, 1886.
\(^3\)Interview with Oswald Berg, Lennep, December 29, 1965.
One early report of the town was given in the Husbandman in June, 1887.

The second saloon is in course of erection. The new store owned by Mr. Rhodes, late of Park City, will receive its goods this week. The material for another store 18x30 feet is on the ground, and will be erected at once. Last week there was but one lady in the town, but this week five more will arrive. A boarding house is the next business to commence there.¹

The first residents were soon joined by about two hundred other settlers. By September, the first stage coach from White Sulphur Springs rolled into the camp.² The town built up around the lower end of the mining district. Houses sprang up along the main dirt road leading to the mines and sprawled out over the neighboring hillsides. With the sudden growth of Castle, eighty acres were platted for the townsite by the Castle Land Company.

Within several months of the first permanent settlers, a better stage and freight line was needed for the ore hauls. Ox teams were used to haul the ore from Castle and the smaller camps over the mountains. The freighters then joined the White Sulphur Springs and Livingston Road. The travel covered about eighty miles, much of it through or over the Castle Mountains. Expenses were steep and the hauls were unduly long. Thus, demands for a branch line railroad were common at Castle within the first months of Castle's existence. Local estimates were that a railroad to follow the same general route as the stage lines to Livingston. At Livingston, the branch railroad would connect the Northern Pacific tracks and continue the ore hauls to the Toston smelters.³

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 2, 1877.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 1, 1877.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 21, 1893.
A railroad was not forthcoming in the 1880's, but interest in the camp was at fever pitch.

Ranchers in the Smith River and Musselshell valley invested considerable amounts in the Castle Mining District. At the same time, outsiders began to look at the area with interest. In 1888, the Castle Mountain Mining & Smelting Company was organized at Helena. They planned to operate the Great Eastern Mine, which was to become the second largest producer of the area. The Helena bankers organized the mine with a capital stock of $1,000,000.1 Other companies were inaugurated. Some were capitalized by local money from White Sulphur Springs and ranchers of the nearby valleys. In fact, White Sulphur Springs business people were reputed to have invested over $400,000 in the Castle Mining District during the 1880's and early 1890's.2 A number of eastern investors also came into the Castle area, with money, machinery and optimism. They came from Boston, New York, Chicago. Marcus Daly was interested in the mines, enough so to have several exploratory teams check out his own properties in the district. Between 1886 and 1890, nearly 1,500 mining claims were taken out in the area.3

With all of the mining activity in and around the Castle District, the camps began to grow. Consequently the Musselshell began to look on Castle as the major town for shopping, social life, and a marketplace for a portion of their beef and mutton. Castle grew to a peak two thousand population by 1891, the year it was incorporated. It was served by three four-horse stage lines, providing service between

1Wolle, 340. 2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 28, 1893. 3Wolle, 340.

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the individual camps, Livingston, Martinsdale, Merino, Townsend, Helena and White Sulphur Springs. Freight wagons, bull teams, stage coaches and horsemen jammed the roads in and out of Castle. Four different news-papers came into existence at Castle. The first was The Castle News. The first issue came off the press on March 22, 1888. It ran a seven-column page and was under the Schlosser Brothers and Editor L. Peavy. The Castle Reporter appeared in 1890, followed by The Castle Tribune. The last paper in the town was The Whole Truth, a folksy hometown paper ran by a Missourian, Shelby Eli Dillard, who was a staunch Silver Republican. The Truth lasted until 1898, long enough to report the coming of a railroad and news of the mining camps and the Musselshell. Above the banner of the Truth, he ran the same saying week after week. "The man who thinks Castle has not a bright future is either honestly mistaken, or is as big a fool as Count Louis DeLestry".

Several typical items show the social life of Castle, as reported by Editor Dillard.

Mr. & Mrs. Jas. J. Fisher had a phonographic party at their residence Monday evening and invited a number of their young friends . . . The guests were regaled by listening to the dulcet and melodious strains of the phonograph.

A Grand Success

The pop-corn festival on Friday evening was a grand success . . . This was the first of a series of festivals in this city under the suspices of the ladies of the Missionary Society . . . . Net Proceeds . . . were the handsome sum of $25.00.

Castle became quite a town. At its height, it contained nine stores, one bank, two barber shops, two butcher shops, two livery barns, two

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1 The Whole Truth, March 20, 27, etc., 1897 and The Whole Truth, November 8, 1898.

2 The Whole Truth, October 9, 1897, and The Whole Truth, January 29, 1898, quoted in Wolle, 345-346.
hotels, a photo gallery, dancehall, church, $5,000 schoolhouse, jail, fourteen saloons, as well as a justice of the peace, a deputy sheriff, and a brass band.¹ H. H. Barnes, the earliest miner in the Castle mining region, was postmaster of the town. His wife, Mrs. Alice Barnes was a Congregational minister and active member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. She became state president of the group, but certainly never found a better town to carry on her temperance activities than in her own Castle.

At Castle, good aspects were in rapid competition with the bad. At one time the town had fourteen liquor establishments, seven houses of ill fame and the lawless elements to go with them. Reverend Alice Barnes was kept busy as was the local Vigilante Committee. It was formed to handle the numerous cases of lot and claim jumpings, killings, fights between individual men, and the riotousness of miners from the various camps and large mines. One of the greatest events for the Reverend Barnes and the Vigilante Committee was the visit of the noted Calamity Jane at Castle and White Sulphur Springs. She was described as being "in the role of 'Carrie Nation No. 2.'" She attempted to clean out three saloons in one morning, a livery barn on the side, but being baffled in her desire to wreck things she took the stage to Livingston, where, she said, they are dead easy to do business with."²

Castle had all the elements associated with a mining camp. As active a mining camp as it was, however, it never enjoyed a complete

¹Wolle, 342.

²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 28, 1901.
boom because of its lack of a railroad. From its very earliest mining
stampede, miners complained of the lack of the "Iron Horse."

The transcontinental Northern Pacific and the narrow gauge Utah
and Northern reached Montana in the early 1880's. They were the first
railroads in the state and signalled the beginning of the end for the
Montana frontier. Other railroads soon followed. The Great Northern
entered Montana in 1887. By 1892 it had extended to the western
border of Montana and built or absorbed small roads in the state. A
number of short-line railroads were planned, and a number were built.
Foremost were Charles A. Broadwater's Montana Central and the Helena
and Northern, built by Samuel T. Hauser. As one historian chronicled
the building activity, "the railroad fever became a highly contagious
disease in the 1880's."\(^1\) The Musselshell Valley was not immune, thanks
to Richard Austin Harlow.

Richard Harlow was a native of Illinois and an 1885 graduate of
Northwestern Law School at Evanston, Illinois. He moved to Helena,
Montana, in 1886, because his health demanded a dry climate. Harlow
immediately began to practice law. As a sideline, he dabbled in real
estate. The venture into real estate was so profitable for Harlow
that he began to look into other business fields. Railroading was a
natural outlet for the young lawyer.

In the summer of 1890, Harlow conceived the idea of building a
railroad. Years later, he wrote of his decision:

\(^1\)Burlingame, 148.
There was great excitement all over the state in those days in mining circles. Silver and lead were high and in great demand, and copper was beginning to come into its own. Everybody in Helena felt rich. Real estate was exchanging hands at a lively rate and new enterprises of any kind, were received with favor.¹

Helena was coming into its own at the very time railroad activity was beginning in earnest in the state. The city had an ideal location, was emerging as the business and banking center of Montana, and was a leading contender for the permanent state capital. East Helena, five miles away, had a large smelter which was processing most of the ore from the numerous nearby mining regions. Further, East Helena was on the trackline of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Helenans received numerous favorable reports of mining activity in the isolated Castle Mountains. Fifteen steam hoists and two smelters operated in the area. Two thousand men were at Castle and "every inch of the mountains had been located and innumerable prospects were being worked."² The Cumberland Mine was the largest ore producer. The Cumberland had its own smelter but was hampered by growing expenses. In 1890, it had reduced 6,000 tons of silver lead bullion. Wagons were used to haul bullion to Livingston and to make return trips with


²Ibid. Letter from Richard Austin Harlow to Mrs. W. T. Hart, Harlowton, c. 1922. Every town and community, irregardless of size or economic livelihood, wanted a railroad. Editors throughout the state wrote of the potential growth of their towns and the increasing numbers of ranches in their communities with the advent of railroads. The Sutherlin Brothers continually editorialized of the need of a railroad for White Sulphur Springs and the Smith River and Musselshell valleys. In one issue of the Husbandman, characteristic of countless others over the years, the editors wrote, "With a railroad to our town it would spring rapidly to the front as a point of commercial importance as well as the leading health and pleasure in the Rocky Mountain Northwest." Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 24, 1893.
coke for the furnaces. Helena people, noting Castle was only 60 miles to the east, decided to take their own action. A bonus of $200,000 in land and cash was offered by the Helena business interests to anyone building a railroad from that city to Castle.¹

Richard Harlow was familiar with the mining district around Castle through his dealings with a small mine owner with the unlikely name of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare owned the Yellowstone Mine, by 1890, the only major mine working at Castle. About 1890, Harlow met Shakespeare in Helena. Harlow agreed to stake part of Shakespeare's mining activities. Eventually, the lawyer and miner became partners. Harlow decided that a railroad was the only answer for a productive partnership in the Castle mines. In September, 1891, Harlow hired an experienced railroad engineer, W. A. Haven. After conducting an extensive survey, Haven recommended a route from Helena to Castle, via East Helena, Canyon Ferry, White's Gulch. Haven compensated for this expenditure with a vision of reopening the Copperopolis mines at the same time the route was completed.²

In 1893, Harlow incorporated the Montana Midland Railroad with a capital of $2,000,000. Harlow was listed as president, Haven as chief engineer, and William J. Guchs as secretary.³ Construction began in August, 1893. White Sulphur Springs greeted the report of the first

¹The Harlowton Times, March 31, 1932. Harlow never received the Helena bonus money. It was withdrawn at the time of the Panic of 1893.

²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 6, 1895 and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 5, 1896. Beyond Harlow's own savings, the financial backing was provided by J. P. Whitney of Glassbone, New Jersey. Whitney was a wealthy industrialist.

work: "Hurrah! Hurrah! The Cloud Lifts and the Purple of the Dawn Tinges the Western Hills."¹ The Husbandman reported Harlow was sincerely behind the venture. "In regard to the railroad he (Harlow) assured us that he means business and that the road would be pushed as fast as possible."² The editors noted the importance of the Montana Midland. The Sutherlin Brothers felt White Sulphur Springs should make an all-out effort to encourage the railroad's earlier arrival.

Fifteen hundred dollars would pay for the necessary labor to be expended in grading ten miles of the railroad from White Sulphur Springs to Helena and one-half of this could be paid in supplies such as shoes, shifts, overalls, etc. which supplies could be furnished by our people without cash, each farmer, merchant and stock grower turning in a certain amount of supplies. By this method great activity could be inaugurated here dull as the times are and scarce as money is. Will our people move in the matter and meet Helena half way in this railway enterprise.³

The editors hoped the railroad could revive the boom period of Meagher County when Castle was at its peak of activity in the late 1880's. Harlow hoped his railroad would do the same. By October, 1893, workmen were busy over the ten miles from Helena to Canyon Ferry. A dam across the Missouri River at Canyon Ferry was to be built in early November. Optimism for a resurgence of Castle was running so high that Richard Harlow and the other backers of the Montana Midland Railroad also incorporated the Montana Southern Railroad. The Montana

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 17, 1893. At this time, many people called the Harlow railroad the Helena, Missouri Valley and Eastern. In 1890, another railroad, the White Sulphur Springs and Castle, was incorporated. It was to be built from Townsend to the mines. Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 8, 1899, quoting Meagher County News. Other plans included construction from the Great Falls Neihart Railroad terminus at Neihart and from Livingston.

²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 24, 1893.

³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 31, 1893.
Southern was to extend to Whitehall and Dillon from Helena, passing through the Missouri, Madison and Jefferson valleys.\(^1\) The unsteady silver market of the world darkened the optimism, however. In the late fall of 1893, a worldwide panic halted all building plans projected for Harlow's railroad interests. The Montana Midland managed to grade only five miles out of Helena.

With the Panic of 1893, Castle went further downhill. The district needed a railroad to move the ores and to cut the shipping costs assessed by the freighters for ox-team hauls to Livingston. Mining activity reached a standstill. The Cumberland boardinghouse, for instance, served meals to 135 men one night, and fed only six men three days later. The six men made up the crew retained by the owners to dismantle mining machinery. The few remaining families were said to have made a living by "pecking around and raising small crops."\(^2\) White Sulphur Springs received the hardest blow from the Panic of 1893. During the fall of that same year, a local news report said the Meagher County Seat had invested $400,000 in Castle.\(^3\) The Cumberland Mine, for instance, was operated by ranchers in Meagher County. Len Lewis, B. R. Sherman and Charles H. Severance, had formed a stock company and worked the mine until 1894 when it was forced to halt operation.\(^4\)

In early 1894, surveyors of the Montana Midland and Montana Southern surveyed in the Townsend area. Backers of the two railroads planned

\(^1\)Helena City Directory, (1895), p. 31.
\(^2\)Wolle, 344.
\(^3\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 28, 1893.
\(^4\)Wolle, 344.
to build a junction near Toston. With the new routing, two railroads would share trackage from Helena to Toston. From Toston, the Montana Midland would build through the Sixteen Mile Canyon to White Sulphur Springs and Castle. The Montana Southern would still build southwest to Whitehall and Dillon.¹

The winter of 1893-94 further depressed Meagher County. Musselshell stockmen estimated a loss of 25%. Ranchers complained that the winter was one of the worst on record. Merchants in the towns were hampered by the same problems. Martinsdale was forced to close its only general store during the winter of 1893. When a new firm was opened, it included the management and goods from a Castle store.² The Husbandman found the only solution for the economic slump of the county in renewed efforts for a railroad. Merchants, ranchers and mine owners were exhorted:

Now comes the test of patriotism. If the people of Smith river valley want the Montana Midland railroad it is within their reach, let them stretch forth their strong right arm and grasp the opportunity now. They should at once tender a right of way and such a land donation as will interest the company in their welfare.³

During July, 1894, Harlow visited the mines at Castle and met with a number of mine owners. Harlow was looking for financial support for the Montana Midland to resume construction to the depressed area. At that time, Harlow asked for a subscription of $500,000 in first mortgage bonds on the road payable in ore. A total of $350,000 of the

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 22, 1894.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 10, 1894.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 12, 1894.
amount was pledged at the meeting.\textsuperscript{1} Harlow returned East to interest more capital in the enterprise.

On September 1, 1894, the Montana Railroad Company was incorporated. Capital stock was offered for $3,500,000, divided into 35,000 shares of $100 each.\textsuperscript{2} By May, 1895, work was commenced at the head of Sixteen Mile Canyon and the spot was designated Castle Junction. Castle Junction was seven miles from Toston and connected the Logan-Helena branch line of the Northern Pacific. Four contracts were made by Harlow before construction was commenced. The first was with the contractors who built the grade and who under their contract agreed to accept notes of the company, secured by bonds, in lieu of cash. The second contract was with the Cumberland Mining Company. The mining company agreed to exchange 7,000 tons of ore for the Montana Railroad's bonds. The East Helena Smelting Company then agreed to pay the railroad $150,000 in cash in exchange for the ore. The final agreement was with the Northern Pacific Railroad by which they agreed to supply the Montana Railroad with rails, spikes and stocks. In return, the Northern Pacific was to receive notes secured by bonds of the Montana Railroad. With all of these agreements, it was little wonder that Richard Harlow's Montana Railroad was referred to as the "Jawbone."\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 2, 1894.

\textsuperscript{2}Incorporation Papers of the Montana Railroad Company, Secretary of State of Montana and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 30, 1895.

\textsuperscript{3}The Harlowton Times, March 31, 1932. Letter from Richard Austin Harlow to Mrs. W. T. Hart, Harlowton, c. 1922. The term "Jawbone" was a common expression at this time. For example, the author has seen a sign in a reconstructed harness shop at Virginia City, Montana, with the shingle, "Leather and Labor are Cash, Jawbone will not pay our Bills." Also, interview with Dave Lake, Harlowton, Montana, Sept. 1, 1965. Dave Lake said the term, "a man who uses his jawbone" was common usage in the early years he was in the Musselshell.
The "Jawbone" reached Leadboro, three-quarters of a mile below Castle on November 19, 1896.1 (See map on page following.) The sixty miles of construction was completed in a year and a half, nearly a full year from the projected arrival date. The men were paid two dollars a day for their work, plus five dollars per week for board. Harlow, again using his "jawbone" to solidify his operations, employed work crews up to 1,000 men and paid them with time checks. Besides paying his bills, Harlow was hampered by the ranching interests in Meagher County. A number of people in the area were not interested in having a railroad, contrary to the Husbandman's prophetic future plans for Meagher County.

The Husbandman reported:

We learn with some surprise that some of the settlers along Sixteen Mile Creek have commenced legal proceedings to restrain the progress of the Montana Railroad. This is to be regretted since the road is an absolute necessity and private interest is often compelled to yield to the public good... The railroad must come, it will come in spite of all opposition of land owners, and our admonition to settlers is to make the best terms they can and open up their premises and bid the locomotive speed.2

1The Whole Truth, November 21, 1896. The Truth said of the event: "When the Castle and Helena road was completed to upper Leadboro, or three-quarters of a mile below the lower part of Castle, there was no gold spike and the crowds lustily cheered Richard A. Harlow, J. P. Whitney and Chief Engineer Lombard."

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 24, 1895. In his own reminiscences concerning the Montana Railroad, Richard Harlow wrote, "We had a frightful time getting supplies up Sixteen Mile Creek. A team and wagon had to travel sixty miles to get from the lower to the upper end of the box canyon which is scarcely one-half mile long. A four horse team with oats was sent to a camp from which and landed without a pound of oats in the wagon. It was caught in a snow storm and the driver had to feed all the oats to the horses. We had trouble with labor, with our engineering parties, and, it seemed, with everything with which we came in contact. Trouble was the normal condition. The owners of the little ranches that we crossed held us up with shotguns. The ranchmen along the route hesitated to sell us supplies fearing they would not get their money." The Harlowton Times, March 31, 1932.
In spite of all the adversities, the Montana Railroad hauled its first train of ore to Castle Junction two days after its arrival at the Leadboro terminus. At Castle Junction, the seventeen cars of ore were transferred to the tracks of the Northern Pacific enroute to the East Helena smelter. The Castle newspaper reported "this event should be hailed with ecstasy and a mineralogical war-whoop of red-hot enthusiasm."\(^1\) The "Father of Castle," H. H. Barnes, told a Helena newspaper

The Castle of today is not the Castle of one or two years ago. With the approach of the railroad it began to take on signs of life, and is now one of the liveliest camps in the state. Two new stores were opened in the last few days and others will come. We have a newspaper and there is general evidence that the town is very much alive. The demand for buildings can be supplied, although a year ago many of those we had were not occupied . . . Castle is all right, if anyone should ask you.\(^2\)

The Husbandman at White Sulphur Springs commented, "This (first load of ore) was but a forerunner of thousands more to follow and will pave the way for the development of the immense carbonate deposits in this group of mountains."\(^3\) Thus, editorial comment at Castle, Helena and White Sulphur Springs translated the arrival of the Montana Railroad as the answer to the depressed conditions of all three towns and their areas.

In spite of the warm reception, the railroad did not relieve the economic hardships. Within two months, the Truth complained of the high freight prices of the "Jawbone" and the processing charges at the East Helena smelters. "Unless liberal concessions are made on this line

\(^1\)The Whole Truth, November 21, 1896. On October 3, 1896, the Truth had reported, "A number of buildings are being renovated in Castle for occupancy in the near future."

\(^2\)The Helena Independent, October 27, 1896.

\(^3\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 26, 1896.
any of our mines that remained open. Our interests are mutual, one
or not be successful without the help of the other. 1 The railroad was
having its own problems. Lead was worth two and a half cents on the
eastern markets and silver was priced in the forty cent range. 2 The ore
could not be hauled to East Helena and smelted at those prices. Mining
activity fell off through the winter of 1897. With such poor prices,
few mines reopened in the spring of 1899. Nature added its own troubles
to the fledgling railroad company during the spring. A sudden spring
thaw roadbed was washed out from one end of the canyon to the other.
Harlow wrote of the latest jolt:

We had practically to begin construction all over again and when
the trains were running we found our traffic on the old
instead of the new. There was not only no traffic in the Castle
Mountains but, owing to the depression all over the country,
there seemed to be no chance of any further mining developments
and I was forced to realize that our only hope to save what we had,
was to build on, so I began to delve into the problem of extending
to Martinsdale 24 miles away. 3

Throughout the entire construction of the Montana Railroad, rumors had
persisted as to the eventual eastern terminus of the railroad. As
early as 1893, reports had circulated in Meagher County that the Montana
Railroad would eventually merge with the Burlington line to provide a
route from Billings to Helena, via the Musselshell and Smith River
valleys. 4 In 1897, the Anaconda Standard was quoted as saying the

1The Whole Truth, January 9, 1897.
2The Harlowton Times, March 31, 1932. Letter from Richard Austin
Harlow to Mrs. W. T. Hart, Harlowton, c. 1922.
3Ibid., and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 22, 1897.
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 7, 1893, and Rocky Mountain
Husbandman, September 28, 1893.

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Burlington would absorb the Montana Railroad and build to Butte.\(^1\)

Only months later, the \textit{Lewistown Democrat} reported a visit by Richard Harlow to Lewistown and the Judith Basin. The party including the major stockholder of the railroad, J. P. Whitney, and R. H. Sutherlin of the \textit{Husbandman}.

As a last-ditch effort, the East Helena smelters leased the Cumberland Mine and sent fifty men to boost the staggering mines at Castle.\(^3\) Failing again, the future of the railroad seemed bleak.

Then, on June 24, 1897, a page six news item, in the \textit{Husbandman}, revealed Harlow's reasoning for extending his line to Martinsdale. The item was "Grande Bros. were the first to ship wool over the Montana Railroad. They loaded at leadboro."\(^4\)

Cattle raising never regained its former strength in the Musselshell after the winter of 1886-87. The Chicago and other eastern markets did not offer prices conducive to rebuilding of herds by those cattle men who had managed to continue their operations after the trying winter.

The sheep owner suffered great losses through the same winter. The Musselshell sheepmen, however, were aided by the wool tariff policies of the national Republican Party. Traditionally labeled the high-tariff party, the Republicans were continuing their protection

\(^1\)\textit{The Whole Truth}, January 23, 1897, quoting the \textit{Anaconda Standard}.

\(^2\)\textit{The Whole Truth}, September 25, 1897.

\(^3\)\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, June 17, 1897.

\(^4\)\textit{Rocky Mountain Husbandman}, June 24, 1897.
policies after the 1886-87 winter and had enacted the McKinley Tariff prior to the Panic of 1893.¹

Sheep prices had fallen from their high mark of twenty-five and twenty-seven cents a pound in the early 1880's to seventeen and eighteen cents in 1892 and a low point of nine cents in 1894. The McKinley Tariff, however, had provided for duties as high as thirteen cents per pound on all types of imported wool. Ranchers naturally associated a strict import market with a home-produce market which must strengthen in time. The attitude of the rancher was well portrayed by the Fergus County Argus prior to the election of 1892.

It is incomprehensible how any man in Montana, whether he be a Republican or a Democrat or a Populist, sheepherder, sheep shearer or laborer on the sheep ranch can go deliberately to the polls and vote to flut the market. A man who votes the Democratic ticket simply votes for free wool.²

In 1894, the Wilson-Corman Tariff Act was passed. It lowered duties on all classes of wool. The Fergus County Argus expressed the sheep raiser's opinion of the bill as a "silly, sectionalized, ill-doctored putrid mass--whose fetish ofor has polluted the home industry to that degree that it is a fatal epidemic to our industrial pulse. Its blighting presence is tolerated but under protest."³

The national policy on tariff protection favored the sheep interests. In spite of this, nature caused the final ruination of the

¹National Democrats who were in political control of the country in the mid-1880's favored a downward revision of tariffs. President Grover Cleveland advocated reduced tariffs, during both of his administrations. In fact, his message to Congress in December, 1887, was almost entirely devoted to that subject. For the local coverage, see Fergus County Argus, Lewistown, Montana, December 22, 1887.

²Fergus County Argus, October 13, 1892.

³Fergus County Argus, September 15, 1893.
cattleman in Meagher County. During the winter of 1893-94, the entire county suffered severe cattle losses. In March, the Husbandman stated "snow and ice had prevailed almost continually since September and there was no grass to speak of."\(^1\) By May, reports from the Musselshell set the winter losses at 25% with "cattle on the range gaunt and weak and could hardly look worse."\(^2\)

George R. "Twodot" Wilson and George Lyons, two of the largest cattlemen and among the earliest pioneers to the Musselshell Valley, planned to "spay" hundreds of head of their cattle in order to curtail the size of their herds.\(^3\) In the neighboring Smith River Valley, the case of another rancher pointed to the straits of the cattleman.

William Luppold, of this valley, who is one of its pioneer cattle growers and one of the largest owners of the valley, intends spaying over 200 head of cows this spring. He will spay all of his old cows and many of his heifers. It is Mr. Luppold's intention to curtail his herd at least two-thirds, and he may close out entirely and engage in sheep husbandry instead.\(^4\)

The Husbandman, as the state agricultural medium and reporter for Meagher County, editorialized:

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 1, 1894.

\(^2\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 3, 1894.

\(^3\)Ibid., The term "spaying" meant the removal of the female ovaries. The individual cow would naturally fill out and weigh more than a calf-bearing cow. The rancher would produce less stock, hoping to make up the difference with heavier beef cattle.

\(^4\)Ibid., In the same issue, the following item appeared. "A cattle grower of this valley estimates that if he was in the sheep business and could get twentyfive cents per head net for the wool grown that he can make more money handling sheep than he has with cattle for the past ten years. He therefore expects to dispose of his cattle and buy sheep."
We have reached a period in the history of our country when our people cannot afford to stand losses. It is better to do a smaller business and proceed safely. This being a well established fact the curtailment of herds becomes an absolute necessity.¹

With rapidity and little fanfare, the economy of the Smith River and Musselshell valleys became dependent on the raising of sheep. Richard Austin Harlow was well aware of this fact when the Grande Brothers shipped the first load of sheep over the Montana Railroad in 1897. Sheep raising dominated the stock industry of the Musselshell up to the very time of the first homesteaders a decade later.² In 1893, for instance, Meagher had 24,350 stock cattle and 297,571 sheep. Four years later, in 1897, the county had 21,544 stock cattle and 323,675 sheep.³ From this time until the initial homestead settlement, Meagher County's livestock business stabilized at this general ratio.

In June, 1898, the Montana Railroad announced its intention to build

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, The editors were using the same arguments in 1894 as they had after the winter of 1886-87. On May 3, the Husbandman editorial included a lesson for the ranchers. "The livestock of the state have so multiplied that they graze down the range in summer and there is little or nothing left for winter and there are but few farmers or ranchers who have anything like enclosed pasturages sufficient to carry their herds through." The answer given by the editors was prophetic. "Stock growing and farming are kindred pursuits and must in the future go hand in hand together".

²Interview with James Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, November 15, 1965. Mr. Lunney came to the Musselshell Valley in 1903. At that time, with the exception of George R. "Twodot" Wilson and George Lyons, all ranching between Martinsdale at the western end of the Musselshell, and Lavina, seventy miles to the east, was carried on by sheep men.

³State Board of Equalization of the State of Montana, 4th Annual Report, 1893, and 8th Annual Report, 1897. (Helena: State Publishing Company, 1894 and 1897), N.P. The Montana Railroad owners were given ample opportunity to note the amount of wool produced in the Musselshell Valley. The Husbandman stated in 1896 that the Smith Brothers sold 250,000 pounds of wool for 8½ cents to a Boston Company. At the same time, the Bowers Brothers, recent purchasers of the Charles Severance Ranch near Oka and Ubet, sold a 200,000 pound clip for a fraction less than the Smiths received. Rocky Mountain Husbandman,
a wool warehouse at Dorsey. Dorsey was the small station in the middle of the Smith River Valley and White Sulphur Springs' closest connection to rail communication. It was located halfway between Lombard (the new name for Castle Junction, given in honor of Chief Engineer Arthur G. Lombard) and Leadboro, Castle's terminus. When Harlow announced the construction plans for the warehouse, he emphasized the proximity of the railroad stop to local ranchers of both baileys. He had great plans for the area as he announced, "Wool buyers realizing that Dorsey will be a center for wool of this entire section of Montana, will go to Dorsey to buy wool."2

If cattlemen needed a further hint on the ending of the open range, they received the news in 1898. In February, the Husbandman published an article concerning numerous state newspaper reports which had dealt with the amount of barbed wire being strung in Montana.3 In March, the Sutherlin Brothers wrote, "It is estimated that there will be ten car loads of wire strung on posts in this valley this summer."4 During the same spring, news items included reports of the fine lambing season and reports of small ranchmen expressing concern that they were

1The Whole Truth, June 11, 1897. In May, the Truth stated, "The lambing season has been unusually good throughout the Musselshell wool growing district. The sheep came out of the winter in prime condition." The Whole Truth, May 21, 1898.

2The Whole Truth, July 2, 1898.

3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 24, 1898.

4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 3, 1898.
being pushed out by the larger ranchers who were fencing their grazing lands.1

Dorsey's wool warehouse was constructed at a cost estimated as between $50,000 and $60,000. It was built to hold 3,000,000 pounds of wool. The wool shipment in 1898 was a good one. It was expected to be even better the following year when the twenty-four mile Martinsdale addition was completed. In spite of the recent railroad developments, though, progress was coming too readily in the minds of many.

The extension of the Montana Railroad illustrated the still lingering frontier attitude of people in the Musselshell Valley. Ranchers were mixed in their desires of having a railroad penetrate into the Musselshell. On June 22, 1899, the track-layers began their work from the Leadboro cutoff. Reports came in to the Husbandman with expressions of sentiments in the Musselshell.

The people of the Musselshell are reported as being the most contented and happy of any in the west. They have a railroad building near them but are little concerned about it and a number are opposed to the invasion of the iron horse. How strange!2

Ranchers complained of the coming of the railroad for numerous reasons. The most vocal outbursts were caused by track-laying through land of the ranchers. H. W. Tice had the head of an irrigation ditch cut by the graders. A news item concerning the business manager of Smith Brothers Sheep Ranch, J. A. McNaught, pointed out another

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 31, 1898, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 12, 1898. At this time, the Smith Brothers, the largest sheep ranchers in the Musselshell, announced the purchase of twenty sections of Northern Pacific lands. Other sheepmen were also buying land.

2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 22, 1899.
opinion of the railroad. "It is hard for him to become reconciled to
the building of a railroad through his country." The most humorous
aspect of the railroad entering the Musselshell pertained to a barn.

The track of the Montana Railroad had been surveyed to pass
through a corner of the sheep barn belonging to the prosperous sheep
ranchers, the Grande Brothers. The Sutherlins wrote a graphic
description of the event in the Husbandman.

The grades have been built leaving a short gap where the barn
stands. The chief engineer we learn has notified Mr. Grande to
remove the structure but that gentleman is well satisfied with
the location of his barn and refuses to move it. The barn is a
very large and costly structure, containing over a carload of
iron upon its roof and will be difficult to remove without
expensive appliances, except that it be torn down and in that
case a considerable expense would be entailed in rebuilding it
in as good form as now. By making a slight curve in the grade
the barn could be avoided and to the railroad company that its
much cheaper way out of the dilemma. A wise plan would have
been to have so lain the line of road as to pass by the barn,
but it seems the engineer thought otherwise. But we think
engineers are liable to mistakes as well as other people and no
doubt the builders of the road when they examine into the
situation will decide that the best plan for all concerned is
to go around the Grande barn.

The end result did not solve the problem. The $2,500 barn had a corner
cut away for passage of the railroad. The Montana Railroad Commission
allowed the Grandes $700 for their loss. The Husbandman stated, "It
is hard indeed to see a settler's property thus destroyed, when it
could easily have been avoided. Had the grade of the road been laid a
couple of rods further north it would have been on better ground and
missed the barn."

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 13, 1899.
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 14, 1899.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, September 21, 1899.
However great the mixed feelings greeting the railroad, the eastern terminus was extended to Martinsdale during the middle of October, 1899. The original town of Martinsdale moved to "New Martinsdale" two miles south. It was rebuilt adjacent to the railroad tracks.

As early as October and November, 1899, the Husbandman reported the possible extension of the Montana Railroad into the center of the Musselshell Valley. On November 23, Richard Harlow made the official announcement of planned construction to Merino. This stage stop was twenty-five miles east of Martinsdale. It was the meeting point for numerous sheepmen of the lower Musselshell prior to their united sheep drives to the Northern Pacific tracks at Big Timber. Merino was on the east-west stage route from Martinsdale to Lavina and the north-south route from the Judith Basin to Melville and Big Timber. The town was made up of a combination stage stop, post office, general store and saloon. Richard Harlow himself announced that Merino would be the final destination of the railroad. Few people, however, expected Merino to be the eastern terminus of the Montana Railroad. The Lewistown Argus reported the eventual destination of the railroad as Lewistown. Billings and Forsyth papers spoke in terms of their own cities as the final end.

Harlow was pleased with the Merino extension for two reasons. First, the stage line between the Judith Basin and the present terminus at Martinsdale were waging their own rate war for command of an already heavy passenger and freight traffic. The Argus said of the feud, "each

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, October 19, 1899.
2Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 23, 1899, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 1, 1890, quoting The Lewistown Argus, Forsyth Tribune, Billings Gazette.
company quotes lowest rates, the best accommodations and the quickest time
whether it be to Montana points or South Africa."\(^1\) However, the wool
market was still Harlow's main concern at this time. The possibilities
of hauling wool clips from all of the Musselshell to Lombard would help
the railroad financially. In addition, more of the sheepmen of the
region would be encouraged to increase their flocks because of the cheap,
easy railroad hauls.

The Montana Railroad was extended to a point eight miles south of
Big Elk during the last part of March, 1899. Business people started
activity at the proposed stop two weeks prior to the railroad's
arrival. The *Husbandman* reported, "The embryo city of Twodot is
laying its foundation. A store, a saloon and an eating place are in
prospect and it is probable that a half dozen business houses will be
in full blast before the steel tramway of the Montana railroad reaches
that point."\(^2\) Twodot was located on the ranch of G. R. "Twodot"Wilson.
Wilson was the major booster of the new town, besides being one of the
pioneer cattle men in the Musselshell. He immediately build a hotel
for the town, started a general store, and spoke of backing a newspaper
and bank.\(^3\) In June, 1900, the Montana Railroad reached Merino.

On June 4, 1900, the Montana Railroad finished track-laying.
Within a few hours, Chief Engineer A. G. Lombard conducted a townsite
sale around the area bordering the tract. The new town was christened

\(^1\) *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, February 8, 1900, quoting The
Lewistown Argus.

\(^2\) *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, March 15, 1900.

\(^3\) *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, January 29, 1902.
Harlow, in honor of the builder and main promoter of the railroad. The start of the new town was similar to the beginnings of Martinsdale and Twodot.

... Within a few hours after the completion of the road a townsite was mapped by Cook & Waldson, railroad constructors and within the short space of four days a miniature city had sprung into existence ... First to arrive in the new town, and to whom is due credit for its advancement in the early days of its existence, and for much of its subsequent prosperity, were J. A. Hensley, James Fisher and T. F. Hanzlik. These men came overland, bringing with them limited worldly possessions, and small stocks of lumber for the construction of temporary homes and places of conducting business. In most cases the store and the homes were under one roof ... Hanzlik's confectionary, residence and barber shop (was) the first building constructed after the opening of the townsite. No time was taken for laying foundation stones.

Those early days of the town's infancy were marked by scenes of greatest activity. Men employed in the building of the railroad swarmed the town, settlers seeking new locations came on every train, the construction of two large hotels was taken up, and evidence of prosperity were seen on every hand.¹

Martinsdale, Twodot and Harlowton grew rapidly. Small telephone companies were organized locally. They soon connected all of the towns and post offices of the area. Many of the ranchers acquired telephone hook-ups. All three towns built their own schools. Within several years, a full school term was conducted at all three towns for the elementary students. Fraternal organizations were started in the fledgling towns. Especially active were the "ancient Order of United Workmen" and "Woodmen of the World."² Within two years, some professional men began to settle. The arrival of the first doctor is indicative. "W. E. Almas ... has hung out his shingle in Harlowton and will answer calls from Martinsdale, Twodot, (etc.) and the rest of the world."³ When the

¹The Meagher Republican, White Sulphur Springs, September 9, 1904.
²The Meagher Republican, September 28, 1900.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 10, 1901.
Montana Railroad was first building from Martinsdale to Twodot and Harlowton, the *Husbandman* had decided, "There is going to be quite a strife for the ascendency between the embryo cities,"¹ The three towns did grow up together. In 1902, Harlowton had two general stores, two hotels, a livery stable and several saloons. Twodot had two "mammoth" general stores, hotel, livery stable, restaurant, blacksmith ship and jewelry store. Martinsdale had two hotels, two saloons, a general store, livery stable and blacksmith shop.² Stockyards were built at all three towns. A seven hundred dollar Methodist Episcopal Church was built at Twodot and Harlowton had two sheep shearing plants. An eastern air took over the communities as they began to play organized baseball. Twodot played Harlowton for the first time in 1904, winning 66 to 9. The Twodot correspondent wrote of the game, "Several very clever plays were made by the visiting team but they were ineffective hitters and from the start Twodot's mavericks were prime favorites. Twodot played a faultless game."³

In 1903, Richard Harlow extended his Montana Railroad to Lewistown and the Judith Basin. Besides opening up the last major farming region in Montana to the outside world, Harlow gave an added incentive for more settlement. *The Butte Miner* sent a reporter to cover the celebration of the railroad's arrival at Lewistown, October 31, 1903. The *Miner* used several full-page spreads commemorating the feats of Harlow's Montana Railroad and the importance of transportation into

¹*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, April 5, 1900.
²*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, November 20, 1902.
³*The Meagher Republican*, July 15, 1904.
the Judith Basin. One half-page ad proclaimed, "A THOUSAND OPPORTUNITIES AWAIT THE SETTLER IN THE JUDITH BASIN. Go West, Yong Man, Go West." The **Miner's** reporter was forecasting a population increase which would mainly result after the end of the Montana Railroad Railroad and its replacement by the transcontinental Milwaukee Railroad. But settlement along the route did increase slowly during the short life span of the Montana Railroad. In fact, by 1903, the **Husbandman** was able to report, "The railroad lands of Meagher County except the precipitous mountains have about all been sold. Fully twenty-five thousand acres have been disposed of in this part of the state since Christman (of 1902 and April, 1903)."

Wool shipments for the entire Smith River and Musselshell valleys continued and increased throughout the period. The railroad constructed a thirty-five machine shearing plant for the White Sulphur Springs area. Harlowton had two shearing plants and was reputed to have sent out two million pounds of wool during a single season. Freight, machinery, fuel, mail, lumber and passengers were carried into the lower Smith River and Musselshell valleys and, after 1903, into the Judith Basin. Editors of all the area newspapers harangued Richard Harlow's Montana Railroad up to the very moment of its purchase by the Milwaukee. The editors, especially those from Lewistown, criticized the Montana for its inability to combat snow conditions. More than once the editor compared the railroad to the replaced stage teams, with the edge going to the feline mode of

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travel. In one issue of the *Lewistown Argus Farmer* in 1904 the editor made this caustic remark:

Over around Lewistown there were still many people clamoring for the return of stage coaches, especially after the Fergus Flyer got on the wrong track and ended up in Livingston . . . (and the) embarrassed railway officials placed the following advertisement in (our) Farmer: 'The passenger train scheduled to arrive in Lewistown three weeks ago last Monday will arrive tomorrow evening.'

Nonetheless, trips to wrong destinations not withstanding, its role in influencing and changing the Musselshell was a fact. The Montana Railroad helped the process of growth and, in a great way, ushered the way for the era of the dry land farmer.

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A lead article from *The Meagher Republican* in the summer of 1904 pointed to the changing conditions of the Montana land scene. The editor recalled that during the period up to the disastrous winter of 1886-87, the stockgrowing industry had had free rein of the ranges, but that since that time the situation had altered. This, according to the editor of the only paper now serving the Smith River and Musselshell Valleys, was caused by the influx of additional sheep and cattle men. They had squatted, homesteaded, purchased and fenced every available acre. Besides making it impossible to graze cattle on the open range, this situation caused over-extended use of pasture lands or added to the costly driving of stock further into the hills for range. However, the editor was not bemoaning this problem. He felt the increasing number of individual ranchers and the corresponding decrease in the size of ranches would be a healthy situation, bringing further increased prosperity. He decided that "where there is one man engaged in the business now there will be twenty." As an example of this trend, the editor pointed to one of the largest ranchers in the Musselshell having a colonization plan under consideration.\(^1\)

This article illustrated the thinking of many individuals in Meagher County. The same reasoning extended to much of Montana. In sum,

\(^1\) *The Meagher Republican*, August 19, 1904.
the view was commonly held the large rancher had outlived his day and
his usefulness. Even so, other than the First National Bank of White
Sulphur Springs, the Montana Railroad and the Northern Pacific, which
had been bequeathed a considerable acreage within the county as part of
its land grant. the large ranchers, Smith Brother, Len Lewis, G. R.
Wilson, paid a considerable share of Meagher County taxes.\(^1\)

The county had enjoyed such a limited growth over the past thirty
years that a lackadaisical attitude hovered like a shadow over the towns
and the very lives of the people. The booming spirit following the coming
of the Montana Railroad and the productive periods at the mining towns
of Neihart, Castle and Copperopolis, was no longer in evidence. The
Rocky Mountain Husbandman, so long the voice of hope and prosperity
for White Sulphur Springs and the area, finally closed its doors and
made the move to Great Falls in the spring of 1904. In part, Robert N.
Sutherlin left because of the competition created by the two-year-old
Meagher Republican, the partisan paper published by the county attorney,

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 24, 1896. This issue listed
the largest taxpayers in Meagher County for this particular year. All of
the large county taxpayers were ranchers, the railroad and one mining
company. Case examples: G. R. Wilson, $11,085.85; Smith Brothers, $1,839.63;
American Sheep & Land Co., $1,105.32; First National Bank, White Sulphur
Springs, $3,601.25; Montana Railroad, $1,956.03; Florence Mining Co.,
$1,901.26.

The Meagher Republican, November 4, 1904. Leading taxpayers in 1904
were as follows: Montana Railroad Company, $4,621.61; Smith Brothers
Sheep Company, $2,370.70; Len Lewis Estate, $1,110.47; G. R. Wilson,
$1,174.82 and G. R. Wilson Company, $173.11; George Lyons, $1,061.14;
First National Bank, White Sulphur Springs, $2,321.00; Anderson-Spenser-
Manager Company, $1,430.15; Catlin Land and Livestock Company, $1,217.91;
M. T. Grande, $905.19; P. J. Moore, $454.54. Each one of these taxpayers,
outside of the railroad, bank and largest store, was a major stockman.
Most were sheepmen.

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Max Waterman. The Husbandman lost the county printing to its rival and the state agricultural paper was economically forced to make its move to better grounds. Sutherlin left White Sulphur Springs with a final comment that 1904 was a rough year for all of Montana.¹

Stockmen in Meagher County encountered yet another delicate quandary with the Federal Government's announced withdrawal of lands for national forests. The stockmen saw the creation of more forest reserves as a further encroachment upon their livestock operations. The view was ably expressed by a Twodot writer to the Republican.

The withdrawing of land for settlement, preparatory to creating more forest lands, is a very serious matter and is of great concern to the stockmen of Meagher county. Those who have suffered so keenly by the creation of the Belt reserve will look with additional discomfiture on the creation of the Castle and Crazy mountain reserves. It absolutely jeopardizes every stock interest in Meagher county. Were these created above timber line it would not be as noticeable, but not content with a certain range, they have included townships that are absolutely barren of timber and have driven the settler or squatter, with his small possessions, upon the tender mercies of the universe. Some preconcerned action should be taken relative to prescribed boundaries as it looks very much as if the sacred soil of Meagher would be one great forest reserve.²

The rancher, so long belabored by the sporadic wool and beef prices, now looked on himself as helpless against the power of the Federal Government. The financial straits of Harlowton businessmen and falling stock prices for the local ranchers were serious conditions. However,

¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 10, 1904. The Great Falls area, at the time Editor Sutherlin moved his newspaper, was undergoing a new farming process being experimented with by Paris Gibson, a friend and protege of Jim Hill of the Great Northern Railroad. Practiced most recently in the Dakotas, it was termed Dry-Land Farming. Gibson was a frequent contributor to the Husbandman's columns. Most of his letters concerned the merits of non-irrigation.

²The Meagher Republican, March 18, 1904.
the arrival of the Milwaukee Railroad opened the valley to the outside
world and potential settlement because the railroad was anxious to real-
ize a return from its investment in the West. Further, it needed a ready
buying and selling market for its hauls across the north country. Home-
esteading, a proven colonizer in the Dakotas since the mid-1880's,
provided the answer.

The first indication of a sudden change in the county came with
an editorial in a 1905 issue of The Meagher Republican at White Sulphur
Springs. The editor wrote of the persistent rumors that the Milwaukee
Railroad would be building into Montana on its drive to the Pacific and
would very likely come through Harlowton in the heart of the Musselshell,
branching to the north and Great Falls, or to Helena by way of the
Smith River Valley and White Sulphur Springs.1

Through the fall of 1905 and into the first part of 1906 the editor
continued to write of the route and the great possibilities for any
section traversed by the transcontinental line.

The county seat editor was not alone in his interest in the rail-
road and its possible routes. A Martinsdale correspondent expressed
concern for the people of his area in constructing new buildings for
fear that the railroad route would force them to pick up and move the
town. In anticipation of the future railroad building, Twodot was
reported to have prospects for a new general store, barber shop and a
jewelry.

So long cut off from a railroad, White Sulphur Springs business-
men organized the Meagher Investment Company and were "ready to buy up

1The Meagher Republican, October 20, 1905.
land for immigration and issue stock" with the premature hope the Milwaukee would run its line through the Smith River route and on to Helena.¹

At Harlowton, a newspaper was born in the summer of 1906 in anxious anticipation of the Milwaukee Railroad which had recently announced from its Chicago offices that the line would run through Harlowton.² Editor A. F. Weston's articles were devoted to the many local affairs and a close observance of the Milwaukee construction towards Forsyth, Montana, 175 miles to the east.

He extolled the virtues of the town and its possible growth with the arrival of the Milwaukee. He called the Musselshell Valley "a land of great promise... and what is now ranch country will some day be agricultural land if the various schemes of colonization; of irrigation; of well-drilling and reservoir building materialize."³

During this same summer Harlowton businessmen with the aid of the Harlowton Boosters, local ranchers, and Milwaukee and Montana railroad officials reorganized the private Bank of Harlowton into the State Bank of Harlowton and capitalized it with $30,000.⁴

The bank organizers were preparing for the possible business boom which many local people expected would accompany the coming of the Milwaukee Railroad. Weston, after reading editorial comments of other

¹The Meagher Republican, October 20, 1905.


³The Musselshell News, July 26, 1906. ⁴Ibid.
state newspapers, had many of the same thoughts. He wrote in January, 1907: "At the present time there is much talk, newspaper and otherwise, about 'boosting Montana.' We can scarcely pick up a paper without seeing something about a meeting held to consider steps to induce emigration to the state."

Dr. Suddeth was planning to bring in a colony of Iowa farmers to farm dry land around his own experimental operation. The News passed over Suddeth's accomplishments and future plans with a short local item because the town was occupied with a problem of its own.

In June, most of the town of Harlowton burned to the ground as the temporary, hastily constructed wooden structures of the first seven years were consumed in a very short time. Harlowton people recovered in short order, this time rebuilding with stone from a nearby quarry.

By August, with construction of the town well on the way, the editor again began to opine on the workings of Dr. Suddeth and the arriving Iowa colony. The editor was more optimistic this time, having had ample opportunity to read news accounts of early dry land crop production and prospects, "If people can raise crops in that section, (near Lavina on Suddeth's farm), we should be able to do something in the crop line on our own fine lands which surround us on all sides."

The newest businessmen in the Musselshell, the real estate men, were far ahead of the editor. They were buying land in anticipation of reselling it for crop productions.

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1 The Musselshell News, January 17, 1907.

2 The Musselshell News, April 4, 1907.

3 The Musselshell News, August 8, 1907.
Two large ranch sales were negotiated in August and September. One sheep ranch of 40,000 acres, running 40,000 head of sheep was sold for $600,000, and a 26,000 acre ranch was sold for $400,000. These lands sold for $15 an acre and one of the buyers commented that his ranch purchase would bring in no less than twenty families during the next two to three years. The editor wrote after these land transactions:

Meagher county, too, may be fairly said to be getting into the line of progress, and in nearly every portion of it there have been very successful tests (of dry land farming). The great and fertile valley of the Musselshell will be found keeping up with the spirit of onward agriculture, and it will afford hundreds of homes for farmers, who will thrive and wax fat upon the harvests wrested from its rich areas. This will make for better farms, better homes, and bigger and better towns. AND HARLOWTON? WELL, HARLOWTON WILL BE RIGHT IN THE CENTER OF IT!¹

This optimism was not confined to the Musselshell area. Most of the state’s newspapers commented this breakdown of the large sheep and cattle ranches was an orderly transition, and one for the better. The Great Falls Leader stated:

This is a natural and most satisfactory development of the agricultural resources of the state. It is bound to continue, to the prosperity of all concerned. Gradually Montana land is becoming more valuable, and, as it is realized that what in the past has been regarded merely as grazing land is capable of producing excellent crops, and of returning satisfactory profits to the grower, the big ranches must go.²

The attitude of the Great Falls newsman was no different than that of many Montanans by this time. A wide-spread view was that the large ranches were too large. Too much land was being used only for

¹The Musselshell News, September 12, 1907.
²The Musselshell News, September 19, 1907.

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grazing sheep and cattle. Colonization of the state would do much to help it grow and prosper. Further, the experiments with dry land farming by men like Dr. W. X. Suddeth at Lavina and Paris Gibson of Great Falls and the countless examples of "dry landers" in the Dakotas were proof of the possibilities of farming with little or no irrigation and a minimum rainfall. For those wary individuals who did not adhere to these reports, the Milwaukee, Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads had agricultural and publicity departments. The departments were spending large sums of money to prove the practicality of dry land farming in Montana. They proposed to populate the prairie land which had been considered of no worth beyond livestock grazing.¹

Montana, long suffering from the plight of the ranchers, took to concept of dry land farming as though a germ of truth, long dormant, was finally being realized. The virgin soils of the grazing lands were ready to unfurrow bountiful harvests for all.² Dry land farming was as

¹Dry land advertising by all of the various agencies followed the same general sequence of personal testimonies, homestead laws, laudatory descriptions of the area, prices of land, several maps and pictures of farm homes, grain fields and sturdy farm families. Note Sam Teagarden, The Land of Opportunity (Harlowton: The Musselshell News, 1908); Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. HOMESTEAD DAYS: Government Homesteads and How to Secure Them. (Chicago: Poole Bros., 1908); Great Northern Railway, Briefe von Farmern die Ansassing sind auf den fruchtbaren Lande­eien von Montana und Washington an der Great Northern Railway. (Chicago n.p., n.d.); Siegfried Michelson, Promotional Activities of the Northern Pacific Railroad’s Land and Immigration Departments, 1870-1902: A Case Study of Commercial Advertising in the Nineteenth Century, (Unpublished Master's dissertation, University of Minnesota 1940); Mary Wilma Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1957).

²Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, MONTANA: Its Resources and Opportunities (Chicago: Poole Bros. Railway Printers, September, 1912), Cover. This was the best-known pamphlet cover devised by the Milwaukee Railroad. It was a multi-colored picture of a farmer plowing through a map of the Great Plains, especially through the route of the Milwaukee. In the wake of the plow, gold coin pieces overflowed the banks of the plowed furrows.
quickly accepted and adopted in Montana as in other states. The opening of the public domain by the enlarged Homestead Act and the buying of the large ranches by syndicates for resale in smaller farm tracts, opened thousands of acres of Eastern Montana to small farmers.

The Billings Gazette commented on the dry land farming products at every county fair in Montana in 1907 and decided "that dry land farming is bound to be one of the chief industries of the state."¹

The Musselshell News chronicled the continuous reports of the fine successes scored by dry land farmers during the summer of 1907 and added:

... What may be accomplished by the intelligent application of industry and modern methods of dry soil culture in Montana is of peculiarly pertinent interest to the people of the great Musselshell country. Not anywhere else out-of-doors is there bench land of greater fertility, nor of greater productive possibilities; nowhere does the precipitation of moisture come at a more favoring season. All that is lacking here is an appreciation that measures up to present opportunities.²

With the new year of 1908, the opportunities were even more apparent than before. In the second issue of January, the editor told of the recent purchase by one of Harlowton's founding fathers, A. C. Graves, of one of the oldest ranches in the Musselshell Valley.³

This purchase ominously marked the changing land conditions of the Musselshell. With the approach of the tracks toward Harlowton, the Milwaukee announced its intentions for the immediate area:

¹The Musselshell News, October 24, 1907.
²Ibid.
³The Musselshell News, January 9, 1908.
Cheap colonists rates (will be available) as an added inducement for people to come to Montana . . . . For the last several years the commercial organizations of the west and the agents of the land companies have been engaged in publicity work, advertising to the people of the east of the advantages of this part of the country. They have been sowing the seed, and the harvest is now forthcoming.¹

Harlowton businessmen were most enthused by the promised harvest planned by the Milwaukee Railroad. In the middle of January, 1908, the Musselshell Valley Business Men's Association was organized to assist in the harvest. The purpose of the group, according to the editor, was "to interest all people in the growth and development of the area so that there might be united, intelligent and systematic work carried on in that behalf."² The organizers included, among others, the local jeweler, several saloon owners, all the real estate men, two lawyers, the banking interests, the editor and the two general store owners. Over fifty men joined the group. The local fervor was so strong the women of the community started an auxiliary club to work for town improvements. But it was the men who pushed the area for the homesteader. They began to call their organization the Harlowton Boosters Club.

The boosters publicized the Musselshell Valley with determination. They advertised in a number of Montana and out-of-state newspapers.³ Special emphasis was centered upon the fine land in the Valley and the potential growth of the area and the towns with the completion of the

¹The Musselshell News, January 16, 1908.  ²Ibid.
³A notable example of their advertising campaign was the three-page spread in The Evening Times, Grand Forks, North Dakota, Monday, February 1, 1909, pp. 2, 4 and 7. The headline read, "Harlenton, Montana pride of the Musselshell Valley. A Land in the Region of the Sunshine and Plenty—the place where the investor has the opportunity to enrich himself."
Milwaukee. Representatives of the club were sent to Washington, D. C., to appear before a congressional committee to argue the need of a government land office at Harlowton. They were also instrumental in capitalizing the new State Bank of Harlowton for $50,000 and in gathering a number of local produce items for the Milwaukee's dry farming exhibit cars which were being readied for publicity tours of the eastern states.

On March 9, 1908, the first through train connecting Harlowton with the East arrived in the town, now grown up to an estimated 400 people. The editor greeted the railroad's arrival with a most optimistic note. "And so it has come to pass that through passenger and freight trains are a feature of life in the great Musselshell valley! What growth, what prosperity, what a splendid future this portends."\(^1\)

This line of reasoning overwhelmed the businessman of Harlowton with more emotionalism than fact. To a great extent it was helped by the falling livestock market and the arrival of the Milwaukee. At the same time, local people were anxious to have their region grow and prosper and develop with the rest of the country. In simplest terms, Montana wanted to get out of the past and grow up to the Midwest example. The railroad and the Federal Government looked at Montana

\(^1\)The Musselshell News, February 20, 1908.
with rose-colored glasses and asked, "Why not?" Most Montanans answered in this same vein.

Harlowton businessmen started their own advertising agency in organizing the Harlowton Boosters Club. This group was founded to advertise the Musselshell area in Montana and eastern state newspapers. The local editor felt the advertising was doing a notable service in presenting the "legitimate resources" of the Musselshell and ended his editorial with the heart of the reasoning underlying the advertising, "What we need more than anything else is a few hundred practical farmers to settle up our agricultural lands." 2

The Boosters invited the nearest Milwaukee Railroad experimental farm expert to speak at one of their meetings. Dr. W. X. Suddeth reviewed the recent changes in land ownership and predicted that the Musselshell and its various towns would have "a fine future." He congratulated the people of the area on their fortunate geographic location on the mainline of the transcontinental railroad, which, he said, "was the greatest

1 Senator Joseph Dixon, Montana, had the more realistic view of Major John Wesley Powell on the settlement of the West when he proposed his amended homestead bill. The Musselshell News, December 26, 1907. "The Homestead law which has played a great role in the settlement of the country was admittedly devised for application to the fertile and well-watered plains of the Middle West. Its authors never supposed that the arid lands of the far West would ever be settled, and consequently no provisions were ever made for them in the bill. To impose the same limitations and restriction in the arid land district of Montana as are applied to the bountiful, watered lands of the Mississippi basin is a manifest injustice." Even the Enlarged Homestead Act, providing 360 acre homesteads, wasn't practical on the dry prairies. In most cases, the Timber Culture Act and Desert Land Act proved to be as impractical.

2 The Musselshell News, April 16, 1907.
colonizer and business builder of all the great continental transportation lines." 

As he left the meeting the Lavina experimental farmer met a group of Wisconsin and Illinois land buyers in Harlowton, and proceeded to take them on a tour down the Milwaukee route to this Lavina farm.

Even with Dr. Suddeth's bright forecasts many Harlowton men were cautious of all-out backing of this farming technique too readily. The next meeting of the Musselshell Valley Business Men's Association was devoted to the livestock interests. At that time, the association met with a number of ranchers from Eastern Meagher County to discuss the possibilities of a wool warehouse and a centrally-located sheep shearing plant at Harlowton to bolster local fortunes.

Within the month, however, the Association was set straight on the railroad's plans for Harlowton and the Musselshell. A group of Milwaukee officials came to town to inspect the railroad building and to determine how Harlowton was adapting to the railroad. Businessmen up and down main street were urged not only to maintain their association but also to strengthen it for further town building. The Harlowton editor noted the advice of the railroad officials as he reported, "those towns along the line which the soonest demonstrate a quick and lively sense of their opportunities will be the first to receive our assistance. But we shall not be able to waste any time on drones, individually or collectively." 

By April, the future of Harlowton was assured to be dependent upon

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1 The Musselshell News, January 30, 1908.
2 The Musselshell News, February 20, 1908.
colonization of settlers. Louis Penwell, a major ranchowner and more recently a buyer and seller of ranches for land syndicates, announced from his Helena office the purchase of two ranches in the Musselshell Valley for $125,000. His purchases were followed by those of a number of eastern buyers and syndicate representatives. The remaining ranchers were left pondering their future existence in the Musselshell by these acquisitions of neighbors' lands and the results of the Murphy trial at Helena.

The News editor had a small page three story in April, 1908, reporting that a number of Musselshell Valley ranchers were at the capital city attending the trial of Chas. T. Murphy for illegally fencing the domain. \(^1\) Heretofore the domain had been endless grazing land for livestock herds. With legal suits like the one against the rancher Murphy, the government was reaffirming its ownership of the domain, the end of free range, and the opening of free homestead lands on a grand scale. The ranchers found the trial results unrealistic in terms of their use of Montana lands.

\(^1\)The Musselshell News, April 9, 1908.
The open range era was through. Many ranchers began to sell out, most notable the sheepmen who had used the domain for considerably more grazing than the cattlemen.\footnote{Several local news items help to answer the interesting side-light as to how the local rancher reacted to the changing complexion of local land conditions. "Mr. Pirrie, the well-to-do sheep man of Rothiemay, was in the city last Friday on business, and informs us he has 200 acres of oats that stand 4 feet high . . . . Mr. Pirrie is one of the sheep men who realize that this country is on the verge of settlement, and he has made up his mind that as long as it is sure to come, at the proper time he will divide his ranch holdings into small tracts and sell them to the incoming settlers." \textit{The Musselshell News}, August 21, 1908.}

The Musselshell News editor, calling himself "The Booster of the Musselshell," felt the verdict a just one and began to expound the area's possibilities with greater intensity in each succeeding issue. Like most of the journalists of the homestead period, and especially those economically dependent upon homesteading, he became overwhelmed with his own rhetoric and ability to fashion descriptive passages, to the point where he believed them truthful. He viewed the Musselshell in terms of a garden spot.

The Harlowton business community also watched the results with

Perry G. Moore was one of the first ranchers in the Musselshell Valley. He wintered stock in the valley in the early 1870's, ranching the same ground over the passing years. Interviewed in 1908, Moore said he had once seen corn spilled along the old freighter routes sprout up to be four or five feet high. The editor wrote: "he then predicted this country would some day be growing crops of a surprising nature." The editor continued with his customary description of the wonders of the Musselshell. He ended his articles by saying Moore was trying a little farming on his own and "unlike the average old-timer, his faith in dry land and dry farming is very great, and he admits his belief, that, if proper tillage is given the soil, as good, if not better results can be obtained thereby than by irrigation." \textit{The Musselshell News}, September 4, 1908. Perry Moore's faith in dry land might have been authentic at the time, but he and his son and grandson ranched and still ranch their land, not farm it, in the 1960's.
more than passing interest. With court rulings handed down against cattle-
men like Murphy, the lands around Harlowton were free for the price of a
$3 filing or for sale at a moderate price. The Harlowton Boosters read
of the Murphy trial, watched the land syndicates buying and selling ranches,
and saw the rancher selling his lands or forming his own syndicate. The
Boosters began to envision greatness for their valley. To learn more,
the group invited Professor Thomas Shaw to give his learned opinion of
Eastern Meagher County.

Professor Thomas Shaw was a dry land farming expert for the Great
Northern and Milwaukee railroads. He had received his education in
agriculture and had taught in colleges in Canada and Minnesota. Joining
the land departments of the railroads during the early colonizing efforts,
Professor Shaw became an excellent public relations man for dry land
farming in Montana. Shaw came to Harlowton in the fall of 1908, visited
the local business people and tested the soil of the area. He reported
his findings in a national farming magazine, The Orange Judd Farmer. Shaw
was at his literary best when he noted in one paragraph:

... I can see no reason why this land, the larger portion of
which is open to entry as homestead land, may not be successfully
farmed without irrigation. ... I fail to see why the soil here
should not be made to grow good crops of winter wheat and rye,
or durum wheat and spletz, of all the small cereals. I fail
to see why it would not grow good crops of alfalfa and alfalfa
seed, in some seasons one cutting and in other seasons two. The
tillage of the land would not be difficult.\(^1\)

The editor wrote for his own editorial page after interviewing Professor
Shaw in Harlowton, "(He) was very impressed with the natural fertility of
the soil, and made the remark that the finest kind of crop would be

\(^1\)The Musselshell News, September 18, 1908.
When Professor Shaw was in the Harlowton area, he was driven by Model-T car over the buffalo grass benchlands of Eastern Meagher County by one of the local real estate men, A. C. Graves. Graves was one of the Harlowton Boosters, as were all the other real estate men of Harlowton in 1908, S. L. Hodges, Sam Teagarden and L. D. Glenn. They, too, were preparing for the flood of homeseekers.

Sam Teagarden prepared a pamphlet on the Musselshell Valley entitled, "The Land of Opportunity." The pamphlet described the excellent business openings in Harlowton and the vast sections of free government homestead lands and the newly-acquired ranchlands available for purchase. Among comments printed in the pamphlet were excerpts from The Musselshell News and Professor's Shaw's analysis of the area's soils. Teagarden stressed the great possibilities for settlement in this the last great open country of the West, including personal testimonies of the early experiments of dry land farmers who had already made the grazing land yield rich grain harvest along the Musselshell.

Eastern Meagher County had been excellent stock country, most recently for sheep. The Musselshell Valley had thousands of acres of open grazing land, land which was part of the public domain, the Northern Pacific land was interlaced with a number of mountain fed streams which adequately watered cattle and sheep through most of the year. In the winter the ranchers moved their stock closer to the Musselshell River and the creek

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1. The Musselshell News, September 18, 1908.

2. In 1906, Meagher County had 234,888 sheep and 26,787 cattle. In 1908, the county had 168,560 sheep, a loss of 28% in a two-year period. State Board of Equalization, Annual Report, 4th Annual Report, pp. 50 and 58, and Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 11th Biennial Report, 1907-08, p. 133.
bottoms where the stock could be fed through the winter and trees were plentiful and ample protection for the stock and home ranch buildings. Along these bottom lands, the greatest tonnage of hay was raised and stacked in the fields for the winter feeding. The earliest families in the Musselshell had settled along the river. For the most part, those ranchers selling out were sheepmen who had settled along the smaller more erratic streams and consequently were pressed into a much greater reliance on nature's wiles.¹

The land available for homestead settlement in Eastern Meagher County was formerly used by cattle and sheepmen to graze their herds. Very little of it had been plowed or used for crops. In addition, much of it had been overgrazed to the extent that ranchers had found it imperative over the passing years to raise more hay for their herds or cut their herds down because of the diminishing grasses. This land, for years considered only in terms of limited use for stock grazing, was now suddenly viewed in terms of a "veritable paradise" of virgin soil, waiting only for the plow to yield bountiful harvests.

In the Harlowton area, the transition from exclusive stock country to all-out farming was a rather orderly, though abrupt period of rearrangement for the land and the people. With more and more railroad publicity and countless news stories and conversations among business and ranching people, public opinion adjusted readily and easily. Settlement of the

¹The W. A. Hedges and P. I. Moule sheep ranches were both located near the later established homestead communities of Hedgesville and Nihill. The Swimming Woman Creek was the only stream passing through their area. These ranchers had grazed their sheep over much of the unfenced public domain bordering their holdings. The Hedges and Moule ranches were the first sold; there were to be many others.
area was considered in terms of necessity. Most people, especially the younger business people, reasoned:

We had to adjust to the changing times. The large ranches and their hoarding of the ranges was an economic concept which had outlived itself. We though farming and settlement would make Montana and the Musselshell grow in the same way as the Midwest. And most recently, we had seen the example of the Dakotas.¹

In the early summer of 1908, the already poor wool market collapsed. Wool clips sold at fifteen and sixteen cents, when conservative estimates for the year had been at least eighteen cents a pound. Prospects for the Musselshell that summer were for an expected record of 5,000,000 pounds of wool.² Sheepmen, with two poor market years immediately behind them, were faced with prospects of financial ruin. With the peak production of wool, sheepmen could not hold their clips for any length of time hoping to catch the market at a high point. Added to their woes, prices offered would not handle the incurred debts of most of them.

The news release of the Bowers Brothers of Oka selling their 150,000 pound clip at seventeen cents appeared on one page of the Harlowton newspaper. On the next page, the sale of the Bower Brothers' Ranch was reported. Nineteen thousand sheep and $300,000 were involved. This ranch was the eighth purchased in Montana by the Penwell Family at this time.³ Ranchmen could not contend with three continuous years of low

¹Interview with James Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, November 15, 1965.
²The Musselshell News, May 7, 1908.
³The Musselshell News, July 9, 1908. Ironically, the foundations for the wool warehouse and loading docks were poured during this week. The Harlowton Boosters Club had backed the wool warehouse in addition to its colonization work.
prices. For the easiest and most economical remedy, Penwell Ranches or other of the numerous monied land syndicates were ready to pay a cash price for the commodity they most desired for other uses - land.

From several aspects this land was ideally suited for the production of dry land crops. Nearly all of Eastern Meagher County had flat benchlands, with an occasional stream meandering through the middle of the open country. To be sure, the season was short, but had ample spring rains and hot, dry weather for the growing months of July, August and early September.

The Penwell Ranch Company, managed by Lewis Penwell of Helena, was a ranch holding company. The company owned a number of Montana ranches, each one under a separate company name. As the Penwell Family purchased each ranch, officers were named, usually including one of the Penwells in a titular position. The other officers were chosen from among the prominent Montana stockholders, the former ranch owner and members of land syndicates. In the Harlowton area, the company made its first purchase in September, 1908, with the acquisition of the fifteen thousand acre Basin Livestock Ranch. This ranch, added to the largest Penwell Ranch in the area, the Minnecook Land & Livestock Company, with its seventeen thousand acres of deeded land and a like acreage of leased land, gave the Penwell Ranches nearly ten miles of the best ranching lands in the Musselshell Valley. A portion of the Basin livestock company in the neighborhood of the homesteading area near the Judith Gap was sold soon after its purchase to an Illinois syndicate. Another two thousand acres of the same ranch was contracted to another purchasing firm and between the two sales, the company planned to pay its stockholders about sixty per cent profit on their investment for one year.

The P. I. Moule Sheep Ranch involved a sale of thirteen thousand acres on Careless Creek and Swimming Woman Creek, twenty-five miles northeast of Harlowton. This property was managed by H. J. Giltinan and bordered the McQuitty Land Company. This eight thousand, two hundred acre ranch was the former W. A. Hedges Ranch and the company officers included several Harlowton businessmen and area ranchers. Its location surrounded the homestead town of Hedgesville on the Billings & Northern Railroad. A colonization company purchased the Giltinan and McQuitty properties and immediately settled, in part, by Dutch farmers from the Netherlands. The townsite of Hedges also became the property of the new company in the same transaction, by an agreement of Penwell Ranches and the Great Northern Railroad. Together, the four Penwell Ranches in the Musselshell Valley ran 45,000 head of sheep, and the total Penwell acreage in the Musselshell was about 55,000 acres. The herds were being disposed of as...
As early as the 1880's small amounts of grain had been raised along the river in the Martinsdale and Big Elk areas, mainly to provide feed for horses. The Van Camps, Perry Moore and the Smith Brothers had grown several acres of grain during most summers since they had arrived.\(^1\) The grain was irrigated during the summer and produced well. Still it was raised for the use on the home ranch, not for market.

In 1905, E.S. Grant, the ranch manager of the W. A. Hedges Ranch, near the old Billings-Fort Benton stage stop of Yale, had planted Turkey Red wheat with a seed drill during the fall. Sheep had managed to get into the field during the next summer, but even with their tramping, the field, in spite of a severe hail, produced 32 bushels to the acre. The wheat was sold for a dollar a bushel, marking the first reported commercial sale of Eastern Meagher County wheat to someone other than a neighboring buyer.\(^2\)

readily as buyers could be located. A change in the use of this land was essential to the company for quick profit. The ranches were sold to various land syndicates and individual buyers or groups interested in cutting up the ranches as rapidly as possible for incoming settlers. (Material for this resume of the Penwell Ranch Company came from numerous news articles in The Meagher Republican, White Sulphur Springs, 1906-1908, and The Musselshell News, Harlowton, 1906-1909.) Locally, the Penwell people were looked upon in a favorable light. One reporter miraculously evolved from the day of the few owners of extensive ranches, controlling miles of open range to the era of the small farmer upon every one hundred and sixty or three hundred and twenty acres. The credit for this remarkable change must be given to the two railroad companies, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the B. & N. (Billings & Northern). They have been carrying on for the past year an extensive and aggressive advertising campaign through the states of the middle west, exploiting the advantages of Montana . . . . Credit must also be conceded to the men of far-sighted business ability who have secured these large tracts and are turning them at the right time to parties able to carry on the work of colonization." The Musselshell News, July 9, 1909.

\(^1\)Interview with James Moore, Twodot, Montana, December 21, 1964.

\(^2\)The Musselshell News, April 30, 1908.
Into this area the Great Northern Railroad built a branch line in the summer of 1908. The branch, called the Billings & Northern Railroad, connected the major cities, Great Falls and Billings. It passed through the Judith Gap, crossing eastern Meagher County diagonally, northwest to southeast.

Townsites were located at points designated as New Ubet, Judith Gap, Nihill and Yale, the latter name soon being changed to Hedgesville. Each of the towns was located on the benchland near the recently sold Hedges Ranch and P. I. Moule Ranch. At these points the Billings & Northern conducted town sales for land buyers and speculators, built water towers, sidetracks and depots. The towns were built on sheeplands which had been established as early as 1879 and 1882.

At the time of the sales, the Harlowton editor passed over the poor local sheep prices with the simple explanation, "there is just no demand." Instead he editorialized on the new prospects of dry land farming as a catch-all cure of the area's ills. "Prosperity is gradually returning over the entire country . . . and those towns dependent upon the farmer will continue to do well." The Harlowton editor summed up the feeling of most people as he chronicled the sale of two of the largest sheep ranches to a South Dakota land syndicate in 1909.

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1The Musselshell News, May 21, 1908 and The Musselshell News, June 18, 1908. The Moule Ranch of 13,500 acres was sold to H. G. Giltinan, White Sulphur Springs, for $130,000. The Hedges option for his ranch of 7,500 acres went to J. H. Charters, Lewistown businessman. The Penwell Ranch Company was connected with both purchases.

2Ibid.

3The Musselshell News, May 28, 1908.

4The Musselshell News, June 11, 1908.
No business transaction of the last few months will have more immediate and direct effect upon the welfare of Harlowton than the sale of the Shaw and Fitzpatrick ranches. All the land in these two large tracts will always be tributary to Harlowton. A town cannot be supported by ten or a dozen large ranches, if there is only one family on each ranch. But when two ranches ... are cut up into small farms of from 160 to 320 acres with a family on each it necessarily means a tremendous increase in business in the town.

The farming towns commented that summer of 1908 in the Musselshell. The first of the communities was Judith Gap, nineteen miles north of Harlowton. It was located within the historic natural opening, the Judith Gap, between the Little Belt and Snowy mountains. The Judith Basin Valley was to the north and the Musselshell to the south. The townsite was established on a hillside with rolling benchlands facing north and south for endless miles. For Jim Hill's Great Northern, the area looked like a natural business boom possibility.

The Billings & Northern Railroad built a single track into Judith Gap, in the late summer of 1908. Sam W. Small and William Bills, both originally of Minneapolis, Minnesota, arrived within days of the track laying. These two men were townsite agents for the railroad. Small was a newspaperman and Bills, a lawyer. They were the ideal homestead combination. Small was to conduct the advertising and write the glowing reports of Judith Gap. Bills was to purchase sheeplands and provide legal advice for the interested land syndicates. The Harlowton editor noted the arrival of the two men with little fanfare.

'The Musselshell News, May 7, 1909.'
S. J. Small, a newspaperman, came up from Roundup yesterday, together with C. B. Witter and Louis Penwell, in the latter's car, and left this morning for the Judith Gap, where he intends to erect a building and enter the journalistic field. In company with a lawyer to look after that end, the townsite will be handled for the Great Northern folks and other real estate business that may come their way. We have great expectation for Judith Gap as a coming town, but the newspaper business, at this time, we would gladly see in the hands of Mr. Small in preference to our own. Here's wishing to the future success of the enterprise.¹

Judith Gap, like the homesteader himself, was not in the area one day and in business the next. One small main street marked the town as readily as the hastily constructed home at the corner of a quarter section designated a homesteader. The town sprang up within days of the town lot sales. The first sale of lots at Judith Gap was made July 28, 1908 and the first permanent building was completed within a month.²

The Great Northern Railroad made a substantial investment in the community in the first three months of its existence. A total of $71,725 was invested in the new town of Judith Gap to build a water system, depot, coal bunker, warehouse, office building and roundhouse.³ Harlowlton's editor visited the new town several months after its start. In addition to the railroad properties, Judith Gap had two saloons, a blacksmith shop, livery stable, two general stores, cafe, 50-room hotel, three rooming houses, barver shop, and a building for the newspaper underway. The editor was duly impressed when he wrote:

¹The Harlowlton News, July 30, 1909.
²Judith Gap Journal, November 20, 1908.
³The Musselshell News, September 11, 1908.
Judith Gap has a future, and is sure to be a town of note, at no distant date. One cannot fail to see when he considers the ideal location, the surrounding country and the expensive and substantial character of the work the railroad has put in.¹

S. J. Small, the editor of the Judith Gap Journal, published his first issue November 20, 1908. The Journal had several half-page ads announcing recent land developments and potential business opportunities for the railroad-homestead town. Editor Small was most optimistic as he wrote on page one, volume one, number one:

The townsite of Judith Gap is beautifully located on the west slope of the Big Snowy Mountains, midway between Great Falls and Billings. Tributary to it is an extensive territory, practically undeveloped, comprising some of the finest agricultural lands in Montana. During the past eight months settlers have been locating almost daily in the vicinity of this town, and now the unappropriated government lands surrounding the town for several miles have been taken up, and next summer farming operations will be begun and carried on with a vim characteristic of Western push and enterprise. The fertility of the soil, which has been proven, and the dense settlement of the surrounding country will make Judith Gap the natural trading point for a large territory, insuring its rapid growth and permanent prosperity.²

The railroad helped to establish a bank, grain elevator and several store in hastily-constructed frame buildings overlooking the miles of endless Buffalo grass.

Judith Gap was the largest homestead town in the Musselshell, but the others were just as active. The smaller towns, New Shawmut, 79, Milhili, Living Springs, Rothiemay, Japan, Cruse, Franklin, Durand City, Oka and Irene, served their own local community needs. Each one had a post office, a general store and a saloon. Most had a one-room schoolhouse and a lumber yard. They were small, but long on optimism.

¹The Musselshell News, September 11, 1908.

²Judith Gap Journal, November 20, 1908.

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As the homesteaders continued to come into eastern Meagher County during the peak years of 1911-15, each one of the towns had visions of being another Harlowton. The most optimistic viewed their towns in terms of a future Billings, Great Falls or Helena.

Optimism played a vital role in the development of Hedgesville. Hedgesville was the other major homestead town within Meagher County. Within several months of its sister town, Judith Gap, Hedgesville, grew up around a lonely depot fifteen miles south and east. Hedgesville was on the track of the Billings & Northern, replacing the old stage stop of Yale and its combination stage station, saloon, general store and post office. For many years, Yale had served a large number of sheep ranchers. Now the only semblance of the past was the name Hedgesville for the railroad's townsite.¹

Hedgesville, like neighboring Judith Gap and the other homestead towns of eastern Meagher County which grew up in the next three years, started in the traditional railroad sponsored manner. Hedgesville's first building was the small Billings & Northern's railroad depot. A saloon was the first business interest in the town. Angus McKay, a Scotsman most recently from Garneil, twenty miles away, brought his family to the prairie depot in the summer of 1908. He set up a tent, used part for living quarters and sold drinks in the other half of the tent. Bill Van Dyke established another early business, a livery stable.¹

¹W. A. Hedges was a son of Cornelius Hedges, Montana's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, a U. S. District Attorney and Attorney General. His son was a graduate of Yale and due to poor eyesight, necessarily took to an outdoor life. His sheep ranch was one of the earliest in the area. Homesteaders always called the town Hedges. Hedgesville was the name provided by the railroad.
He had a "landslide business" during the fall of 1908.¹ Hedgesville began to grow in 1909 when the railroad added a hotel and coal dock and made the fledgling town a stop on its Billings-Great Falls run.

To speed up settlement in the area, Louis Penwell of Helena was hired. The Penwell Ranches took over the townsite from the Billings & Northern Railroad and advertised a townsite sale in conjunction with their own advertising of the Hedges and Moule sheep ranches.

The Hedges and Moule ranches were set up under two different companies, the Giltinan-Penwell Ranch Company and the McQuitty Land Company. The officers of the two firms were from Harlowton, Lewistown and White Sulphur Springs. After considerable negotiations with potential land buying syndicates and individual purchasers, the two companies formed a large colonization group.

Marion Small, brother of Sam J. Small, editor and publisher of the Judith Gap Journal, helped to establish the town of Hedgesville and was sincere enough in his belief in the community's potential to build his own homestead newspaper plant. He called his paper The Hedges Herald. His first issue came off the press in time to proudly proclaim that "no less than two hundred families of Holland Dutch" were to move into the Hedgesville area during that fall of 1909. To carry out the sale, the local owners were issuing $350,000 worth of stock for the total 24,100 acre tract.² Readers of the paper were

¹Mrs. Elizabeth M. Barrett, "Hedgesville Country" (notes in possession of Dave Giltinan, Judith Gap, Montana).

²The Hedges Herald, October 19, 1909.
counseled to buy land immediately since nearly all the stock had been subscribed for by the industrious Dutch. The Dutch colonists were expected to raise sugar beets as one of their chief industries. The editor predicted the community would soon have a sugar beet factory and become a strong rival to the irrigated beet farms near Billings.

In actuality, however, the Dutch who did come to the Hedgesville community were much different additions than had been forecast. Their experience was typical of many misled homesteaders.

After the Penwell Family Ranches purchased the sheep ranches bordering the town of Hedgesville, a colonization group with the auspicious title of Montana-Holland Colonization Company was organized. Harry Giltinan of White Sulphur Springs and a Mr. McCann of Lewistown handled the company workings. Their first step was to enlist the help of a Catholic priest, Father Van Heuval, a Dutchman by origin who had come to America and had parishes in North Dakota and Montana, most recently in the Judith Basin. Giltinan and McCann paid the expenses to return Father Heuval to his native North Brabant, Holland, near the Belgium border. Father Heuval visited many of his old friends, encouraging them to make the move to Hedgesville. He gave glowing reports on the recent dry land farming successes in Montana and told of the great areas of land being offered for sale to interested farmers. Five families and three bachelors answered Father Heuval's call and decided to move to Hedgesville.

The families came in two groups, the first arriving in Hedgesville in the fall of 1909, the second in the spring of 1910. They traveled by ship, landed in New York and crossed the rest of the continent by
train. The families arrived with little money and nothing more than their immediate personal possessions. As the two groups arrived, Giltinan and McCann encouraged the families to buy land along the Swimming Woman Creek. Two families, the VanderVorts and the Willemses contracted to pay $40 per acre for 160 acres apiece, with about half the land irrigable. The Montana-Holland Colonization Company agreed to finance the families, providing four horses and a minimum of farming equipment. The two families stayed on this land for two years when they made the decision to follow the example of the others. The VanderSloots, Joseph Schriks, Andrew Collen, Koos, Kees VerMeer, John Spithoven and the one Belgian, Louis Reypens, had filed on homestead land. The two families who had purchased land for $40 an acre, like the others, did not know of the Homestead Law when they first arrived. The others learned of it after the two families bought land and before they had decided which land to take from the company. In the ensuing ten years, the small Dutch community worked their lands together and farmed as best they could. These were the only Dutch coming to the United States under the auspices of the Montana-Holland Colonization Company. The two hundred families expected by Editor Marion Small never materialized.

Small boosted Hedgesville in all of the early issues of the Herald. He wrote:

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1 Interview with John Willems, Harlowton, November 27, 1965. Mr. Willems said Father Heuval spoke of Hedgesville in most glowing terms and "whatever a priest said must be true." The experiences of these few families fits the example of many others, in Eastern Meagher County and elsewhere.

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Hedges (Hedgesville) has the brightest future of any of the new towns along the Great Northern Railroad between Great Falls and Billings. It has a larger tributary farming country than any of them, and the richest. It is the nearest railroad point to a rich gold mine that is rapidly being developed; it has streams traversing its tributary farming country that are sufficiently large to irrigate a large portion of the country, if irrigation is ever necessary; it is receiving hundreds of the best farmers in the world to people its vast prairies and make this rich soil produce millions or gold dollars; it has the best climate in the state, and clear sparkling water that cannot be surpassed on earth. Hedges is a good place to come if you want a home or a business opening that will make you rich in either event. You will be warmly welcomed by the most hospitable people to be found in the United States.¹

Marion Small could well have believed every word he wrote. In one issue of the Journal, Marion's brother Sam quoted Professor Thomas Shaw, The Great Northern agriculture expert as saying Judith Gap and Hedgesville had black and brown soil so fertile that the twelve to nineteen inches of normal rainfall was no detriment at all to the growing conditions of any grain crop.²

¹The Hedges Herald, October 19, 1909.

²Judith Gap Journal, November 20, 1908. Shaw had ample opportunity to visit and encourage the efforts of the Small Brothers. He visited in the area many times.
CHAPTER IV
THE HOMESTEADERS

Homestead settlement in eastern Meagher County began with the completion of the two railroads crossing Central Montana, the Milwaukee in the spring of 1908 and the Billings & Northern six months later. The railroads opened the broad plains land of the Musselshell Valley to settlement on the free public domain and the vanishing ranch lands. Following the pattern of all the areas of the Great Plains, settlers came from numerous backgrounds and many states. Midwesterners made up the largest single group and more often than not were farmers before they came to the West.¹ The exceptions to this pattern, however, do not allow a typing of background of the homesteaders. In simplest terms, the homesteaders were ordinary people, seeking new homes and new leases on life. The open plains offered them a place to go to find answers to their dreams and hopes.

Homesteaders came to eastern Meagher County to build homes of the free or cheap, unbroken, virgin prairie land. These people had been swayed by their own dreams, the influencing propaganda of the railroads, and

¹Judith Gap Journal, November 20, 1908. In a list of thirty of the first homesteaders in the Judith Gap area two were listed from midwest states, four from the Gallatin Valley of Montana and the remainder from western states. The Nihill community had ten families from South Dakota, three from Iowa, and two each from Minnesota and Michigan, and one from Germany. The Hedgesville area had the same types of background, in addition numbers from Holland and Belgium. See Duane Lammers "Silver Sagebrush," term paper for Dr. Merrill Burlingame Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana, winter quarter, 1965, pp. 2-23.
land syndicates and local businessmen. Newspaper editors, land experts, real estate men, and ordinary people just like themselves promised a land of wealth and opportunity.¹

Thanks to the excursionist and immigration car rates of the Milwaukee and Great Northern railroads, the homeseeker came to the Musselshell in great numbers and at a minimum of expense. At the depot at Harlowton or Judith Gap or Hedgesville, the homeseeker stepped off the train into the bright sunshine. He saw a small town and prairie lands stretching for miles to the mountains in the distance. He bought a newspaper at the station and read part of a large front page story of the recent visit of soil expert Professor Thomas Shaw. The article proclaimed this land the finest in the world, so valuable in potash, humus and phosphorous that it could even be sold for fertilizer.²

Interrupted midway through this "scientific" soil analysis, the homeseeker was approached by a man introducing himself as a land locator. For a fee of twenty dollars, he promised to locate the homeseeker on the best piece of land in the Musselshell Valley.³

The homeseeker, alone or with his friends from the same town in a midwestern state, would climb into the car or buggy of the locator and drive through the main, and often only, street of the town and follow

¹For example, the Harlowton editor pointed out that "the Milwaukee has spent more than $50,000 on its literature concerning this district and tributary territory," and went on in the same article to twill of the joint role Harlowton businessmen and the railroad had taken together in promoting the community. The Musselshell News, August 6, 1908.

²Judith Gap Journal, November 20, 1908.

a long, straight dirt road into the country. The land man took the unknowing homeseeker out to view the agricultural lands in the vicinity which had yielded dry land crops a year before of twenty or thirty bushels to the acre. They continued their ride over the flat benchland, stopping again at a small shack in the middle of a large, open field. This was the home of another recent arrival. The men watched the horse-drawn plow unearth the grassland for the first time and the locator stopped the farmer, whom he had also located, and introduced the men. They spoke of the area, the soil, the climate, and last year's harvest on a neighboring quarter-section, and they likely found they were from the same area of Iowa. If the homeseeker had been unimpressed before, he was eager to settle in the Musselshell now.

Hastily departing, the locator and his homeseeker went to view the free land on the public domain. As the buggies of Model-T's bumped along over the prairie, the locator and the homesteader chose a location. They marked the spot on the map provided by the locator and started back to town. Now or later, the locator, who was also a real estate man, pointed to another tract of grassland nearby. This was the grazing land of the former ranchers. As the locator-realtor hastened to point out, this land was owned by the company he happened to represent, but was for sale at a moderate price. The homeseeker was encouraged to buy a tract, as prices would go up with more settlers arriving to settle up the free government land. The Easterner, impressed with the unbroken soil, the mountains in the distance, the talk with another homesteader and the realtor, decided to buy the additional tract to insure a rich return on his free-land investment. The realtor returned with the new
homesteader to town. For his own part, he was satisfied with another
day's service to his community, his firm and himself.

Helping the homeseeker find land was a major concern of business
for the entire community as the typical newspaper comment testifies:
"J. J. Hall has added an auto to his liver. He finds that it is neces­sary to supply the demand for more rapid travel among land men and has
purchased a 42-horsepower Rambler capable of carrying five or six passen­gers."¹ The realtor who maintained an office in the town, was an active
member of all worthwhile organizations to boost the area and was considered
a valuable asset to the locality. Some were scrupulous and others were
not. Regardless of their scruples (or lack of them) in business, their
role was an important one.²

Lewistown had the nearest land office to the Musselshell. The
homesteader had to travel to the Fergus County Seat to file his quarter
section with the government. On his trip to Lewistown via the old
Montana train, or the Milwaukee after 1909, he finished the local news­paper, and wrote a hurried note home telling his wife to start packing.
He also decided what items he would need to plant a crop before going
to the Midwest to gather his family and belongings, and to find several
neighbors to share an immigrant car to return to the Musselshell.

The railroads and the homesteaders changed the complexion of
Meagher County to a considerable extent. In essence, the railroads
opened eastern Meagher County to settlement whereas the western half of
the county was characterized by mountains and had only one major valley,

¹The Musselshell News, April 30, 1909.
²Howard, pp. 182-183.
Smith River. White Sulphur Springs, which had prophesized and begged for a railroad since the 1880's, was not satisfied until the Yellowstone Park and White Sulphur Springs railroad was built by the Ringling Bros. circus family in 1910. The lack of a railroad hampered settlements around White Sulphur Springs.

As the eastern railroads arrived in the early spring and the fall of 1908, the Musselshell Valley began to change. A combination of forces entered the complicated picture. The railroad, the fading livestock industry, the Federal Government, local people and the newly arrived land syndicates all joined forces at the same time. The homestead era was on. It was a phenomenon in the Musselshell because it was new and meant a land bonanza and an opportunity for the area to prosper and grow. The homesteaders changed the Musselshell as quickly as they arrived to build their clapboard one-street towns and their 12 X 20 shacks on the corner of a quarter section of prairie land.

For the most part, young men came out to the hastily constructed towns and the unbroken sod to seek their fortunes. They were eager and willing. They came to the Musselshell Valley in the hot stuffy railroad immigrant cars or joggled over muddy roads in their overloaded Model-T's. They gave little thought to the problems of establishing homes or plowing unbroken land. The young men planned to become rich.

In fact, everyone connected with homesteading in its early years was thought of as rich, in his own estimation and in the estimation of everyone else. The prairie land was looked upon in terms of money, prosperity, reward. The homesteader considered himself rich in having had the opportunity to pay a $3 filing fee and receiving 160 or 320 acres of fertile, unplowed, virgin land. The land syndicates, their
stockholders and their land men felt themselves rich because they had purchased the sheep ranches at low prices and would sell the land as smaller, individual plots for a much greater return on their original investment. The railroads planned to get rich by colonizing the land, carrying the carloads of grain and branching out in new directions and opening up more areas of rich land. The oldtimers, in and out of town, had to live with the prospects of change, or move up to the times and also profit. The new townspeople would profit doubly, selling goods to the homesteaders and filing on their own land as farmers. The rancher had to cut his herds, find new grazing lands on unappropriated government lands and take to farming. He might not have felt himself rich, but those around him viewed his large property with relish, for irrigated farming land for a new land scheme. The rancher could sell if he could not adapt.\(^1\)

The homesteader arrived with his few belongings, ready and anxious to re-establish or start a new home on the prairie. Some came with little more than their personal possessions; others had money and invested heavily in the necessary farm items when they arrived. Typical was the Beers family who settled around Judith Gap. Mr. and Mrs. Beers "arrived in full force with an immigrant (railroad) car, loaded with furniture, machinery, three horses, a cow and a lawnmower."\(^2\) Compared to many families, the Beers had a most enviable start.

Most homesteaders settled in time to plant a spring or winter crop;

\(^1\)Interview with James Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, November 15, 1965.

thus, the first homes were hastily constructed out of sheer necessity to hold back the elements. Others were not as lucky. Delano Antoine of Hedgesville, for instance, planted his first crop nearly two years after he arrived. He came to Hedgesville with no money and was forced to work for a neighboring rancher until he had enough to pay his filing fee, plant a crop and build a home.

In still another way the homesteaders had great difficulties. From the moment they set foot on their quarter-section or half-section of land, they had to contend with the elements. Foremost were the elementary problems—water, wood, and fuel. This basic contention with life was a lasting situation with the new settlers, wherever they settled on the plains and no matter how long they farmed their land.

There were few homesteaders along the Musselshell River. These lands were the best located and the ranchers who held on rather than selling to land syndicates after 1906 owned the land along the river. The first filings in the county were proximate to the small streams. Thus, most of the homesteaders were forced to file on land away from natural running water. Water was furnished by wells, usually dug by

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1Williamson, Oaks to Prairies, p. 63.

2Interview with James Lunney, November 15, 1965. Most of the settlement in this area was on the north side of the river. The homesteaders, in many ways, taking any type of land offered, felt the many eroded, pockmarked coulees and slopes south of the Musselshell incapable of becoming good farm land. This can further be attested to by the few applications for homesteads filed south of the Musselshell River.
the homesteader and his wife. Windmills were common in the area.\(^1\)

The well and windmill, for most homesteaders, provided all the available water, for the family, stock and the garden.

Distance, not the lack of timber, created the most serious problem facing the homesteaders in eastern Meagher County. The Crazy, Little Belts and Snowy mountains were within view, but up to forty miles from some of the dry land farmers. Lumber, so important for building fences and shelters, was at a premium. It had to be hauled for miles. Some homesteaders bought lumber from the sawmills and hired carpenters to build their buildings. Most cut their own wood and did their own carpentering through necessity.

Fuel came from wherever feasible and cheap. The Hedgesville area and several locations along the Musselshell River yielded a low-grade coal. Trees along the streams and cattle wastes were other sources. Most of the fuel, however, came from the forest lands and was gathered in several trips by the homesteader and his family with a horse-drawn wagon or two. Dependent as they were on the elements, the homesteaders struggled to plow the land, plant crops and build homes and communities.

Two of the homesteaders in the Hedgesville and Judith Gap areas were Delano Antoine and Frank Holmes. They are representative of the homesteaders of eastern Meagher County. Delano Antoine arrived in 1909. He rode the Montana Railroad from Lombard to Harlowton and Judith Gap, __________

\(^1\)Every homesteader had his own garden and a cow or pigs for food. The wildlife, however, often decided the food question for the year. Large herds of deer and antelope had always been found in the Musselshell. The herd population of both animals decreased rapidly, beginning to repopulate years later when the homesteaders had moved on. This information provided by interviews with a number of local homesteaders and David Lake, Harlowton, Montana, former forest ranger in the Harlowton, Martinsdale and Moore offices, September 24, 1965.

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departing from the train to "a veritable boom town, people were flocking in in droves to take out homestead claims." Antoine and his brother filed on adjacent claims near Hedgesville and immediately built a 12' x 20' cabin. The two brothers were short of money so were forced to forget homesteading and work on the Ubet Ranch as hay hands and cowboys to earn enough money to buy seeds and machinery. In 1911, Delano Antoine broke forty acres of land and put Scotch wheat into ten acres with flax in the other thirty. The yield that first fall was ten bushels of flax, bringing $2.50 a bushel and fifteen bushels of wheat per acre at $.75 a bushel.

The following year, 1912, the brothers purchased more machinery, horses and some cattle from the profits of the first year. They also continued to build up their farms with new buildings and fences. Delano Antoine married that same year and soon after her parents left their native Iowa and filed on a nearby tract. The families farmed the land until the drought period when they relinquished their holdings for delinquent taxes and moved to Idaho.

Frank Holmes was one of the early settlers in the Hedgesville country. He was a native of Missouri, but had lived most recently on a cattle ranch near Fargo, North Dakota, when he received reports from a friend who had moved to Montana and was working in a hotel at Harlowton. The friend wrote of the railroad coming through the Musselshell Valley and the opening of this vast region for settlement. Holmes and eleven other young people, several married ones included, and all in their twenties, made the move together. The group bought railroad tickets for Lewistown, the nearest land office to the Mussel-

1Williamson, p. 23. 2Ibid., p. 64.
shell. They chose their land on a map in the land office and paid their filing fee. Five of the men went together and hired a livery team for the forty-five who filed that year on Hedgesville Bench. Having arrived in March, the men worked together to plant their first crops. Holmes broke ten acres that spring, helped his neighbors and started to build a home, in addition to working at all the available odd jobs in the neighborhood during the winter. The next spring he returned to North Dakota and married the daughter of the rancher for whom he had been ranch foreman. He returned to Hedgesville with his bride and four horses and some machinery. To supplement their homestead, the young couple paid $300 to buy 240 acres from the Northern Pacific lands. Their farm was larger than most in the area but also entailed numerous problems. The couple was forced to earn more money to keep their homestead and ranch in operation. Mrs. Holmes taught at Hedgesville and the small one-room schools in the vicinity and Frank Holmes started a garage in Hedgesville. Unlike most of the homesteaders, the Holmeses continued their operation after the others had gone, building their ranch by buying homesteads and taking up homestead relinquishments. They finally sold out when they retired in the 1950's. When they left the area, four sheep and cattle ranchers had control of all the Hedgesville Bench.¹

An actual letter of one of the homesteaders, L. D. Glenn, who doubled as a land locator and lawyer, gives another view of the Musselshell River. Ironically, his original buildings were those of the old town of Merino, the stage stop replaced by Harlowton and the arrival of settlement.

¹Interview with Frank Holmes, Harlowton, Montana, December 21, 1964.
L. D. Glenn's description of his homestead was written up for and published in a brochure prepared by the Milwaukee Railroad with a number of other homesteaders' accounts of their life on the prairie lands.

October 5, 1911
Harlowton, Montana

To Whom It May Concern:

In the month of August, 1910, I filed upon a quarter section of land about three miles south of Harlowton, and I have farmed the same two seasons with very good results. I raised good crops of spring and winter wheat, corn, potatoes, buckwheat, flax, oats and all kinds of garden products the year of 1910, and in the month of May, 1910, I planted more than a hundred apple trees, some plum trees and two cherry trees. The orchard venture was more for an experiment than anything else, but I have now decided that fruit growing in this locality can, with very little effort and care by made profitable. I have planted 79 trees in my orchard out of the number planted that have grown nicely through two summers without irrigation and with little or no attention after planting. All my farming has been without irrigation and insofar as convenient I used scientific methods . . . .

I consider land here worth more than in Wisconsin, where I used to farm, and it does not cost one-half as much to farm Montana bench land successfully as it does to farm in Wisconsin. Even tobacco was raised here this year and matured on my plate.

My well is of a depth of 95 feet and the water is free of alkali and I am well pleased with the water.

I made proof on my homestead in January, 1911, and patent was received in July of this year. I would not dispose of my land here in exchange for a farm in the East, and I see no reason why it should not be worth at least $150 per acre within a few years. I never lived in a place where there was less sickness, more sunshine, and better prospects for the farmer who comes here prepared to cultivate the soil and do diversified farming and stock raising.

I trust this letter may answer many questions that are sure to come to the mind of a man looking for a new home. If I can be the means of answering any questions for our prospective newcomers, I will be only too glad to do so.

Yours very truly,

L. D. Glenn

1Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway, HOMESTEAD DAYS: Government Homesteads and How to Secure Them (Chicago: Poole Bros., 1912), n.p. The Milwaukee Railroad made a concerted effort to bring further homesteaders to join the Antoines and Holmeses. Their appeal was all-
The homestead history of Nihill is indicative of what happened to the homestead communities in the Musselshell. This community was started several miles west of Careless Creek on the Billings & Northern Railroad in 1908. It was first known as Bercail Siding. Prior to the railroad's arrival, several sheep ranchers were the only utilizers of the land. Charles Shanahan operated the only store in the area. The store was kept in his home, three miles west of the depot at Bercail Siding.

In 1909, a townsite buyer Pat Nihill, bought the land along the railroad siding and mapped out his town. He named the streets before anyone moved into the community. From this time it was known as Nihill. Immediately after purchasing the townsite, Nihill was reputed to have been offered $10,000 for the town by H. J. Giltinan, a Hedgesville land speculator.1

out and a very concerted effort. An example of The Musselshell News illustrates this. The Milwaukee Railway is interested in the development and settlement of this country, and in the work of attracting immigration, needs the active assistance of settlers already located here.

This section of country needs more farmers, dairymen, and stockmen. The new towns need more merchants, businessmen and professional men. There are opportunities for all.

Nothing appeals so strongly to a prospective settler in a new country as a letter from an actual resident giving details as to the crops raised, the yields, the prices, the climate, the cost of getting a start, the water and fuel supply and other information . . . . You have a splendid country, the soil is fertile, the climate good, and the chances for getting a start are much better here than they are in the thickly settled portion of the East.

You can help build up this country. If you have friends in the East try to interest them in locating here. I would like to have you write me about your personal experience since you located here.


1Lammers, p. 1.
Herman Mueller, Frank Howdle, Herman Heisen, Ed McBlain and Shorty Morse were the first homesteaders. They were from South Dakota. The prospective settlers landed at Harlowton April 26, 1909, unloaded their belongings, wagons and horses from several of the Milwaukee Railroad's emigrant cars, and filed their claims. The small wagon procession made a stop at Judith Gap for lumber, finally arriving at their homesteads late that same afternoon. The tracts were four miles from Nihill. This group built their cabins in the center of a section known as Turkey Hill. They were soon joined by other settlers. Their districts were known as Gospel Knowl, Fools Flat, Dancing Valley and Heavenly Hump.¹

M. Gayland and C. Shanahan built the first store building in Nihill in 1908. Later that year, a lumberyard and livery stable were constructed. In 1909, several stores, a blacksmith shop and a saloon were built. In 1910, a church was built in the town.² The first subscriptions for the construction totaled $117.50.³ A school was needed at the same time, so the church was used for both purposes. Miss Carrie Ullman Allen taught the first school for a salary of fifty-five dollars a month. Her pay included the janitorial work.

At the same time, taxpayers in District twenty-five of Meagher County had to vote on a bond issue to build a schoolhouse. The bond was for $2,500. This amount raised the local two mill levy to three mills. Prices listed for cedar shingles were $3.25 per square and a hundred pounds of nails for the same price. Advertisements were run in the Hedges.

Herald and Judith Gap Journal for bids. Three contracts were submitted. The contract was given to F. D. Firehammer, of Franklin, to furnish the material, and build a two-room school with two large cloak rooms and a full basement, for the sum of $2,725. In 1911 there were forty children in the district and twenty were of school age.

The new school was opened in 1912 for a full term. By 1921 there were fifty-six children on the census. Later it was necessary to teach the first year of high school. A horse-drawn bus was run east to bring the pupils in to school. During the winter a sled and a team of mules were needed. Several families came in by buggy or on horseback.

A Farmers Elevator was constructed in 1913 and a coal shed was added to it which did a good business. Still, many drove a four-horse team to Swimming Woman to get locally-mined coal for three dollars a ton. A creamery operated for several years and the railroad did a good local business with freight and passengers.¹

The Nihill unit of the Wheatland County Farm Bureau was organized in 1918. It was an active unit until the mid-1920's. Meetings were held once a month during the year. Activities included instructions and educational topics discussed by the county agent. Pest control programs were organized. These programs included ground squirrel baiting and grasshopper poison mixing and spreading. Juvenile clubs were also started for the younger children of the area. Adults and children were active in the home talent plays.²

A close bond existed between the homesteaders and the business people of the homestead towns. Most of the townspeople had filed their

¹The Harlowton Times, November 26, 1964. ²Lammers, p. 3.
own homestead claims. Economically, the towns were dependent upon the
homesteaders, and the homesteaders upon the towns. A marked distinction
between town and country was nonapparent, however. People considered
themselves members of the Hedges community, the Judith Gap community or
the Shawmut community. The schoolhouse was the center of the community,
whether locally or in the towns. For most people, it was the only community
building for meetings of the Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the basket
lunches and pie socials and holiday dances. Dances would attract people
from adjoining communities. Many traveled long distances, often at
considerable hardship, to gather with their neighbors and friends to talk
over the local news and weather. For example, skating parties south of
Hedgesville on Roberts Creek occupied the people in that area in the
winter. They would skate and sing around a roaring bonfire. In the
summer, parties were often held along the nearer streams. Supper was
served and dancing and singing lasted long into the night, ending with
"Sweet Adeline." Hay rides were another means of gathering the community
together.¹

Quilting bees, threshing days, wood sawings and rabbit hunts were
yet other ways of bringing neighbors together for work and play. For
example, at various times rabbits multiplied to an extent that measures
were deemed necessary to rid the menace. Families congregated from
everywhere in the community. While the women visited and children played,
the men divided into two teams and hunted rabbits.² The regular sports
intriguing most people were rodeos and baseball. Homesteaders usually

¹Mrs. Elizabeth M. Barrett, "Hedgesville Country" (notes in
possession of Dave Giltinan, Judith Gap, Montana).

²Williamson, p. 71.
watched or took a backseat to the experienced cowboys from the ranches along the Musselshell in riding and roping competition. In baseball, though, the homesteaders played a game with which they were familiar from their former homes. Baseball drew large crowds and was played with all-out endeavor. It pitted community against community, whether large or small.

In the summers, baseball dominated Sunday's recreation. Homesteaders piled their families in their wagons, automobiles, rode special railroad excursions or sauntered in on the plow horse or mule. Everyone went to the games to cheer for his favorite team, to have an outing and to get together with neighbors. The Montana Railroad ran special trains on Sundays for the players and fans. For example, Twodot played White Sulphur Springs in 1905. The railroad carried seventy-five passengers and charged a dollar for the round trip.\(^1\) Excitement increased after the arrival of the homesteaders. Many bets were waged on the outcome of the Sunday games and a number of fights broke out among the lively participants and spectators. Twodot's fine team of 1916 stands out as the sports' representative of Musselshell.

Most of the players on the Twodot team were homesteaders. Several local ranchers, a doctor, saloon keeper and several businessmen were also on the team. The Twodot games were played on a flat piece of ground on the edge of a farmer's field. On many Sundays a double line of Model-T's, wagons, buggies and horses circled the Twodot diamond. Throughout the homestead period, Twodot teams won a great percentage

\(^1\)The Meagher Republican, August 11, 1905 and The Meagher Republican, August 18, 1905.
of their games. But no team, Twodot or otherwise, ever completed an
undefeated season in the Musselshell Valley. In 1916, Twodot had a team
which won eighteen straight games. The wins were garnered during the
regular season but they were warmup games. Local fans considered the
winner of the tourney competition at the Meagher County Fair at Harlowton as winner of the Musselshell's world series. At fair time, the
total Musselshell population went to the two days of exhibitions, side-
shows and performances. Baseball dominated the fair, despite the many
other features.

Twodot, with high hopes of winning the competition, decided to
hire an outsider in place of their own cowboy pitcher, Herman "Kentuck"
Arnold. The "ringer," named Williams, was from another homestead town,
Roy, in the Judith Basin. He charged one hundred dollars for each game
pitched. Twodot felt Harlowton would offer the most competition so the
recruited pitcher was held back. Harlowton won its first game. Twodot,
anticipating little difficulty with Hedgesville, thought only of the
championship game with Harlowton. Hedgesville, a lightly-regarded team,
went against the odds and defeated Twodot. Thus, Twodot was forced to
lend their hired pitcher to Hedgesville against Harlowton in the finals.
In the end, Harlowton defeated Hedgesville 1-0. The losing pitcher was
paid his hundred dollars by Twodot and a number of bets were paid off.1

Baseball was the major sport of the Musselshell, but not the only
sport. In 1910, the first game of basketball was played in Harlowton.
The game was held in the opera house. The Woodmen of the World were
defeated by the Harlowton Athletics, 20-16. Two months later, Harlow-

1Interview with Charles Walton, Harlowton, Montana, November 11, 1965.
ton played Roundup, "a nice, clean bunch." The game ended in a tie.¹

The rapid settlement of the Musselshell had a marked effect upon the area. In 1905, the Musselshell Valley had one private bank, the shortline Montana Railroad, a scattering of business houses and the small cowboy towns of Harlowton, Martinsdale and Twodot. Five years later the valley had seven banks, four newspapers, a host of businesses and growing towns. But 1910 Harlowton had 300 more people than the county seat of White Sulphur Springs. Judith Gap and Hedgesville, only two years old, matched the county seat's business area and shared a larger population than the seat of government. Overall, the county population increased from 2,526 to 4,190 between 1900 and 1910. The eastern half of the county accounted for most of the gain. The western area increased from 1,625 to 1,926 people. At the same time the eastern half of the county had a population boom, increasing from 901 to 2,264 people.²

The homestead towns continued to grow and other new towns came into existence. Land purchases, homestead entries and advertising continued to spiral upward, moneywise and otherwise. Every aspect of the burgeoning homesteading activity pointed to the faith and optimism so characteristic of the beginning stages. The land, though, stands above all else.

One eastern farmer was O. M. Geer. He started in the Musselshell with a quarter-section of government land. Making good the first couple of years, Geer and his sons purchased another 3,000 acres of land. The


Geers planted all of their land holdings to winter wheat. Other homesteaders were not as well off. But they, too, wanted to be larger. In the Shawmut area, a number of homesteaders banded together to work their own holdings. They used seven steam plows and six gasoline-powered plows and averaged over 400 plowed acres per day.¹

Examples of large land purchases in a sample two-month period reveal the number, size and frequency of eastern land speculation. The O.K. Land & Trust Company was established fifteen miles north of Harlowton. Its name came from the old stage stop of Oka which was included in the holdings of the company. The purchase of the former sheep ranch involved 2,300 acres. A Harlowton real estate man was engaged to handle the duties of president and general manager. Easterners bought the land.² The Mussellshell Valley Land Improvement Company purchased the 14,000 acre Shaw Ranch on the American Fork. The president of the firm was from Chicago. Other officers were from Mansfield, South Dakota, and Carthage, Illinois.³ The son of a Milwaukee Railroad official, R. M. Calkins, paid $150,000 for a 22,000 acre ranch with 4,000 acres of irrigable ground.⁴ The Musselshell Development Company was capitalized for $100,000. The company holdings were controlled by Charles Harris of Aberdeen, South Dakota, and I. Weaver of Madison, Wisconsin. Weaver was a realtor; Harris, a lawyer. Other stockholders included two Madison, Wisconsin, businessmen named Cory and Liberty. The men set

¹The Harlowton News, April 21, 1909.
³The Harlowton News, August 20, 1909.
⁴The Harlowton News, September 10, 1909.
up their own land agency in Madison for the express purpose of selling 160 acre tracts partitioned from this ranch. They also reserved one tract of their land for their own experimental farm "to show how grains and vegetables work on it."

As homesteading came of age, the railroad experts added their own new twist to encourage farmers and better farming practices. In November, 1909, a Montana Farmers' Institute meeting was held in Harlowton. The main speaker was Professor H. W. Campbell of Lincoln, Nebraska. He was the editor of Soil Culture and Scientific Farmer and was cited by the Harlowton editor as "the greatest exponent of dry Land Farming." Five hundred people, including all of the Harlowton business community, attended the institute. Besides Campbell, Dr. W. X. Suddeth, the Lavina experimental farmer, Professor F. S. Cooney, Superintendent of Farmers' Institutes for the State of Montana, and the Milwaukee Railroad's Immigration Agent, George B. Haynes, attended the meetings and lectured the gathered farmers on the best dry land farming techniques. Haynes told the audience why the railroad had invited the soil experts to Harlowton.

He told the people that in order to satisfy themselves that the Musselshell Valley was really adapted to farming, the Milwaukee had spent large sums of money, sending out experts to investigate the agricultural conditions in this section, and they were fully convinced that they would prove favorable. He also stated that this railroad was not only going to bring out the settlers, but would help them in every way possible after they got here.

Settlement followed the railroads. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Hedgesville and Judith Gap were taking on many

1 The Harlowton News, July 9, 1909.

2 The Harlowton News, November 9, 1909.

3 Ibid.
of the identifying features of self-sufficient towns. Judith Gap's Security State Bank was finished in the fall of 1909. The Hedges State Bank was completed in the spring of 1911. By 1910, Judith Gap had a population of 350 people, a $50,000 school building, two churches, two hotels and three general stores. It was stated that in 1909 a $50,000 expenditure was made in the erection of new buildings, including thirty-five businesses.¹ Hedgesville enjoyed a similar growth.

In 1909, Mrs. Max Giltinan started a small public library in Hedgesville. It was largely furnished by local donations and community dances. School girls volunteered their time to serve as librarians. The library was reputed to be the smallest Carnegie-endowed library in the United States. Montana Governor Sam V. Stewart was largely responsible for its endowments. By 1914, Hedgesville had a small oil refinery, a butcher shop, four general stores, two lumber yards, two hotels, a livery stable, library, school, two architects, a U. S. Land Office, a stone repair garage, barber shop, hardware store, druggist, several saloons and a combination pool and dance hall. The town also had a doctor, dentist, several lawyers, and a newspaper.² The busiest building in Hedgesville was the 20,000-bushel elevator. During harvests, the grain elevator had

²Barrett, notes. The Hart Oil Refinery had operations at Hedgesville and Miles City. The refinery at Hedgesville processed crude oil from the Cat Creek District east of Lewistown. The oil was shipped to Hedgesville by tank car. It was considered a low-grade gasoline and the refinery lasted only a few years. There was also considerable oil activity north and south of Twodot. Oil men and geologists felt there was a major oil basin in the Musselshell. It was and has never been located.
long days of steady hauls where traffic would be so great that "wagons would be waiting for two miles to unload."\(^1\)

Harlowton, older than the homestead towns and the leading town in the valley, enjoyed its own boom. In the summer of 1909 a Grafton, North Dakota, firm announced plans to erect a $15,000 flour mill. The local editor decided the mill "will have the effect to encourage agriculture along the lines of grain raising . . . and convince the transient that there is something bigger and better behind Harlowton than the railroad and stock raising."\(^2\) In 1910, Harlowton had a water system, electric lights, three banks, an opera house, three churches, a newspaper, public school, brick plant, flour mill, a red light district, a Japanese community and almost 900 people.\(^3\)

The other towns in the valley had their own boom. The Martinsdale State Bank was built in July, 1909, mainly through the efforts of Harlowton realtor and land locator, S. L. Hodges. The Tice & Baxter Bank at Twodot was reorganized as the Twodot State Bank, owned by area ranchers. Both Martinsdale and Twodot had public schools, churches, lumber yards, general stores and hotels. Unlike the homestead towns, however, both of these communities came into being prior to dry land farming. Both towns had their own short-lived newspapers. A. H. Eiselein sold The Harlowton News in 1910. He immediately moved to Twodot, twelve miles west, and established The Twodot News. Other news ventures were founded

\(^1\)Barrett, notes.

\(^2\)The Harlowton News, July 9, 1909.

at Twodot over the next decade. However, the Tribune and Gazette were momentary members of the newspaper field. The Martinsdale Independent was edited by B. E. Green during the years 1909, 1910, and 1911. Small subscription lists and limited advertising hurt each of these newspapers.

Other new towns came into existence at the same time. One was "79." The postal department called it "Seventy-nine," but residents knew it by the name of the former John T. Murphy ranching empire of the Big Coulee, south and east of Harlowton. Another new town was New Shawmut. Two Harlowton men started the town, building a general store and a butcher shop as a start. Cruse was a near neighbor of New Shawmut. The report of its beginning was expressive of the optimism which characterized the advent of most of the new communities.

What has been nothing but a trackless stretch of valley a few days ago is now being converted into a thriving little city, which has a bright future before it. Cruse, the station 15 miles east of here (on the track of the Milwaukee Railroad), and whose townsite is owned by A. C. Graves, is now having a boom. A general merchandise store is in the course of construction and a lumber yard will be located at that place. A. C. Graves tells the News man that before the next spring Cruse will be the best and most progressive town of any town between Harlowton and Roundup.

Sam Teagarden and the other real estate men did their best to help Cruse and the other homestead communities realize the lofty aspirations of their founders. Teagarden was reported to have sold Harlowton and the neighboring towns 30,000 copies of homestead literature during 1910. The advertising was handled by the Teagarden Publicity Bureau.

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2 The Harlowton News, November 12, 1909. 3 Ibid.
The homesteaders read the publicity materials in 1910 as their forerunners had read the earlier efforts of Teagarden in 1906-08. Unlike the earlier homesteaders, most of these prospective homeseekers came with more belongings and in large numbers. Three Chicago settlers arrived in Harlowton via three railroad immigration cars. They had "eight head of horses, 4 cows, 4 calves, pet dogs, chickens, geese, doves, guinea fowls, some lumber, household goods, machinery and other articles." By 1910, the flood of settlers inspired the News editor to write:

All the towns in the entire Musselshell Valley are receiving daily cars of immigrants bringing their household and farm effects from the east. Last week Lavina had ten carloads of immigrants, Ryegate five, Barber three and a large number in Harlowton. The class of settler, who brings his entire belongings along, is the man that will stick it out here. The News has received from good authority that there will be over fifty carloads of immigrants arriving in the Musselshell next week.

Harlowton businessmen noted this rapid settlement with their usual foresight for future prosperity. The businessmen petitioned Senator Thomas H. Carter for the creation of a U. S. Land District for the Musselshell Valley. In May, 1910, Senator Carter sent a letter to H. C. Hawley, president of the Harlowton Commercial Club. Senator Carter informed the interested Harlowton backers that a bill for the creation of the Harlowton land district had passed the Senate and was before the Committee on Public Land of the House of Representatives. The bill, however, was never realized as a law.

In June, 1910, the News quoted the Helena Record on the most recent figures of the homestead passenger traffic carried by the Milwaukee Rail-

1 The Harlowton News, May 3, 1912.
2 The Harlowton News, March 18, 1910.
3 The Harlowton News, June 17, 1910.
road to Montana. The mainline of the Milwaukee extended through the entire Musselshell Valley. In the six-month period, January to June, 1910, the Milwaukee brought in 284 immigrant cars averaging two and one-half families per car. A total of 5,710 families arrived. Over 28,500 people were involved in this mass migration.¹

The Musselshell Valley adapted to the dry land boom. By 1912, the valley had nine grain elevators with a capacity of 210,000 bushels. Harlowton's flour mill and grain terminal could handle 350,000 bushels of grain. The valley and the railroad combined their abilities to make Harlowton the second largest shipper of grains within Montana. In 1910, the grain raised within the area was under 1,400 bushels. By 1912, the valley produced 240,000 bushels and forecasts for 1913 predicted 1,550,000 bushels. Dry land acreage increased to 200,000 and the valley had 80,000 irrigated acres. Twice this acreage of land was considered "tiltable (sic) but not cultivated" at this time.² Harlowton boosters were beginning their most active efforts for the creation of a county within the Musselshell Valley. Names proposed for the new county included Wheatland and Richland. The Harlowton editor decided Richland was "a pretty name indeed, and very appropriate."³

Nature was kind to the homesteaders. The rains came in the spring, the harvests were bountiful and prices were high. Wheatland County, Richland County, or the name taken by the neighboring homesteaders when they created "Golden Valley" County, would have been deemed worthy and

¹The Harlowton News, June 17, 1910, quoting the Helena Record.
²The Harlowton News, February 28, 1912.
³The Harlowton News, January 5, 1912.
indicative of the Musselshell. The Montana newspaperman-author, Joseph Kinsey Howard, quoted the experience of one homestead town during the good years.

The mushroom towns bustled with activity. It was no uncommon sight to see long strings of wagons full of sacked wheat . . . all drawn by a tractor, moving along the county road bound for the shipping point. The little stores were packed and clerks worked overtime putting up huge orders which included everything from harness to satin pajamas. Optimism ran high. Real estate dealers talked largely of future values and began laying out new additions; . . .

The Musselshell Valley shared this same prosperity. Average rainfall was twenty-six inches in the years just prior to 1917. This average was over ten inches greater than the years before and following the peak of the homestead cycle. Improved dry land sold for twenty to thirty-five dollars an acre. Irrigated lands sold for fifty to seventy-five dollars an acre in the Musselshell. In 1910, Meagher County had 400 farms. By 1920, the same area had 1,135 farms. The Musselshell was included in the Lewistown district of Montana's ten homestead districts. A total of 6,373,965 acres was handled by the Lewistown office. The percentage of total entries was indicative of the pattern of settlement.

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1 Howard, pp. 190-191.
2 Montana, Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, Montana: Resources and Opportunities, 1917, p. 126.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
### Percentage of Total Entries Filed at Lewistown

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<td>1915-1919</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920-1934</td>
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</table>

The land rush was a continuing process throughout the decade. In the fall of 1914, Carey Lands were opened to homestead settlement in the Musselshell Valley. The Carey Land Act of 1894 had authorized one million acres of land to be given to each public land state for irrigation and reclamation. Carey Lands in the Musselshell amounted to nearly 160 quarter sections. This land was filed for in rapid order.

This rush at the local land office (at Lewistown) in connection with the opening to entry of a 20,000 acre tract near Harlowton; formerly withdrawn under the Cary (sic) Act, has ended, 175 filings having been received during the two days. Except for a few scattered forty-acre pieces, all of the land was filed on. The opening of this land is expected to have an excellent effect upon Harlowton, which has long been working to bring it about.

Most homestead filings were made during the spring. Settlers came from many areas of the United States and foreign lands. In April, 1916, a number of settlers arrived in Harlowton. Most were from the Midwest, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and in this particular settlement, a number from Washington.

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1. Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, 38th Annual Report, Bulletin No. 328, Table. (Bozeman: Montana State College, 1931, p. 79.

2. The Montana Almanac, 1959-1960 (Missoula, Montana: Montana State University, 1958), p. 120.

This week had seen the beginning of activity in the sales of land. Every train coming into Harlowton was brought with it numbers of land seekers. The hotels and land lodging houses have been filled to their capacity every day and the Graves hotel has been forced to find outside quarters for their held in order to accommodate the public.¹

The Northern Pacific lands in the Musselshell were relatively limited in comparison to areas near the tracks of the transcontinental railroad. Most of the Northern Pacific lands sold for $1.25 an acre in the Musselshell. A Harlowton real estate company negotiated most of the Northern Pacific sales when they were placed on the market in April 1, 1916. Within two weeks of the sale offering, fourteen buyers paid $115,430 for 5,779 acres of the railroad land. Interested purchasers were negotiating for another 48,000 acres which the railroad was selling.²

In October, 1914, wheat was sold in the Musselshell for 88¢ a bushel. This was the highest price paid in the valley up to this time.³ Tom Hanzlik, a local grower, raised 136 bushels of wheat on four and one-half acres. Others were doing as well.⁴

Newsmen in the area, though, wanted to see farmers diversify their crop production. In December, 1914, the Meagher County Democrat proposed a new proposition to the homesteaders. The Democrat was anxious to see the dry landers raise cattle, especially dairy cattle. The editor, George H. Beasley, called for assistance from the various commercial establishments.

¹Meagher County Democrat, April 8, 1916.
²The Harlowton Press, April 22, 1916.
³Meagher County Democrat, October 9, 1914.
⁴Meagher County Democrat, October 23, 1914.
clubs in the Musselshell. He reasoned, "dairy cattle would help merchant
and farmer . . . (and) in order to have creameries, we must have farmers,
with cows. Our area is a great milk cow country."¹

Farmers had little reason for trying such radical steps as diversi­
fied farming. They were making this prairie land produce crops which
gave promise of exceeding the proportions expounded by the newspapers,
railroads and land companies. In July, 1915, J. D. Towers, a homesteader
with 160 acres of land, located on a rolling benchland north and east of
Twodot, arrived at the Democrat news office. Tower had a bunch of
grain samples from his homestead. Editor Beasley noted with wonder, "he
has a sample of rye which measures from extreme tip to tip 46 inches.
Samples of fall wheat, 30 inches high, oats and barley 26 inches high
and all looking as fine as it is possible for grain to look."²

Two weeks later, Governor Sam Stewart spoke before a homesteader
gathering at Mocassin in the Judith Basin. Stewart had ample opportunity
to view the growing crops of the area. He was also armed with the latest
predictions of his Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry. Governor
Stewart told the assembled homesteaders Montana's 1915 wheat crop would
be in excess of 30,000,000 bushels, an increase of almost fifty per
cent over the best previous crop in the history of Montana. Governor
Stewart's predictions were proven true. The total production of wheat
in Montana in 1915 was a phenomenal 44,413,000 bushels. This was nearly
18,000,000 bushels more than 1914, the previous all-time high for Montana.³

¹Meagher County Democrat, December 11, 1914.
²Meagher County Democrat, July 2, 1915.
³Meagher County Democrat, July 30, 1915.
The Meagher County Democrat at Harlowton told the story of 1915 in the Musselshell Valley.

The crop this year is wonderful. Many of the fields we have heard from will go from 35 to 40 bushels of wheat and some even greater. This is the kind of prosperity that will count for the increase of wealth in this community. The wheat seems to be a fine quality.¹

One homesteader, Jess Duffy, planted forty acres of wheat in the spring of 1915. His yield was sixty-three bushels to the acre. In February, 1916, the Montana Milling Company at Harlowton informed The Harlowton Press of its intention of building a $30,000 addition to its Harlowton mill.²

A Seattle land company purchased seven sections of land in the Nihill district, paying thirty-five dollars an acre for the land. The Twodot banking firm's ranch, the Tooley, Baxter and Tice Ranch, sold 13,000 acres of land to a land man named McCrossun. McCrossun had been the chief colonizer for land sales in and around Beach, North Dakota. He promptly announced his intention of cutting the Musselshell land into 160 acre tracts and selling them to eastern land seekers.³ One homestead, recently "proved up," sold 200 acres of plow land for $11 an acre and 320 acres of prairie land for $580.⁴ Another homesteader, J. Littlejohn, planned to enlarge his homestead. Littlejohn lived near Pious Hill, between American Fork and Fish creeks, twenty miles south of Harlowton. He purchased a supply of farm machinery in Harlowton and

¹Meagher County Democrat, August 20, 1915.
³The Harlowton Press, April 1, 1916.
⁴The Harlowton Press, June 17, 1916.
a team of horses, to supplement the four head he already owned. He negotiated with a nearby rancher and bought a number of cattle. Littlejohn was diversifying and expanding his farming operation.

During the winter of 1916, the Harlowton real estate firm of Lynn & Dunn reported their latest land sales. In December, 1916, they sold six farms, ranging from 120 to 480 acres.

Settlement was further enhanced by an innovation of the Milwaukee Railroad. In 1916, the Milwaukee added electric trains to its transcontinental traffic. Harlowton was made the eastern terminal for the electric trains. The eventual western end was Avery, Idaho. With the addition of electricity, the railroad was given an impetus to further its passenger and freight traffic through the Rocky Mountains. The Milwaukee was making its own investment in the future growth of the Musselshell.

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1The Harlowton Press, April 8, 1916. The Press continued to plead diversified farming in subsequent issues. "The Meagher county farmer who industriously develops his land, at the same time diversifying his products, is assured not only a comfortable future, but of a financial independence." The Harlowton Press, June 17, 1916.


3The Harlowton Press, April 15, 1916.
CHAPTER V
MATURITY AND A TRAGEDY

Other aspects of life were also coming into their own during the mid-1910's in the Musselshell. Women's suffrage was a comparable quiet issue until 1914. In October, of that year, barely a month away from the November election which would determine the fate of voting for the fair sex, Jeanette Rankin paid a visit to Harlowton.

Miss Rankin did not disappoint those who expected to hear an able exposition of this issue. She is a logical speaker and without any attempt at dramatic affect, tells her story in a simple straightforward manner that lends impressiveness of itself. She is thoroughly in earnest in her work and has made many friends for equal suffrage.¹

The Democrat reporter was somewhat awed by Miss Rankin. "Her appeal struck conviction to many minds last night as was evidenced by the close attention given to every word shw apoke. There is no doubt that women are going to be enfranchised."²

In November, suffrage was approved by Meagher County residents, 732 to 647 votes. The county seat, White Sulphur Springs, defeated the proposition, 121 for compared to 168 against. The Musselshell Valley swung the county.

¹Meagher County Democrat, October 16, 1914.
²Ibid.
Suffrage - 1914

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Women were important news items in two other examples of cultural maturity. In the first case, it was more a lack of maturity. Harlowton, like most "nouveau" communities, had a number of houses of ill-fame. Since the early beginnings of the town, most citizens had viewed them tolerantly. In 1916 the Meagher County Democrat at Harlowton handled the story with tongue-in-cheek. The page one headlines read:

SCARLET WOMEN MUST HIT TRAIL
HABITUDES OF THE RESTRICTED DISTRICT ARE GIVEN
AN EMPHATIC WARNING TO GO HENCE

Sheriff Nagues gave "explicit instructions relative to the elimination of the habitues of the tenderloin district . . . ." Editor F. E. Johns gave his reasons for the sudden order. "The reason for the existence of these houses throughout the state is that so many county attorneys,  


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sheriffs and cathopping politicians have united in discouraging a proper enforcement of the law governing such establishments."1

The temperance movement was active in Meagher County since the 1880's. Reverend Alice Barnes, wife of H. H. Barnes, the "Father of Castle," had an active Women's Christian Temperance Union throughout her years at Castle.2 Years later, Reverend Barnes edited a Montana W.C.T.U. newspaper from Columbus. The paper was the Montana W. C. T. U. Voice.3 Her example was a persistent force in the Musselshell. One Sunday in May, 1897, Reverend Barnes held church services in Martinsdale. The saloon and store were closed and devotions were held in the parlor of the hotel. A letter to the editor told of the occasion of this early church service in the Musselshell.

The store and saloon were both closed and all went to church, reminding us of that spirit of the "early days" still lingers, for we have been told by "old timers" that whenever a preacher came into a town either the saloon as the largest and most convenient place was offered for his use or every one went and given his a respectful audience and generous collection.4

Reverend Alice Barnes' example was a long-lasting force in the Musselshell. By 1915, the temperance movement was very active in Montana.

In February, 1915, the Helena Independent conducted a statewide poll of the state's newspapers. One hundred and four papers sent back replies. A total of 57 papers stood in favor of prohibition against 47 "wet" newspapers. The Meagher County Democrat, Meagher

1The Harlowton Press, December 23, 1916.
2The Whole Truth, January 30, 1897.
3Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 18, 1904.
4Rocky Mountain Husbandman, May 8, 1897.
Republican, Hedges Herald and Judith Gap Journal gave a solid vote for prohibition. In October, 1916, the W.C.T.U. polled all of the prospective county officers of Meagher County. With few exceptions, the candidates were for prohibition. Temperance was a political necessity in Meagher County by 1916.

Numerous reasons were given for having Montana and the United States go dry. The local editors had many opportunities to cite W.C.T.U. literature in their news pages. Crime, institutions, taxes were common items which were mentioned. The good women firmly held families would be saved, bad men would be made right and Christianity would again reign supreme.

One Harlowton temperance meeting had several of the most noted anti-drink proponents. In October, 1915, John G. Wooley, who headed the National Prohibition ticket on three occasions, came to Harlowton. The Democrat gave its readers an indication of what to expect from Wooley and his fellow traveler, Lee Morrow.

He (Wooley) is quite generally regarded as one of the foremost orators of America, and upon the subject of a saloonless nation, has no superior. He is especially noted for his choice language, and also brings to his subject a wealth of knowledge that makes his address intensely interesting. He is accompanied on the trip by Mr. Lee Morrow, another speaker of the first rank, who thrills his audience as he brings the big subject home in a startling manner. It is the hope to have the Harlowton band out, and a big chorus will sing patriotic airs. No admission will be charged, all are welcome.

In the November, 1916, Montana General Election, a liquor prohibition referendum was listed on the ballot. Montana voted for prohibition, with an overwhelming majority, 102,776 to 73,890. Meagher County voted

1 Meagher County Democrat, February 12, 1915.
2 Meagher County Democrat, August 10, 1916.
3 Meagher County Democrat, October 1, 1915.
for prohibition, 1,627 for and 925 against. Montana had its own statewide prohibition from November, 1916, until 1933. Prohibition was specifically forbidden in the United States between 1920 and 1933.

The Judith Gap Journal described another temperance meet in 1917. The W.C.T.U. County Convention was held in Harlowton July 11 and 12, 1917. Fifty young students appeared on the program.

The young campaigners sang, "Down With Whiskey," gave flag drill and many yells. A number of Y.P.B. (Young People's Bureau) young people from the Iowa Bench and Living Springs chapters, east of Judith Gap, sang, "Saloonless Nation," and "De Brewer's Big Hosses." Some real good acting accompanied the last song.

Another movement which captivated Montanans of the time was The Montana Society of Equity. It had been organized in 1914, and had over fifteen thousand members in the state by 1917. In sum it corresponded to many of the tenants of the various Farmers Alliances of the Middle West. Farmers felt they were not being represented politically and were held back by corporations and wealthy interests. The Society had a short flurry of activity in the Musselshell.

George H. Beasley, erstwhile editor of the Meagher County Democrat, sold his newspaper to F. E. and Thomas J. Johns in 1916. Beasley immediately joined the Montana Equity News, the official publication of the State Union of the American Society of Equity. The Judith Gap Journal, a homestead newspaper and representative of a farming community, said the Society tended "directly toward the doctrines of socialism."

1Judith Gap Journal, July 20, 1917.
3Judith Gap Journal, April 6, 1917.
Editor Lyle Cowan gave his views in his newspaper.

The Journal is a firm believer in organizations of farmers—it is the one great thing that has been needed throughout the northwest for a number of years past. However, it is deemed essential, by the Journal, that the farmers organize among themselves instead of having George Beasleys over the country doing their organizing for them.

Its beginnings in the area were more a social than a forceful movement. Societies were started in all of the homestead towns. The homestead community of Findon was a typical gathering of farmers joining together to protest poor wheat prices and the high costs of making a living on the plains. Locally it appeared to be more of a social gathering than a method of exerting a strong agrarian protest.

Last Sunday the farmers in the vicinity of Findon met at the Findon school and organized a local of the American Society of Equity. There were about twenty present including a number of ladies and they were all very enthusiastic over the advantages offered by the cooperative system of the Equity... The Findon farmers expect to make the local a center for social as well as commercial activities.

The group started its own cooperative store in Harlowton. A. B. Anderson, a homesteader himself, operated the store for the Society of Equity. The store handled oil, axle grease, farm machinery and groceries. It did a good business with the homesteaders for several years. The store was started by selling stock, but dividends were never earned by the investors.

In the long run, the Society did not realize its lofty goals in the Musselshell, nor in Montana.

A similar group tried to entrench itself within the Musselshell. The Nonpartisan League was a strong agrarian movement in North Dakota and

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1Judith Gap Journal, April 6, 1917.

2The Harlowton Press, April 22, 1916.

3Interview with James Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, January 1, 1966.
figured in some Montana elections. Basically it sought producer-
cooperative control of agricultural finance and marketing.\(^1\) In the
Musselshell it was most often referred to as "Townleyism" (for its
founder A. C. Townley). It was too revolutionary in its characteristics
to win a great following among farmers in the Musselshell. The leading
farming newspaper in the area was the Judith Gap Journal. It fought a
long and continuing battle against the policies of the Nonpartisan League.
In 1919 the major issue involving farmers and the League came to light
over the sale of a grain elevator at Oxford, south and east of Judith
Gap. The elevator had belonged to another co-operative group of farmers,
The Montana Grain Growers' Association. Editor Lyle Cowan was critical
of the lack of action on the part of local farmers in letting the eleva-
tor come under the control of a "sub-Townley organization."\(^2\)

Editor Cowan referred to Townley as "a big blatant skinner . . .
with a bonanza farming scheme." Cowan did not stop with mere name-calling
of Townley and his movement. Townley was given both barrels for a time
in 1919. Consequently, the Nonpartisan League was not given a chance to
organize in the Musselshell. Cowan wrote:

\(^1\)Howard, 283, and Edward C. Blackorby, \textit{Prairie Rebel, The Public

The American people today are for a pure, unadulterated Americanism. Townley injects Bolshevism into our midst in a sugar coated form. He is a true disciple of Lenine and Trotsky, and were he and his lieutenant Cockeyed Lempke, the man who has every appearance and tactic of a buccaneer, to change places with Lenine and Trotsky, things would go on as the (sic) have been other than (that) the Non-partisan league leaders would have to become used to delving in gore, and the advanced class in nationalization of women.

Most businessmen and farmers in the Musselshell associated the League with radicalism. But a smattering of farmers from the outliving districts in the area backed the League with considerable political interest. Meetings were held at Shawmut, Hedgesville, Nihill, Bercail and other homesteading communities. The farmers brought in speakers, had reading groups and talked among themselves.

It was active in local political circles in only one election, that of 1918. Interest in the Nonpartisan League was always hampered by local pressure against it. The largest milling firm in the Musselshell was an outspoken critic of the League. W. N. Smith, the Harlowton manager of the Montana Flour Mills, led a strong fight against the League. Thus, in the Musselshell, the League had a short-lived existence. Basically, it was little more than a political fringe organization.

Counties were made and broken over the issue of good roads. Individual farmers, homesteading communities, towns were all interested in roads. In the Musselshell, the question was particularly acute, mainly because of the inaccessibility of White Sulphur Springs. During the campaign of 1914, the county candidates ran for their respective offices on a platform of better county roads. For instance, Frank Smith, who was

running for county commissioner, was interviewed by the Democrat. Said
the Democrat editor:

(He) "is an ardent believer in better roads and promises
the voters that if elected, he will advocate such policies
as will insure the immediate enforcement in reference
to the building of highways throughout the country. He believes
that our present system of road supervisions is wasteful and that
all road work should be by contract, let to the lowest bidder,
under the supervision of the County Surveyor." 1

The supervisor system was used in the early years for road construction.
Under this method, the commissioners chose a road supervisor. Too often,
a relative or friend of one or more of the commissioners was chosen for
the job. On small jobs of repair or limited pick and shovel work, road
supervisors handled their duties well enough to satisfy most taxpayers.
Jobs involving men and machinery and money were a more costly expenditure.

Road contracts were the only answer in the minds of most people. 2
By September, 1915, proponents of Good Roads voiced their demands for
the contract system at another Harlowton meeting. They argued that there
was a "minimum of expense by the contract system." 3

A Good Roads Meeting was held in Harlowton in July, 1915. All
areas of Meagher County were represented. A state highway official was
invited to address the group. The following week, sixty men were
present at another road meeting held at Harlowton. The Democrat reported
considerable action. "As an incitation of the interest in the meeting
it is only necessary to point to the fact that for over three hours
those pres\t attended attentively to the entire proceedings and no

1 Meagher County Democrat, October 30, 1914.
2 Interview with James Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, January 1, 1966.
3 Meagher County Democrat, September 3, 1914.
The essence of this meeting was indicative of the seriousness of the geographic and political split between the eastern and western halves of the county. The county commissioners were elected by popular vote of the entire county electorate. The election of officials was not, however, that simple. Candidates could count on no other support than that of their own geographic area, and at very best, a smattering of votes from the opposite end of the county. This political reality was particularly a truism in the determination of county division or the removal of the county seat from White Sulphur Springs to Harlowton.

Roads offered another bone of contention. County commissioners, wherever they were from, were criticized and maligned, by everyone in the county. However, the commissioners handled the various petitions for road building in the county, they were faced with an impasse. They could not win for losing. At one meeting, the Democrat reported, "While there was no condemnation of the county commissioners for their method of handling the road work, members spoke along this line while one or two spoke in behalf of the commissioners."^2

Good Roads Clubs were particularly strong until the creation of a county in the Musselshell. Though the good road movement originally

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^1 Meagher County Democrat, July 23, 1915. The State of Montana took up the public fervor for good roads. In the 1915 legislature a "Good Roads Day" Act was designated. The Governor was "to proclaim . . . material, or money towards the improvement of public highways in their respective communities." Montana Laws 1915.

^2 Meagher County Democrat, July 23, 1915.
started as a unified county project, the eastern half of the county was soon carrying on its own concerted actions. One Good Roads Club meeting held in Harlowton was indicative of the pattern. After a short business session:

there will be an automobile trip through the bountiful wheat fields of this section and incidentally a little road inspection. . . . Shawmut has signified its intention of coming over well represented and Hedgesville has been one of the foremost towns in the Good Roads movement.¹

By 1919, Good Roads Meetings were taking on another far-reaching practice. The Musselshell area was vitally interested in securing a highway. Billings and Great Falls business people were behind the venture and had had numerous meetings during 1919. Most of the discussion had centered around the possibilities of building a highway between these two majored Montana cities. A natural route was the old stage line from Billings to Great Falls, via the Musselshell Valley and the Judith Gap. With a potential highway within reach, a new road group was organized in the Musselshell area. The Buffalo Trail Association had a sole purpose of "making a perfect highway between Billings and Great Falls."² A meeting of the group was held at Judith Gap in mid-November, 1919. Harlowton, Broadview, Ryegate, Lavina, Hobson, Stanford, and Windham sent representatives to the meeting. In time, this road was realized. Many others constructed through the 1920's and 1930's in the Musselshell owed a major part of their realization to the efforts of the Good Roads Clubs of the area and of the times.³

¹Meagher County Democrat, August 20, 1915.
²Judith Gap Journal, November 7, 1919.
³Interview with Jim Lunney, Harlowton, Montana, January 1, 1966.
Wheatland County was created in early 1917. (Note next chapter). The Musselshell Valley had reached its political culmination at the very time it was enjoying its greatest economic prosperity. People living in the new county felt the 1,425 square miles of land was not the only item included within terms of the established boundaries. They felt the fulfillment of political dreams and aspirations would be realized at long last. Justified by the facts or not, Wheatland County started an immediate campaign of active road building, hired additional county officials, purchased county maintenance and office equipment, paved streets and floated numerous bond issues. Wheatland County was making a most auspicious entry into the ranks of Montana's counties.

In 1917 another newspaper, The Harlowton Times, was started in Harlowton. The new editor, Howard Squires, was filled with fervor for the Musselshell Valley. In his first editorial, Squires opined:

WE MAKE OUR BOW: We have cast our lot among you in what we consider the richest and most favored sections of the globe. We know of land much inferior to that in this vicinity, that is selling for two hundred dollars an acre. This country is bound to develop. It simply can't help it. And along with this development, we wish to go with you, speaking a good word when we can, standing for the right at all times, and devoting our energies to the material and moral progress of the community.¹

Local land sales in 1917 substantiated the editor's optimism. Wheatland County had passed through its initial homestead boom and was settling into a mature economic growth. The new editor interviewed one of the Harlowton real estate firms:

¹The Harlowton Times, July 5, 1917.
COMMUNITY-BUILDERS: In conversing with one of the members of the real estate firm of Lynn and Dunn, we learned the following facts: That during the month of June this firm sold 13,437 acres of land to 33 persons, the total amount involved being $251,620 and for the three months of April, May and June, this company disposed of 36,664 acres to 78 persons for $764,097. The average amount purchased by each buyer was 488 acres. Eighty percent of the land sold was virgin prairie land, which means that few of our local farmers are selling out, and many new people are coming in. Over fifty percent of the land bought was bought by actual home builders, and one has but to ride out of town in any direction to see the large amount of new land going under the plow, and in any direction you look you see the smoke of a tractor and hear the exhause of a gasoline engine plowing up hundreds of acres every day some 150 power rigs being at work in Wheatland County.¹

By August, 1917, The Harlowton Press editor spoke for everyone in the community when he re-examined the era of the homesteader. "The transformation that has occurred is both marvelous and astonishing. The coming of the dry land farmers has converted our fertile ranges from a commonwealth that may be truly likened unto an agricultural paradise."² The Musselshell Valley appeared to be a paradise. Year after year, nature had been benevolent. In the late summer of 1917, however, some parts of Montana suffered from the lack of rainfall. Wheatland County was one of the rain-favored patches of the state. Squires remarked in the Times in a typical fashion. "This is a veritable oasis in the desert . . . . The soil in this county is especially adapted to drought because the deepness and richness of the soil gives it a recuperative power which is sometimes astonishing."³ Rich soil did not help the rest of the state.

¹The Harlowton Times, July 5, 1917.
²The Harlowton Press, April 21, 1917.
³The Harlowton Times, August 2, 1917.
Over all Montana was experiencing the first serious crop failures for the homesteaders. Montana's commissioner of agriculture and publicity, Charles G. Greenfield, called for use of the so-called County Seed Lien Law. The Thirteenth Legislature passed this law in 1915. It provided for the issuance of bonds and warrants by counties to purchase seed grain for needy farmers. The farmers, once they were on their feet again, were to repay the county. Greenfield's office estimated 50% to 90% crop failures. Commissioner Greenfield said of the crisis:

... the farmers of Montana who have lost their crops are game and willing and anxious to try again with winter wheat (after the spring wheat looses). They will give their labor and their land. All they ask is the seed to plant, and if the God of the harvest is kindly next year they will repay whatever advances may be made to them.1

Locally, the newspapers again called on farmers to diversify their farming. Over the years, pleas for diversified farming had often appeared in the papers. Turkeys, purebred cattle, dairy cattle, poultry had all been encouraged as second industries for the dry land farmers. In 1917 the newspaper wanted to give "more consideration to the humble hog." Facts and figures were quoted proving the monetary returns in meat and meat products from raising hogs. The editor decided that if the industry would receive the attention warranted by local living conditions, Wheatland County could support its own packery.2

Farmers did not listen to these radical thoughts. Nor did anyone else. Homesteaders, businessmen and bankers were more concerned with the spiraling wheat prices and the war effort. One issue of the Judith Gap

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1The Harlowton Times, August 2, 1917. See Montana Laws 1915, Chapter 23, p. 32.

2The Harlowton Times, August 30, 1917.
Journal published two reader’s suggestions. The reader wanted Judith Gap boy scouts to pick up the short-cropped straw and grain stalks. He felt at least 10% additional wheat would be gathered up for the good of the country and the time spent outdoors would be healthful for the boys.¹

One recent Harlowton arrival offered to trade eight hundred acres of land in Pine County, Minnesota, for a like amount in Wheatland County. Fifty farmers and businessmen arrived on one Milwaukee train. They were from the Dakotas, Minnesota and Iowa. Two new banks were built in the Musselshell. The Shawmut State Bank opened in March, 1917. The Farmers National Bank started in Harlowton, December 7, 1917.²

Harlowton had three other banks, the Bank of Wheatland County, First National Bank, and the Continental Bank. Judith Gap had two banks, the First National Bank and Security State Bank. Hedgesville and Twodot had state banks.³

Grain prices gave the homesteaders impetus to increase their own production. Wheat, the standby dry land crop, increased in price. World War I pushed it over $2 a bushel. The newspapermen editorialized about the patriotic duty of all farmers raising more grains for the war effort. A Lewistown bank advertisement appeared in the Judith Gap Journal in 1917. It shows the liberal bank policies of the time and the overwhelming public feeling that all-out crop efforts were necessary and

¹Judith Gap Journal, April 20, 1917.
²The Harlowton Press, December 19, 1917.
³The Harlowton Press, December 19, 1918.
good. "It is the patriotic duty of every farmer to put in crop this spring every acre of land he can properly tend. Those who need additional money should write or call . . . ." The banker was helpful and the market trend showed the monetary satisfaction farmers received by planting, buying, extending their land output.

### ALL WHEAT BY YEARS IN MONTANA

(Random Samples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Acreage</th>
<th>Average yield/acre (bushels)</th>
<th>Total Production</th>
<th>Dec. 1 Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>42,812</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>685,000</td>
<td>$1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>72,555</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>1,929,963</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>137,389</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>3,297,336</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>153,000</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>3,703,000</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>415,000</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>8,885,000</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1,055,000</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>21,417,000</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1,596,000</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>26,821,000</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>2,440,000</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>37,632,000</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>3,485,000</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>33,365,000</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>3,621,000</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>9,889,000</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>2,787,000</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>28,690,000</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>3,221,000</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>34,601,000</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Former Meagher County Senator C. P. Tooley informed the Montana Record-Herald of Helena in 1917 that 85% of the land surrounding Harlowton was farm land and only 2,000 to 3,000 acres of farm land had not been filed on by homesteaders. Harlowton, Tooley told the Record-Herald, was

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1Judith Gap Journal, April 20, 1917.

the largest non-county seat town in Montana in 1917. Further statistics for 1917 attested to the Judith Gap Journal's banner. For ten years, the Journal proudly informed the world of the productive might of its area. "Judith Gap is located in the largest and most prolific winter wheat region in the world." Growers in 1917 proved the Judith Gap and other county editors correct for the time being for their prolific use of the pen.

RANDOM WHEAT PRODUCTION FIGURES IN WHEATLAND COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grower</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Bushels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. H. Beckey</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melvin Bads</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Morgan</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooley, Baxter &amp; Tice</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. B. Myers</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labrie Ranch Co.</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. L. Dixon</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>38\frac{1}{2}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. McFarland</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Trimmer</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In January, 1918, F. E. Johns, editor of the Press, called for a united community of farmers and businessmen. "We have before us one

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2Judith Gap Journal, November 18, 1918.
great task—to win the war. Everything else must be subordinated to
that." The community carried on a united homefront throughout World
War I. Active units of the Red Cross held dances, auctions and gathered
clothing for the soldiers. War savings stamps were sold in all of the
towns and the Musselshell carried on an active Liberty Loan program
between 1916 and 1918. In fact, the new Wheatland County was honored
with having its name grace a newly-commissioned battleship. The only
open anti-German campaign was an effort by some people in the area to
stop the teaching of German in the four-year high school at Harlowton.

In June, 1918, the Musselshell Valley had a full week of rains.
The dry land crops grew well and predictions call for a million dollar
crop in the county. Several small hail storms hit scattered farming
sections in early August. Little damage was done, however. Other sec­
tions of Montana were not so lucky. More counties or the state reported
crop damage or a lack of rainfall. But Wheatland County lived up to
its name. Production was down from the previous year but farmers averaged
ten to twelve bushels to the acres. The total harvest was nearly 1,200,000
bushels with a valuation between two and two and on-half million dollars.
Harlowton was one of the three major milling and shipping centers in
Montana.

Wheatland County was at its height. Over twenty-three hundred
voters were registered to vote in the 1918 general election. The figures

1The Harlowton Press, August 1, 1918.

2The Harlowton Press, December 19, 1918.

3The Harlowton Press, April 6, 1918.

4The Harlowton Press, August 15, 1918 and Montana, Bureau of
Agriculture, Labor and Industry, Montana . . . 1923, p. 29.
were impressive for the new county. Harlowton had a bare one-quarter of the total registration. The homestead communities dominated the county population.\(^1\) Wheatland County had 688 farms, harvesting close to 900,000 acres of land. The county had 141 businesses, twelve grain elevators and seven lumber yards.\(^2\)

The homestead towns had their own air of permanency in 1917. The homestead towns were larger, often with two main streets and brick, stone and wood paneled homes on the expanding side streets. Smaller clapboard business buildings were replaced by imposing two and three-story structures. Harlowton, Judith Gap and Hedgesville built bigger schools and added high school courses of study. A cultural and recreational enlightenment was also added to the maturing communities. These were Chautauques. Traveling groups came to all of the homestead towns providing several days of educational and recreational assemblies. The program included lectures, concerts, magical demonstrations and dances. One three-day session was held in Judith Gap.

J. H. Lackey, who is the correspondent here for the Meneley System Chautauqua has received the advance advertising matter for the appearance of the Chautauqua here on July 13th, 14th and 15th.

The Chautauqua will be held in a large tent in or near town. There will be three big days. The program for each day will be varied and complete. Arrangements should be made now by everyone to attend the Chautauqua in July . . . .\(^3\)

People in the Musselshell Valley were able to enjoy the Chautauquas in 1918. The area had been the recipient of enough rainfall to provide

\(^1\) The Harlowton Press, August 15, 1918.


\(^3\) Judith Gap Journal, May 11, 1917.
another good wheat crop. The next year, nature did not follow the script. The spring rains did not fall in 1919. The "veritable oasis in the desert" was all too soon like the rest of Montana.

The mean average precipitation received at the three recording stations in the Musselshell Valley varied considerable during the period 1907 to 1928. Harlowton averaged 11.57 inches. During the same twenty-on period, the Yale station near the homestead town of Hedgesville recorded an average 12.84 inches. Findon, located on a high tableland north of Martinsdale averaged 17.28 inches. In 1919 all three stations showed marked drops in precipitation.1

In 1919 Harlowton recorded 6.22 inches, Findon 11.86 and Yale about 9 inches. During the peak growing season of April, May and June, Harlowton recorded a total .86 inches of moisture. Findon had the most precipitation for the same period, 2.05 inches. Harlowton recorded over half of its 1919 total rainfall after the fall harvest, receiving 3.24 of its total 6.22 inches. The total precipitation for the three stations varied from four to seven inches less rainfall than in the normal years.2

K. Ross Toole, in his Montana: An Uncommon Land, noted the pattern of drought during the dry years of Montana. "When the drought came, it did not come all at once, or in all places at the same time. Drought is a little like cancer; it seems to spread outward until it encompasses


2Ibid.
everything."¹ The Musselshell Valley was lucky to resist the beginning phases of drought during 1917 and 1918. But 1919 was different. If drought could be compared to cancer, the Musselshell would have received a diagnosis of malignant cancer in 1919.

During 1919 the rain clouds blew over the eastern horizon of all Montana. Editors were strangely silent for the moment and homesteaders tightened their belts. They plowed under their wheat stubble or tried to harvest a crop which yielded a two- or five-bushel crop. Grasshoppers fought in their greed to abuse the thirst-ridden crop remains and the young grain shoots. The winds swept through the Musselshell Valley, gathering the now-rootless, much-plowed topsoil.² In 1920, there was little left for the grasshoppers and the wind. There was even less for the homesteaders.


²The Montana Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry reviewed the drought year of 1919 as it affected the entire state. "The year 1919 has been the driest Montana has ever experienced. Prospects at the beginning of the year were very good for a bumper crop. The snowfall in the mountains had been light, but it was expected that during the crop growing season, when the rains usually came, the precipitation would be larger than usual because of the light snowfall. The high price offered for wheat led to a large acreage being planted. During the months of May, June and July, the growing months, (there was) very little rainfall with the result that a large section in the state produced no crop or pasturage, while other sections gave but small returns. The unusually hot weather soon melted the light snow covering in the mountains, with the result that the usual water for the irrigated tracts became scarce . . . ." The bureau was optimistic of better times to come. "The people in the state are undaunted, however, and are making the usual preparations for the season of 1920. It is pointed out that Montana has never before in its history had three seasons in succession as dry as the seasons of 1917, 1918 and 1919 have been. From this it is argued that the state will surely come back in 1920." Montana, Bureau of . . ., Montana Resources . . . 1919, pp. 5-6.

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Montana newsmen found the pinch as difficult to reconcile as the homesteader. They were too long accustomed to writing plaudits of the fertility and productiveness of Montana soil. In the middle of the decade, the editors continued a steady stream of optimistic verbiage. Editors used the term "knocker" in referring to anyone who did not share a complete faith in the Musselshell Valley. In 1916, the Meagher County Democrat defined the knocker. "After God had finished making the rattle snake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left, with which he made the knocker." The remedy for the knocker was supplied as the closing statement of the same definition. "Boost, and the world boosts with you. Knock and you knock alone." Editors delighted in their own boosting. Harlowton was continually referred to as a coming city of 10,000 or described as "the pearl of the Musselshell." One editor wrote:

It doesn't require the gift of prophecy to forecast the fact within five years Harlowton will be a more populous city than Lewistown, as well as the most active railway center in the entire state of Montana. All that is required to bring this condition is earnest, united co-operation upon the part of our business men.2

1Meagher County Democrat, November 6, 1914.

2The Harlowton Press, June 17, 1916. The Press editor, George H. Beasley, wrote a news item which was indicative of the newsmen's logic in condemning the knocker. The item was entitled, "Not A Knocker." "We listened with a great deal of pleasure to a local dealer the other as he told us an experience that he had with Harlowton people. From it we draw greater pride in the past, more faith in the present, more hope in the future of our town.

It seems that during some of the coldest weather this winter four men from the Dakotas came into a local land office. The weather was cold and disagreeable and, if a man felt a little grouchy, we should not blame him too much. These men were spending winter's inactivity looking around and came into the office merely to ask questions. They were told about the advantages of this county and shown many things that surprised them. They thanked the agent and soon took their departure.

Greatly to the surprise of the land dealer, they returned after several hours and said "We have been about town a little and have talked
In a July, 1919, editorial, the Press hinted at the possibility of a dry year. "True it is that our crops are not all they should be, but when one compares our dry-land wheat with that of other counties, and our range grass with that of other counties, the most pessimistic cannot help but see that Wheatland county is in A-1 shape."\textsuperscript{1} But at the same time, Editor Herbert M. Peet, lauded the government's recent decision to cut the time of proving up on homesteads. Peet called the homestead laws "unrealistic programs . . . where climatic conditions make it a hardship to live on the land."\textsuperscript{2}

Early wheat returns were reported in July. Homesteaders were realizing yields of ten, twelve and twenty bushels to the acre. These early returns were among the best. In another month farmers in the vicinity of Shawmut, north of Twodot and south of Oka were reported to have lost most of their crop. Many of the farmers cut their grain for hay. Some farmers reported total losses. The editor tried to sound encouraging as he wrote of one group of farmers.

with no less than a dozen of your business men. With one accord they agree to the same things that you have said, so it must be true. We are coming back here next summer. There is not a knocker in town."

A few days ago, the land agent received a letter signed by one of these men. It read: "We have sold out and will leave for Harlowton this month."

. . . It pays to boost the country wherein you gain your livelihood. Boost all the time, and your reward will be a better town in which to live and more prosperous country from which to draw your trade."

\textsuperscript{1}The Harlowton Press, July 10, 1919.

\textsuperscript{2}The Harlowton Press, July 24, 1919.
Farmers are reported to be most discouraged, and it is to be regretted—that in some cases farmers who could least afford to lose are going to have a small crop this year. And while we feel very sorry for these men who have lost out, we should not become so discouraged as to encourage their departure from our country. Let us all keep up our best smile and remember that Wheatland county is and always will be a county of most advantageous agricultural opportunities. The unusual conditions which have prevailed . . . are exceptions, rather than the rule.¹

The editor concluded his catch-all remedy. "Irrigate and diversify. . . . This is the 'Jewel of the Musselshell.'"² An advertisement from a Butte firm, the Henningsen Produce Company, illustrated the faith Montanans placed in diversity. The advertisement read in part, "While the crop conditions are bad, every farmer should take good care of the cow. She will bring him a good steady income if he can feed her. The money crop is assured if the dairy herd is provided for."³ Wheatland County immediately tried to supply its own cure for the farmer's ills. The county provided one hundred thousand dollars worth of seed bonds tax for a new start for local farmers.⁴ A hurried government ruling gave the homesteader a chance to leave his land for outside employment. Local land offices granted permits to those "homesteaders who find it necessary to leave their farms to earn a living because of the present drought."⁵ The City of Harlowton tried to help by providing jobs.

¹The Harlowton Press, July 10, 1919. ²Ibid. ³The Harlowton Press, July 24, 1919.
⁴Ibid. In 1915 the legislature provided "for the allowance of crop liens" without specifying who should provide the monies or seeds. Thus the county took the initiative on its own. Montana Laws 1915, Chapter 23, p. 32. This was introduced in the Senate as S. B. No. 37.
⁵Ibid.
One advertisement for farmers' employment appeared in heavy black type on page one during the summer of 1919.

FARMERS WANTED. There is a great need for more men to work on the projects in Harlowton being done under the direction of the city council. Farmers who are looking for day-labor work should apply to Mayor W. F. Jacobs for a job on the many city improvements now in progress. Good wages are paid.¹

One of the most tragic aspects of the drought was the gradual leaving of the homesteaders. As the depressed conditions continued, sales were held every week in the Judith Gap and Hedgesville communities. Two auctioneers at Harlowton handled the sales. At first, one or two or three sales were held during an average week. The tempo increased in 1920 and during the next five years. Hanbills, posters and newspaper advertisements announced the sales. People came from everywhere in the Musselshell. Unhappily, the potential buyers had little more than their leaving neighbors. Farm machinery, beds, harness and everything else was sold for whatever price could be garnered, usually twenty-five or fifty cents. Turkeys, another item which some homesteaders believed would boom as well as wheat, were given away by the departers. As one witness of the tragedy described it, "everything was worthless when one homesteader was as poor as all the others."²

The present drought continued into the early 1920's. At first the homesteaders were able to hang on in Wheatland County. But the crisis was more than a momentary eruption by nature. Wind and hail, drought and grasshoppers banded together to add to the woes of those homesteaders trying to weather the storm. The editors tried to encourage everyone in

¹The Harlowton Press, July 24, 1919.
the community with their editorials. The encouragement offered in 1919 was the same as that of 1924. The Times editor wrote the following article after the dry spring of 1924.

KEEP SMILING! Sure, we know its discouraging and things have not been 'breaking good.' . . . We know the farmers have been handicapped by conditions and prices and that taxes are high. But this old world has been spinning around a good many centuries and when it hasn't been too cold it has been too hot, when the floods subsided the droughts came. Right here in Harlowton you haven't much to kick about. If you want to know what trouble is, move to Russia. Quit your grumbling boy! You don't know about trouble here in God's country.¹

It was difficult to equate God's county with facts however. In the ten-year period, 1920-1930, Wheatland County lost two thousand people. The population in 1920 was 5,619 people. Ten years later, Wheatland County had 3,751 people. The 33.2% loss gave Wheatland County the dubious honor of being one of the five Montana counties losing over 30% of its population during the decade.² Hedgesville lost nearly half of its population. Judith Gap fell from a population of 739 in 1920 to 444 in 1930. Harlowton lost over five hundred people during the same decade. In 1920 Wheatland County had 688 farms; in 1930, the area had 324 farms.³ The homestead banks followed the same course as the dry land farmers. In 1923 banks closed in Shawmut, Hedgesville and Judith Gap. The State Bank of Twodot and two Harlowton banks were bankrupt by the end of 1926.⁴

¹The Harlowton Times, June 5, 1924.
²Montana, Agricultural Experiment Station, 38th Annual Report . . . , p. 84.
⁴Abstract of Reports of Conditions of Montana State Banks and Trust Companies, December 31, 1923 and April 12, 1926 (in the files of Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana).
The last issue of The Hedges Herald was printed in 1919. The Harlowton Press and Judith Gap Journal closed their doors for the last time in 1923. The last issues of the Journal illustrated the hardships and trials of the area. Advertising was sparse, local news recorded the departure of more families or was not reported. Most of the newspaper was purchased fill-in copy and dealt with state and national news. A farm page was no longer included. As Lyle Cowan left the Journal he left with a parting comment which was a strange mixture of faith and weariness.

With this issue, the writer retires as editor and publisher. We have been in that position for a little over a decade, and in that time have seen many changes for better and for worse in the community. We have faith in this section, and are firmly of the opinion that within the next three years Judith Gap and community will experience real prosperity, and that, too, from agriculture. Of course, there are the sceptical who will not agree with us, but they are not aware that at this time Montana lands sown to wheat yield better than any lands in the entire Northwest. Well, that is neither here nor there. We are leaving, but our faith is in this section. Don't think that we have lost faith in Montana - especially this section - for we have not, and never will.¹

The Harlowton Times was the only newspaper to survive through the drought period and continue as the voice of the upper Musselshell Valley. Six months after the departure of the Journal, Editor Howard Squires wrote an ironic chronicle of the homestead era in the Times.

As they leave the gaze on the most marvelous pastoral scene and breathe the most magnificent (sic) air pervading in the land most potent in resources and replete in opportunities on God's green earth, to go - in search of the rainbow. And the tragedy of it is, they never find it.²

The homesteader was ruined by the dry land farming tragedy in the Mussel-

²The Harlowton Times, January 10, 1924.
shell. When the reality of life was driven home during the drought years, the government, editors, business people and everyone else fully realized that "the most marvelous pastoral scene" could not be achieved by 160-acre tracts farmed by hundreds of small farmers. The homesteader did not survive in the Musselshell Valley, but the name Wheatland County, in large part, was due to his fashioning and creation. Wheatland County was made in the image of the early rancher and his successor, the homesteader.
CHAPTER VI
CREATION OF A COUNTY

The change in the population strength of Meagher County influenced the thinking of the people within the developing homestead communities. The political domination of Meagher County shifted from the White Sulphur Springs area to Harlowton and its surrounding homestead towns. Homesteaders accounted for most of this population increase. This transformation swayed the domination of county officials from west to east and further, it provided the Democratic Party with its first substantial voice in affecting the outcome of elections. Most important, it caused considerable animosity between the areas of the county, eventually resulting in county division. The growing animosity of the two sides of the county clouded the political picture, particularly in the case of county office.

As deeply entrenched as was the Republican Party at White Sulphur Springs, it had considerable trouble in overcoming the competition and jealousy in the opposite end of the county. Intra-party conflict became the rule. Party loyalties did not control the political aspirations of either end of the county. Simply, White Sulphur Springs votes went to the candidate from White Sulphur Springs or its trade area; Harlowton candidates, or those candidates within its vicinity. This pattern of politics was at least in part a result of the railroads and the homesteader, and continued with greater intensity until the eventual breakup of the county.

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In 1900, a presidential year, eastern Meagher County contributed one-fifth of the total vote. They were influential in electing the one contested office, that of county attorney. Even with the solid power of the Republican Party in Meagher County, this was only the second time since 1878 that a Republican had managed to win the position of county attorney. The winner was Max Waterman, the soon-to-be central figure of a very controversial school fight. The Musselshell vote was especially apparent in this Republican victory as Harlowton, Oka, Winnecook and Living Springs voted a straight one-party Republican ticket.\(^1\)

The strength of the Musselshell and the breach between Harlowton and White Sulphur Springs came to the fore in the 1902 dispute over the proposed county high school and a site for its location. Education was ever an important question. Since the beginning of settlement in the region, families desiring to send their children to high school were forced to make the necessary expenditures of paying for their child at one of the boarding schools of Montana. The closest and most popular one for Meagher County residents was St. Vincent's in Helena.\(^2\) The expense was a major one for any family and to remedy it, the White Sulphur Springs editor, R. N. Sutherlin of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, carried on a long-running editorial campaign to insure a high school for the county. As he was situated at White Sulphur Springs and an ardent booster for the town, he naturally backed the case for the county high school's location at the county seat.

\(^1\)Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 15, 1900.

Sutherlin's editorials were in keeping with his desire to see the county bettered by an added necessary facility. In a letter to the editor, one local citizen expressed the same view as Sutherlin and a number of education-minded residents of the county, as he wrote:

The proposition submitted to the people is not to establish a school for the benefit of White Sulphur Springs, but to establish at White Sulphur Springs a school for the benefit of the county . . . . Tuition is to be free . . . . Many go out of the county to finish their education who can hardly afford to go out of the county . . . .

People in the Musselshell were in favor of continuing education for their children. The location of the high school at White Sulphur Springs was the very crux of their arguments against it. Thus, people in the Musselshell considered a high school at White Sulphur Springs an added burden on the back of the rest of the county at their expense, and more important, as a crown on the head of western Meagher County. White Sulphur Springs backers, in turn, argued that the logical location of a high school should be the largest town in the county so long the center of the county government and trade. Pamphlets were circulated by both warring groups. Harlowton argued the high school would increase taxes and students from the Musselshell could attend school outside of the county cheaper than traveling to White Sulphur Springs. White Sulphur countered with the accusation that Harlowton was trying to hold back progress, and that the recently-elected county attorney, Max Waterman, had contributed $500 to the Musselshell fund as an expression of gratitude for backing him for county attorney. As the White Sulphur Springs editor derisively maintained, the county attorney was also

1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, March 27, 1902, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, April 3, 1902.
actively bidding for the creation of "Waterman county in the Musselshell."

The election returns followed the same pattern of all-out battle. The county was split irreparably and the 514 school-age children of Meagher County had to wait for another day while their elders jealously fought over supremacy of the county at the expense of all else. The special election returns were indicative of the strife which overshadowed the county, politically, and, in fact, socially and economically.

### Area Voting for High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>White Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delpine</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Mile</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
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</table>

All four precincts within Meagher County were in the Smith River Valley.

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Area Voting Against High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newland Creek</td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Elk</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Elk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harlowton</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinsdale</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twodor</td>
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<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lennep</td>
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<td>Shannon</td>
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<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorsey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMPLETE TOTALS:** 314 388

The final tabulation of voting of the 1902 school election proved two irreconcilable truths, as true in the next ten or fifteen years as the results of this election. The first truth was that Meagher County was hopelessly split, east and west. This was expressed most pointedly in the realm of recent politics, the sources of which were principally due to the isolation caused by the mountains separating the two valleys and the changing land conditions brought on by homesteading in the Musselshell. The arrival of the railroads, beginning with the Montana in 1889 and 1900, and the Milwaukee and Billings & Northern railroads in 1908, opened the eastern valley to the homesteaders. At this same time, stock-raising continued to dominate in the Smith River Valley in the western

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*The Meagher Republican, August 29, 1902.*

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half of the county. The second fact was dependent upon and a result of the first: the eastern half of the county, the Musselshell Valley, desired the county seat or county division.

Demands for the county seat of Meagher County or a division of the county was viewed as an economic and political necessity at the turn of the century. This was the case in the Musselshell Valley, and every other area of the state. Roads, taxation, representation—these were

1The two county newspapers gave an indication of this fact. After 1905, articles in The Meagher Republican of White Sulphur Springs continued to focus on the stockraising industry and the pressing need for a railroad to the county seat. The Musselshell News and its successor, The Harlowton News, at Harlowton, and after 1908 and 1909, the Judith Gap Journal and Hedges Herald, respectively, dealt with the increasing growth of their communities. First was the arrival of the Milwaukee and Billings & Northern railroads. Secondly, was the number of ranches sold to land syndicates, and finally, the arrival of the homesteaders. The small branchline, the White Sulphur Springs & Yellowstone Park Railway, had reached White Sulphur Springs in October, 1910. The total track mileage was only twenty-five miles, connecting White Sulphur Springs to the Milwaukee at Ringling, the circus town which, like the shortline railroad, was built by the Ringling Circus owners. As an experiment, the Ringling family was trying to make their winter quarters in Meagher County. This effort, like the prospective boom which White Sulphur Springs hoped would follow the railroad, never materialized. Settlement did not increase notably near White Sulphur Springs after its completion. The examples of presidential election years in the Smith River Valley attest to this fact: 1908 - 252 voters; 1912 - 234 voters; 1916 - 165 voters. The physical makeup and recent history of the two valleys were important to the development of the Musselshell over Smith River. The Musselshell Valley opened to the plains area of Eastern Montana. The Smith River, much older in terms of ranching settlement, was surrounded by mountains and was a much smaller valley. Both of these physical limitations hampered possible growth.

2Montana became a state in 1889. At that time, certain provisions were included in the Montana Constitution relating to counties. Article XVI, section 1, provided for the sixteen counties of the state "until otherwise established or changed by law." Concerning new counties, the Constitution said "in all cases of the establishment of a new county, it shall be held to pay its ratable proportions of all the existing liabilities of the county or counties from which it is formed ...." Montana, Constitution, Art. XVI, sec. 1, and Art. XVI, sec. 3. Montana Territory had nine counties. By the time Montana became a state in 1889 it had sixteen counties. The number increased to twenty-eight by 1910. Eleven years later, Montana had fifty-four of its total fifty-six counties. Montana's "county busting" period was 1910-1921.
issues at the very roots of a community as readily in 1900 or 1920 as in 1966. Logically following such a proposition at a time when counties were quite large and county seats were far from isolated areas, people in one area of the county thought in terms of their own area and those in yet another area looked to their own special interests. Meagher County, with its two major valleys, was caught up in the throes of such a dilemma from the first days that the cattle and sheep ranchers of the Musselshell began to realize they were growing in numbers, and as they logically or illogically deduced, political strength.

Ralph Berry, owner of the large Winnecook Ranch in the 1880's and 1890's, was credited with the first public statement concerning a county for the Musselshell. (See map on page following). In 1894, on a visit to White Sulphur Springs and the office of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, Berry told Editor Sutherlin he was:

proposing a measure for Musselshell county to embrace all the country in the Musselshell watershed from a point six miles west of Martinsdale to the Big Bend of the Musselshell . . . (and) . . . have but one officer for this county and that he draw a salary of $1,500 a year and board, and that he board around with the people.1

The Berry proposal did not win adherents willing to carry on a campaign for his county, nor would the proposition have received enough strength in the Musselshell area of Meagher County, and the nearby areas of Fergus and Yellowstone Counties. In 1894, in the second election for determining

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1Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 20, 1894. The area of the proposed Musselshell County in terms of the present fifty-six counties would have included all of Golden Valley, Musselshell and Wheatland, half of Sweetgrass and Meagher, one-third of Fergus, and small parts of Petroleum, Yellowstone and Garfield counties. Ralph Berry was thinking in terms of the Musselshell cattle range, the undefined boundaries of the cattle and sheep ranges of ranchers of the Musselshell.
the location of the state capital, a heavy turnout of voters in Meagher County overwhelmingly favored the closer town, Helena, over Anaconda. The Musselshell area cast one in fourteen of the total ballots within the county.¹

In 1897, ranchers in the Musselshell spoke in terms of approaching the Fifth Legislative Assemble to ask for the creation of Musselshell County. This plan was discussed locally, although representatives were never sent to Helena to the Legislature.²

Richard Harlow's Montana Railroad entered the Musselshell in 1899 and 1900. At this same time, the Burlington Railroad was surveying a route between Billings and the Great Falls area. With one railroad a reality, and another on the drawing board at the turn of the century, people in the Musselshell looked for a prospective boom for their own area and a decline in White Sulphur Springs, a county seat without a railroad. Twodot interests proposed their own two-year-old town as a contender for the county seat. Twodot was in the midst of the area's livestock region and on the track of Montana Railroad. Rumors also hinted that an undetermined point along the Burlington survey in the Musselshell might be proposed. At the same time, the White Sulphur Springs editor argued against any talk of a creation or moving scheme in no uncertain terms. Editor Sutherlin argued that the county schemes would be a tax burden and a "height of folly" since both the Smith River and Musselshell valleys were sparsely populated by "a dozen ranchers whose

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¹*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, November 15, 1894.

fences a horseman could not circumvent between sun and, (further,) not one-tenth of the area is cultivated."

By the fall of 1902, the White Sulphur Springs editor and most of the subscribers to his newspaper in the western area of the county were willing to let either Harlowton or Twodot push for Musselshell County, or any other county. Smith River Valley people felt the Musselshell had cast an overwhelming ballot against the special high school bond issue. To them, this constituted a conspiracy against White Sulphur Springs. The conspiracy, they wholeheartedly maintained, was spearheaded by County Attorney Max Waterman, a man who would be honored by having "Waterman County" in the Musselshell named after him.² Angry words were expressed between the two valleys, and a good number of White Sulphur Springs people considered Twodot's C. P. Tooley's election as county representative as the first step to a proposal for Musselshell or Waterman County at the next legislature.³

The momentary issue of the high school bond issue passed, but the county factions were at odds, ready to start new tires when needed. Max Waterman started his own. Calling the Rocky Mountain Husbandman "the chicken organ," Waterman inaugurated his own newspaper, The Meagher Republican, with the terse announcement that his rival was claiming to

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¹Rocky Mountain Husbandman, February 13, 1902.
²Rocky Mountain Husbandman, August 28, 1902, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 13, 1902.
³Rocky Mountain Husbandman, November 27, 1902, and Rocky Mountain Husbandman, December 4, 1902. Internal bickering and infighting were also going on between Harlowton and Twodot. Twodot had the county representative, C. P. Tooley, but Harlowton was the eastern terminus of the Montana Railroad, a larger town, and had recently acquired a $500 pest house and a new jail. Harlowton was proud of the latter two conveniences.
run a non-partisan agricultural newspaper which it definitely was not. He went on: "Meagher County is a republican county. A democrat cannot be elected within its boundaries unless elected by republican votes." The Republican expressed its affiliation in its editorials and on its banner. The Husbandman remained quiet.

Both newspapers were located at White Sulphur Springs but they helped widen the gap as supporters went to the aid of the respective editor they backed. The political parties fought each other in and out of the newspaper columns of the Republican. The valleys fought each other while the entire United States was suffering through a period of economic doldrums. The growing town of Harlowton burned down. To add to the local misery, all hopes of reviving the old mining camp of Castle were discouraged by the dismantling of the mammoth boiler from the former rich producing Yellowstone Smelter. The boiler was shipped via Leadboro and Lombard on the Montana Railroad for Anaconda.

The White Sulphur Springs newspapers condemned each other for charging high prices, bossism, partisanship and for influencing the county commissioners to obtain the county printing contract. With the awarding of the contract to The Meagher Republican in 1904, R. N. Sutherlin was forced to move the state agricultural newspaper to Great Falls, the home area of Montana's pioneer dry-land farming booster, Paris Gibson. Max Waterman won the round against the Husbandman. However, any dreams of an all-out continued domination by the Republican Party in Meagher County and a proposed Waterman or Musselshell County of the county attorney-editor's

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1The Meagher Republican, December 18, 1903.
2The Meagher Republican, October 28, 1904.
thinking would never be realized. The railroads and the homesteaders saw to that.

After the newspaper struggle in 1903 and 1904, the county quieted until the 1906 election. The persistent thoughts of moving the county seat or splitting the county began to boil again when a new hope emerged for the Musselshell. The perennial rumor that the Milwaukee Railroad was planning to build into the Musselshell Valley was confirmed with the announced sale of the Montana Railroad to the Milwaukee in March, 1906.1 People in the Musselshell area, depressed by the poor cattle and sheep prices over the past four years, were heartened by the prospect of a transcontinental railroad. The Milwaukee assured the area of settlement comparable to the recent example of the Dakotas. J. J. Fisher, running for county representative from Harlowton in the fall of 1906, tried to dispel the idea that the county could afford to move the seat or government or divide, but he spoke to deaf ears. Voters in the Musselshell Valley wanted one or the other, however long the wait.

As the first boostin for homesteaders commenced in 1906 and 1907, Harlowton's new newspaper published an occasional advertisement hinting at the possibility of a county seat or division as an inducement to buy land or town lots. Editorially, however, the newspaper was silent. A. F. Weston, editor of The Musselshell News, was financially forced to take a middle-of-the-road policy on possible county issues. The News was awarded the county printing contract during the first year of operation for its peace-keeping efforts. Writing about the much-maligned county

commissioners Weston commented, "we feel the whole county will be treated with fairness at their hands."

Roundup, seventy miles to the East, made its own bid to the legislature when it convened in the spring of 1909. Roundup hoped to create Musselshell County from territory in Fergus, Meagher and Yellowstone counties. The Roundup Commercial Club had two lobbysits, W. K. K. Quarles and L. R. Carroll, in Helena for the legislature. Their efforts went for naught in 1909, but Roundup's move sufficiently awakened Eastern Meagher County to action of its own. S. J. Small, editor of the Judith Gap Journal, half in jest, proposed Harlowton's inclusion in the new Musselshell County as long as Judith Gap was left out so they might advance their own county division efforts. The projected western line for the new Musselshell County, however, only extended to a point east of Shawmut, twenty-five miles from Harlowton.

Harlowton was a step ahead of Judith Gap according to The Meagher Republican.

Foxy Harlowtonians tried to slip a knockout over our guard by sending a representative of the town to the legislature this week with a bill petitioning for permission to vote on the change of the county seat. "Nothin' doin'," he was told. The legislature knows where the good towns of the various counties are located, so they turned down four bills of a similar nature.

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1 The Musselshell News, March 14, 1907.
2 The Musselshell News, January 22, 1909. The comment of The Roundup Record was quoted by The Musselshell News. "Sam Small of the Judith Gap Journal, published at the town of Where-Is-Judith Gap fame, which also has a longing to be a county seat of something, got pretty nervous last week when he learned of the proposed formation of Musselshell County for the first time... We are sorry we cannot accommodate Bros. Small by letting Harlowton come in to bask in the sunshine of the new county, having fully decided to leave that division to work out its own salvation."

3 ibid.
The comment of the Harlowton editor did not deny the allegation, stating only, "we are sorry that our neighbors are so restless. Never mind, White Sulphur Springs, Harlowton will not do a thing to you for two years late."^1

Proponents of county creation were quiet for the next two years. Instead Harlowton people decided to work for movement of the county seat to the Musselshell and away from White Sulphur Springs and the Smith River Valley.

In 1909, with the very active example of Roundup boosters as an illustration, the Harlowton editor argued for the movement of county buildings to the Musselshell to alleviate the problem of traveling the sixty miles to White Sulphur Springs to transact fifteen minutes of business, necessitating a full day of travel to accomplish it. Roundup was in a similar situation. The county seat of Fergus County was at Lewistown, 140 miles away from the coal mining center. For Roundup people, it meant three days of travel and expense to do any county business, however small.2

In February, 1910, the Harlowton Commercial Club, long active in the betterment of the community, started an active campaign for movement of the county seat to Harlowton. They ordered badges from a manufacturer with the inscription "Harlowton For the County Seat."3 When the badges

^1 The Musselshell News, January 22, 1909.


^3 The Harlowton News, April 1, 1910. The editor described the badges as "very neat and well gotten up. They are made of celluloid and are round, about the size of a fifty-cent piece. Around the edge is a red circle containing the war cry 'Harlowton For the County Seat,' and in the center of this is a picture of the new $23,000 schoolhouse which
arrived in March, the editor reported "you now find every citizen of Harlowton and vicinity wearing the slogan."¹

The Commercial Club sponsored a local debate, well attended by people of the vicinity. County seat removal was argued for, in the main, because of the growth of Harlowton and White Sulphur Springs' lacking a railroad. The following week, in mid-March, the club sent three men, A. T. Anderson, Harlowton's government land officer, Attorney W. C. Husband, and businessman-land speculator, I. S. McQuitty, to White Sulphur Springs, to appear before thei commercial club. A number of White Sulphur Springs citizens were present at the meeting. It was reported, with the exception of one or two, they were in favor of county division and willing to give Harlowton its own county, rather than fighting for the county seat location.²

Twodot, promised aid to Harlowton if Harlowton, in turn, would back Twodot's bid for its own free county high school. The Twodot correspondent wrote in his column for the Harlowton paper:

A movement is now on foot to secure a county free high school at Twodot. A petition is being circulated with a view of having the matter brought before the people at the next general election. Inasmuch as Harlowton has started a campaign for the removal of the county seat to that city, the citizens of Twodot feel reasonably confident of their unanimous support.³

¹The Harlowton News, March 11, 1910.
²The Harlowton News, March 18, 1910.
³Ibid.
Harlowton was so desirous for the county seat that it would have promised
Twodot half of the county officials in return for any support given to it.

Newspaper talk was the main voice in this early campaign however.
The Harlowton Commercial Club did set up a county seat removal committee,
but its activities were not stated. The Meagher Republican editorial
pages pointed out the major problem with which every taxpayer was most
concerned in any talk on county seat removal. The editor decided the
cost of transporting all of the county offices equipment and records and
building a new courthouse in Harlowton would involve an expenditure of
$200,000. This amount was outrageous he opined. The writer also alleged
Harlowton was on its last legs. The Harlowton editor hit back with the
caucus reply, "the Republican editor let forth a howl which sounded
like a mournful wail of a starving hound on a desert land."^2

The expenditure involved was the main concern of the taxpayers.
Thus, whatever the two editors might say in their editorial pages,
the time for backing any project for bringing county government to the
Musselshell was still in the future. Further, The Hedges Herald and
Judith Gap Journal editors were too involved in writing glowing statements
about their prairie land paradise. They had more to do than waste
valuable news space on a county matter. Thus, news space in the remaining
nine months of 1910 involved the increasing homesteading in Meagher
County. For the moment, the editors and politicians left well enough
alone.

^1The Harlowton News, March 25, 1910 and The Meagher Republican,
March 18, 1910.

Still, the growing strength of the Musselshell area rudely awakened any slow thinkers in the county. In the closest election in Meagher County history, eight Republicans and seven Democrats were returned at the polls for county offices. The Musselshell area was still strongly Republican in political thinking, but it gave whole-hearted support to its own democratic candidate for county representative. He was I. S. McQuitty, one of the major proponents in the county fight. McQuitty's, election marked the first time in the county's history that a Democrat represented Meagher County at the Montana Legislature.

In 1911, Harlowton boosters switched tactics. This time they proposed county division rather than removal of the county seat. Merino County was the name decided upon. It was to include sections of four other counties. (See map on page following). The backers went to considerable trouble in reviewing all records, checking boundary lines and insuring support from people in the areas involved. The county was to comprise 2,200 square miles and have a 14-mill taxation to raise $66,724. Other sources were to bring in $7,950 for a total of nearly $75,000. The Harlowton mathematicians juggled figures to the extent of showing Merino County with an actual $22,500 profit in its first year of operation. This was, $32,000 less than the amount for which Meagher County was carrying on its own county operation.

1The Meagher Republican, November 25, 1910. McQuitty was opposed by Republican N. B. Smith of White Sulphur Springs. Smith carried White Sulphur Springs by 3i votes and Martinsdale by a single vote. Twodot split, while Harlowton, Judith Gap and Hedgesville disregarded political parties for the moment and gave McQuitty a 309 to 96 vote. McQuitty carried the county by nearly 100 votes, thanks to his overwhelming return from Musselshell voters.

2The Harlowton News, January 13, 1911.
MONTANA IN 1911

MUSSELHELL COUNTY

MEAGHER COUNTY

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Merino County was to include the following property, figures taken from the assessed valuation of the areas involved:

- Eastern Meagher County $3,200,000
- North Sweetgrass County 400,000
- West Fergus County 1,036,000
- Northwest Yellowstone County 130,000

Total Valuation $4,766,000

Meetings were held throughout the Musselshell. Martinsdale promptly announced its intention to vote against any new county because of increased taxes. Martinsdale was located halfway between White Sulphur Springs and Harlowton, and its people would be forced to travel thirty miles to the county seat whether it was located in White Sulphur Springs or Harlowton. Judith Gap, Hedgesville and Twodot backed the Harlowton effort and were most optimistic when Harlowton boosters visited their "mass meetings . . . where county division was discussed thoroughly and with enthusiasm." At the Judith Gap meeting, the boosters nominated their own set of county officials for Merino County. County commissioners were to be C. L. Beers, a homesteader near Judith Gap, W. T. Weil, a Harlowton businessman, and Perry Moore of Twodot, one of the earliest ranchers in the Musselshell. Oscar Rader of Hedgesville, former Meagher County undersheriff, was nominated for sheriff. The Musselshell Valley was most democratic in choosing county officials from many occupations and every community of size.

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1 The Harlowton News, January 20, 1911.
2 The Harlowton News, January 13, 1911.
3 The Harlowton News, January 20, 1911 and Judith Gap Journal, January 20, 1911. All was not peaceful, however, in the Musselshell. Seventy miles downriver, Roundup, with its own backers was planning to petition the legislature for Musselshell County. It was reported that Roundup was inserting a section of Eastern Meagher County land and exchanging some worthless land in their own area. The acquisition of railroad land for increased taxation was the reason. The Harlowton News, January 13, 1911.
Enthusiasm swept over the Musselshell Valley like a fast-moving contagious disease. On January 27, the News devoted a full-page article to the new county. The headlines blared:

BOOST PROPOSED MERINO COUNTY

BIG MASS MEETING AND SMOKER TOMORROW NIGHT

PEOPLE OF NEW PROPOSED COUNTY ANTICIPATE ITS PASSAGE THROUGH THE LEGISLATURE

EVERYBODY ENTHUSIASTIC

The editor pointed to the great distance from White Sulphur Springs for three-quarters of the county population and said the best taxable property, population and volume of business of the county was at the eastern end of the county. The editor and the boosters gave Harlowton the tenth Judicial District of the state. They magnanimously selected Harlowton as Merino's temporary county seat until the state law could be passed and a permanent county seat chosen by popular vote. To comply with the Montana Constitution, people in all the areas of the projected county had signed enough petitions to merit the establishment of the new county.1

In February, with the legislature in the midst of its biennial gathering, Roundup and Harlowton newspapers illustrated the emotionalism involved in the county fights. The Roundup Tribune called the mass meeting at Harlowton "a jealousy meeting" with each interest looking out for itself.2 The Harlowton editor countered by stating that

1 The Harlowton News, January 27, 1911.
2 The Roundup Tribune, February 2, 1911.
Lavina and Ryegate had both proposed themselves as county seat for Musselshell County, letting Roundup go wherever it wished.\(^1\)

At the legislature, Roundup won its battle for the creation of Musselshell County.\(^2\) The eastern boundary line of Meagher County was not altered, much to the satisfaction of Harlowton, Judith Gap and Hedgesville people who had heard numerous rumors over the past two years that their respective communities were to be included in Musselshell County.

Merino County did not enjoy a similar creation. Its fate was in doubt for the time being. The Harlowton editor said "Merino and some other county divisions are more meritorious than Musselshell, but the have no favor with the copper trust agents and, of course, will have a hard pull on account of opposition coming from that source."\(^3\) At any rate, the case for Merino County did not get beyond Meagher County. A bill for its creation was not introduced in the legislature.\(^4\) The

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\(^1\)The Harlowton News, February 10, 1911.

\(^2\)Senate Journal, House Journal, Twelfth Session of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana, (Helena, Montana: Independent Publishing Co., 1911), Ch. 25, secs. 1-19. Cited hereafter as Senate Journal 1911 and House Journal 1911. At this 1911 legislature, eleven bills requesting the creation of counties were introduced in the Montana House of Representatives. Three others were introduced in the Senate. All of the proposals involved land within the area of central or eastern Montana or the High Line.

\(^3\)The Harlowton News, February 17, 1911. In another article on the same page, the editor wrote, "It seems there are a certain few at Helena who have it in for Representative I. S. McQuitty of Harlowton because he steadfastly refuses to join their corrupt politics (sic) and sell his honor to the copper trust for their paltry dollars, but stands for the interest of the people whom he represents." This comment was the only published item concerning the fate of Merino County in the legislature. No indication was given as to whether the opposition was from the "Copper Trust."

\(^4\)Senate Journal 1911 and House Journal 1911.
legislature, however, gave Merino County a lease on life and renewed hopes for another day. At the 1911 meeting of the Montana Legislature, Dr. Ira A. Leighton (R) of Jefferson County sponsored an alternative to statutory creation. The Leighton Act called for the "petition and election" method of creating counties.1

Certain minimum standards must be met by the proposed county. The new county was to have a minimum four million dollars assessed valuation. Present counties could not be left with less than a five million dollar assessed valuation and a land area of less than eight-hundred square miles. County lines could not pass within eighteen miles of the county seat of any proposed county. Lastly, the new county must be signed by one-half or more of the registered voters in the area of the proposed county. If the new county was to take part of its area from more than one county, then one-half of the voters from the county areas involved were required to sign the petition. The signed petitions and a maximum five thousand dollar bond for expenses incurred were to be delivered to the board of county commissioners of the mother county or county which would lose the largest land area. The commissioners were to hold a hearing for both petitions and objections at which time they would determine the proposed county's boundaries and the validity of the statements in the petitions. If fifty per cent or more of the qualified voters in an existing county requested exclusion of their territory from the new county, the boundaries of the new county had to be altered. If all requirements for creation

were met, an election, conducted according to the general election laws of Montana, was to be held. The ballot for the general election was to have a slate of county officers, choice of a county seat and contain the proposition for or against the creation. Sixty-five per cent of the voters of the proposed new county had to vote "yes." If land area from two or more counties was involved within the boundaries, sixty-five per cent of the votes were required in all county areas affected.  

The Helena Independent followed the legislative proceedings which dealt with the passage of the Leighton Act. During the February hearings the Independent reported the senatorial squabble.

TEMPEST IN TEAPOT. Senators Meyer and McCarthy paid each other anything but ecomiums of felicity as a result of the division. Senator McCarthy said the bill had been amended out of all semblance of form and rightfully should be referred back to the Judiciary Committee. He placed (the move) in the form of a motion. He said the bill took from the legislature the right to divide counties and placed the matter primarily in the hands of the county commissioners.

Senator Larson offered an amendment to strike out all reference to population in the bill. The amendment carried providing county have at least a taxable valuation of $5 million. Seven senators voted against this.  

The Independent noted a possible reason for the introduction of the Leighton Bill. "In the place of creating new counties the indications are the legislature will take steps to make the matter of county division optional with the people." Possibly the legislature was tired of an endless contention with county divisionists. The Independent reported  

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1Montana Laws 1911, Ch. 112, secs. 1,2,3. Blaine and Hill counties were created under the provisions of the Leighton, "petition and election" Act in 1911. Following legislatures enacted numerous amendments to this basic framework.

2The Helena Independent, February 7, 1911.

3The Helena Independent, February 14, 1911.
at the first week of the legislative meetings:

It is doubtful if any state in the union has been confronted with so many county division schemes at one time as will be passed favorable or unfavorable by the 12th Legislative Assembly. They number seventeen and cover a wide range of territory in the third largest state in the Union.  

The Independent was not completely satisfied with the passage of the Leighton Bill in March.

There is some regret that the legislature should have passed SB . . . . Under the new plan there will be some exciting elections in various parts of the state but there will not be the big lobbies sent to Helena as in the past.

Efforts of various sections of the state to secure the organization of separate county governments was responsible for much of the life of the session and although the Musselshell crowd was the only one whose efforts were crowned with success the other county divisionists made good fellows of themselves, learned much of the legislative methods and departed with the intention of winning out some other time or in some other way.

By May, 1911, Harlowton backers followed the provisions of the new Leighton County Creation Law and started over. The News reported 700-petitions had been signed backing Merino County, and of this number, only two of every seven petitions came from Harlowton. To add weight to his contention, Editor R. A. Lockridge cited "an interesting and instructive comparison of the great and the near great." He listed the White Sulphur Springs population in 1900 and 1910 in relation to that of Harlowton over the same decade with White Sulphur Springs 427 and 417 respectively; Harlowton 0 and 770.

Anyone questioning the population center of the county had ample opportunity to see it during May of the same year, 1911. The county

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1 The Helena Independent, January 10, 1911.
2 The Helena Independent, March 5, 1911.
3 The Harlowton News, May 5, 1911.  4 Ibid.
commissioners had submitted proposals to build or add to their county courthouse facilities at numerous times over the years. Pressure from the Musselshell had continually defeated any such move. Trying again in 1911, the commissioners decided on a plan calling for a $100,000 courthouse to be paid for at six per cent interest over the following ten years. The Republican encouraged the construction on the simple grounds of outright necessity. The Judith Gap Journal said the cost was too high and did not include provision for a sinking fund to lower the taxable mill levy involved. The News at Harlowton was the most vocal opponent as the editor wrote "this is a lavish and unnecessary expenditure of the taxpayers' money (and) would materially increase the taxes in the county (and) a building costing half this amount would meet the demands of this county for years to come."  The News did not deny the need of a new court house. Instead it argued in terms of cost with this move. He hoped to keep alive the cause of Merino County and at the same time keeping increased mill levies out of the thought of the taxpayers.

Voting in the special election was characteristic of recent Meagher County elections. People voted in terms of where they lived, forgetting the merits or demerits of a much needed new building for county offices. Harlowton voted against the measure 161 against 14. White Sulphur Springs had 10 against to 160 for. Judith Gap, Oka and Nihill voted overwhelmingly against the measure, but for the first time, Twodot, Hedgesville and Shawmut did not follow the lead of Harlowton and Judith Gap instead carrying the court house measure by three votes. Overall, the

1 The Harlowton News, May 19, 1911.
court house lost 343 to 279 and the candle of hope in Eastern Meagher County was kept flickering.¹

A new proposal for Merino County was started in the fall of 1911. Meetings were held in Judith Gap, Nihill, Ryegate, Barber, Hedgesville and Harlowton. Twodot was to be left in Meagher County because of the lack of interest shown in the last election. To remedy this loss of land, the new boundaries would include additional townships from Yellowstone and Sweetgrass counties, fifteen miles of Musselshell County, maintaining the Fergus boundary as the northern line. Judith Gap, however, with its own ideas as to where the county seat of Merino should be located, forced the New County Association, as the boosters now labeled themselves, to agree to include ten miles of southern Fergus County.² (See map on page following).

Internal bickering overran clear thinking at this time. Judith Gap was calling itself THE TOWN of the new county.³ Harlowton promised to submit no candidates for county offices since it was the largest community. Opponents objected to Merino County as:

¹ The Harlowton News, May 26, 1911.
² Ibid.
³ The Harlowton News, May 26, 1911. Sam J. Small, editor of the Judith Gap Journal placed a banner over the Journal head which read "Judith Gap is located in the largest and most prolific winter wheat region in the World." This line was carried on the front page for ten years by Small and each succeeding editor.
too suggestive of the sheep business and misleading, inasmuch as a band of sheep in the territory comprising the new county will be a curiosity in ten years. It will become the richest agricultural county in the state in a few years and as alfalfa can be raised in all sections of it for all time to come, a more appropriate name would be Alfalfa county.¹

At a meeting held in Judith Gap late in 1911, I. S. McQuitty, Meagher County Representative from Harlowton, explained the existing methods of creating a new county. In talk from the floor, the views of the homestead community were expressed. The homesteaders were dissatisfied with the reluctance of the county commissioners to build roads throughout the prairie land they had settled. They also felt Eastern Meagher County was not receiving the homesteading representation which it needed. The homesteaders offered their own recommendations for a name for the county more in keeping with the times than Merino. They proposed Richland, Judith, Oka and Judith Basin.²

The Journal tried to convince the people located within the four-mile strip of Fergus County of the merits of being in a new county. The newspaper pointed to the lack of roads in the southern strip of Fergus County, the lack of representation at the county seat in Lewistown.

¹The Harlowton News, November 3, 1911, quoting the Judith Gap Journal. Editor Small was in keeping with his role as a homesteading newsman. He decided Alfalfal County would be a good name for the hay crop that was raised by both the homesteader and the rancher and for the most part, homesteaders and ranchers did not agree on much. Merino County was not a fitting name anyway; many people spelled it Marino. The proper spelling would have been another point of contention.

²Judith Gap Journal, November 24, 1911. One of Meagher County's commissioners, Frank Webster of Shawmut, had tried to explain the official acts of the county commissioners in the past two years. He wrote long, thought-out letters in the issues of November 10 and 17, 1911. Editor Small called his open letters "a diarrhea of words and constipation of ideas" in which he was trying to argue against county division at this time, but which the Journal interpreted as his attempt to remain in office. The homesteaders had little use for Frank Webster or any of the other commissioners.
The editor said in the new county, taxes would be lower, the county would have a $7,000,000 valuation, roads, county officials from that area. In essence, he added, "Can you ever hope to get relief while Lewistown is ambitious to be the whole of Fergus County? Think it over."¹

Harlowton backers, checking the number of homesteaders moving into the Hedgesville and Judith Gap communities, felt they could lose the county seat by a few votes in an election to determine its location. Thus, Harlowton would not go along with the demands of Judith Gap for the four-mile strip in Fergus County. Judith Gap and Hedgesville reacted in anger. The Judith Gap Commercial Club drew up a petition of its own and started an opposition movement against any county backed by Harlowton.

The counter petition was circulated freely throughout the Musselshell telling; the taxpayers to beware of a Harlowton petition which would come around about April 1, 1912. Headlined "FACTS OF INTEREST TO THE VOTERS OF MEACHER COUNTY," the Judith Gap petition informed the taxpayers the cost of removal would involve an expenditure of $300,000 and $400,000. It asked "Are you prepared financially to assume this great burden just in order to have the county seat a little nearer to you, or to satisfy the desires of ambitious towns for county seat honors?"²

In March, 1912, the Journal noted with a good deal of sarcasm "the town lot boosters of Harlowton had decided to drop the sheep name Merino for the new county, instead substituting the more appropriate

¹Judith Gap Journal, November 24, 1911. Fergus County was in no mood to lost more land at this time. The Lewistown News was quoted in the Journal, November 17, 1911: "The sentiment of this city is against this loss of some of the choice townships of the Judith basin and the opposition here will be strong."

name of Wheatland. It is nice to have all these little things fixed for us in advance."\(^1\)

The *Harlowton News* devoted an editorial to this "get-together spirit (which) is the art of shoulder to shoulder work that will make Harlowton what it has an opportunity of being in coming years."\(^2\) In essence, however, this quote, like similar ones in the *Journal* and *The Hedges Herald*, points to the lack of togetherness within the Musselshell hurting any serious efforts for creating the county. The name Wheatland, as standard bearer, was the only point on which all factions of Eastern Meagher County agreed.\(^3\) Harlowton, Judith Gap and Hedgesville leveled charges and countercharges against each other followed by outlandish promises in their various individual quests for support.

Judith Gap insisted on adding land from Fergus County to give it a more central location and a chance for the county seat in case of an election to determine the popular demand for the county seat location.\(^4\) Harlowton, looking out for itself, would not back a boundary change which

\(^1\)Judith Gap Journal, March 22, 1912, and *The Harlowton News*, March 15, 1912, said the name Wheatland was decided upon by the New County Association because "There had always been more or less criticism and dissatisfaction with the name Merino, as it was suggestive of conditions and industries that are no longer paramount in the commercial development of the Musselshell valley, while Wheatland is synonomous with the great staple cereal that is destined to make this section of Montana world known."

\(^2\)The *Harlowton News*, January 12, 1912, and *The Harlowton News*, February 16, 1912.

\(^3\)As late as 1920, Harlowton ranked as one of the three largest milling centers in Montana and had twelve grain elevators. Wheatland County was the best possible name in the view of most people. Figures from: *Montana, Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry. MONTANA 1923 Edition* (Helena: State Publishing Company, 1923), p. 23.

\(^4\)Judith Gap Journal, April 5, 1912 quoting the *Roundup Tribune*, April 4, 1912.
included Fergus County. Thus, Harlowton lost Judith Gap's support, Judith Gap and Hedgesville were threatened by Harlowton with exclusion from Wheatland County and left as an isolated strip in Meagher County surrounded by four other counties. Judith Gap said Harlowton had been an overboomed railroad town now relegated to being "a junction point of the branch to Lewistown (having) limited agricultural land close by and not sufficient to support a town of the present size."^1 Harlowton turned the homesteaders away from the Journal's view by promising each individual farmer with a road leading from his place to the nearest town. To settlers in the Oka area, between Harlowton and Judith Gap, Harlowton backers hinted at the construction of a grain elevator and possibly a town within the year. The Journal's reaction was "the Harlowton boosters are (making) a big play at telling how kind and fine and wonderful they are (and) not one grafter as they say started Musselshell county--HA HA."^2

The Hedges Herald reported a meeting at Rothiemay in Musselshell County which would feature:

"gentlemen---self-inspired, self-opinionated and self-interested--(who) will endeavor to persuade the residents of Musselshell County that they can get away from the exorbitant taxes of their new county if the creation of Wheatland county, born of a selfish desire of those financially interested in Harlowton is permitted to consummate."^3

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^1Judith Gap Journal, March 22, 1912. The Journal was quoted as describing Harlowton as "part of the territory containing nothing but sand dunes, Cayuse mountains, rim-rock, sagebrush and grease wood." The Harlowton News, April 5, 1912.

^2Judith Gap Journal, April 19, 1912.

^3The Hedges Herald, May 31, 1912. The Journal pointed out another example of Harlowton's self-interest. Harlowton boosters were willing to let any town within the new county make a bid for county seat. "Only towns incorporated can be county seats, so sneaky Harlowton would be the only one with a chance." Judith Gap Journal, June 7, 1912.
The proposed Wheatland County was set up as thirty-one miles east and west and forty-two miles north and south, according to A. T. Anderson, one of Harlowton's most ardent boosters (see map on page following). Anderson gave a number of interesting facts to Editor Sam Small of the Judith Gap Journal. Instead of a $300,000 or $400,000 assessment for the establishment of the county as many critics had insisted, Anderson checked the costs of establishing Sweetgrass, Broadwater, Carbon and Musselshell counties. The first three averaged $14,000 for total cost of transcribing records, buying books, furniture, typewriters, etc., and the cost for Musselshell County was $30,000. Anderson estimated the cost of Wheatland County as $19,655, a negligible amount as Anderson pointed out considering the tax burden which the railroads would assume with eighty-two miles of track within Wheatland County with a valuation of $1,162,496.¹

To appease the demands of Judith Gap, the new county lines were to be one mile east of Twodot, seven miles north of Melville and take in two townships from Fergus County. The eastern boundary was to continue to be the old Meagher County line. Land was to be taken from Sweetgrass, Fergus and Meagher counties, leaving out any area within Musselshell after the complete failure to gain support from Musselshell County.

The valuation was set up to comply with the legislature's change in standards necessary for the creation of a county. Changing lines to conform with the law and to insure enough favorable opinion involved considerable flexibility before the boundaries were determined.

¹Judith Gap Journal, November 29, 1912.
Representative I. S. McQuitty, W. N. Smith and L. Burrows traveled throughout the proposed Wheatland County visiting the homesteaders, getting petitions signed, answering questions and writing numerous letters to the News, Journal and Herald proclaiming the advantages of a small, compact county. To help in their efforts, the Harlowton boosters invited the views of Daniel McKay, the famous "county splitter" of Montana.

McKay, a brickyard owner at Vandalia and Glasgow, was the proponent of numerous counties within Montana. An ardent backer of the homesteader, he envisaged a time when Montana would have 300 counties. McKay damned the Anaconda Company, the railroads and the stockmen, and encouraged the homesteaders to exert themselves in the political and economic arena. The best way, McKay reasoned, was by creating counties in which the dry-landers would have a major voice and their first opportunity to look after their own interests. McKay's labors for county splitting were in the initial stages when he visited Harlowton in 1912. He was the expert, and local people listened.\(^2\)

\(^1\) The Harlowton News, November 22, 1912.

\(^2\) Daniel W. Whetstone, *Frontier Editor* (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1956), pp. 99-106, and Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 236-243. This was the only effort made by Dan McKay in the creation of Wheatland County's creation, however small, was a real one.
The Harlowton News quoted McKay, "I find smaller counties more economically governed and with better buildings, roads and bridges, less debt and better credit." McKay stressed the jealousy of big counties and their lack of logic in fighting the cause of the smaller counties which could be created from them. He cited costs of travel to the county seat, the expensive prosecution of criminals, the forgotten road and school districts. McKay, beginning his career as the rather of a number of Montana counties, said everything McQuitty, Smith, Burrows, Anderson and the rest had argued for during the campaign for creation of Wheatland County. The backers of Wheatland County felt ready. They decided upon a double-barreled attack to insure the realization of Wheatland County as the thirtieth county of the State of Montana. First they planned to go through the legislative route. If that method failed, they would ask for a mandate by the people.

During the fall of 1912, L. D. Glenn, a Harlowton lawyer and real estate agent, was elected to the post of Meagher County Representative for the coming legislature in Helena. He was a strong backer of Harlowton and an ardent booster for a county seat and a new county. Andrew C. Grande, a rancher near Lennup on the western fringe of the Musselshell Valley, was the elected senator from Meagher County. He was interested in keeping Meagher County at its present size and maintaining the county seat at White Sulphur Springs. L. D. Glenn, with the aid of former Meagher Senator, C. P. Tooley, planned to take a county formation plan to the legislature. Andrew C. Grande was ready to fight any move to change Meagher County.

The Harlowton News, August 2, 1912.
Harlowton business people secured enough petitions within the area of the proposed Wheatland County to appear before the Meagher County Commissioners, asking for a primary election for potential county officials. In accordance with one of the provisions of the Leighton Act, a primary election for county officials was called by the commissioners for February 28, 1913. The Judith Gap Commercial Club immediately selected its slate of candidates. The Harlowton Press editor, Frank G. Brug, wanted a bi-partisan list of candidates from Harlowton and warned of Judith Gap, "Let us work unitedly as in Judith Gap we have a strong opponent for the county seat, and worth of our most serious consideration."¹ Harlowton, with its characteristic optimism, made an all-out effort for the new county. A typical comment of the editor was "Wheatland County, first, last and all the time."² The preceding week he had called for the relocation of the University of Montana to Harlowton because it was centralized and a coming town.³

Numerous reasons were given for Wheatland County's creation. The editor made a special point of the great distance and costly travel time to White Sulphur Springs and he informed his readers of the new county's railroad mileage, proportionately larger than any county in the state. Further, the editor decided 90% of the people residing in the area demanded Wheatland County. Most of all, however, he pointed to the great homesteading development within the Musselshell Valley in the four-year period since 1910. Harlowton had the only grain terminal

¹The Harlowton News, January 10, 1913.
²The Harlowton News, January 31, 1913.
³The Harlowton News, January 24, 1913.
in Montana with a capacity of 350,000 bushels. In addition, the area within the new county had nine grain elevators with a capacity of 210,000 bushels. Harlowton, according to editor's statistics, stood second in Montana in "milled in transit" business, mainly because of the Milwaukee Railroad and the great increase in marketed grain within the area since 1910. The quoted figures were quite impressive, whether to an interested land buyer or the Twelfth Legislature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bushels of Marketed Grain 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>55,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>240,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913 (est.)</td>
<td>1,550,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This four-year period was the high point, to date, of homesteading within the Musselshell and a major reason for the all-out effort for the creation of the new county. The Press editor argued, "The creation of the county will bring relief to the settlers in this territory." 2 Editor Brug pointed out that White Sulphur Springs politicians and The Meagher Republican were not protesting Wheatland County because they would rather be rid of the east end of the county than carry on a continuous warfare, especially in light of "Harlowton's prominence now and its unrivaled prospects in the future." 3

Hedgesville had its own feelings towards the creation of the

1 The Harlowton News, February 28, 1913.
2 The Harlowton News, February 7, 1913.
3 The Harlowton News, January 24, 1913.
new county and, especially, of Harlowton's plans for reserving the county seat for itself. One of the growing homestead towns in the Musselshell, Hedgesville felt it had its own just case for winning the county seat honors within the new county. The Hedgesville newspaper and business leaders decided that the proposed county lines had been drawn up by Harlowton with the express purpose of placing Harlowton in the center of the county, leaving Judith Gap near the northern boundary and Hedgesville bordering the east boundary. Hedgesville planned for an all-out fight against the Wheatland County measure.

On January 21, 1913, the Hedgesville Commercial Club organized an Anti-Division Club. Members of the club visited the homesteaders and all the homestead clubs within the lines of Wheatland County. The plan won many adherents among the new farmers. Movements were started in Bercail, Nihill, Shawmut, and, eventually Judith Gap, after The Hedges Herald warned, "Judith Gap won't have the support of Hedgesville, Nihill, Shawmut or Bercail, so they might as well vote against Harlowton getting the county seat."¹

The homesteaders were finding their dreams few and far between on the prairie lands and their plight was a serious one. The Herald ran one large headline, "TAXPAYERS, PROTECT YOURSELVES!", and the article beneath it consumed a good share of the front page in explaining the reasons for an eight million dollar delinquent taxpayers in Meagher County in 1912, 104 were homesteaders in the area of Wheatland County.² One homesteader wrote a letter to the Herald arguing that settlement in the

¹The Hedges Herald, February 4, 1913.

²The Hedges Herald, May 6, 1913. The Herald's article concerning delinquent taxes within Meagher County was the only one of its type during the period. The Harlowton newspaper said the Herald was "knocking the homesteader." The Harlowton News, May 9, 1913.
proposed Wheatland County was in its infancy and most settlers did not know whether they could raise enough crops, much less afford a new county.

It is claimed it will be a good thing for us to have a county of our own. Good for whom? Good things generally cost money. Have we the money in sight with which to pay the bill?\textsuperscript{1}

The most vocal opponent was Marion Small, editor of the Herald. In one issue, he wrote a long satirical story concerning a little village which wanted to be the biggest village in the county. The merchants wanted brick blocks and big stores and many other nice things, but at the same time, many other sturdy little villages were built around the village which wanted everything for itself. The politicians of the village which wanted everything decided the best way to realize its desires would be to get the county seat, but that effort failed. The same politicians made up their mind to call the old county seat and its politicians grafters and plunderers and get the county for itself. But like all bad villages which will stoop to any limits to get what they want, the bad village will lose.\textsuperscript{2} In another instance, Editor Small printed passage in heavy, black type:

\begin{quote}
Hey, you there! You booster for county division, do you own property in Harlowton or Judith Gap, or are you looking for an office? How! Oh, that's It! Yes. Yes.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

Hedgesville convinced all of the homestead communities to vote against Harlowton's bid for county seat, citing high taxes, the poverty conditions of the area, the failure to include the nearby large homestead

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{The Hedges Herald, January 21, 1913.}
\footnote{The Hedges Herald, January 28, 1913.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
community of Rothiemay in Musselshell County (which would add a considerable number of votes for Hedgesville as county seat), and the selfish desires of Harlowton businessmen. The News countered, "Hedgesville thinks they have no show for the county seat and consequently are fighting the whole proposition."¹

The fate of Wheatland County at the legislature added as much drama as the county seat fight at home. Harlowton had considerable hope of getting its petition through the legislature, at whatever cost. The News reported during the opening weeks of the legislature, "Representative L. D. Glenn is supporting all worthy new county bills before the legislature."² The Herald, possible showing its own political colors, said the Wheatland County Bill was taken to the legislature by former Senator C. P. Tooley, who was met by Senators John E. Donlan, Republican from Rosebud County, and Fred Whiteside, Democrat from Flathead County, whom the Herald referred to as the "Amalgamated managers, and for whom Tooley had been a faithful lackey for four years."³

Tooley waited for Senator Grande, a firm opponent of Wheatland County, to be away from Helena with an institutions investigating committee before the bill was introduced. Amalgamated, according to the Herald, was behind the Wheatland County Bill in order to control former Senator

¹The Harlowton News, February 7, 1913.

²Ibid. Five county bills were introduced in the House and two in the Senate. All except one of the requests was for county creation in central or eastern Montana. House Journal 1913 and Senate Journal 1913.

³The Hedges Herald, February 25, 1913.
Tooley or whoever else was elected from the new county.¹

Senator James E. Leary introduced Senate Bill No. 145 during the last week of February in the legislature.² Leary, a Democrat from Lincoln County, and resident of Libby, was termed by the Herald, "Senator Leary, whoever he is."³ Wheatland County was to include an area of Musselshell County, fourteen townships of Sweetgrass County, six miles of Fergus County and have its western boundary within two miles of Martinsdale. (See map on page following).⁵

The assessed valuation of the county was to include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Valuation of Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meagher</td>
<td>$4,111,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetgrass</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fergus</td>
<td>306,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musselshell</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Herald reported part of the activities in the Senate fight. Senator Duncan opposed the passage of the bill and questioned the legal rights of the legislature to create a county. They cited the recent opinion of the attorney general stating that provision was made in the Montana Constitution that where there is a general law concerning certain matters, special legislation shall not be enacted. Senator Ashbridge characterized the method of creating the county as reactionary. Senator A. C. Grande read petitions signed by residents and businessmen

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¹The Hedges Herald, February 25, 1913.
²Senate Journal 1913, S. B. No. 145.
³The Hedges Herald, February 25, 1913. ⁴Ibid.
⁵The Harlowton News, February 28, 1913.
⁶The Hedges Herald, March 4, 1913.
of White Sulphur Springs protesting the creation of the county by the legislature.\textsuperscript{1} However, Senate Bill No. 145 passed the Senate on February 27 by a vote of 19 to 10. Five days later, on March 4, the bill passed the House 41 to 38.\textsuperscript{2}

Governor Sam V. Stewart vetoed the Wheatland County Bill and similar county bills creating Wibaux, Clay and Richland counties. The Herald marked the event with a headline, "Governor Uses His Little Axe On Wheatland County."\textsuperscript{3} The Harlowton News published the reasoning behind the governor's veto. The bills were unconstitutional because they were not passed on their merits, but through "combination and log rolling;" and were not passed in terms set down by the 1911 Leighton Act.\textsuperscript{4} The News editor editorialized, "Governor Stewart . . . has practically said that he knows more than the legislature (and) . . . each of the new counties would have been either progressive or republican counties."\textsuperscript{5}

Backers of Wheatland County decided to try one alternative step which the governor had cited in his veto. Petitions were taken to every town and homesteader's home in the Musselshell until enough signatures were gathered to meet the requirements of the recently amended Leighton Act. With the amendment, a proposed county could be created with a fifty-one per cent affirmative vote. At the same time, the required

\textsuperscript{1}The Hedges Herald, March 4, 1913.
\textsuperscript{2}Senate Journal 1913 and House Journal 1913.
\textsuperscript{3}The Hedges Herald, March 11, 1913.
\textsuperscript{4}The Harlowton News, March 14, 1913.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
minimum assessed valuation was reduced from four million dollars to three million dollars. A five million dollar minimum valuation was still required for the county or counties from which land was taken. The board of commissioners of Meagher County called for a special election in May, 1913, to determine the case of Wheatland County and whether Judith Gap or Harlowton should be the county seat.

An overwhelmingly plurality for Wheatland County and for Harlowton as county seat was not enough. A technicality in the provisions of the Leighton Act defeated the measure. The personal sentiments of the Herald and the News shows the reactions of the respective communities.

The Herald was pleased that of the 61 votes cast at Hedgesville, 57 voted against Wheatland County and four voters did not mark their ballots. Hedgesville voters did not vote on the Harlowton-Judith Gap issue for county seat. The Herald called the election "the untimely and selfish issue that had been foisted on the people by a group of men who dreamed of county seat and political victories." The News decided "the law as it now stands is an outrageous one."

1Montana Laws, 1913, ch. 133, secs. 1, 4. Under the amendments to the Leighton Act in 1913, eight new counties were created by petition and election—Big Horn, Fallon, Mineral, Richland, Sheridan, Stillwater, Toole and Wibaux.

2The Hedges Herald, May 13, 1913. The News reported on the Hedgesville election. "It has been reported to this office, on good authority, that some of Hedgesville's citizens that were opposed to county division threatened some voters who were in favor of it, and told them that if they voted for it they would receive no consideration in business or any other way in town. That they would know how every man voted . . . . Those doing this are a blot on civilization." The Harlowton News, May 16, 1913.

3The Harlowton News, May 16, 1913.
Special Election Results\(^1\)
1915

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>For Wheatland</th>
<th>Against Wheatland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harlowton</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Gap</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oka</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nihill</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bercail</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedgesville</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawmut</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY SEAT</th>
<th>For Harlowton</th>
<th>For Judith Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harlowton</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Gap</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oka</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nihill</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bercail</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedgesville</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawmut</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The returns of the special election showed the strength proponents of Wheatland County had gathered throughout the area. Their efforts however, went for naught. Neill, the area call the Fergus Strip, voted against inclusion in Wheatland County 27-11. The most recent law set up by the legislature had a clause which stated 50% of all people in any area must vote for the new county; Wheatland had nearly a 78% majority. Neill, however, voted against the county, negating county creation since

\(^1\) The Harlowton News, May 16, 1913.
it was in another county area and not meeting the required 50% total voters of any county area to be affected within the proposed boundaries of a new county.

Judith Gap's demand for the inclusion of the Fergus Strip had been met. It resulted, however, in the defeat of Wheatland County's creation, and did not satisfy Harlowton's or Judith Gap's hopes for the county seat. Harlowton backers were undaunted by the loss of Wheatland County, on the same page as the returns were reported, Harlowton announced plans to carry on a campaign to move the county seat from White Sulphur Springs to Harlowton.

Harlowton boosters began a grass-roots campaign for winning the county seat honors. Working behind the scenes during the remainder of 1913 and through the spring of 1914, people in the Musselshell area were given ample opportunity to reassess their position in relation to White Sulphur Springs. Petitions were taken to every farm home, to the railroad yards and every business house in every community in the Musselshell Valley. Handling all aspects of this campaign with delicacy and accuracy, Harlowton managed to gather enough petitions and votes from the Musselshell to submit a bid to the Meagher County commissioners for a special election to determine the location of the county seat.

In September, 1914, the commissioners, after a long examination of each signed petition, announced their canvas revealed enough public sentiment to call the special election in November, 1914. For the next two months, the Smith River and Musselshell valleys accused and fought

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1Montana Laws 1911, Ch. 133, sec. 4.
2Meagher County Democrat, October 9, 1914.
each other with charges and more charges. The commercial clubs of Judith Gap, Harlowton and Hedgesville carried on the campaign in the Musselshell. The commercial club of White Sulphur Springs and the incumbent county officials backed the Smith River. The newspapers, three in the Musselshell, and The Meagher Republican at White Sulphur Springs, displayed large headlines, printed extra papers and numerous pamphlets for county distribution. In each issue, the charges made by the opposing editors were cited and dissected methodically and viciously. The county seat fight ruined all possible accord between the two valleys for years to come.

The editor of the Meagher County Democrat, George H. Beasley, started the verbal barrage with a listing of grievances and reasons people in the Musselshell Valley felt meaningful for county seat removal. He cited distance, the lack of progress in White Sulphur Springs, the ultra conservative feelings of the Smith River Valley and false sentimentality for the old county seat as the reasons White Sulphur Springs should yield to Harlowton's demands. Beasley reasoned a move of the county seat would be the opening wedge in county division and the cost of removal would be only about $1,000. After pleading for voters to examine cold facts and figures with care, he ended his article with a blistering self-accusation of his own area.

THERE IS A GREATER COUNTY CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN THE EASTERN END OF THE COUNTY . . . . that is the claim that ninety percent of the criminal business Originates in the east end of the county. If this is so, it is a very great reason why the center of government should be closer to the originating point of the county's crime and thus save the enormous tolls in the transportation of these criminals to White Sulpher Springs. The above claim is made by the people of White Sulphur and as the court sessions are held there they should be in a position to know.¹

¹Meagher County Democrat, September 18, 1914.
The Republican at White Sulphur Springs did not argue the last statement but found numerous points of contention against Harlowton. The editor opened his case by asking, "Do you want to help the townsite boomers of Harlowton?" He questioned the motives of Harlowton, pointed to the lowest tax levy in Montana which Meagher County enjoyed, accused Harlowton of being ambitious, the center of criminal activity (60% crime at Harlowton and 40% at White Sulphur Springs) and removal would be the first step to Harlowton's bid for the county court house which it had defeated in 1912.¹

In the next issue, the Musselshell papers answered with their own answers and resumed with numerous new charges. The fight continued on in the same vein until the election in November. Two aspects, however, stood out. Both sides were willing to go to any extent in gaining strength, and emotional arguments were used as never before.

White Sulphur Springs sent a circular letter to every voter in the county. The circular, printed and mailed by the White Sulphur Springs Commercial Club, accused Harlowton of looking out for its own desires. It also alleged misrepresentation of costs and running Meagher and the proposed Wheatland county, failure to pay the cost of the county division election which had been promised and increasing the taxes of the farmer were other accusations. On the front page of the circular, an election ballot was reproduced.²

¹ Meagher County Republican, October 8, 1914 and Meagher County Republican, October 14, 1914.

² Meagher County Democrat, October 9, 1914.
CANDIDATE FOR COUNTY SEAT

X

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

WHY THE COUNTY SEAT SHOULD NOT BE MOVED:
1st—"It will Increase my Taxes"
2nd—"God Knows They are High Enough"
3rd—"It Will Benefit Harlowton and not Me"
4th—"It is Promoted by "Harloboosters'"
5th—"I am Willing to Let Well-enough Alone"

The Democrat disputed most of the claims of the circular, agreeing to Harlowton's booming and ambition. He decided "White Sulphur Grows Hysterical."^\

White Sulphur Springs was running scared, however. A situation never disputed by the Republican was brought to the attention of voters by the Democrat, which, in turn, made great light of the matter. The Democrat reported:

Fifty men imported to work on sewers from Butte, but in reality to vote against county removal. It is said that the sum paid for these men was in the neighborhood of $1,000, but this could not be verified. A Harlowton man in conversation with one of the imported men had a talk something like this: "How are they treating you?" Rotten. We had to sleep in the jail the first night, then we had to buy our own rubber boots on order to work in this mud and slush. They said they wanted us to vote for the county seat. I am heartily sick of the job."^\

The Democrat reported the men arrived at White Sulphur Springs on the day of registration and all were registered. The Democrat pointed to

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^Meagher County Democrat, October 16, 1914.

^Meagher County Democrat, October 9, 1914. On October 16, the editor asked, "What are you going to do about the fifty imported men from Butte, Mr. Taxpayer?"
the spirit of fair play in the western half of the county which would not tolerate such actions as these. He reminded his readers, "It looks very suspiciously like they were there for no other purpose than to defeat county seat removal. This will defeat White Sulphur Springs." In the same article, the editor argued the fact that White Sulphur Springs was off the main route of transportation. The Montana Railroad (Jawbone) had not built to White Sulphur Springs and the Milwaukee line was likewise built miles to the south.

Both sides protested the other's actions during the following weeks before the election. As final blows, the Democrat accused the White Sulphur Springs interests of promising aid for Martinsdale, Ringling and Lennep people in their bids for a county seat, when and if Meagher County should be divided. The Democrat howled, "This is certainly the greatest manifestation of hypocrisy yet exhibited by White Sulphur people." As a final rejoinder the newspapers quoted their own compiled figures accusing farmers and businessmen in the opposite valley of paying fewer taxes and having lower valuations than their own valley.

The 1914 election solved nothing. The same equilibrium between the two valleys held any decision at a stalemate. A two-thirds majority vote defeated Harlowton's bid, as White Sulphur Springs received 765 votes to Harlowton's 837. The Smith River Valley backed White Sulphur Springs' retention of the county seat. The Musselshell voted for Harlow-

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1 Meagher County Democrat, October 9, 1914.

2 Meagher County Democrat, October 23, 1914.
ton 802 to 37. Twodot gave Harlowton only 46 of its 75 votes. Another bid had failed for the moment.

Hedgesville and Judith Gap both fought the 1915 petition of Harlowton before and after the latter town submitted its division petition to the District Court at White Sulphur Springs, February 8. Neither the Republican nor the Democrat found reason for the two homestead communities to file their own objecting petitions before the court. Prior to the hearing the Republican at White Sulphur Springs conceded that the time would come when Meagher County would be divided, alleviating travel costs, a reduction in the class of the county, county expense and "either end of the county could go ahead with road improvements without waiting for the other to recover from its chronic grouch."

The Harlowton newspaper, quite in agreement with the Republican, was at a loss to explain the strong opposition of Judith Gap and Hedgesville. It could not understand their reliance on the "scarecrow of high taxation," since the counties created under the Leighton Act of 1911 had actually

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1*Meagher County Democrat*, November 27, 1914. The Democrat reported one humorous note to the outcome. A window display was set up in Marshall's Store. "They had the court house on wheels and a toy team hitched to it hauling the building to Harlowton and a crepe was placed on the place supposed to represent White Sulpher Springs. The jail was also coupled on behind the court house and the two buildings were supposed to be about half way between here and White Sulpher Springs, where disaster overtook the caravan. The boys in the store showed they were good sports though, when the next morning came the team was turned backward and the crepe was placed on the Harlowton side of the picture." *Meagher County Democrat*, November 6, 1914. Harlowton voted for itself, 426-3; White Sulpher Springs gave four votes to Harlowton and 371 for retention of the county seat at White Sulpher Springs. The other towns followed this same pattern.

revealed a lower tax rate in the new counties than before the segregation.\footnote{Meagher County Democrat, February 5, 1914.}

T. J. Johns, the Harlowton editor, decided Judith Gap and Hedgesville carried on their "work of opposition . . . stealthily, and in the dark. Not until the cards were all played at White Sulphur Springs last week was it discovered that the game had been played with marked cards."\footnote{Ibid., supplement.}

Judith Gap countered in its next issue by saying if anyone was playing a game with marked cards, it was Harlowton. The \textit{Journal} argued that Harlowton was using its own unfair means to gain its end.

People over the entire eastern end of the county, who are unfortunate enough to be indebted to some of the corporations of the town of Harlowton are feeling the pressure of the thumb behind the money sack. What do the people of Meagher county, and the proposed county of Wheatland, think of a man or a set of men who will coerce an American citizen, with the God-given right to vote as his heart dictates, just because he is unfortunate enough to be in debt?\footnote{Judith Gap Journal, February 5, 1915.}

The \textit{Democrat}'s reply was that the \textit{Journal} should be censured for "such infamous representation."\footnote{Meagher County Democrat, February 12, 1915.} The \textit{Democrat} editor, T. J. Jons, had a signed first page statement by all Harlowton businessmen, to the effect that Harlowton merchants had used neither force nor intimidation with people from any outlying community.
Wheatland County's creation was to have another delay. The Democrat, taking the side of Harlowton, argued that the county commissioners, in a "travesty of justice," added and subtracted names from the official registration in the County Register for county elections, to the point that Harlowton's petition did not have enough signatures to meet the minimum requirements.¹

Frank Webster, Meagher County commissioner from Shawmut, was particularly ridiculed for his part in determining the official registration. The Harlowton editor had the final prophetic word for the future of Frank Webster and Wheatland County.

The people of Harlowton have just begun to fight and if Webster thinks he can dominate the entire population of Meagher county, as he dominated the board of county commissioners, he is very much mistaken. The recent conflict of the county seat is but the skirmish line and the real battle is yet to come. Harlowton is now rolling up its sleeves and will fight this thing through to a finish and if there is such a thing to be had in the state of Montana as justice we are going to get it.²

Harlowton rolled up its sleeves and went to work with a will to insure the defeat of Frank Webster in 1916. The Republican at White Sulphur Springs, still hoping to keep the county wars at a minimum, came out in support of Harlowton's Ben T. Stevens for county commissioner, decided Frank Webster's six-year term was enough. The paper came up with the

¹Meagher County Democrat, February 12, 1915. The 1915 Montana Legislature made creation by petition and election more difficult. Likely, the sudden increase of the new counties accounted for the legislature's firm policy. The 1915 amendments raised the required assessed valuation of a new county to five million dollars. The original county or counties were to be left with a minimum eight million dollars in assessed valuation and a remaining territory of not less than twelve hundred square miles. Montana Laws 1915, Ch. 139, secs. 1, 2, 3, 4.

²Meagher County Democrat, February 19, 1915.
novel idea of having a county commissioner from Harlowton, another from
White Sulphur Springs and the third from the western end of the county. Harlowton was satisfied, but more so, diligent in its "proper" choice
for county representative and county senator. The men chosen were
E. C. Baxter, a rancher with lands on the American Fork and near
Twodot and an owner in the State Bank of Twodot, and Warren E. Jones,
a young Harlowton lawyer.

Both men were strongly backed in the Musselshell Valley. The Women's
Christian Temperance Union, very energetic in this area in 1916, polled
most of the county candidates. Jones said he was for prohibition. At
the legislature Baxter voted dry. Neither man mentioned Wheatland
County's creation during his campaign. The editors, too, were
surprisingly quiet.

In the August primary, however, the largest turnout of voters in
Meagher County history went to the polls. The year 1915 was the high
point for homesteading in Meagher County and besides high crop yields,
the final influx of homesteaders filed on land within the county. Over 3,200 votes were cast, with nearly two-thirds of the total from
the Musselshell. The republicans, Jones and Baxter, won handily. Frank
Webster, seeking re-election, was last in a three-candidate race. The
Harlowton Press said of Webster's defeat, "the political hide of the
Shawmut statesman and letter-writer was neatly nailed to the back-yard

1Meagher County Democrat, February 19, 1915, quoting Meagher County
Republican.

2Interview with James Lunny, Harlowton, Montana, November 15,
fence by the Harlowton proletariat." The primary nominations of Baxter and Jones was the most important feather in the cap of Harlowton. These two men won handily in November. They would take the case of Wheatland County to the 1917 Montana Legislature.

Senator W. B. Jones of Harlowton and Representative E. C. Baxter of Twodot arrived in Helena during the first week of January. They were armed with a complete list of items for the proposed Wheatland County. The boundary lines were selected to include Eastern Meagher County within the Musselshell Valley with a western boundary three-to-six miles east of Martinsdale. The northern and eastern lines of Meagher County would serve as the like boundaries of Wheatland County. To the south, a six-mile strip of Sweetgrass County would be annexed. (See map on page following). Plans for a new courthouse were drawn and a full slate of county officers for the new county chosen. The county ticket included potential officials from Judith Gap, Hedgesville, Nihill, Twodot and Harlowton. The Harlowton backers chose officials in favor of division. In the final form, this list was as follows:

Commissioners: I. S. McQuitty, Harlowton
Frank Williams, Twodot
John Foster, Harlowton

Clerk of Court: A. T. Anderson, Harlowton

Assessor: E. E. Crawford, Shawmut

Clerk and Recorder: W. W. Phares, Hedgesville

Sheriff: Dominic Grivetti, Harlowton

Treasurer: Charles B. Riedeman, Judith Gap

1The Harlowton Press, September 2, 1916.
2The Harlowton Press, December 10, 1915.
County Attorney: L. D. Glenn, Harlowton
Superintendent of Schools: Bertha Lunceford, Harlowton
Surveyor: Calvin C. Jewell, Nihill
Coroner: Dr. E. F. Ross, Harlowton

Senator Jones and Representative Baxter were to maneuver the passage of the Wheatland County Bill through the legislature. Harlowton carried on its own creation efforts this time, thus hoping to avoid all possible chances of failure. Twodot, Hedgesville, Judith Gap and the smaller communities were expected to fight the bill which they did. In a final fight, Harlowton was on one side, the other towns of the proposed county on the opposite. Both combatants prepared for the contest after the Journal made this terse announcement in its first issue of 1917, "Senator W. E. Jones and Representative E. C. Baxter of Twodot are in Helena, and have announced their intention of passing a bill creating Wheatland County." Note: 

Opponents of the bill immediately began to organize. This time, White Sulphur Springs' Meagher County Republican, was for the creation of the county. The editor wrote, it:

1Judith Gap Journal, February, 9, 1917 and Judith Gap Journal May 18, 1917. McQuitty, Anderson and Glenn had been ardent supporters for the creation of Wheatland County over the years. Charles B. Riedeman was said to be "an enthusiastic booster for Wheatland County." Judith Gap Journal, March 23, 1917, quoting The Harlowton Press. Frank Smith, Judith Gap, and E. L. Shumaker, Twodot, county commissioners in Meagher County at this time, were left off the ticket. Both men were against the passage of Wheatland County. Another Judith Gap man originally listed on the list was the Meagher County deputy sheriff. Judith Gap Journal, January 5, 1917, and Judith Gap Journal, January 12, 1917. The backers of Wheatland County gave out their own spoils system: those for the new county were rewarded with office.

"will cum administrative, court and other expenditures . . . . Should this division be defeated, thru the efforts of White Sulpher, we can depend upon Harlowton commencing another county seat removal action, and the eastern end towns, that today ask our support (in opposition to a new county), will then be with Harlowton. We don't want this construed as showing the 'white feather.' It would simply be the case of 'doing unto others' as they had already done unto us."

The following week, the Journal told of people in the Twodot section, headed by P. J. Moore and Leed Shumaker, who were preparing to attend the legislature to argue against Wheatland County. Twodot was trying to keep any boundary limits to the east of it, thus leaving Twodot within Meagher County. The Judith Gap editor noted the interests of his town and Hedgesville in relation to any move by Twodot.

It is thought the bill can be passed with little opposition, providing, of course, that the legislature will consider the bill at all, if the proposed county can be left as it is now outlined. But, if the Twodot people are successful in breaking away, it is more than probably that the Gap and Hedges sections will be forced to follow suit, while if the county should remain in tact as proposed, it is doubtful if any strong opposition would develop in the east end.

The very next week, the Journal reported a visit by Perry Moore of Twodot and his meeting with a number of anti-divisionists.

An organization was completed whereby Twodot and Judith Gap antis' would work in conjunction. Then the party went to Hedgesville, where they met Harry Giltinan and some others of the anti-divisionists, and an agreement was reached between the people of the three principle towns in the proposed new county, outside of Harlowton.

There is little doubt but that the fight will be bitter and long drawn out should the legislature give the proposed bill more than passing notice. The Harlowton boosters are strong for division, and it is understood that in many places outside of Harlowton there is a strong feeling of division, but as yet it is no way organized, while those opposed to

1Judith Gap Journal, January 5, 1917, quoting Meagher County Republican, January 1, 1917.

division have organized and will in all probability have able and capable men in Helena to see that no county division of Meagher is put over while they are on the job— but.¹

The committees of protest of the three towns, Judith Gap, Hedgesville and Twodot, were organized for action. January would determine whether protest would be needed, much less what direction it would take. For the moment though, the outcome of Wheatland County was in the hands of Senator Jones and Representative Baxter in Helena.

Senate Bill No. 58 was filed at the Montana Legislature January 19, 1917, by Senator W. E. Jones.² The bill was for the creation of Wheatland County from portions of Meagher and Sweetgrass counties. The valuation in the new county was estimated at $6,362,711 from Meagher County and about $200,000 from the strip included from Sweetgrass County.³ At this time, the bill included only a description of boundary lines. The county officials were left off the bill at the last moment.

The Judith Gap Journal editor, Lyle A. Cowan, took a stand in favor of the new county. He admitted his earlier opposition in this and the other creation fights involving the Musselshell, but felt this bill provided for a good valuation and of good size. He wrote:

¹Judith Gap Journal, January 19, 1917. The two tiers of townships in Sweetgrass County to be included in the county did not join the opponents. They signed petitions in favoring Wheatland County. Harlowton was much closer than Big Timber. The Harlowton Press, February 17, 1917.


OUR STAND

When the division question in Meagher county comes up we take our hat off to no man. For we consider that we have seen as much of this internal tangle that has been going on for the past few years as any of the battlers on either side. Two years ago we fought division as hard as we could because the county was too small in every respect. We will fight the division of the county just as strong this time if the west line is drawn back to Twodot instead of leaving it at Martinsdale. We favor a good-sized valuation in a new county and a reasonable chance when it comes to voting.¹

The Journal was accused by opponents of selling out to Harlowton. The editor responded that he believed the county should be created, that he was not leaving Judith Gap to move to Harlowton and "It would be nice to have the county seat at Judith Gap, but this is out of the question. So why should we keep Harlowton from becoming a county seat just because we can't have one."²

Opponents of the Journal and the stand of the editor, Cowan, were waiting patiently for the legislature to discuss Wheatland County. Judith Gap had five representatives, Twodot had two, White Sulphur Springs had several, while the expected opposition from Hedgesville, Shawmut, Nihill, Bercall and Oka did not materialize.³ Senate Bill No. 58 was presented and referred to committee for report. The hearing was originally set for Friday, January 26. It was postponed until

¹Judith Gap Journal, January 26, 1917.
³Ibid., On January 30, Postmaster C. L. Beers, James H. Lackey and William T. Fisher went to Helena to represent Judith Gap's opposition. The night before this, a meeting was held at which time some twenty men were to go to Helena. Three left at that time, two others, C. M. Gurley and Walter Witt, went to the capital city. The effort by Judith Gap appeared to be half-hearted at this time. Judith Gap Journal, February 2, 1917 and Judith Gap Journal, February 9, 1917.
February 1 when opponents were given their chance to appear. Those favoring the bill testified before the committee on February 2. However, though the committee had not approved or disapproved of the bill, it was ordered printed with only two days consideration and prior to the open hearings.¹

The Senate held its own debate on February 6. Senator Henry Ellingson (R) attempted to introduce an amendment leaving off the townships from his own Sweet Grass County. His amendment was defeated. The so-called McCone Law, passed in 1915, brought forth most persistent arguments.² Senator Thomas S. Hogan (D) of Yellowstone County argued Wheatland County did not comply with the provisions of the McCone Bill, mainly the sections calling for a minimum $5,000,000 valuation for the new county and leaving the old county(s) with at least $8,000,000 valuation. Senator Hogan felt non-compliance with this measure "would open up the old condition of log-rolling, trading and fussing around that clogged legislation."³ Senator J. C. Kinney (R) of Wibaux told the Senate the creation of Wheatland and Sykes counties was legally within bounds. Senator J. P. Meaders (R) of Richland County wanted the Senate to change the McCone Law, "before letting down the bars and permitting the county divisionists to ramble all over the pasture."⁴ Senator D. W. Slayton was in favor of Wheatland County. He built his case around the weather and the extreme difficulty of bucking snow-drifts from the Musselshell Valley to White Sulphur Springs. Senator

¹Senate Journal 1917, p. 208.
²The Hedges Herald, February 16, 1917. ³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
William E. Jones (R), Meagher, centered his final arguments around one of his favorite topics: the big taxpayers favor Wheatland County. The Hedges Herald reported the legislative steering work by Senator Jones and by the sponsor of the Sykes County Bill, Senator John Oliver (R) of Fallon.

They argued so earnestly that exceptions should be made in the present cases, the former (Wheatland) because a strip of townships taken from Sweet Grass was served best by the proposed county and the latter (Sykes) because a railroad had been promised if the Sykes were created, that the senate finally granted the pleas, with the understanding, however, that this should not be the signal for letting down of bars and the indiscriminate making of new counties during the present session.1

The motion to recommend the bill for passage carried 16 to 14.

On February 8, S. B. 58, creating Wheatland County, passed the Montana Senate by a 20 to 17 vote. Sixteen republicans and four democrats voted for the bill. Eight republicans, eight democrats and one independent voted against it. On the same day, Sykes County was created by a margin of 22 to 15.2 Montana's 1917 legislative assembly was the scene of renewed efforts for county formation by resolution. Three bills for new counties were introduced in the House. Two county bills were introduced in the Senate.3

Carter, a substituted name for Sykes County, and Wheatland County passed the Montana House with no trouble, Wheatland by a vote of 71 to 17.4 The bills became law after sitting on Governor Sam V. Stewart's

1The Hedges Herald, February 16, 1917.
3House Journal 1917 and Senate Journal 1917.
desk for five days, thus automatically becoming law. The Wheatland County Bill became law February 28. But the way was not assured yet.

During the last week of February, Governor Stewart instructed Attorney General S. C. Ford to start an action in the supreme court to ascertain the constitutionality of the Carter County bill. Carter County, according to the news reports, was chosen as a test case because it was created with very little opposition. Wheatland County's future was bound with the outcome of the Carter County decision.

Opponents to Wheatland County were given new life by the governor's decision. Attorneys for both sides gathered in Helena almost immediately. Immediately, Attorney General Ford was assisted by Attorney Norman Barnecord of Judith Gap, Judge E. K. Cheadle of Lewistown, Col. C. B. Nolan of Helena, former Meagher County Attorney C. A. Linn of White Sulphur Springs, and lawyers from Fallon County, and the county created from it, Carter. The firm of Gunn, Rasch & Hall, of Helena, Jones & Jones of Harlowton and Fallon County lawyers defended Carter County. On March 24, Attorney General Ford filed a complaint before the Montana Supreme Court in the case of Wheatland County. At the same time, Ford

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1 Judith Gap Journal, March 2, 1917 and The Montana Record-Herald, February 16, 1917. The governor did not sign the bills as he felt the Legislature had no authority to pass bills creating new counties when a general statute is upon the books. In 1913, he had vetoed bills by which the Legislature had passed on counties for creation.

2 Judith Gap Journal, March 2, 1917. Among the list of defense lawyers was one of the major men in the construction of the Montana Railroad, M. S. Gunn, former president of the railroad. The Montana railroad opened the Musselshell Valley to its first substantial settlement. The law firm of Jones & Jones included the "Father of Wheatland County," Senator W. E. Jones, now in the situation of fighting for the life of the law he helped through the legislature. The Harlowton Press, March 10, 1917, said of the attorney general's assistants, "these other luminaries have a personal grievance to avenge against our people."
made application for a temporary injunction restraining the commissioners of Wheatland County from exercising jurisdiction pending disposal of the test case of Carter County. Two days later, on March 26, the attorney general appeared before the supreme court in regards to Carter County.¹

People within the Musselshell and throughout Meagher County could do nothing but wait for the supreme court to decide on the constitutionality of Carter County. The Journal commented, "Wheatland County is here—but then it isn't."² The county was to start business April 1, 1917, but officials of the new county agreed with the county officers of Meagher County to withhold all action, rather than have Meagher County seek an injunction at the courts. The only semi-official business done by the Wheatland County commissioners was to publish notice calling for bids on the transcribing of the Meagher County records.³

The Supreme Court ruling was expected by local lawyers during the last week of April. The entire month of April passed by as did the first two weeks of May. On May 15, the Supreme Court decision was rendered. Carter County was declared constitutional by a two-to-one decision of the judges. The Montana Supreme Court ruled that the legislature had not repealed the general law relating to the creating of new counties. In actuality "changed conditions in the state had made the legislature the judge of whether Carter county should be created by special act, rather than the court."⁴ Thus, the Fifteenth Legislature passed over its own


³Judith Gap Journal, April 13, 1917.

prior law to create Carter County with a special law. This right was within reason since the legislature had made the first law, and this was their method of going above the previous law to create the Carter County.

The official ruling concluded:

"... We will not indulge the presumption that the legislative assembly wittingly violated the constitution, but, assuming that it is necessary to do so in order to uphold the validity of the act in question, we will presume so in order to uphold the validity of the act in question, we will presume that due consideration was given to the concluding sentence of section 26, (article 5 of the Montana Constitution, enumerating 34 subjects which are forbidden to be touched by special act), and that the enactment of the special law was the means employed to express the legislative determination that the general law is no longer applicable to the creation of new counties under the conditions as they now exist. The same conclusion might have been expressed more lucidly by repealing the general law outright, but if the determination was reached the particular means by which it was expressed is of no moment."

On May 15 at 11 a.m., the first telegrams arrived in Harlowton with the decision from Helena "carrying the glad tidings that the supreme court had sustained the constitutionality of the legislative act creating Wheatland county, and that finally, after a struggle of eight long years the people of eastern Meagher county had won their magnificent fight for county division."

Wheatland County was officially created, with the supreme court ruling, to its original starting date, April 1, 1917. The transition of the Musselshell Valley to its new role as Wheatland County was accomplished without a hitch. The county commissioners of Meagher and Wheatland counties met with a district judge, deciding to split all of the county


2 The Harlowton Press, May 19, 1917.
property shared between the two, fifty-fifty. The meeting was reported as "carried on with the greatest good will and all of the business was settled expeditiously."  

On June 5, 1917, Wheatland County celebrated its creation as the 41st county in Montana. Senator W. E. Jones and former Senator C. P. Tooley were officially honored at the celebration. The Journal, long an opponent of Wheatland County had called for a well-attended gathering of everyone in the area for "we have Wheatland county now, and despite sectional and party feelings that have been created in the past there should be no man or woman in the new county who does not, and will not continue to boost for Wheatland county." The dream of the Journal editor and many others would find this goodwill within Wheatland County and with neighboring Meagher County easier to talk and write about than to realize in actuality.

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1 Judith Gap Journal, June 8, 1917, and The Harlowton Press, June 2, 1917. Chief Justice Theodore Brantley and Associate Justice James O. Holloway ruled for Carter County. Associate Justice Sydney Sanner objected. Justices Brantley and Holloway were Republicans. Justice Sanner was a Democrat.

2 Judith Gap Journal, May 25, 1917. Such was not the case, however. The Journal and Press conducted a running feud over the chosen county officials and why they were chosen. Taxable property within Wheatland County was $6,362,711 and for Meagher County $5,555,051.
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