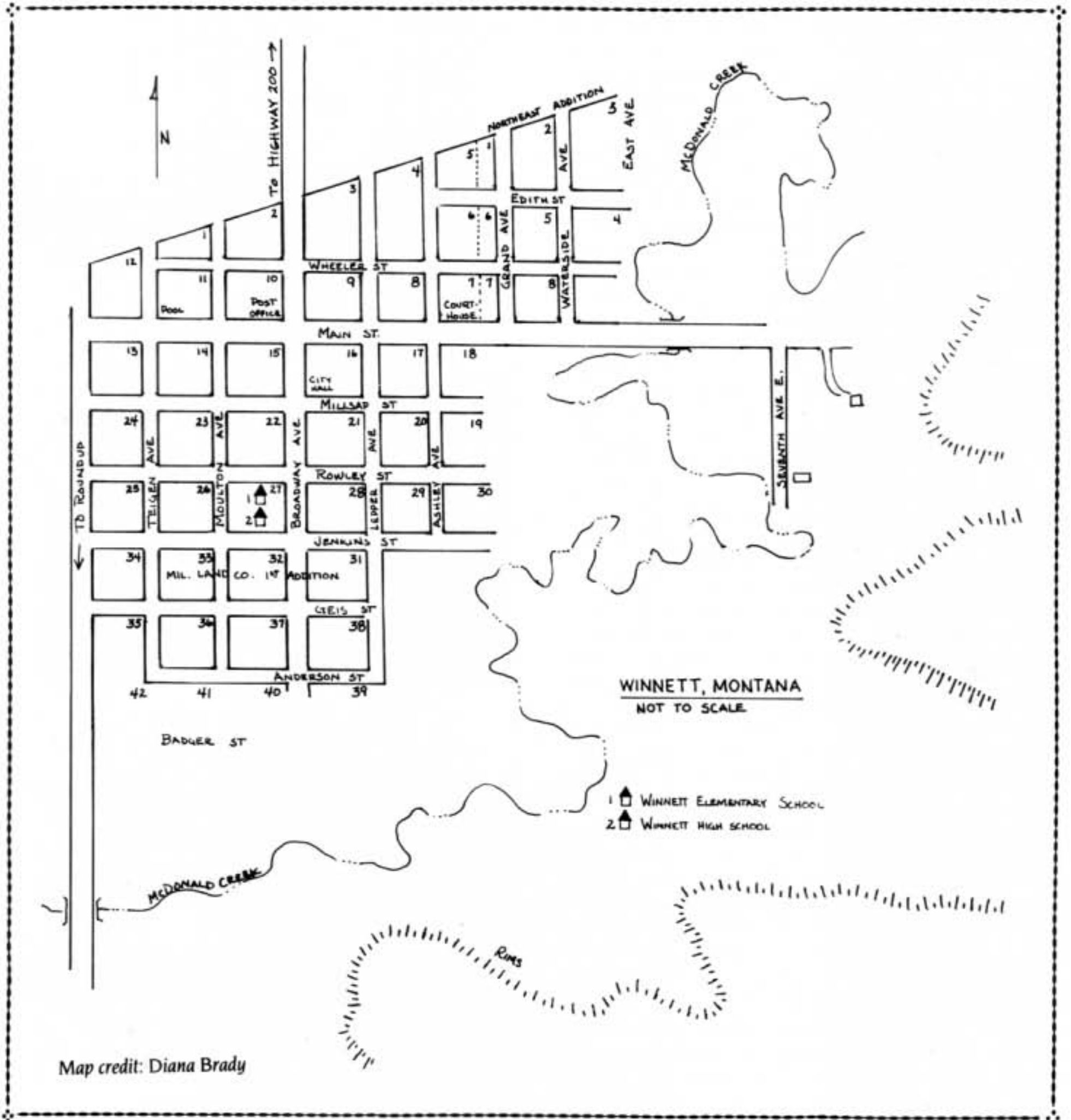


Winnett



Map credit: Diana Brady



Looking west on Winnett's Main Street (1918)



Buildings facing Main Street. (Left to Right) Block 18 W. J. Winnett Ranch house, Hoyle's Barbershop, Halls Icehouse (set slightly back from street), post office, Rasmussen Mercantile, Block 17 The Mode, Enterprise Meat Market (Beck), Spears Restaurant in Moll Pool Hall, Woods Drugstore, Winnett State Bank; Block 16 Toggery, Mrs. Thompson's Restaurant, Jarrett Hotel, Smokehouse Billiard, Aristo; Block 14 (west end of Main Street) first Eager Mercantile

Homestead Town

The town of Winnett gradually emerged from within the perimeter of the Walter Winnett Ranch in about 1909 and eventually encompassed the ranch. The house, barn, corals and sheds were clustered together on a flat plain which was separated from the imposing and protective Eagle sandstone rimrocks by box elder tree-lined McDonald Creek.

The large ranch had many employees and, reportedly, Mr. Winnett built the famous **Log Cabin Saloon** for their convenience. Otto Senst, bookkeeper for Walter Winnett, and Ed Rule operated the saloon until its demise in 1919, when the Volstead Act prohibited the sale of intoxicating liquor.

As homesteaders staked their claims nearby, the need for a store and post office prompted Walter Winnett and Oscar Badger to open a **general store** in one of the ranch buildings. The structure faced northwest at the east end of what later became Main Street. Walter Winnett owned several large horse and wagon freight outfits, and the supplies for the store were freighted by wagon from Musselshell or Lewistown. In 1913 Tony **Rasmussen** purchased the stock and conducted the store in the same location for one year. He then moved the merchandise to his own building (Lot 1, Block 18, Main).

To qualify as an official United States post office, the need for postal service had to be justified. For that reason, Oscar Badger and Walter Winnett set up a trial post office in their store. Frank Nelson, another homesteader and local resident, and John Coble, a Winnett Ranch employee, carried mail each Tuesday and Friday from the Flatwillow Post Office to the Winnett Store. (The mail was delivered to Flatwillow by stage from the town of Musselshell.) This gratis project was continued for six months and a careful record kept of the amount of mail handled. At the end of that time, the post office department extended the route serving Flatwillow to include Winnett. A **post office** by the name of **Winnett** was officially sanctioned on October 4, 1910. John W. Hughes was chosen postmaster, serving until December 12, 1911. (See Appendix for postmaster list.)

In January 1914, Bessie Rasmussen was appointed postmaster. The post office may have been moved to the Rasmussen store until a new frame building was built in 1915 (Lot 3, Block 18). The mail continued to come by stage from Flatwillow until 1916, when a route was established between Grassrange and Winnett. In 1917 the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was extended to Winnett, and the railroad was awarded the contract for transporting mail. Contracts were let to local draymen for hauling the mail to and from the Winnett depot and the post office. When the train discontinued daily service in 1956, the mail was delivered from Roundup and Jordan

Left to right: **Block 7 Winnett Block** (First State Bank, Winnett Times Printing, Montana Lumber and Hardware Company), **Log Cabin Saloon**, town water well with pump, **lumberyard**, **Montana Hotel**. (Note **Montana Elevator** and **Hegna Elevator** in background.)





First Winnett Post Office, on ranch premises, October 4, 1910

by highway vehicle, just as now in 1989.

In 1921 the post office building was consumed by fire. All postal service was handled at the Midget Grill until a new brick and tile building was constructed on the same site as the building which burned. In July of 1926 the of-

fice was moved to the former Marti building (Block 15, Main). The building had been recently stuccoed on the outside and newly plastered on the inside and was rented to the post office department by the Marti family. In the fall of 1972 Winnett was one of the fortunate towns to be granted a new post office building (Lot 14-15, Block 10).

Oscar Badger was named the first **United States Land Commissioner** for this district in 1912. This was an important position because of the number of homesteaders who were not only filing, but also proving up on their claims.

By 1914 Ira Pierson was chosen as **justice of the peace** for eastern Fergus County. Several accounts can be found of his performing marriages in the spacious W. J. Winnett home.

In about 1913 or before, the **Milwaukee Land Company** acquired land from property owners between Grassrange and Winnett for a railroad bed. They also secured a portion of land from Walter Winnett for a townsite. G. W. Morrow, townsite agent for the railroad, arranged for the platting of the town. On July 18, 1914, the Milwaukee Land Company held the first sale of Winnett town lots in the old Culver Hotel of Lewistown with \$64,000 worth of lots being sold. Almost immediately the music of saws and hammers could be heard, and by the time the first *Winnett Times* paper was printed in



Earliest known picture of Winnett's Main Street looking west, taken in fall of 1914. (L to R): **Block 18** Hoyle's Barbershop, Rasmussen Mercantile; **Block 17** Badger restaurant, Woods Drugstore, Winnett State Bank; **Block 16** Smokehouse Pool and Billiard; **Block 14** Eager Mercantile, south side of Main Street; **Block 10** Northrup Barbershop; **Block 9** Bachelor Cafe, Central Billiard (Shumate), Montana Bar; **Block 8** Mahon-Robinson Lumber and Hardware, Winnett Land Co. (Ogg); **Block 7** Log Cabin Saloon. The Independent Lumber Company is barely visible in the background to the right.



Walter Winnett's freight outfit ready to leave Lewistown for Winnett. W. J. Winnett is the man in the white shirt. Ed Fleury is directly behind the man in the suit.



Showing prize stallions west of the Winnett barn. White building is a bunkhouse later known as the Ranchers Rooms



Sheep bedded down east of the Winnett barn on the bank of McDonald Creek.

September of 1914, a headline read: "Thirty-two Business Houses in Winnett." Only a few of the first businesses are noted here. Names of all known businesses of Winnett are listed in the Appendix.

It is believed that, after the town was platted, the first business building on Main Street was the **Winnett Land Company** (Block 8, Main), which was owned and operated by Albert W. and Ralph Ogg. Their office opened in July of 1914. They did a thriving business selling town lots and preparing documents for homesteaders. John W. Brummett had a real estate office on Main Street and Walter J. Winnett also handled real estate transactions during those early years.

The **Winnett State Bank** (Lot 1, Block 17, Main) was constructed and opened its doors for business in August 1914. Officers of the bank were Samuel Phillips, president; Hammond B. Greene, vice-president; Charles Wiper, cashier. Many local men were stockholders. This bank became the **First National Bank** in 1919.

The **First State Bank** (Lot 4, Block 8, Main) opened its doors February 13, 1917. Benjamin F. Lepper of the Flatwillow community is believed to have constructed the bank building. W. J. Johnson was president and David Hilger and Howard Lepper, directors. Howard Lepper was cashier of the bank until his death in 1918. Sometime

after the Winnett Block was completed in 1917, the First State Bank moved its headquarters into the Winnett Block. Carleton A. Kelley was cashier, and Archibald Faragher and Anthony Rasmussen were directors of the bank in September of 1922. The original bank building was used as an office for the **AMZ Oil Company** during the boom, as the county-division headquarters in 1924, as **Busy Corner Grocery** in 1925, and as a dry goods store for the **Eager Mercantile** in 1929 and 1930.

The First National Bank and the First State Bank merged in November of 1923. The new headquarters were to be in the First National Bank building. The move had hardly been completed when the merged bank was forced to close its doors. After some reorganization procedures, the bank opened as the **Farmers and Merchants Bank** in July of 1924. It served the community until January 1930. Among other things, the building later became Winnett's **State liquor store, Mint Bar and Cafe**, and (in 1989) Art Moore's woodworking shop.

After the Rasmussen store opened, the next store to open was operated by O. G. Rosing in the summer of 1914. It was a grocery-hardware combination believed to have been connected with the **Mahon-Robinson Company** (Lot 6, Block 8, Main). In 1915 or 1916 it became the **Hagemann-Pullin Grocery**.

In 1914 Elmer **Eager** of Beaver Crossing, Nebraska, sent a former employee, Pratt Woodard, to build and operate a **general store** in the center of Block 14 on Main Street. After Mr. Eager moved to Winnett to manage his business interests, he built a larger store (Lot 15, Block 10, Main). His first building was then used as a school and church from 1917 to 1920, next as the **Valley Lumber Company**, and finally, in December 1924, it became the present Catholic Church.

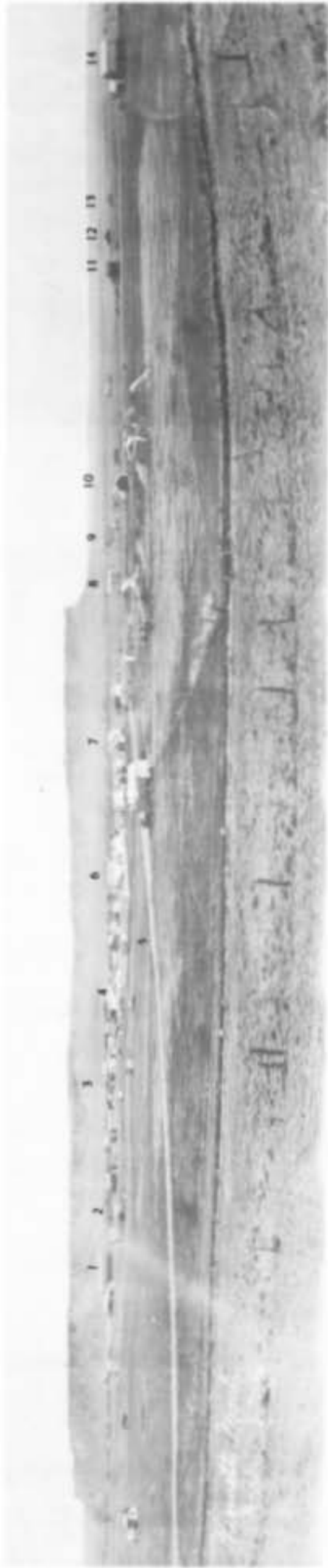
Everyday work clothing could be purchased at one of the general stores, but when a young man had landed that all important date, he naturally wished to get dressed up a bit. To meet the needs of that situation, Alvie Morningstar built the Toggery in 1915. The same year, Oscar Badger and Henry Chadd opened **The Mode**, a men's clothing store in what had previously been the Badger restaurant. The next year, Erik Hove and Oscar Badger were the proprietors (Lot 7, Block 17, Main)

Joe Shumate opened the **Central Billiard Parlor** (Block 9, Main) on October 19, 1914. He advertised candy, cigars, tobaccos and soft drinks in addition to billiard tables. The building still serves the public in 1989 with meals, drinks, pool table and occasional dancing. It is Art Moore's **Winnett Bar**. The building celebrated its diamond anniversary this year of the State of Montana Centennial.

Walter Sevals built and operated the **Smokehouse Pool and Billiard** (Lot 2, Block 16, Main) in about 1915 or 1916. The building was purchased by Elmer Eager for a store in 1928 but was used for only a short time as the store burned in September of 1929. Ray **Moll** also owned a pool hall (Block 17, Main). The Masonic and Eastern



First National Bank about 1919 (former Winnett State Bank in 1914). Back (L to R): E. Ray Austin, assistant cashier; Hamm Greene, cashier. Front (L to R): Sam Pribble, local businessman; Mary Alexander and Rose Merten, bank employees. Note reflection of the Pullin Grocery sign in window.



Panoramic view of Winnett, looking south, in May 1916, almost two years after the first lot sale. Key buildings include: 1) Winnett barn 2) first post office 3) Winnett residence 4) Rasmussen store 5) Mahon-Robinson Lumber Company 6) Schmidt Hotel 7) Jarrett Hotel 8) Sommerfield Harness Shop 9) little white schoolhouse 10) Northrup barbershop 11) Eager Mercantile 12) R. J. Woods' residence 13) Hamm Greene residence 14) Pullin (or Rice) livery stable



Enlarged view of Main Street business section:

- Winnett residence (south side of Main)
 - Rasmussen Mercantile (s)
 - Ogg Land Office (north side of Main)
 - Mahon-Robinson store operated by O. G. Rosing with lumberyard to north and west (n)
 - Schmidt Hotel (n)
 - Montana Bar (n)
 - Toggerly clothing (s)
 - Jarrett Hotel (s)
 - Smokeshouse Billiard Parlor (s)
- In foreground on Broadway Avenue:
- Pribble Implement with the Reynolds blacksmith shop attached to north side (both burned in 1921)
 - Basin Lumber and Hardware (Later Monarch Lumber and Hardware). Building still standing in 1989 on corner of Broadway and Wheeler
- When laid in 1917, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad tracks were just to the north of the Pribble Implement.



Looking east from Broadway on Main Street in 1916. North side (L to R): **Block 9** (between Broadway & Ashley) Bachelor Cafe, Central Billiard, Montana Bar, Schmidt Hotel; **Block 8** (between Ashley & Lepper) Mahon-Robinson, Winnett Land Co.; **Block 7** (between Lepper & Grand) Log Cabin Saloon; end of street, Winnett barn and livery stable. South side (R to L): **Block 16** (between Broadway & Ashley) Smokehouse, Jarrett Hotel, Toggery; **Block 17** (between Ashley & Lepper) Winnett State Bank, Woods Drugstore, Spears Restaurant in Moll building, Winnett Times, Langshausen office, 1st Enterprise Meat Market, The Mode clothing; **Block 18** (between Lepper & Grand) Rasmussen Mercantile, Post Office, Hoyle Barber-shop, Winnett residence



Major buildings in bird's eye view of Winnett looking northwest from rimrock in 1917: (L to R) 1) little white schoolhouse 2) Harness Shop 3) Jarrett Hotel 4) Central Billiard 5) Moll Pool Hall 6) Schmidt Hotel 7) Rasmussen Mercantile 8) foundation for Winnett Block 9) Winnett Garage 10) Winnett residence 11) Opera House (later Montana Hotel)



Ed Fleury proudly tends a 16-hitch string of horses at the 1916 Fourth of July celebration.

Star members met in the second story of his building. Junior high and high school classes were conducted in the Masonic rooms from 1915 to 1917. Later the building became known as the **Odd Fellow Hall** and, among other things, served as a drugstore from 1946 to 1959. The building stands unused in 1989.

A grand Fourth of July celebration was held in 1916. It was during this celebration that Ed Fleury, a Metis freighter, reportedly performed a feat which has become a local legend. Bets developed over his ability to execute a U-turn within a city block with his 16-horse team hitched to some wool wagons. Those who bet against Ed's ability were quickly deprived of their money, as Ed was a skilled teamster and accomplished the feat with dexterity.

The series of pictures on these pages depict the parade with many of the main street businesses in the background.

Homer Geis came to Winnett in 1914 as Winnett's first practicing attorney. **Nicholas Langshausen** came in from his homestead south of town and built a law office on the south side of Main Street in 1916. **Percy Napton**, **Ethel S. W. Abbott**, and **Raymond Wiedman** were other early attorneys.

In September of 1914, Homer Geis set up the print shop for the **Winnett Times**. The printing machinery and equipment came by rail freight to Musselshell, then by wagon freight to Flatwillow and Winnett. The shop was located in Lot 4, Block 17, East Main Street. Mr. Geis hired as editor, E. V. Alexander, brother of the physician Joseph L. Alexander, who arrived in Winnett in 1915.

In 1917 the printing business was sold to Edwin M. Berg. Sometime between 1917 and 1921 the business was moved to the central portion of the Winnett Block. In 1921 Charles Doherty and C. E. Palmer became



July 4th parade 1916. Background buildings on north side of Main Street: (L to R) Northrup Barbershop, Eager store under construction



Bachelor Cafe on north side of Main near corner of Broadway, Central Billiard Parlor (Block 9)



North side of Main Street in July 1916. (L to R): Eager building under construction, Bachelor Cafe, Central Billiard Parlor, Montana Bar, Schmidt Hotel

publishers and editors. Their "banner" editorials were enjoyed until January 1931. During Charles Doherty's ownership, in November of 1925, the Winnett Times moved to a 25' by 70' building which was to become its final location (Lot 12, Block 11, Main). In order to move the heavy machinery without completely dismantling it, the large plate glass window of the Winnett Block had to be removed. It required three days, two trucks and nine men to move the large modern plant.

Delmar Cole became the editor and printer from 1931 to 1936. He was followed by William Rader who sold to Rudolph Glatz in July of 1940. Rudy published the paper a record 36 years — from 1940 until April of 1976. At that time this venerable Winnett institution was sold to the Roundup Record-Tribune. Louise Rasmussen publishes the *Roundup Record-Tribune and Winnett Times* in 1989. Lot 12, Block 11 continues to be the home of the **Winnett Printing Company** and the company's owners, Rudy and Bernice Glatz.

The frantic flurry of homestead building created the need for lumber and building supplies. One of the first to supply this need was the **Independent Lumber Company**. It was a large business — the store and yard occupied Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Block 2. B. F. Moulton was president; W. J. Winnett, vice-president; Tom Fleming, treasurer; and P. J. Anderson, manager.

The **Grogan-Robinson** (formerly **Mahon-Robinson**) **Lumber Company** (Lots 18-19-20, Block 9, Lepper) was a North Dakota corporation which also had a branch in Grassrange. The **Montana Lumber and Hardware** was

established August 10, 1914. It was a branch of the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company of Lewistown owned by George Wiedeman. The location of his first store in Winnett is not known, but after the Winnett Block was completed in 1917, the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company operated in the eastern one-third of the building. It remained in that location until November of 1929 when a new building was constructed adjacent to the Winnett Block on the east. The Montana Lumber and Hardware closed in 1971, but Vernon and Janet Bauer operated their **Trading Post** hardware store in the building until July of 1979. The building (now used for some storage and, on occasion, dancing) still stands in 1989.

The **Basin Lumber and Implement Company** (Lot 5, Block 2, Broadway) was established in 1916 and became the **Monarch Lumber Company** with P. J. Anderson as manager in December of 1921. Tillman Sandaker was manager from 1926 until 1942, when the stock was sold to the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company. **Rogers-Templeton Lumber Company** (Lots 13-14, Block 3, Lepper) was managed by O. G. Rosing in 1918.

The rapidly growing town was in need of overnight lodging when Emil Schmidt built the first hotel in the spring of 1915. The **Schmidt Hotel** (Lot 17, Block 9, Main) was a two-story structure containing 24 rooms. Under the ownership of Robert Hogg in 1925, it was renamed the **Commercial Hotel**. Although there were several succeeding owners, the name remained unchanged. The building was dismantled in 1967.

Charles Jarrett built the **Jarrett Hotel** (Block 16, Main)