



WINNETT, MONT., JULY 4TH, 1916

Looking west on Main Street in 1916 with the W. J. Winnett ranch house on the left. Note bell tower which was removed before 1918. The bell became the fire bell.

soon after the Schmidt Hotel was completed. It was later known as the **Central Hotel** which burned in the big fire of September 1929. The **Park Hotel** (Lot 14, Block 17, Lepper) served as a school dormitory the school year of 1920-1921. It was a hospital in 1924 (See NICHOLSON). In 1926 it became the **Masonic Temple** and remains that in 1989.

While Walter Winnett was operating his store, he commenced building a large warehouse (Lots 5-6-7, Block 7, Grand). The first story of the building was built of Eagle sandstone quarried from the local rimrock. However, Mr. Winnett disposed of his store business before the building was completed, and as a result, he decided the town needed an **opera house** more than he needed a warehouse. The building plan was modified, and two stories were added with lumber sawed at Mr. Winnett's sawmill near the Musselshell River. The structure, completed in 1916, was used as an opera house until 1918, when it was converted into a hotel building. In the fall of 1918, the would-be hotel became the first **school dormitory**. It served this purpose during the 1918-1920 school years. Frank Millsap bought the building for use as a hotel in June of 1920. It was appropriate that this building constructed of all local Montana materials was named the **Montana Hotel**. The hotel operated for 25 years. The school district purchased the building in 1945 for use as a school dormitory. It then served as a church and home for a minister and his family in 1950, and finally, was razed by the school district in 1960. Some timbers

and other lumber from the historic hotel live on in the First Baptist Church.

In about 1916 or early 1917, William Dickson built the town's first theater. It was named the **Aristo** (Lot 1, Block 16, Main). Some school and sundry supplies were offered for sale there, and the building, in addition to being a theater, served as a gymnasium for high school and adult athletes until the school's first gymnasium was completed in 1921. Commencement exercises for the first Winnett



One of the few pictures of the first Aristo. Schoolgirls Velma Woodard, Inez Anderson and Thelma Brown about 1918



East end of Main Street near corner of Lepper and Main before construction of the Winnett Block (present courthouse). Note tennis courts immediately behind what would become the courthouse. Stone construction on far right became the Montana Hotel. The Winnett Land Company in foreground was owned by A. W. and R. Ogg.



Another view of empty corner lot where Winnett Block would be built in 1917. North side of street shows stone work for Montana Hotel, Log Cabin Saloon, Winnett barn and ranch bunkhouse (later Ranchers Rooms).

High School graduating class were held there in the spring of 1919. The building, later owned by Rudy Beck, became the **Beck Hall**, the **American Legion Athletic Hall**, the **Palm Garden**, the **Olympic Bowling Lane**, the **Eager Mercantile** and finally, the beautiful **Love Bird Cafe**, which burned September 1, 1929. Mr. Dickson sold the first Aristo building and had a second **Aristo** built. (Block 14, Main) It was a fine brick and tile structure that opened in November of 1921. Besides serving as a movie theater and ice cream parlor, it was the scene of commencement exercises, funerals, political rallies, boxing bouts, dancing, roller skating and home talent plays, before being dismantled in 1942.

Several other theaters operated in later years. The **Winnett Theater** (Block 7, Main) was established in August of 1921 by Harold W. Berry. The Winnett Theater also extended theatrical service to Cat Creek during the boom years. In 1932 the building became **Vane Catlin's Service Station**, which burned in 1937. The **Peoples Theater**, run by William Griebel, operated for about a year. The first location was in the Moll building, and the second in the center of the Winnett Block during 1927-1928. In 1945 Lloyd Lafond converted the original Basin Lumber building into the **Rimrock Theater**. The original Central Billiard Parlor, when known as the **Tunnicliff Hall**, served as a theater for a short time also.

Rudy and Freida Beck built a **slaughter house** on their homestead south of town. They processed their own meat and sold it at their **Enterprise Meat Market** (Block 17, Main). They sold the business to J. Otis Mudd and Frank Boeckman in 1921. A new building was built (Lot 4, Block 16) which burned in 1929.

Mrs. Klein (Mary Anna) Cole managed the **Bachelor Cafe**, which was west of the Central Billiard Parlor. Schuyler "Scotty" Spears operated his restaurant in the



Rudy Beck's meat market parade float in 1916 parade

Moll building. Mrs. O. S. Thompson and Ray Badger were early restaurateurs.

William Northrup, a crippled man, owned and operated a **barbershop** (Block 10, Main), and besides cutting men's hair and shaving faces, he offered haircuts, facials and manicures to ladies. The Northrup building later became a **furniture exchange store**, **Mrs. Walker's millinery and dress shop**, **Longpre Bakery**, **Eager Mercantile**, and now a storage building (known as the Bauer building). Reportedly, there was also a barber chair in the Log Cabin Saloon, and Len Hoyle was one of the very early barbers.

Although there have been reports of a very small earlier burial ground on the northeast edge of the rimrocks, it was not until July 1916 that serious consideration was given to the establishment of a **cemetery**. At that time, William Stockton was engaged to survey and lay out the lots and streets of the graveyard, which is located in the lee of a hill about one-half mile north of town.

Apparently the first **physician** to serve the early town of Winnett was **Dr. Brown** from Grassrange. He came to Winnett when called. **Dr. J. L. Alexander** was the first resident doctor (17 Lepper Ave.) He came in 1915 and cared for Petroleum County patients until his death in 1948. **Dr. Kent W. Berry** arrived in 1921. When the **Winnett Hospital** was established by Mrs. Lyda Nicholson, R. N., and Stella Youderian, R. N., in March 1924, Dr. Berry was the surgeon. The hospital was in the Park Hotel building (See also NICHOLSON).

Mrs. Volney (Ella) Wiggins conducted a **Rimrock Hospital**, a maternity hospital, between the years of 1922 and 1927. She also cared for some of Dr. Alexander's bedridden patients. The building (7th Ave. E., Rimrock Addition) was later moved to the Harmon Grosboll Ranch in the Petrolia area.

A **dentist**, **Dr. R. R. Robinson**, with offices in the Hover building, and later in the Winnett Block, arrived in Winnett in 1921. Another dentist, **Dr. Knight**, later served the community on a scheduled basis until the late 1920s.

An **optometrist**, **Dr. George A. Lhamon**, came to Winnett every sixty days through the early boom years and saw his patients at the Schmidt Hotel.

R. J. Woods arrived in Winnett in September of 1914 and established a **drugstore** (Block 17, Main). Reportedly another drugstore known as **Central Drug** was in operation for a short time during the oil boom, but no data is available for it. The **Woods Drugstore** closed in 1937. In February 1946, the Woods Drug building became the **Smokehouse News Store** in which magazines, cigars, cigarettes, and candy were sold. It was a very popular hang-out for youngsters, because it also had a jukebox, and young people were welcome to dance. There was no other drugstore until first Vern Scheurman, and then

Arthur Kencke, both registered pharmacists, offered prescription service in 1946 in the I.O.O.F. hall building. That pharmacy closed in 1959 and became the **Winnett Drug and Gift Shop** under the management of Gladys Long.



Dan Sommerfield and his wife, Alice, on the porch of their Harness Shop, visit with Mill Rice and Bill Petrusch.

There were harness shops and livery stables to care for the needs of horse-powered transportation. Charles Pullin, Frank Nelson, Walter Winnett and Tom Carr, among others, ran **livery stables**. I. S. Shine opened a **harness shop** in 1914, and Daniel Sommerfield mended harnesses, collars, saddles and bridles in the two-story **Harness Shop** building (Block 15 So. Broadway).

Motorized vehicles fast replaced the faithful "hayburners." Three garages were established — the **Wide Awake Garage** (Block 11, Moulton) in 1916,

the **Motor Inn Garage** (Block 10, Broadway) in 1916, and the **Winnett Garage** (Block 8, Ashley) in 1916. The **Petroleum County Shop** in 1989 is located to the rear of the former garage.

In 1916 Walter Winnett began the construction of a large two-story, Eagle sandstone building. Reportedly, Croatian stonemasons were engaged in building the structure. The sandstone, when first blasted, is of a soft texture which can quite easily be carved and chipped into building blocks. However, its composition is such that the longer it is exposed to the elements, the harder and more firm it becomes. The lumber for the interior of the edifice was freighted from Grassrange by wagon. The new building, known as the **Winnett Block** (Lots 10-11-12, Block 7, Main) was ready for occupancy by the fall of 1917. The west portion of the main floor was occupied by the **First State Bank**, the center section by the **Winnett Times** printing shop, and the east portion by the **Montana Lumber and Hardware Company**. A restaurant was in the basement, and business offices occupied the top floor.

Twelve years later, Mr. Benjamin F. Lepper, by then the owner, remodeled the building for a **courthouse** and leased it to Petroleum County for \$200 a month, giving the county an option to purchase for \$31,000, with rent money applied against the purchase price. The county did not buy the building until after Mr. Lepper's death. On March 1, 1943, the building was purchased from the Lepper estate for \$6400. Under the terms of the original contract, \$27,600 had been paid in rent, making the total cost \$34,000. However, Mr. Lepper had paid \$4000 in taxes on the building throughout the years, which made the actual cost to the county \$30,000. In this Montana State Centennial year of 1989, it remains a beautiful stone building, and Petroleum County residents are proud to claim it as their courthouse.



Jacob Vogel wrote on the back of this picture: "This is the new stone \$40,000 building at Winnett, Montana. Mr. Winnett built it, but he had a wool clip worth \$50,000; so I guess he could afford to do it!" Jacob Vogel is seated behind the wheel of his Model T with Ella Dyer and young William Vogel in the back seat (1919).



Winnett Block (present courthouse) nears completion on October 10, 1917, when the town celebrated the railroad's arrival



Parade, October 10, 1917, looking east from the corner of Broadway and Main



Rodeo west of the Winnett Ranch barn, October 10, 1917

In 1977 Frank Valach, a son of John Valach (who built the present Masonic Temple building, the second Aristo, the Hover building, and many other brick and tile structures during the oil boom), and Frank's son, Robert, renovated the basement into a functional hospitality area. Senior citizens enjoy a weekly meal and sociability there. It is used for many business gatherings and parties.

One of the most important events for Winnett was the arrival of the **Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad** on October 10, 1917. There was a gigantic celebration. The fine local band, under the direction of Dr. J. L. Alexander, enthusiastically greeted the first train. A local girl drove the "golden" spike that completed the rail line, and Winnett was on the railroad! A huge parade and picnic was followed by a rip-roaring rodeo.

The train rendered a vital service to the community for many years. Bigger trucks, better highways, and more efficient oil pipelines all contributed to a decline in the demand for railway service, and daily freight service was discontinued in 1956. On October 29, 1965, the depot closed. Commissioned freight service continued for a time, but in September 1972 the last train whistle was heard in Winnett as the small train chugged its way west to Lewistown.

The arrival of **telegraphy** in Winnett coincided with the arrival of train service in October of 1917. It was Winnett's first rapid communication link with outside points. Mordecai J. Boyd, an expert and experienced telegrapher, was the depot agent for the Milwaukee Railroad. Many Winnett people remember entering the depot and hearing the pecking noise of a Morse code message being received or transmitted. The staccato sounds represented different letters and numerals which were transcribed into words by the telegrapher. Transmission was by telegraph wires strung on telegraph poles which paralleled the railroad track. The slang expression for telegram was "wire." Railroads used telegraphy for all their internal business communications, but service was available to the public as well.

Words were carefully chosen when sending a message since the charge was based on the number of words in addition to the address. The initial charge was for ten words, the cost increasing with each additional word. The word "stop" was used in place of a period, since punctuation had to be spelled out. All capital letters were used. A message might read: AUNT KATE DIED STOP CAN YOU COME STOP FUNERAL PENDING. A "night letter," consisting of more words, could be sent at reduced cost but delivery was not made until the following day.

A telegraph service which was commonly used in earlier days, and can still be used today, was that of sending money. It was a safe sure way to quickly send money which was easily converted to cash with none of the problems attendant to cashing a personal check.

The first telegrams or wires were hand delivered from the depot to local residents. After telephones became common, the message was telephoned from the local

telegraph office to the recipient. Messages to people outside of the city limits were often mailed, sometimes causing frustrating delays.

It is assumed the telegraph system was discontinued in Winnett with the closing of the depot in October of 1965.

The homesteaders who had been fortunate enough to acquire productive land reaped some fine harvests from the newly-turned virgin soil. Two elevators were opened in Winnett in November 1917 to receive their produce. The **Western Lumber and Grain** was managed by George W. Conrad and was located west of the Milwaukee depot. That elevator eventually became known as the **Montana Elevator Company**. The building still stands in 1989 and is used as grain storage for the Bohn Ranch of Petrolia. Ted Hegna owned and operated the other elevator which was just east of the depot. It was known as the **T. E. Hegna Elevator Company** and later became known as the **Farmers Union Elevator**. It served the area until 1935, when it was dismantled by the Hegnas.

The **Town of Winnett** attained legal status with the meeting of the first **Town Council** on August 5, 1918. This historic meeting was held in the law office of the Town Clerk/Attorney, Nick Langshausen, with Peter J. Anderson as Mayor, Robert J. Woods as Treasurer, and John Jensen, Charles E. Pullin, Henry T. Knapp and Werner G. Hagemann forming the council.

Licensing of businesses was a matter of immediate concern and eighteen categories of businesses were defined, with a license fee established for each. It is interesting to note that these charges were, in every instance, the same as or more than the amount charged today (1989). It seems there might have been some discrimination practiced at that time as "each male engaged in laundry business" required a license, but nothing is mentioned about those of the fairer sex.

The "moral health" of the community was also a matter of great concern to the early councils and many ordinances were passed to ensure this "health." No pianos, player or electric, or other musical instruments of any kind were allowed in a business where there were pool, billiard or bagatelle tables. It was illegal for anyone under the age of 18 (later changed to 19) to be where these games were played. No gambling was allowed; drunkenness, obscene language, cruelty to animals, operation or frequenting of houses of ill-fame were all subject to severe penalties. Operation of an "opium joint" had its own section of local law and was, of course, strictly forbidden.

Building codes were addressed, and all buildings within one block of Main Street were required to have "a good substantial chimney of brick, tile, concrete or stone." Coalholes in the sidewalks were required to be flush with the walk, not more than 24" in maximum dimensions and covered with cast iron, suitably roughed. Coalbins, ash and swill barrels were prohibited on the sidewalks.

Furnishing water for the town people had always been a concern. The first sketchy history in regard to the **water**

supply for the emerging homestead town was in September of 1914, when the *Winnett Times* reported a diamond drill "in the hands of experts" was about to begin drilling for water on the rimrock. The outcome of the venture is not clear. Almost immediately following incorporation of the town in 1918, however, a bond issue of \$35,000 was approved for construction of a concrete storage reservoir 35' in diameter and 22' deep and a distribution system. (The reservoir, incidently, is still being used in 1989.) It can be assumed that the water from the aforementioned well and from a spring atop the rimrock was gravity-piped in wooden lines to the reservoir.

"Uncle" Ben Wood (Sec 32-15-27) had dug an 80' well on his farm in the Brush Creek country and secured a voluminous supply of excellent drinking water. With a **horse-drawn tank wagon**, and later with a tank truck, he hauled and sold water by the bucket to the families who were not connected to the town's small water system. In order to draw the attention of the waterman, a "WATER" sign was displayed in the window of the home owner when water was needed.

By the time a town council was organized, Winnett was entering the age of modern conveniences, and the council strove to implement orderly development.

Individually-owned generating plants brought electricity to the earliest businesses and larger homes of Winnett. In March of 1919 a franchise was granted to Werner G. Hagemann for the first **commercial light plant** in Winnett. His was a very small plant, and it was not long before another source of electricity had to be located.

Frank Seal, an electrical engineer from Great Falls, Montana, was granted a franchise in June of 1921. His plant, known as the **Winnett Electric Light and Power Company** was capable of lighting 4000 25-watt lamps at any time of day or night, with the generator having access to 100 horsepower furnished by two semi-diesel crude-oil-burning engines. The plant and office (Lot 10, Block 17) opened in late July of 1921 — operating at first only until midnight, with the promise of 24-hour service and power for motors to be added later.

The plant was the scene of a serious accident in December of that year. An air-pressure tank, which was used for starting the large crude-oil-burning engines, exploded, causing the death of Everest A. West, a visitor to the plant. Daytime engineer Clarence Enlow was seriously injured and suffered a 60% disability of his left arm. The state boiler inspector asserted that the accident was due entirely to the tank being defective — the manufacturer had overestimated the strength of the product. Whereupon Frank Seal vowed: "Tank, or no tank, and regardless of strength or size, there will never be another in this building. The tank goes into the ground as soon as we can put it there!"

The Winnett Electric Light and Power continued to operate until February of 1925, when it sold all its holdings and franchise to Barney and Frank Winkes. The company was renamed the **City Light Company** and was

moved to a new location (Lots 13-14, Block 2, North Broadway). Another 100-horsepower engine was added and 24-hour power and light service instituted. New meters were installed for all patrons.

Harry Hafer and Al Johnson of Lewistown purchased the City Light Company and the Winkes home in 1937. They, in turn, sold to Joe Pitman in April of 1943.

Town residents and their country neighbors signed up for rural electric service, and in 1947 Joe Pitman sold his local electric plant to **Fergus Electric Cooperative**, which serves Winnett in 1989.

In April 1919 the Burt Sisters secured a franchise for their **telephone** system. Mr. and Mrs. John Burt had installed telephone service in Grassrange in 1918, and their two daughters — Blanche and Matty — operated the Winnett exchange. The Grassrange line was extended the 23 miles east to hook up with the new system. Oil companies in September 1920 extended a line from Cat Creek to their loading docks in Winnett and to the Burt Sisters' exchange.

Burt Sisters Telephone Company had been in business for forty years when it was sold to **Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative** in July of 1959. Mid-Rivers provides telephone service to the entire town and county in 1989.

Whenever people congregate in one spot, there are always a few, it seems, who are prone to follow a wayward trail and become a threat, if not a danger, not only to themselves, but to others. To protect the law-abiding citizens of Winnett from these rogues, the

Milwaukee Land Company donated Lot 1 in Block 5 to the town for use as a **jail** in January of 1919.

This resume of the birth and growth of the town of Winnett up to 1920 is intended to give the reader a picture of the town whose growth was spurred by the arrival of the homesteaders. (Please see the later sections which address the development of the schools and churches of Winnett.) By 1918 the town's growth was beginning to falter. 1918 was a year of severe drought, and a quietus of building descended upon the town. The summer of 1919 was equally dry, and many settlers were leaving the land. Worry was rife among both town and country citizens.

The winter of 1919 arrived with a vengeance in October. A heavy, wet snow fell, and on October 26, 1919, the government thermometer at the weather station on the Wiggins Ranch registered thirteen degrees below zero — the coldest reported that early in any year. The low temperature changed the heavy snowfall into a veritable sea of ice. (For more on that winter, see CORNUE — Petrolia.) In addition to the cold discomfort of it all, local businessmen knew that the farmer's plight directly affected their own economic outlook.

The town had its own problems. Water lines froze, and the water delivery wagon had difficulty making rounds. There was a coal strike, and local bins were depleted early in the season, with no replacement coal to be obtained. There were some days when business places opened their doors for only a few hours in order to preserve their inadequate fuel supply.

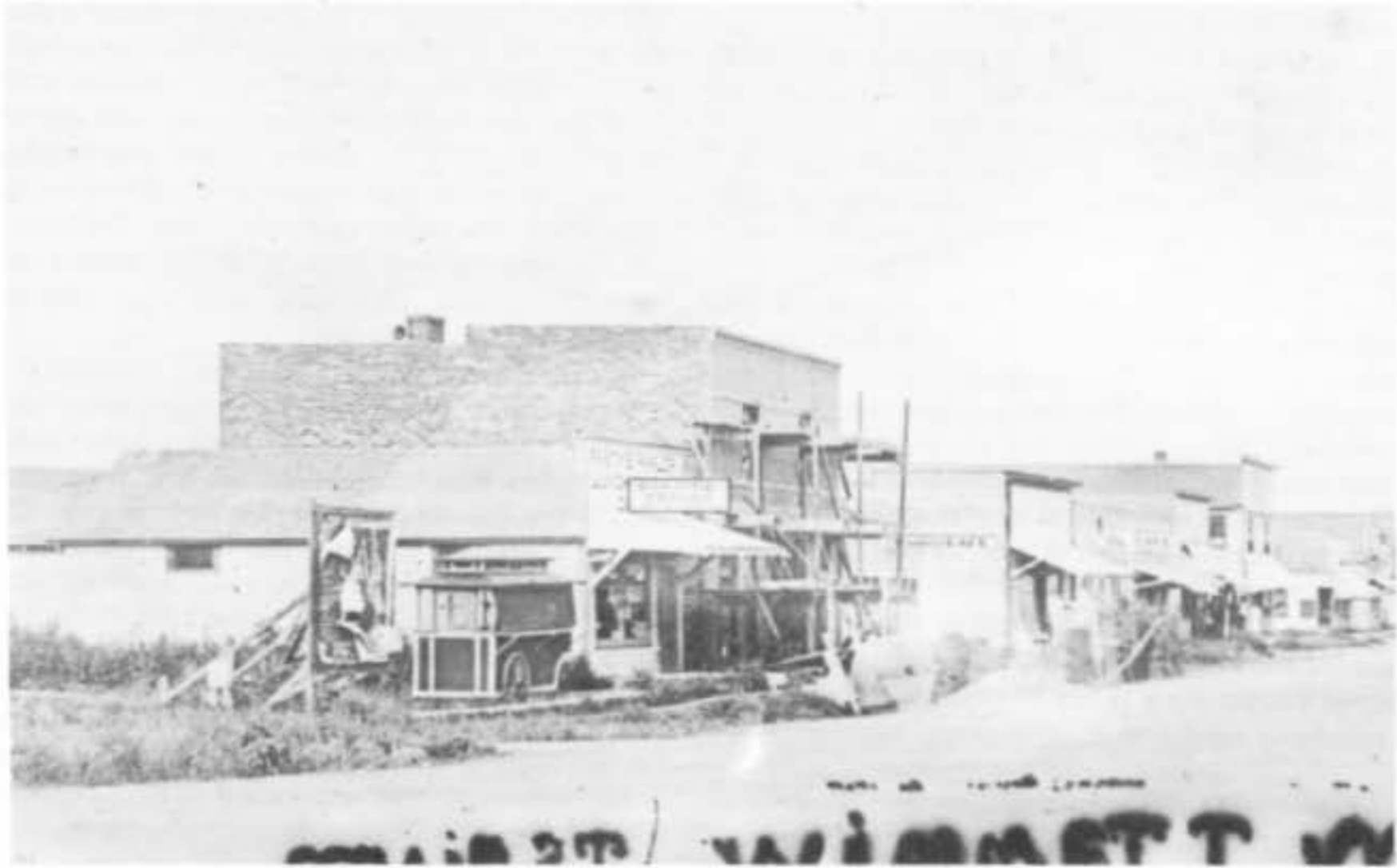
Oil Boom Town



Looking east from the corner of Broadway and Main (1920). Note popcorn wagon on left corner and the lack of sidewalks.

On a weekend in February 1920, a rumor circulated in town regarding a possible oil strike in the Cat Creek area. The rumor was verified when Editor Edward M. Berg printed a special edition of the *Winnett Times* on February 25, 1920, with a banner headline that proclaimed: "FIRST WELL IN FERGUS COUNTY COMES IN WITH GREEN OIL

PRODUCTION MONDAY." Words can scarcely describe the sudden excitement and tumultuous growth of the town which had so recently been worried about its own survival. The population increased faster than buildings could be constructed and "tent" homes and places of business sprang up.



North side of Main Street looking east from Broadway, left to right (1920)

Block 9, Lots 6-17

- 6 vacant
- 7 popcorn wagon
- * 8 Pastime Parlor
(former Bachelor)
- * 9 Hover building
- 10 Winnett Cafe
- 11 vacant
- * 12 Central Billiard Parlor
(former Shumate)
(Winnett Bar 1989)
- 13 Oil Cafe
- 14 "barber-drinks"
(later Town Cafe)
- 16 vacant
- * 17 Schmidt Hotel
(Commercial 1925)

Block 8, Lots 4-12

- * 4 Winnett Grocery
(First State Bank 1917)
- 5 Bores Sombor ? tailor
- 6 Pullins
- 7 Rainbow Cafe
- 8 Dugan barbershop
- * 9 Savoy Hotel
- * 10 Butte Block
(hotel and cafe)
- 11 bakery
- * 12 Weowna Service Station
(Coles station 1933)

Block 7, Lots 12-5

- * 12-11-10 Winnett Block
(First State Bank, Winnett Times, Montana Hardware)
courthouse after 1929
- * 9 (Montana Lumber and Hardware after 1929)
- * 7 Winnett Theater with
confectionery and
tobacco shop in front
- * 6 Cash Meat Market

Block 7 addition

- Log Cabin Saloon (1912)
- Delco Cafe ?

Montana Hotel on east
center of block

Business locations marked with an asterisk have been verified by deed or town plat records. Lots facing Main Street and Broadway Avenue are, with only one or two exceptions, 25 feet by 140 feet. All other lots, including residential lots, are 50 feet by 140 feet. The lots are not uniformly numbered in all blocks.

On the north side of Main Street numbering begins, in most instances, with Lot 1 in the northwest corner of each block, with three lots on the west side, lots 4-15 facing Main, and lots 16-17-18 on the east.

Businesses on the west end of north Main Street which do not show in the picture include **Block 11**: Wilson Building (later Stenson Garage, Winnett Times); **Block 10**: millinery shop (1922) in former Northrup barbershop; Eager Mercantile and warehouse (later first courthouse on corner of Broadway and Main).



South side of Main Street looking east from Broadway, right to left (1920)

Block 16, Lots 1-12

- * 1 Aristo, 1st
- * 2 Smokehouse Billiard
- * 3 Palm Garden Confectionery (1923)
- * 4 2nd Enterprise Meat Market
- * 5 Jarrett Hotel (later Central Hotel)
- 6 Thompson Restaurant (1915)
- * 7 Toggery (1916), First Hub (1921),
Blumenfield's Cafe (1921),
Mother Stewart's Cafe
- * 8 Creel and Opp (1921),
Winnett Land Co. #2 (1921),
Second Hub (Oct. 1921)
- 9 vacant, 10-11 unknown
- 12 Bandstand

Block 17, Lots 1-9

- * 1 First National Bank (former Winnett State Bank)
- * 2 Woods Drugstore
- * 3 Scotty Spears' restaurant in the Moll Pool Hall
- 4 (formerly Winnett Times)
- * 5 Nick Langshausen office
- * 6 1st Enterprise Meat Market
- * 7 The Mode clothing
- 8 confectionery

Block 18, Lots 1-10

- * 1-2 Rasmussen Store and warehouse
- * 3 post office (creamery 1930 Alfson;
Gusher Bar 1946-1975)
- 4 Munroe Hotel (built in 1921, burned 1921)
- 5 Cecil Hotel 1921, burned 1921
- 6 Army-Navy Store 1921, burned 1921
- 7 Winnett Soft Drink
- 8 vacant
- * 9-10 Winnett residence

On the south side of Main Street, Lot 1 is the first lot on the west end of each block with 12 lots facing Main Street. The numbering continues 13-18 around the block with the six larger lots facing the avenues.

Businesses on west end of South Main Street which do not show in picture include **Block 14:** Burt Sisters Telephone, Valley Lumber (Catholic Church, 1925); **Block 15:** 2nd Aristo (1921), Kragrud Furniture (1921), Winkes Bros. Store (1921), Marti Bros. (1921).

Several interesting features on a 1922 fire-rating map deserve mention. The map lists the population of Winnett at 1213 in September 1922. Seventeen men, including a fire chief, made up the volunteer fire department. The department had at its disposal two hand hose carts and one hand hook and ladder truck with 1000 feet of standard hose. A fire bell was noted. (Reportedly the fire bell was the bell which originally adorned the Winnett residence.)

During prohibition (1919-1933) billiard parlors replaced bars. The 1922 fire map lists four "billiard-drink" establishments, one "barber-drink" combination, three "drink" businesses in addition to four confectioneries, five restaurants, and a "soda pop" factory.

The fire map also shows 10 "lodging" businesses in addition to two hotels. Eight "ice" buildings — small wooden structures on the alley behind business places — are also indicated!



Rushing equipment to the Cat Creek Field. (Photo by Western Portrait & Film Service — Roundup, Montana)

On April 2, 1920, a *Winnett Times* article stated: "Twenty-two four-horse teams left Winnett Tuesday morning with supplies for the oil field." In August of 1920 the first oil from Cat Creek flowed through a pipeline laid on top of the ground to Winnett. It was loaded into railroad cars and the thrice-weekly train schedule was increased to, on occasion, three trains a day!

In June of 1921 when a rodeo was held in Winnett, a headline in the *Winnett Times* read, "Thirty hotels and rooming houses are packed to capacity for the big stampede and rodeo." Many were the stories of beds in halls and lobbies, and of the tent hotel wherein the beds, not the rooms, were rented and not by the day, but by the shift. One man would crawl out of bed and another fall wearily in.

In the summer of 1921 the newspaper reported, "Within just six weeks in 1921 there were 48 new homes built. It is predicted that with the first hint of cold weather, many of those who are living in tents will hurry to build their houses."

Listings in the *Polk Directory* and a count of advertisements in the weekly newspaper indicates there were nearly 200 businesses and a population of about 1200 people in Winnett by the end of 1921.

The oil business was not without its financial disasters and corporate maneuvering. The **Independent Pipeline Company** laid 19 miles of six-inch oil line from Cat Creek to Winnett and built a loading rack about one mile east of Winnett. The company also built two 55,000-barrel storage tanks — one at the loading racks and one in Cat Creek. They invested over \$400,000 in the venture. However, the Mutual Oil Company and its affiliate, the Standard Oil Company, secured the greatest share of the oil production in the field, and with their great storage facilities and both a two-inch and a four-inch pipeline to the railhead in Winnett, there was no need for the Independent's six-inch line. The Independent Pipeline Com-

pany, with no oil to transport, met with complete failure. The company proclaimed its grievance to the world on a sign which was erected near its loading racks and read (W.T. 9-29-22):

"HERE LIES THE INDEPENDENT PIPELINE WITH NO OIL TO TRANSPORT — A HALF MILLION DOLLAR TRIBUTE TO THE UNSCRUPULOUS, PER-FIDIOUS, SMOTHERING, FALSE PROPAGANDA OF THE STANDARD MONOPOLY."

On June 6, 1921, sod was turned for the first oil refinery in Winnett. Built near the Independent Pipeline storage tank, it was to be fed by the Independent Pipeline. The refinery, known as the **Great Northern Refinery**, was completed, and the first tank car of gasoline refined in Winnett was shipped on November 1, 1921. The fate of the Great Northern Refinery is not documented in the local newspaper. However, according to the *Winnett Times*, the Independent Pipeline Company was sold at a sheriff's sale to satisfy a debt of \$51,660.09 to the Continental Supply Company in April 1923. The *Winnett Times* (6-5-1925) also reported, "The Continental Supply Company this week deeded the former Independent pipeline to the Mutual Oil Company for a consideration of \$60,000."

Not a part of the townsite, but certainly a part of the town's history, was the **Weowna Refinery**. A small refinery, it had been built by Batchler and Miller at Cat Creek and was moved to Winnett in October 1921. It was located on the east side of McDonald Creek not far from the Milwaukee railroad tracks. In just 19 days, it was erected and ready to refine gasoline, kerosene, naphtha, and fuel oil. Oil was piped from the **Elk Basin** supply tanks on the hill to the refinery's storage of 20,000 barrels capacity, and the finished product was piped to the company's loading rack for shipment by rail.