



J. Otis Mudd behind the counter of the Enterprise Meat Market. Mr. Mudd and Frank Boeckman owned the market from 1921 until it burned in 1929.



Interior of the Monarch Lumber and Hardware Company

Recreation and Parks

By July of 1922 the refinery was shipping a railroad tank car of gasoline daily. In January of 1923 the Weowna was enlarged with an additional storage capacity of 20,000 barrels. Its output of gasoline, heavy fuel, kerosene and light fuel was 810,158 gallons for the month of January 1923. The business prospered for about three years. Then financial problems developed and in 1927 the refinery was sold at a sheriff's sale. It resumed operation under new management in June of 1929, was sold for taxes in October 1929, and operated on a small scale for only a few years thereafter.

Another refinery was built near the creek east of town in 1936. When oil was drilled on government lands, the government royalties were paid in barrels of crude oil. The **Yale Oil Company** was the highest bidder for the crude in 1936, and the company constructed a facility to refine the crude. Yale Oil Company lost the bid to **Continental Oil Company** in 1937, and the Yale refinery in Winnett was dismantled.

Another business closely connected with the oil industry moved from Lewistown to Winnett in 1921. (W.T. 9-16-1921) "This week the *Oil Fields Bulletin* widely known as Montana's first **oil journal**, is published at Winnett instead of at Lewistown as formerly. Sam W. Teagarden, after publishing the magazine successfully at Lewistown for some time, decided to move the oil fields journal to where the oil fields are in order to render better service to his readers and advertisers.

"The bulletin has a wide circulation throughout the American continent and has established a reputation for authentic information . . ." Mr. Teagarden's offices were in the Winnett Block. F. H. Safford assisted in the publication. The *Montana Oil Journal* has continued to be published throughout the years and presently (1989) has offices at Billings, Montana.

It is fortunate the town of Winnett had already been legally organized and was in operation as a town before the onrush of the oil boom. Winnett was reclassified as a city of the third class in April of 1922 with a population of 1213. Though only estimates are available, some say a population of about 2000 was reached sometime in 1923. By that time, oil production had stabilized and new well-drilling activity slackened when no new fields were discovered. By 1930 the population of the town was only 408 people. In 1932 the council discussed returning to a "town" status. It appears that this was not accomplished until May of 1937. In the meantime it had been necessary to provide a number of services to the town and the community.

Sidewalks and Streets

Three miles of concrete sidewalks were laid by the Miracle Concrete Construction Company during the summer and fall of 1922. Also that same fall a contract was awarded to Thomas Carr and Boone Kennedy for the scarifying, grading and graveling of the streets. Voters approved a \$105,000 bond issue for these improvements.

When the town of Winnett was platted, W. J. Winnett, who had previously owned the land in Sec 6-14-27, deeded some of the lots as a gift to the town of Winnett with the stipulation that the tract be reserved forever as a park. McDonald Creek, with many twistings and turnings meandered leisurely through the area. So it was that in the early years, two natural swimming holes were located — one by the name of Little Casino for the very young and inexperienced swimmer — and the other, Big Casino for those who could swim. Big Casino eventually sported a diving board. The two pools were near to each other, so families could divide according to their swimming skills and still enjoy their time together. Parents and older family members instructed the younger children.

The pools, being situated as they were within city property, were governed by city laws and ordinances. Some rules were made in regard to propriety. The city fathers were especially opposed, it seems, to "skinny-dipping." In June of 1925 the following notice appeared in the *Winnett Times*: "NOTICE TO SWIMMERS — Any person or persons bathing in McDonald Creek within the city limits without bathing suits or other proper covering will be subject to immediate arrest and prosecution. Signed, George R. Waldrop, Mayor."

Just the week before, the Eager Mercantile had an ad in the paper: "Bathing suits for men, women and children. You do not have to be a judge of values to get a good bathing suit here — they are all good. We take care of that point when we select them for our stock."

There were apparently no opening dates for those early swimming holes. In 1928 the pool was unofficially opened on March 21st by five high school boys — Clayton Kruger, Rondall Brady, John Munson, Joe Kroetch and Clairmont Clark.

It was not until 1943 that the town attempted to provide a **municipal pool**. An excavation was dug on the corner of Main Street and South Broadway and filled with water from the city water mains. It was a very popular place for its few days of existence. Unfortunately the town's water system could not keep up with the demand created by the thirsty dirt walls and floor, and the project was doomed to failure.

In 1962 the Phillips family donated two lots in Block 11 between Wheeler and Main streets, and a group of volunteers, headed by the Reverend David Zietlow, Robert Clark and Rudy Glatz, donated time, material and money to build a concrete pool. This pool deteriorated badly over the years and in the late 1970s application was made for a grant from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for replacement funds. After two years of local fund raising and inclusion of the **George Ore Memorial Park** recreation and picnic area improvements, these funds became available, and the present pool was constructed in 1981.

In these days (1989), a lifeguard is always on duty during regularly scheduled hours, and swimming classes for

different levels of experience are provided. Shades of Big and Little Casino — some days the water can scarcely be seen in the pool, because it is so thickly populated with swimmers on a hot summer afternoon! How proud the earlier town officials would have been!

The town sponsored a **municipal golf course**, north of town near the cemetery, and the first game played was against Roundup in April of 1926. (W.T. 4-16-26) "... The ladies of the club have arranged to have a tent on the course and serve hot coffee and sandwiches to the players. . . A great deal of work has been done on the fairway and greens . . . The posts along the fairway, as well as the sand boxes, have all been painted white. The greens have been oiled and leveled. . ."

Baseball was a favorite sport, and Winnett fielded a team that met Lewistown, Roundup, and all the neighboring community teams. The baseball field, with even a bandstand and protected bleachers, was located in Block 20. John Merten's suit imprinted "WEOWNA" is often seen at historical displays.



Flooded baseball diamond on the grounds of Winnett's first park



Rodeo in progress on the park grounds. Notice Masonic Temple on the left in the background and the large Pribble house on the right (Hanson residence 1989)

Tennis courts appear in some of the earliest pictures of the town. In 1937 a gravel court was constructed south of the schoolhouse. Of the older players, William Bennett, clerk of the school board and clerk of the town of Winnett, was the one to beat in those years! When the town's streets were paved in the late 1970s a paved court was laid near the present (1989) football field.

Water and Sewer

Nothing could have been of more critical importance to the town than its water supply. Just before the discovery of oil, the town council contracted with N. J. Littlejohn to dig a city well in the alley in Block 7, to be used by those not connected to the water system. Digging was slow due to the layers of rock which had to be penetrated by blasting. The well was completed, and equipped with a hand pump. Residents of the town were allowed to obtain their water from the well.

The influx of oil people created an immediate demand for more water. In April of 1921, the town contracted with a resident geologist, C. J. Stone, to drill a well in the Rimrock Addition of the town. Stone was to be paid 10 cents per 100 gallons for water delivered into the reservoir. Meanwhile, Locksley Lantz contracted with the council to enlarge the good water well on the Phelps Millar farm north of town (Sec 33-15-27), install a pump, and deliver water via a two-inch water line to the city reservoir. By the end of September the Stone well had been completed and had 700 feet of excellent drinking water standing in the casing. Shooting the well created a 300-foot underground reservoir but did not increase the flow. A pump was installed and water piped to the tank on the hill, but the well produced for only a short time.

\$1100 was raised by popular subscription to defray water expenses, and a pipeline was laid from the Wood farm to the city reservoir to supplement the water supply in October of 1922. Shortly thereafter a \$52,000 bond issue was approved to enlarge the distribution system within the town.

By 1922 the great number of cesspools within the city were becoming a health and physical hazard. In December 1922 the Miracle Construction Company installed a trunk sewer system the full length of Main Street which fed into a disposal plant. Two main lines ran parallel to Main Street down the alleys on each side. The system was completed at a cost of \$37,000. Sewerage for the southeast portion of town was not completed until 1934.

If the sewer system was to work properly, it was necessary to have sufficient water flow through the sewer lines to keep them flushed out. This factor, along with the increased number of water customers, created a larger demand for water. The city contracted to have a well drilled in exchange for a water franchise. Water from this well flowed into the reservoir in October 1923, but by February 1925 the well failed. Lloyd Hassett, who was leasing the Wood farm and water route, was deluged with requests for water! Many more "WATER" signs appeared

in windows.

Ralph Bowen, from his farm on top of the rimrock, furnished some water to the water tank for a time, but badly deteriorated water lines (apparently from a very early water system) could not adequately deliver the water his wells produced. Fred Merten, also on the rimrock, drilled two wells which each initially produced 100 barrels a day. Windmills pumped the wells, and gravity took care of the flow to the reservoir.

The city council had a new water line laid from the wells on the rimrock to the tank, and in about 1926 the City Light Company agreed to take over the management of the water system. They installed an electric line to the top of the rimrock and replaced the time-honored but sometimes unreliable windmills with electric pumping power. The electric line, as well as a telephone line, was laid to the Merten home, and Mertens were put in charge of the pumping operation.

The wells on the rims, supplemented at times by Ole Rigg's house-to-house delivery from the original Wood farm, supplied the town with water until 1935. At that time the town of Winnett was charged with the responsibility of furnishing 6000 gallons of water daily free of charge to a CCC camp, if the town wished to have a camp established in Winnett. The State Water Conservation Board agreed to pay the initial cost of drilling the wells, installing electric pumps and supply lines with a loan agreement which stated that 12 months after the camp was abandoned, the city would pay a regular monthly sum from their water revenue to repay the water board. Local driller Perry Miller was contracted to drill two wells on top of the rimrock. Each well was 120 feet deep and furnished the needed water supply.

In 1937 a government-financed artesian well was drilled in Block 13 of the Rimrock Addition. Farmers were allowed to haul from it. The well came in with such pressure that no pump was required for the first years to force the water to the reservoir on the rimrock. After that, deep-well and booster pumps were added. The town leased the well from the federal government. It was a good source of water for over 30 years until caving problems developed.

The 1960 decade saw the ecological-awareness programs, and that is when the townspeople agreed to bond themselves to build the first sewer lagoon to eliminate the dumping of raw sewage into McDonald Creek. These turned out to be the first aerated lagoons in eastern Montana and were promised to be adequate for at least 20 years. However, within 10 years the Environmental Protection Agency insisted that they no longer provided the necessary protection for downstream waters. A matching grant was secured from EPA and the third lagoon was added to the system with a complete updating of aeration equipment.

In 1972 another deep well was drilled at the base of the rimrock near the east end of town (Lot 6, Block 1, Rimrock Addition). The well was a fine producer, but the town distribution system had badly disintegrated. Great

leaks developed which were almost impossible to locate. The water would break out of a line, follow a gravel layer and enter the sewer. The sewer lagoons would be full and the water tank empty.

With the success of securing government aid fresh in their minds and the knowledge of several new programs available for municipal water systems, action was initiated to find funding to repair the badly deteriorated water distribution system. The town made application for grants from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation as well as the Department of Commerce (Community Development Block Grant program) for funds to assist with replacing the system.

Both applications were approved in the first year, and although more money was to be borrowed for the project, a complete new distribution system was built in 1984. Another well was drilled and a new metering system was installed. The following year the approval of an additional grant from CDBG made it possible to increase the water storage capacity by adding another 10 feet to the height of the reservoir. A chlorination system was added in 1987.

The residents of Winnett in 1989 are blessed with an adequate water supply — a living tribute to the past and present mayors, councilmen, clerks, water commissioners and general laborers. Theirs have been the hours of sleep lost — sometimes just in worry; theirs were the hours spent groveling in the mud repairing broken lines; and more recently, theirs were the hours spent in properly preparing detailed and complicated grant applications. Empathy is to be felt for those who hold the most poignant memory of all — the helpless feeling, while fighting a devastating fire, of the fire hose on their shoulders becoming suddenly limp from lack of water.

Fires

AND devastating fires there were! The first major fire was that of the **Pribble Implement** on July 20, 1921. The next major fire came on September 30, 1921. It burned the **Winnett Soft Drink** establishment, the **Army and Navy Store**, the **Munroe Hotel**, the **Cecil Hotel** and the **Winnett Post Office** — all in Block 18. December 19, 1921, the **Field Hotel** (location not known) burned and on September 8, 1926, the **Leader Hotel** (Block 3, Broadway) succumbed to an electric-wiring-malfunction fire. The **Cosmopolitan Rooms** and the adjoining **Riley Cafe**, both owned by Hattie Neville, (Block 9, Broadway) turned to ashes October 11, 1927.

Nine buildings fell as the result of a block-size fire on September 1, 1929. The buildings were: the **Love Bird Cafe** owned by Mable Towne; **Eager Mercantile Company**; **Shipton Soft Drink**; **Enterprise Meat Market** owned by J. Otis Mudd and Frank Boeckman; **Central Hotel**, owned by James Weaver; **Mother's Cafe**, owned by Mary Stewart; **Hub Clothing**, owned by Sol Stormwind; the Rudy Beck residence and garage; and the Sol Stormwind residence (all Block 16).



Flames engulf the Love Bird Cafe as the 1929 fire moves to the adjoining buildings.



Rubble in aftermath of 1929 fire

The **Alaska Hotel**, location unknown, burned in the early 1930s. **Harry West's barbershop**, **Len Hoyle's barbershop** and the **Savoy Hotel** (Block 8, Main) all were razed by fire on October 30, 1931. The **Eager Mercantile Store**, which had served as the first Petroleum County courthouse in 1925, was lost on January 30, 1945.

In May of 1960, the **Town Tavern**, operated by Pearl and Thamar Mart, the **Town Cafe**, run by Charles and Lois Poulton, and the **Winnett Barbershop** (Block 9, Main) were burned. **Floyd's Bar** (Lot 7, Block 17) burned in May 1966.

Cliff's Auto Service, the former Broadway Garage, was gutted by fire in January of 1967. The **Gusher Bar**, which had been the **Winnett Post Office** from 1921 to 1926, was completely destroyed by fire in March of 1975.

The last major fire destroyed the T. N. Sandaker building, owned by Joe Whisonant, in August 1986. The building had housed the **State Liquor Store** at one time and was part of the **Monarch Lumber Company's** yard.



Remains of the Savoy Hotel and the two barbershops which burned in 1931. The Butte Block building and Cole's Service Station were saved



The Town Cafe and Town Tavern both burned in 1960. This picture was taken in the 1940s.



Mother Stewart's Cafe (Lot 7, Block 16). The Eager Mercantile calendar on the wall is dated June 1929 — two months before the huge fire which destroyed Block 16. Behind the counter are Minnie Huot, Alice Wadman; on stools, Lillian Wadman and Cora Weaver; Mother Stewart standing beside the table. Cora Weaver lost her hotel next door in the same fire.



Harold "Pete" Tunncliff and Ed Stauffacher (Brumberger) in "Pete and Otto's" Town Tavern in 1939.



Civilian Conservation Corps camp on the outskirts of Winnett in 1936. Notice the three big black oil storage tanks on the hill!

Civilian Conservation Corps

In 1935 the town experienced an interesting revival when contingencies of Civilian Conservation Corps young men arrived in Winnett. They had come to this area to construct a new intake ditch into War House Butte Reservoir and to build the Yellow Water Dam. Their camp was in a bend of McDonald Creek near the east end of the town's rimrock. There were some who were awry-eyed and who clucked their tongues when first they heard of the camp's location within walking distance of the town. They could easily imagine the havoc that might be wrought as a consequence of having 200 young men turned loose on the town. The army-disciplined young men were found to conduct themselves as well as any of the home-grown boys, and the town and community soon opened their hearts and homes to them. The camp's last reveille and taps were heard in September of 1938.

Mini Oil Boom

A minor increase in population was noted in 1945-46 when more oil was discovered on the Mosby Dome near Cat Creek. In April 1946 the *Winnett Times* headlined an article "14 New Businesses Opened in Winnett." The article went on to say, "Incredible as it may seem, fourteen new businesses have been established, eleven of them already being in operation. They are: **Rimrock Theater**, operated

by Lloyd Lafond; **Shell Station**, operated by E. M. 'Murry' Palin; the **Antlers** secondhand store; the old school dormitory boarding and rooming house; the **Arras Tank Co.**; the **National Supply Co.**, serving drilling operations; the **New Winnett Cafe**; the **Smokehouse**, owned by R. W. Gilmore; three new bars, the **Mint Bar and Lounge**, the **Rotary Inn**, and the **Gusher Bar and Lounge**. Soon to be in operation are the **City Food Lockers** cold storage system; a drug store and a laundry." The small boom was of short duration. By 1950 the town's population was noted as 390. There has been no activity to stimulate growth since that time.

Town Government

In the early years, the town council meetings had been held in various locations such as Nick Langshausen's law office, the City Light Company office, the courthouse, Eager Mercantile Company, and the William Bennett home. Incidentally, Mr. Bennett's trailer, which he used as an office during the time he was town clerk, burned in the mid-1950s, and it is assumed that is the reason the minutes and other records of 1920 to 1926 are missing.

Town government did not have a home until the Soil Conservation Service building (Lot 20, Block 16, Broadway) was acquired in the mid-1950s. This gift from the federal government was with the stipulation that the



Ted Bayer, CCC enrollee, takes time out for chow on the job at War House Lake



Neat rows of cots and foot lockers in the CCC barracks



Kitchen crew on duty in the efficient CCC camp kitchen

building be used for education or health purposes. Use as only a town clerk's office did not meet this requirement. The public library was in need of space, so the mayor appointed a committee to make the necessary cooperative arrangements to secure the building for joint use by the town council and the library.

The building request was granted and the library occupied the main portion of the building, fulfilling the educational requirement. The town clerk established an office in the small addition on the north side of the building. Council meetings were held in the library. At this time the water and sewer accounts were a portion of the job of the water commissioner, and the records were kept in his home.



Winnett Public Library and City Offices

When the library moved to new quarters in the school in 1974, the town office was moved to the main part of the building, and the water and sewer accounting became the responsibility of the town clerk. This change fulfilled the requirement for health-related use of the building.

A list of elected town officials can be found in the Appendix.

Elmer Eager holds the record of being the longest serving mayor with 13 years, two months. William Bennett served as town clerk for 22 years. Orene Raundal Barbee has the honor of being the first woman to serve as a council member, being elected in 1969. Guri Cook, Eva Lengemann, Helen Quigg, Donna Rabern and Luann Knutson have joined the ranks of women elected to the position in following years.

Public Library

Petroleum County residents have long appreciated the value of a public library. Even when space, professional people, and even books were limited, they still made every effort to provide some sort of service to readers of all ages.



Hover Building as it appeared in the 1940s. Built in 1920 for the Hover-Schwartz Oil Co., it became the Hansen Cafe in 1931 and, after prohibition, the Hansen Cafe and Beer Parlor. Later owners included Stauffachers, Myers, Hougen, Quigley, Calveri and Pinkerton. The Stockman Bar closed in 1980 and the building was demolished shortly thereafter. (See also HOVER -- Winnett)



The Winnett Times in the early 1940s



The Park Hotel, built before the 1920s, became the Masonic Temple in 1926. The building had served as a school dormitory (1920-21) and a hospital (1924).

The first documented effort was a simple book exchange. A shelf for reading material was maintained in the Snowflake Bakery in 1921. Patrons could exchange a book they wished to donate for a book on the shelf. No one monitored the exchange or worried about the ownership of the books. When the bakery closed, the service ended; but American Legion Auxiliary, Rebekah and Eastern Star members cooperated to establish a volunteer library in the basement of the courthouse.

Mrs. Harry West was the first librarian. When the Wests left Winnett in 1936, Mrs. Florence Kindt, also a reading enthusiast, became librarian. She and others volunteered their services to maintain a library for 22 years.

In 1950 Martha E. Hamilton, in her will, left a little over \$4500 to the town of Winnett to be used for library purposes. When the town council became aware of an opportunity to utilize the old Soil Conservation Service building, if a library were to occupy a portion of the building, Mayor Rex Eager appointed a five-member committee to make the necessary arrangements to establish a library. Florence Kindt, Frances Eager, Fern Wacker, William Bennett and Rudy Glatz served on the committee. When Florence resigned to become the librarian, she was replaced by Hallie Tripp.

The minutes from the first board meeting of this group are full of hammers and nails and saws and paint. Shelves were built, lights were installed, and painting and varnishing was done — much of this by volunteer labor on the part of the committee members themselves. Finally on April 21, 1958, the library was formally opened with a reception and open house. The library operated and grew in these quarters. It became a legally constituted county library with a tax base, an appointed board of trustees, and better resources to serve the entire community. When the school board began planning a new facility, the library board asked that consideration be given to including a combined school-public library in the plan. Cooperation between the school board and the library board resulted in the establishment of the first combined elementary-high school-public library in the state. The joint library was dedicated on April 21, 1974, with Montana State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delores Colburg giving the dedication address. The community library has operated successfully since that time.

State Visitors

Two events during the 1980s gave Winnett statewide attention. In May 1980, the Montana State Board of Public Education held one of its regular two-day meetings in Winnett. State Board members were given the opportunity to view firsthand a Class C elementary and high school in operation and to ride a school bus on a regularly scheduled bus route.

As a special honor to the state board, the Petroleum County Community Library Board of Trustees invited the state board members to plant a tree commemorating their visit to Winnett. Marjorie King, as chairman of the State Board of Public Education, turned the first shovel of



Tom Thompson, Harriett Meloy, Allen Gunderson, Andy Matosich, and George Johnson watch, as Marjorie King wields the shovel

dirt for the commemorative planting.

Governor Ted Schwinden proclaimed Winnett "State Capitol for a Day" on October 23, 1987. The governor and several members of his staff were guests at an open meeting in the Petroleum County courthouse hospitality room. Later in the day, Governor Schwinden visited the local schools, where he quizzed some of the students as to whether or not they intended to remain in agriculture, and if they planned to attend school beyond high school.



Governor Schwinden in his Winnett office