

# 1989 Town of Winnett

A phantom homesteader returned to Winnett in 1989 to survey the businesses and public institutions of the town of his past. The visit began at the west end of Main Street on the south side of the street. Looking to his right, his eyes first fell upon the **Catholic Church**. "I remember when this was the **Eager Store**, and then a school and church for several years. Later I bought lumber there when it was known as the **Valley Lumber Company**. The Catholic Church bought the building from the Eagers in 1924."

"The next business building is the **D and E**. Oh yes, Barney and Frank Winkes constructed that store in 1921 and named it the **Winkes Brothers Grocery**. The upper story was leased by fraternal lodges. George Waldrop bought the store in 1925, and Elmer Eager, William Herweg and Donald Gullickson were later owners. It is now the property of Ethel Gullickson and is unused. However, it was the site of a fine Montana State Centennial exhibition during the Winnett High School reunion of 1989.

"And next, this is the old **Marti building**. It was built during the oil boom as a grocery store. It became the **post office** in 1926 and remained that until 1972 when it became Winnett's **fire hall** where the ambulance and fire truck are stored.

"**Kozy Korner** — what an eye-catching name! It is a restaurant which was opened by James and Marge Johnson in 1984, with a bar added in 1986. I remember when it was known as the **City Service Station** owned by Dow Hough in 1936."

The phantom crossed Broadway Avenue but stayed on the south side of Main Street. He shook his head in wonder. "I remember when nine buildings burned along this block in 1929 and now there is only one business place. It is new — **Gershmel's General Store** — built in 1985. Gary and Linda Gershmel, owners, also handle Trustworthy Hardware supplies.

"Now there, across Lepper Avenue, is my old bank building. It opened as the **Winnett State Bank** in 1914 and later became the **First National Bank**. It merged with the **First State Bank** and became the **Farmers and Merchants Bank** until it closed in 1929. Art Moore owns the building now and uses it for his woodworking shop.

"The next two-story building — well, if it isn't the old **Moll Pool Hall**! The second floor was a meeting place for both the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges. In about 1916 the meeting rooms served as classrooms for the school. When the Masons acquired their own building in 1926, the building became known as the I.O.O.F. or **Odd Fellow Hall**. It served many purposes and now is owned by Ralph Corbett and used for storage.

"The next building, after crossing Ashley Avenue, is evidently a residence, but behind the house I see the old **Brown schoolhouse** which formerly was east of Cat Creek. It was moved to Winnett for use as a home in 1945.

"The metal **shop building** next in line was constructed



by William Britzius in 1948, and in the 1960s was a warehouse and office for **Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative**. And what a pity! The **Winnett Ranch** house should be next, but there is nothing to be seen of the old landmark."

The phantom old-timer continued across McDonald Creek in order to survey the full length of Main Street to the top of the rimrock hill. As he crossed the bridge, another memory came to mind. "I remember," he mused, "when the town first built a bridge here in the spring of 1918. The creek, at that time, was flowing over a wider and flatter plain several yards to the east. In the fall of 1918, Boone Kennedy was given the contract to change the channel of McDonald Creek and thus open for use the bridge which had been built."

Arriving at Seventh Avenue East, and looking south, the visitor saw the building which houses the government well which was drilled in 1937 but is no longer used. Looking farther south he could see the business quonsets of **Bevis and Sons'** construction and trucking business. Just west of the Bevises, on city park land, is the town's newest **water well**, drilled in 1984.

A little past Eighth Avenue East and directly under the rimrock, he could see some old buildings of the **Rimrock Dairy** which was operated from 1948 to 1959 by Ernest and Ruth Freburg. A little farther east, the town's blue-painted **chlorination plant** stands, and on Lot 6, Block 1, the town's other **water well**, drilled in 1972.

Making a U-turn on Main Street at the top of the hill, the viewer paused, and looking to the north, looked down upon three rather square pools of water and an orange building — the town's aerated lagoons and pump house. Just a little west of the pools could be seen the concrete forms of several buildings.

"I remember," said he, "of being in town one day when a truck filled with singing and shouting young men went down Main Street — **CCC** enrollees — whose camp buildings had been set on those forms. And over there,

toward the northwest in the bend of the creek, those two rusty oil storage tanks must be the remnants of the **Weowna refinery.**"

Recrossing McDonald Creek, the shadowy guest exclaimed with excitement, "And there is what is left of Walter Winnett's old barn — that building must be the oldest of any in town — it is at least 90 years old. Since the Rogge Brothers gave it a new roof and removed some of the north end, it isn't as spectacular a building as it once was; but what a history it would tell, if barns could only talk!

"I can scarcely believe it! Looking north down Grand Avenue, I see the **Northern Hotel.** What a beautiful structure still, and so well maintained! It was new in August of 1921. Theodore Svindland built it, and it has had only two other owners — Hugh and Blanche Grove and, now, Joe and Charleen Pease.

"Just north of the hotel and still on Grand Avenue, I see the home of **Laugeman's Big Sky Lures.** Fuller and Ruth Laugeman started this business in 1973, and they sell trapping lures to customers in every state in the union.

"Moving along the north side of Main Street, I see another empty building. I remember it as the **Montana Lumber and Hardware** which was constructed in 1929. It operated until 1971, at which time it became Vernon and Janet Bauer's **Trading Post** until 1979.

"The **Petroleum County Courthouse** stands squarely on the corner of Ashley and Main. How well it has stood the rigors of weather and time. The building was known as the Winnett Block when it was completed in 1917. It became the courthouse in 1930.

"The **B & D Service Station** on the corner across Ashley Avenue, now owned by David and Becky Grantier, was once the property of Al Hoyle. It was rented to Kenneth Cole in 1931 and was later purchased by him. It was sold to Robert Coffey in 1966 and to the Grantiers in 1980."

The phantom homesteader marveled at the empty space between the service station and the next building. Every lot had once been occupied. He smiled, however, and thought, "Now here is another old-timer like myself. Joe Shumate would be proud to know that **Central Billiards**, the first billiard parlor built in the town of Winnett in 1914, is still serving the public as in the old days. It is now known as the **Winnett Bar**, owned and operated by Arthur and Lillian Moore."

He crossed Broadway and looked with pride at the **Winnett Post Office.** "It appears so new," he thought, "although it is 18 years old. Luann Knutson is postmaster and Pat Busenbark is clerk. But now this next building — someone called it the Bauer building — I remember it being the **Northrup** building, built by the barber William Northrup."

A few paces beyond Moulton Avenue brought the visitor to the **Winnett Printing** office. He reminisced, "This had been, I believe, the **Stenson Garage** before Charles Doherty moved the *Winnett Times* print shop here in 1925. Although the *Winnett Times* has not been pub-



*Northern Hotel 1989*



*Petroleum County Courthouse*



*U. S. Post Office, Winnett, Montana, 59087*



lished in Winnett since April 1976, I understand that Rudy and Bernice Glatz still operate a business here known as **Winnett Printing**."

A few steps farther west brought the visitor to **George Ore Memorial Park** and **Winnett's Municipal Swimming Pool**. Then looking across Teigen Avenue, he saw the **Lutheran Church**. Beyond the church to the north, he noticed the **Heltz Trailer Court**. This finished his tour of Main Street businesses in the year of 1989.

There was more he wished to see, however, and he betook himself to the **cemetery** north of town. He looked west and south to where the golf course had been but could see no signs of its ever having existed. "But what is that over there?" he asked himself. "Looks like bleachers. That must be the **rodeo grounds** with electric lights and all!"

"Just guess I'll take a peek at the businesses on good old Broadway — there used to be a passel of them. I'll start right here on the north end and go along the west side first. Here is a nice large building, but boarded up and unused. It was the **Hilltop Service Station**, built by Claude Allen in 1961. After his death it was sold to James Altenburg. With Bruce Arthur as partner, the business name was known as Hilltop Service (Aral, Inc.) for several years. At one time the building also housed the **Hilltop Cafe** operated for a time by Edith Arthur. James Altenburg sold the fine welding and machine shop equipment and closed the Exxon gas station in the fall of 1989.

"There used to be several buildings along here near the old railroad right-of-way. There I see some oil storage tanks — wholesale storage for the B & D Service Station — and that little green building — it is storage for Harold Belstad. It just might be a part of what used to be the **City Light Company**, and later the **Ford Agency and Garage** operated by Harold Belstad and Lloyd Berg.

"Next is a large cement block building, **Olsons' Grocery**. Two World War II veterans, James Dundom and Arnold Hansen, built **The City Food Lockers**, a frozen

food storage and meat processing plant and opened it for business in March of 1947. Joe Pitman assisted in the management of the business which also had the franchise for General Electric Appliances. In 1948 the business was sold to Floyd Hill. He operated it until August 1949, at which time he sold the meat and locker business and the building to Charles and Louise Allen, retaining only the appliance franchise. The Allens stocked grocery items in the former appliance display area. In July of 1951 the Allens sold the business to Robert Clark. When Mr. Clark died in 1964, his son Jack bought the business and managed it until October 1973, when it was sold to Ronald and Lurene Olson, the present owners. Olsons also operate the **State Liquor Store** on the premises.

"Here is the old original **Basin Lumber Company** store which became the **Monarch Lumber Company** in 1921. It later became the **Rimrock Theater** operated by Lloyd Lafond in 1945. It was converted by Robert Clark to a coin-operated laundry, barbershop and ladies' beauty salon in 1952. The building housed **Winnett Upholstery**, managed by Orene Raundal and Marjorie Bratten.

"Across Wheeler Street is a new-looking service station known as **Rabern's Oil**, owned by Bud Rabern. Dan Petersen is the mechanic in the two-stall shop attached to the service station. The garage was constructed by Harold Belstad in 1967 and was known as **Harold's Auto Service** until sold to the Raberns in 1987.

"I wonder what I can find on the west side of Broadway after crossing Main Street. This two-story building is definitely a residence now, but it looks so familiar. I know, it used to be Dan Sommerfield's **Harness Shop** until that type of service was no longer needed. The Sommerfields lived here until moving to Oregon in 1938. It has been a residence since that time.

"I don't see the **little white schoolhouse** that used to be just across Millsap Avenue on the corner facing Broadway. When it was first built in 1912, it was the only



*Winnett School complex. (L to R): shop building, old school and new new gymnasium in background; high school and new elementary classrooms and community library in foreground.*



building other than the Winnett Ranch buildings so, of course, it had no street address. It was moved in 1918, as I remember, to the school-building block farther south on Broadway. Here is another business — **C and S Photography**. It became a business in 1979, when Ralph Corbett and Carol Schaeffer acquired Rudy Glatz's dealership for film processing.

"And here, just across Rowley Avenue, is the school-building block. The little white schoolhouse was the first school building to occupy the block. It sat near the corner of Broadway and Rowley, but soon after, the fine old Spanish-style stucco school was completed and is still being used. It faces Moulton Avenue rather than Broadway. Now, I see a large brick building in place of the little white schoolhouse. It houses elementary classrooms, a gymnasium, lunchroom, and community library and was completed in 1974 and attached to the north end of the Winnett High School, which was first occupied in 1951. South of the high school is the industrial arts building which was finished in 1974. The entire town block is taken up with a well-maintained school complex, truly a credit to the community.

"Continuing down the west side of Broadway, I find no more old business buildings, so I'll cross Broadway on Jenkins Avenue and look at the pretty little A-frame building with a lighted cross — it is the **First Baptist Church**.

"Turning north, now on the east side of Broadway, I see what must be the school's **athletic field**. There are running lines for track and field sports, a tennis court, and even a lighted football field. The football field was given as a memorial to James Bartlett, a junior in high school who was killed in a car accident in 1963.

"The next block is occupied with construction equipment owned by Hugh and Mary Brindley, operating under the name of **Brindley's Earthmoving**. Their office is in their home, the original Badger residence, at 115 South Broadway.

"There are no business buildings in Block 28, Broadway, but what a huge new building I see being built in Block 21! It will become Winnett's new **Emergency Services building**, replacing the present fire hall on Main Street. Dwarfed by the new building, the present city hall occupies the lot to the north. It was a Soil Conservation Service building which became the public library and city clerk office in 1958, and the official **Town Hall** in 1974.

"Crossing Main Street, I'll stay on the east side of Broadway as I continue north. There seems to be no business until I reach Block 3 across Wheeler Avenue, where there are large fuel tanks on platforms and three metal buildings — **Montana Highway Department** property. Two trees, which I am sure Charlie Young planted in front of his **Leader Hotel**, still stand. They must be 70 years old!

"Crossing the old railroad bed, the former **Montana Elevator**, now covered with steel, still stands, I see. The depot to the east and the three big black oil storage tanks on the hill to the west are gone forever.

Although our phantom guest had seen all of the commercial and public buildings on Main Street and Broadway Avenue, he did not seem quite content until he searched out the **county shop** (Block 4, Lepper); the remains of the **Wide-Awake Garage** (Block 11, Moulton) believed to have been built in about 1916; the **Masonic Temple** on Lepper Avenue which was formerly the **Park Hotel**, a school dormitory and a hospital; the **Burt Sisters telephone office**, now the Olson residence at 10 South Teigen; **Dr. Alexander's** former office, now the Art Moore home at 8 Lepper Avenue; a new **WyMont re-cycle shop** on Highway #244 and Jenkins Street; the **stockyards** and scale along the old railroad tracks; and **Rabern's wholesale house and bulk oil tanks** on First Railroad Street North.

The wearied, but not quite satisfied, phantom hesitated — had he seen all? He decided to take one more hurried glimpse. He remembered that when the first town lot sale was held in July of 1914, four hardware sites had been purchased. Were there no more remnants of them? "Ah, ha," said he, "that **VFW Hall**, it is a portion of the original **Mahon-Robinson Lumber Company**. And in Block 3, Lot 8, a part of the **Rogers-Templeton Hardware** is now a residence. He returned again to the creek and saw something he had not noticed before — a building west of the Winnett barn. He happily remembered, "That used to be the **Welter schoolhouse**. I bid high and got the schoolmarm's box at a box social and dance there one time!"

He took one last swing to the southwest, and what did he find — the oldest original building still in use! It was the first **little white schoolhouse**, beautifully preserved, standing proudly as the **Methodist Church** on the corner of Millsap and Moulton Avenue

## Schools

In 1899 when District #26 (Flatwillow) was formed, it was a huge district which encompassed the southern portion of what would become Petroleum County including the W. J. Winnett Ranch and the area which was to become the town of Winnett. When the older W. J. Winnett children became school age, the only school in the area was at Flatwillow. So the Winnetts saw fit, in 1907, to convert a bedroom in their home into a schoolroom and to hire a teacher for their own children and any other children who could attend. Katherine Moore was hired to teach, and her salary and all other school costs were paid by W. J. Winnett. The following year, Miss Carpenter, who later became Mrs. Frank Metzger, was hired. The Winnett family, however, did not find this school situation entirely satisfactory, so, for the next several school years, the family moved to Lewistown. No school was held again in the area until 1911.

By 1911 the influx of homesteaders had increased the need for a school, and Hannah Deethardt (Sec 35-15-26) offered the use of her cabin, which was about two miles



*Winnett's first schoolhouse constructed by Flatwillow District #26 in 1912. Frank Moshner was carpenter. Grades 1 through 6 in the 1915-1916 school year with Louisa Wilson as teacher. Boy with bat is Kenneth Cole. Boy with hand raised is Harold Deethardt, son of George Deethardt. Other students named, but not in order are: Edith Winnett, Margaret Alexander, Ressa Wilson, Mildred Woods, Edna Hillius, Claude Diere, Grace Woods, Charles Kent, Lewis Winnett, Harold Homer Howe, Emma Smiley. Three are not named.*

west of the Winnett Ranch, for a school. Miss Dora Beer was hired by District #26 as the teacher.

At last, in 1912, a school building was erected on a lot which was to become 101 South Broadway, and the first public school within the future townsite of Winnett was opened. It was a one-room white building 20 x 40 feet in size. It was to have, and still has, an interesting place in the town's history. In spite of its rather ample size for its day, it became known as the "first little white schoolhouse." Agnes Jones of Missouri was hired to teach approximately 25 pupils in the new building. She died ere her term was completed, and Alma Frye (later Mrs. Edward Reynolds) completed the school year.

The trustees of District #26 hired Miss Amanda Swift in the spring of 1913. She was given the responsibility of teaching in Winnett for an eight-month term, then to spend the balance of the year teaching at other places within the district, wherever school instruction was needed.

By the fall of 1914, several local students were ready for high school classes. Miss Swift, being certified to offer this instruction, voluntarily tended to their classes after

her regular elementary hours and on Saturdays.

By the 1915-16 school year, it was obvious one person could no longer teach all of the elementary children and, in addition, give special help to older students. Miss Louisa Wilson was hired to teach grades one through six in the "little white schoolhouse" and Miss Swift was placed in charge of the higher grades. The upper classes were held in the Masonic rooms above the Moll Pool Hall. (The building is known today (1989) as the old Odd Fellows Hall on Main Street.)

On February 29, 1916, District #159 was formed from parts of District #26 and several additional townships to the north and east. The trustees (H. B. Greene, G. H. Deethardt and S. O. Pribble) of the new district had the responsibility of administering not only the school in Winnett, but also schools in the Brush Creek, Elk Creek and Cat Creek areas. They also immediately set about legitimatizing the high school department which Amanda had voluntarily been sponsoring. Miss Wilson was again hired for the 1916-17 school term. She taught approximately 30 lower and intermediate level students. Miss Swift had charge of about 20 upper level students, again



in the Moll building.

The next year, 1917-18, the upper grades were moved to the first Eager store building on the west end of Main Street (the present Catholic Church). Miss Swift wrote of that year: "Mr. Jones, a fine and experienced teacher was hired as principal. Mrs. Jones taught French, Mr. Lasater, mathematics, and I had English and history for the grades and high school. Everything went well that year until Mr. Jones resigned to take a more lucrative position in the bank. Fate smiled on us, though, in the person of George Bramble, a talented, highly educated man . . . one of the finest, most devoted instructors it has been my lot to meet — a natural born teacher, justly beloved and respected by all his students and patrons. His youngest son, Blaine, entered our school, and George's wife was an asset to the community. At the completion of his year's work, to our sorrow, he left to take a better position in Tacoma, Washington."

Miss Swift also wrote of the district's efforts to provide supervised housing for a few out-of-town students. "As the summer of 1917 waned and war excitement grew, it became evident that there were students to enroll for each of the four high school years. Some parents from outside the town wished their children to board themselves, could quarters be found and someone furnished to oversee them. Mrs. Brown of the Circle Bar neighborhood was approached for the position. We proposed to get a cabin for her, furnish it with fuel, and install her as guardian of the bachelor girls. We persuaded bachelors to donate their abandoned shacks to the cause. Others were called upon to move the buildings into the supervised areas, which they cheerfully did. Thus started our first dormitory.

"Mrs. Brown, a fine, kindly lady, was a warrior withal, and after promising to act as angel guardian, began to worry about her piano left in her home. Men were beguiled into carting it in from the ranch to the school (for her cabin had no room for it). The ladies met and sewed denim into a durable piano cover and also into curtains to divide the store building into classrooms . . . Many were the makeshifts to which we had to resort to make the building answer the purpose. Mr. Woodard was our janitor who grieved that the curtains weren't substantial walls." (For an account of Miss Swift's dealings with Mrs. Brown, see SWIFT — Winnett.)

Due to Amanda Swift's heroic persistence (See Tribute in main introduction), Winnett High School became accredited for the 1918-1919 school year, and a \$5000 state appropriation was received. The board of school trustees called a bond election for the purpose of building a large combined high and elementary school. The issue carried by an overwhelming majority in April of 1918. Otto F. Wasmandorff, from Lewistown, Montana, was hired as architect. He met with the board on September 22, 1918, and presented his building plans. Because the war had its priorities, the bonds could not be sold, nor could any construction commence until the fall of 1919.



*Winnett Opera House where school presented musical and drama entertainment (1916-1918). Converted to school dormitory in 1918 and Montana Hotel in June of 1920.*

In the fall of 1918, the former Winnett opera house, recently converted into a hotel, was rented from Mr. Winnett for a school dormitory. Mrs. Brown was again chosen as matron, and Mrs. Millsap, experienced in hotel management, was cook. The students helped with the work, and the school district furnished fuel and lights. Parents could exchange meat, eggs, butter, and other edibles as payment for board.

Mr. M. A. Cromwell was principal in 1918. He, his wife, and daughter Anne had an apartment for housekeeping in the dormitory. The first white schoolhouse was moved in August of 1918 to Block 27 — the site of the proposed new building. Grades one through six attended there, while the upper grades and high school went to the Eager building. There were 63 high school students. Winnett High School graduated its first class in the spring of 1919. Commencement exercises were held in the first Aristo building. The four graduates — Margaret Anne Cromwell, Byron J. Conrad, Nelle R. Eager and Mabel L. Pratt — produced the first high school yearbook entitled "Winnett Proceeds." From that source came the following bits of history:

Mr. Cromwell taught science, penmanship and manual training; Mrs. Mary Feaster, history, spelling and English; Miss Viola Thurman, commercial; and Miss Marie Afflerbach, Latin.

There was a flu vacation that year. School was closed October 24, 1918, and not opened for a month. Most all students and teachers were victims. The time lost was made up by attending school on Saturdays for over four months. Because of the "vacation" there was no athletic activity until the second semester. When athletics finally was started, a high school athletic association was organized. D. Y. Wilson, Leta Hough and Byron Conrad managed its affairs. With the encouragement of Mr. Cromwell, the association quickly produced a program and a dance, and made the sum of \$34 for the Winnett Athletic Fund. Also the school staged a Japanese operetta for the benefit of the Epworth League, a church youth



group. The show was such a success that the group staged the performance in Teigen and gave a dance for the benefit of the high school Athletic Club.

Since there was no school gymnasium, the businessmen of Winnett formed an association to which they sold memberships. They rented the Aristo for use as a practice and playing floor for boys' and girls' basketball several nights a week. The Winnett Athletic Association, as the businessmen's group was known, made an agreement with the high school Athletic Club to give the club membership if the high school association would give them what funds they had accumulated. The high school students who participated in athletics, nevertheless, were required to buy a membership ticket in order to take advantage of the playing floor!

High school was again conducted in the Eager building for the 1919-1920 year. In the fall of 1919, the approved school bonds were sold, and the first unit of the new school building was completed. William Sullivan had the contract to build four classrooms and basement (north end) at a cost of \$9350. With the completion of the four elementary classrooms, grades one through six were moved into the new building and the white schoolhouse was used for a high school assembly room. A three-stall garage was built onto its west end. A teacher, trained in mechanical and electrical engineering, taught classes there which offered practical mechanical experience to students. Locally-owned cars were used as "patients"; students repaired these cars for only the actual cost of parts.

In the spring of 1920, the discovery of oil at Cat Creek triggered a business explosion in Winnett. Frank and Ella Millsap, business opportunists recognizing the need for another hotel in Winnett, purchased the dormitory building from Mr. Winnett. The dormitory students were moved to the former Park Hotel (Masonic Temple, 1989), where Mrs. Dan Sommerfield, school district clerk, took on the additional responsibility of dormitory matron.

Mr. B. F. Tanner was superintendent for the 1920-1921 and 1921-22 years.

By the end of the 1921 school year, the first and second units of the new school building were completed. There were then 11 classrooms, a gymnasium, an office, furnace room and coal bin, and a shower for men and boys near the science room downstairs at the west end of the basement. The high school library, which was also a classroom, was in the basement — directly across the hall from the furnace room. All the elementary rooms were upstairs, and each had its own classroom library. The gymnasium later became the study hall, and the white schoolhouse, a music room.

The third unit, which had been planned, would have been the same as the first and would have included a shower for girls and women in the basement. That unit was never completed.

In the year of 1921-1922, there were 95 students in high school. The grade enrollment was as follows: first, 45; second, 33; third, 26; fourth, 30; fifth, 33; and two



*Spanish-style stucco building completed as elementary and high school in 1921. Children in front in about 1932: Lucille Merten with doll carriage; Carroll Hough; Roscoe "Buddy" Moore; Charles, Norman, Ruth and Edith Stormwind; Bobby Nelson on tricycle; Dale Nelson sitting in wagon.*

teachers instructed the 60 students who were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Seven elementary and seven high school teachers were hired. A new 23-room dormitory located east of the school (Block 28, Broadway) was constructed by Richard Valentine in the summer of 1921 and was ready for occupancy by fall. To beautify the gymnasium, a metal ceiling was installed during the summer of 1922.



*School dormitory (1921). Weiloff residence in background.*

In 1923 a cesspool was installed for the boys' showers, which, being in the basement, were too low to be connected to the town's new sewer line. It was not until 1934, when with the help of the Civil Works Administration, indoor lavatories for both girls and boys and showers for girls were installed, and the school was connected to a different branch of the city sewer system. Also, in 1923 the flagpole at the west entrance of the school building was donated and erected by the Frantz Oil Company.

The school years rolled on and the school bell, rung by the faithful janitors, called the eager and not-so-eager students to their classrooms. In the early 1940s a two-



*Little white schoolhouse with attached mechanics building on west end. Also a portion of two-story woodwork shop (1960).*

story shop and woodworking building was erected just east of the school.

Desks continued to be removed from the gymnasium, which also served as an assembly and study hall, for basketball practice and games. After such activities, students and teachers were responsible for returning the desks to their designated rows.

In 1950 the accreditation of the high school was threatened because of the number of high school classes being held in, what was termed, a fire trap of a basement. Consequently the electorate approved a bond issue of \$91,000 for the construction of a high school building. It was completed during the summer of 1951.

The little white schoolhouse was sold to the Methodist Church in 1965, and it was moved to Block 15, Millsap, as it was no longer needed for school purposes. It had been not only the first schoolhouse, but a valuable adjunct to the school complex for 53 years. The congregations of every Winnett church had used it as a place of worship at some time in its history.

Twenty-two years later the high school indebtedness had been paid off, and most of the elementary districts of the county had been annexed to Winnett School District #159. The taxpayers of the county approved a \$498,000 bond issue for the construction of a new elementary school complex. It consisted of a 40' X 60' library surrounded by six elevated classrooms; a kitchen-multi-purpose room combination, and a regulation-size gymnasium. A Great Falls, Montana, firm — Page, Werner and Associates — designed the new facility. Klynn Cole, a 1952 Winnett High School graduate, was a member of that company. The Pirtz Construction Company of Billings, Montana, was awarded the construction contract, and the building was completed in February of 1974.

School patrons, who had hoped so long for such a building, were pleased with the new open concept in the elementary classrooms; they were proud that their new building housed the first elementary-high-school-public library combination in Montana. The gymnasium, with extendable bleachers, accommodates 350 spectators — a

vast improvement over the old smaller gym with the single bench along the west side, bleachers on the east side, and the stage and balcony. A new electronic scoreboard, donated and kept in constant repair by the Bohn family in memory of James Bohn, is on the west wall; underneath and to the sides, are two proud rams. They were painted by local artist, Joie Heitz, as a memorial to Casey Fail and George Waldrop. The ram head in the starting circle on the basketball playing floor was painted by Pam Wangseng, a Winnett High School graduate of the class of 1974.



*Rams painted by Joie Heitz, Jim Bohn Memorial scoreboard, and center circle ram on floor painted by Pam Wangseng*

## Winnett High School Reunions

There have been Winnett High School reunions over a span of 31 years. Robert Eike, commander of the Sandman American Legion Post first conceived the idea in 1958. That reunion was so well received that another was planned for 1963 — both planned and sponsored by the American Legion and Auxiliary, with help from the entire community. The next reunion was planned to be on the 50th anniversary of the first graduating class — in 1969. Byron Conrad was the only 1919 graduate to attend. From that time forward the memorable occasions have been staged every five years.

And what celebrations they have been! Even the sun, the moon and the State of Montana have joined in the exhilarations of the homecoming alumni. In 1963 the sun and moon teamed up and put on a partial eclipse as part of the entertainment. Every welding helmet from the shop department was put to use by the many viewers. On the second day of the 1969 reunion, while the happy crowd was enjoying a rodeo, the announcement came over the loud speaker that Neil Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., had landed on the moon, after traveling a mere 238,857 miles through space. They planted Old



Glory on the heretofore untrodden heavenly body. In 1989 the entire State of Montana was celebrating its 100th anniversary. Centennial medals were awarded to the winners of the historically oriented parade floats on reunion Sunday, July 16.

What a buzz and a rumble in the gymnasium, as nearly 500 people all tried to out-talk each other at the same



*Eight Winnett High School "boys" return, July 1974.  
Back: James Cox, Arnold Hillius, Jinks Jelinek, Harry Skjold,  
Rondall Brady. Front: Harvey Brady, Forrest Hodges, Ivan Hodges*

time! About one half of the group can still lustily sing the Winnett High School Song. (The practice of seeing that the freshmen know the song before they can be called sophomores is no longer enforced!) The younger alumni prefer the Winnett cheering song:

### **Winnett High School Song**

Once again here as schoolmates assembled,  
We fain would lift our hearts in song,  
To our High School, our dear Alma Mater  
Let gladness the moments prolong  
We are proud of her lads and her lasses,  
Of honors won in days gone by —  
So here's a cheer for Winnett High School  
For Winnett High School, dear Winnett High.

#### **Chorus:**

Here's to our classes, here's to our lasses  
Here's to the lads they adore;  
Here's to the Seniors so "mighty"  
Juniors so "flighty,"  
Freshies and Sophomores;  
Let mirth and gladness, banish all sadness  
And, as the days go by,  
You'll find us ready, and steady,  
Boosting for our Old High. Rah-Rah.

### **Cheer Song**

Cheer, Cheer for Old Winnett High  
Bring on the victory,  
Shout it on high,  
While our loyal Winnett Rams,  
Go onward to victory,  
Fight, fight, fight. (Repeat)

## **Churches**

**BAPTIST CHURCH** Although thirty years old, the Baptist Church organization and building is the youngest of the churches in Winnett. The Baptist group had been holding Sunday school and church in an elementary school building during the 1950s. They were organized into an official Baptist congregation August 5, 1959.

They immediately made plans to build their own church building. Locally raised, the Reverend David Iverson

drew the plans for the unique A-frame edifice. At the same time as the Baptists, with volunteer laborers, were constructing their new church building, another group of men were in the process of demolishing the famous old Montana Hotel. Some of the beams and floor joists from that hotel were used in the church construction. With the use of salvaged material and much donated labor, the total cost of construction of the First Baptist Church of



*We will build this Baptist Church*



*Baptist Church completed for Christmas 1960*

Winnett was approximately \$2500.

The first service was held at Christmas in 1960. Charter members were: Hallie M. Tripp, David Iverson, Ella Iverson, Ruth Iverson, Isaac Iverson, Pearl Stewart, Guri Ann Cook, Clifford Cook, Hallie Angelu Pugrud, Anne Iverson, Zell Iverson, Phillip Pugrud, Anita Cook, Pat Cook, Bill Cook, Phil Hill, Delores Hill and Myrtle Lawrence.

Many memorials have been given to further beautify the building and site. Among them were: the painting behind the altar in memory of Isaac Iverson, the exterior sign board in memory of Zell Iverson, and the guiding light of an illuminated cross on the church's peak in memory of Mrs. Annette Iverson, grandmother of the Reverend David Iverson. The present (1989) pastor, the Reverend David Iverson, has been the shepherd of the Baptist flock for 30 years.



*The Reverend David Iverson and wife, Ella (Dover) Iverson*

**CATHOLIC CHURCH** The first Catholic church service in Winnett was held in the John W. Brummett residence on May 9, 1916. Encouraged by a good attendance, the Catholic members made plans to meet in either the Aristo Theater or the little white schoolhouse. The congregation started with only 16 members, but grew to nearly 100 members in the early 1920s, at which time their services were held in the new school gymnasium.

Father Aloysius Müller, who lived in Hilger, Montana, came to Winnett on a Saturday once a month. In December of 1924, the parish, feeling the need for a building of their own, purchased what had been the first Eager store. (That building, known as "the big brown shed" had also been a school in 1918, the Valley Lumber Company, and a land office for A. W. Ogg.) Remodeled into a church, it became the site of the first Catholic wedding in Winnett when Anna Kleiman and Joseph Solf exchanged their vows there April 10, 1923. Father Müller was transferred to Winnett for a permanent location and services were held every Sunday.



*Catholic Church 1989*

In June of 1929 work was started to remodel the store building to more resemble a church. The store front was removed and the roof reshingled. A partition in the interior was removed to give more seating capacity. Additional windows were cut, and two large stained-glass windows that had been used in the old Lewistown Catholic church were installed in the front. By November 1, 1929, a small steeple had been placed on top and the exterior was lap sided. It was through the efforts of the Reverend Fr. Müller that the building had been purchased and remodeled, and he and the whole congregation were proud of the achievement. Ted Svindland did all the carpentry work, and Otis Hewes did the painting and wood refinishing. The church was named St. Aloysius in honor of Fr. Müller.

For many years, the members of St. Aloysius church were faithfully served by many priests from Lewistown, Montana.

In the early 1960s the foundation of the church building was found to be crumbling. A new foundation and sidewalk were poured. The building was moved back from the sidewalk, and with additional remodeling, became the present church.

Today (1989) the parish is served by a priest from the Roundup, Montana, community, and services are held each Saturday. The attendance varies from 15 to 20 people per week.

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH** The First Lutheran Church of Winnett had its beginnings in the old music hall (Winnett's first little white schoolhouse) on the school grounds. The first service was held in 1917 with the Reverend Paul E. Meyer. Once every month from 1917 to 1929, Rev. Meyer came from Lewistown to serve the Winnett families. Lutheran services were discontinued in Winnett in 1929.

In the summer of 1932, the Reverend Walter Leege of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Roundup, Montana, began