

almost lost a cow and calf in the same fire. It was started by a little boy playing with matches. That little boy is 56 years old now. Elizabeth decided it was time to leave.

"In 1938 they moved to Fairfield, Montana, where the water flowed free from the Gibson Dam. George worked for the reclamation and for an elevator. Later he did yards and gardens. George died in 1953, and Elizabeth in 1965. They are both buried in the Sunset Cemetery at Fairfield."

NELSON, Charles (Sec 3-26-24) Charles Nelson took up a homestead in 1910, one-half mile south of the present Blakeslee School.

As a result of an illness as a youth, he lost all of his hair, and therefore was known to all as Baldie.

He was an avid corn grower and the community children were hired by him to pick weeds and rocks. Baldie often served them cooked raisins for dessert, a great treat!

Giving up the homestead, Baldie moved to California where he passed away. His nephew, George Beam, still owns the ranch and leases it to Don Fleharty.

NEUMANN, Edward (Sec 8-16-24) Edward and Martha Neumann came to Montana in 1912 from New Ulm, Minnesota. They built and lived in the chicken coop until they built their home in 1915. They had ten children — Alma, Louise, Harvey, Otto, Elsie, Anna, Henry, Julius, Martha and Edward.

Louise and Julius came in the winter and then, in the spring of 1913, the rest of the family came to Grassrange on an emigrant train.

Alma married George Nelson. They moved here from Marshall, Minnesota, in the spring of 1913. They lived on the John Kuhn place now owned by Bob Fleharty. They had four children — Evelyn, Lloyd, Walter and Lewis.

Louise married David Harris, who had a homestead one and one-half miles northwest of the Petroleum County west boundary. They moved to Louise's homestead. They had four children: Floyd, Alice, Frank and David B.

Anna married Gus Brandt. They lived on the place now owned by Bruce Griffith. Harvey was killed in a train accident in Great Falls in 1922 at the age of 21.

Otto resided in Lewistown and started Auto Body Top and Repair in 1924. He took the Plymouth dealership in 1928. In 1931 he started the Nash and LaFayette dealership. He stayed in this business until his retirement. Ed died from an accidental gunshot wound in 1936. He had carried the mail to the Blakeslee area.

Henry lived in Washington where he was a barber. He passed away in April of 1988. Julius moved to Murtaugh, Idaho. He and Henry both married teachers from the Three Buttes School.

Martha and Fred Fehlhaber lived in Washington. Elsie Callewaert lived in Lewistown, and then with Norman and Evelyn Geary in Grassrange until her death. Edward Neumann died in 1942. Martha Neumann moved to Lewistown to stay with her daughter, Sarah. Martha died in 1954.



Mr. and Mrs. Edward Neumann and family (1916)



Henry Neumann with a sleigh of logs in 1928

OPITZ, Albert (Sec 31-18-25) Albert Opitz owned land approximately five miles north of Staff. He and his wife, Doris, lost their farm home to fire in the early 1930s. Albert was lighting a fire with crude oil.

After the fire they moved to an empty house on the Jack Duteau homestead (Sec 23-17-25). Mr. Duteau had built a fairly large house. It was about four miles south of the Opitz farm.

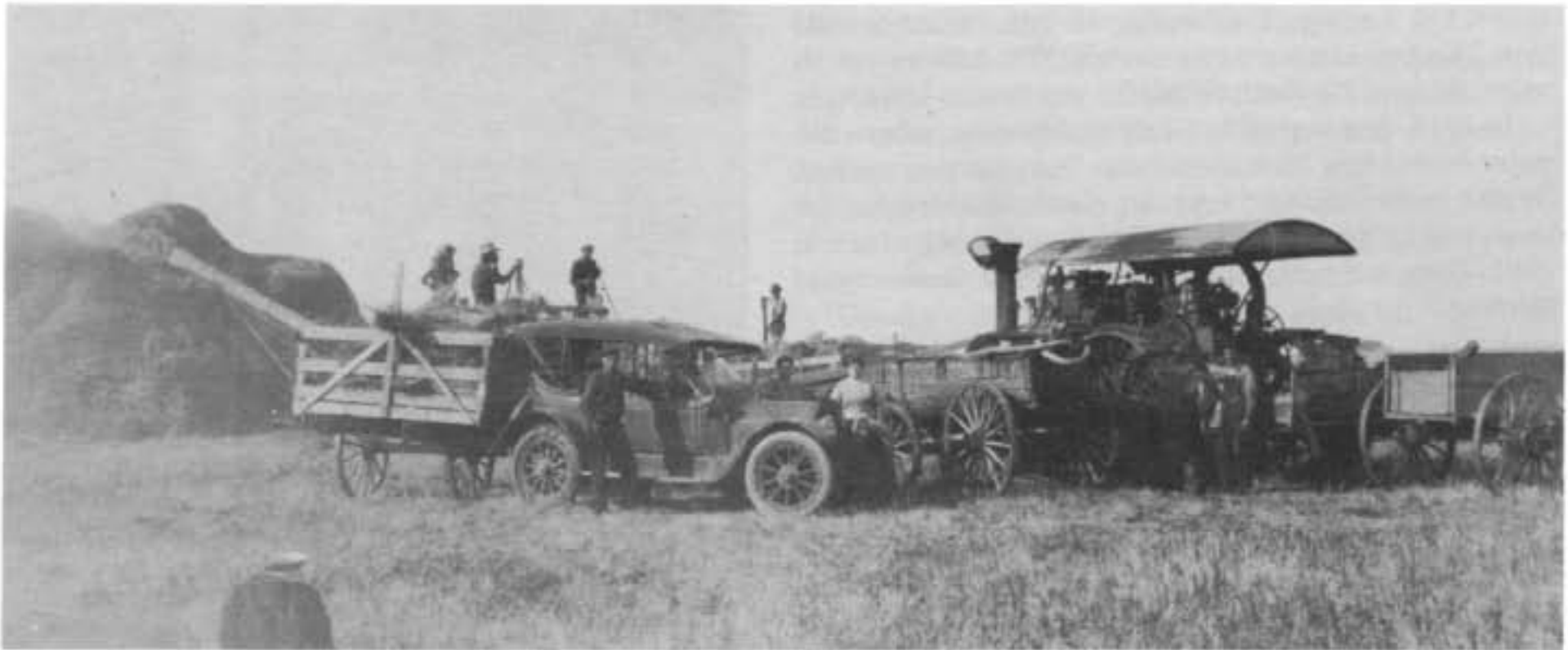
The Opitzes later moved to a ranch near Grassrange. (Submitted by Agnes Lindseth)

OSTERBERG, Ida (Sec 4-16-24) Miss Osterberg lived just west of Baldie Nelson. She was a nurse and was a well-liked woman.

Myrtle Fleharty quotes Miss Osterberg as remembering the Chicago hospital officials teaching "that there was nothing as good as soap and water for fighting germs."

After Ida moved back to Chicago, Jake Strait added her house to his own.

PEDERSON, Nellye B. and Clentine (Sec 28-16-24) Nellye Pederson was a nurse. Earl Bassett reported that she helped deliver him when he was born in 1917. Nellye never married and later moved to Missoula, Montana. Her homestead was located about two miles south of Bassett's place.



A threshing in the community

Clentine (Tena) Pederson homesteaded next to her sister, Nellye. Tena married Elliot (Olie) DeLap and moved to the Forest Grove, Montana, area around 1926-1927.

RANF, Frederick (Sec 24-16-26) Fred Ranf was born March 21, 1883. Marie Pollman was born August 13, 1886, in Boscabell, Wisconsin. In 1909 she moved with her parents to Harlowton, Montana, where, on October 14, 1914, she was married to Frederick Charles Ranf.

Following their marriage they filed on a homestead eight miles north of Winnett and five miles southeast of Edgewater.

While living there, five children were born — August, Frederick, Marie, Orval and John. The children attended local elementary schools.

In 1929 Fred went to work for the 56 Company in the North Oil field, where he was a tool dresser. With steady employment there, he held an auction sale on his ranch to dispense with farm equipment and household goods. However, he did not sell his real estate.

The family moved to Winnett. (See also RANF — Winnett)

REED, James (Sec 17-15-25) James (who may have been known as Thomas) and his wife came to Montana with their five sons in about 1912. Mr. Reed and two of the sons took up land about four miles north of Teigen along the Teigen-Blakeslee road. These homesteads were located in Sec 6,7-15-25 and Sec 31-16-25.

The sons were: Buell, Nova, Spencer, Ralph and Dean. The Reed Brothers operated two threshing rigs. They threshed grain for all of the other homesteaders in the large area.

Nova moved to Malta and worked for the A.S.C.S. Mr. Reed's homestead is now part of the Teigen Land and Livestock Company. The Reed Brothers' place belongs to Evert Brady. The Reeds are all deceased. None of the boys married. (See also REED — Teigen)

RIGGS, Cleveland "Cleve" as he was known, was born April 28, 1889, at Canyon Ferry, Montana. He was one of ten children of Mr. and Mrs. Lorenzo Riggs. He married Minnie Allumbaugh November 17, 1917, at Moore, Montana. She died in 1920.

Cleve came to Petroleum County in the 1920s or early 1930s and farmed on the Minnesota Bench. He was ditch rider for the Winnett Irrigation Company in the 1940s.

He retired in 1948 and moved into Winnett, living there until his death in January of 1962. Mrs. Edith Jewart was named as a survivor. He was buried in a Roundup, Montana, cemetery.

RODEKUHR, John John Rodekuhr was born on March 28, 1887, in Deer Creek, Minnesota. He married Fanny E. Horner on October 20, 1907. She was born on November 10, 1886, in Faribault, Minnesota.

The Rodekuhrs lived on the Minnesota Bench from 1911 to 1916, when they returned to Minnesota. Children born to John and Fanny were: Beatrice May, July 20, 1908; Homer Robert and Howard William, November 25, 1912; Ralph L., December 20, 1916; and Marian L., January 5, 1925, who married Emil Carl Freburg.

John and Fanny Rodekuhr homesteaded adjoining the Freburg homestead on the east. Marian Rodekuhr Freburg writes the following instance of her folks' homesteading at Blakeslee: "My mother, father and my sister, Beatrice, came to Blakeslee as homesteaders in 1911.

"My parents, together with several other homesteaders from Deer Creek, Minnesota, were lured to this area by glowing accounts of land opened up by the new federal government homesteading laws. They all packed up all their belongings. My parents brought their team of horses, Barney and King, on the same train. They all traveled together to the Minnesota Bench and put up buildings before the cold weather.

"The following year my mother was expecting a baby



Marian, Howard, Homer, Fanny, John, Beatrice and Ralph Rodekuhr

and, there being no prenatal care, she finally decided the due date was very near. My father hitched up Barney and King to the lumber wagon and they proceeded to Lewistown via Giltedge, staying overnight in Giltedge where pack rats nearly carried away their loose possessions.

"The next morning, November 25, 1912, they traveled on into Lewistown, arriving there shortly before the stores closed. They went downtown to purchase materials for diapers and other necessities. Then they went to stay with some friends who lived on the banks of Spring Creek. By 9:00 p.m. the same evening, twins, Homer and Howard, were born. The babies each weighed over eight pounds. The births occurred only four or five hours after my folks' arrival in Lewistown!

"Ten days later the Rodekuhrs, with their twin sons, returned to their homestead. It would seem to me a courageous act for a woman five feet two inches tall, weighing about one hundred thirty pounds to have even survived the seemingly primitive times and hardships of homesteading days. But she lived to be 17 days short of 89 years.

"The foregoing is only one of many stories my parents told of their life before I was born. It would seem they worked hard and played hard!!" The two younger children, Ralph and Marian, were born after Rodekuhrs returned to their home in Minnesota.

"Howard, who enjoyed this land of his birth, returned often for hunting trips. While on his last hunt, he passed away at the home of Don and Myrtle Fleharty.

ROWLAND, Nellie (Sec 20-17-24) See DEVINE, Wilson

ROWLAND, Russell (Sec 18-7-24) See DEVINE, Wilson

SELVIG, Hiram Hiram homesteaded in 1911. He lived north of the present Blakeslee schoolhouse with his mother. One half of his place is now owned by Lawrence Kruger and the other half, by Warner Kruger.

SHANKS, Henry (Sec 25-16-24) Henry lived on the former Smith place. There was a scary incident in the schoolhouse at a Christmas program and party when Henry was Santa Claus. While reaching over a lighted candle to pick up a doll, his beard caught on fire!!

SHAWHAN, Hugh L. (Sec 7-16-26) Hugh Shawhan was married. He did his farming with a large steam tractor.

SIPE, Harry F. and Karl B. (Sec 30-17-24) Harry F. and Karl B. Sipe both homesteaded west of the Blakeslee schoolhouse. They sold their land to the Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1929.

SKIBBY, Ed Ed Skibby bought the Forbes Leslie Ranch in the mid-1940s. Ed was an ardent supporter of high school athletics, especially basketball. He and his wife Edna were active in Masonic and Eastern Star activities. Ed served as a Petroleum County State Representative from 1948-52. Skibbys moved to Lewistown, Montana.

SMITH, William (Sec 25-16-24) Mrs. Smith and her daughter lived three miles south and east of the Blakeslee School. Visiting and Easter egg coloring was enjoyed at the Smith home. Bill had the first radio in the community.

When Smiths left the area, Henry Shanks lived on their farm. Bill became a mechanic in the Moore, Montana, area.

SOMMERFIELD, Dan (Sec 27-17-24) Dan Sommerfield owned land that joined Herman Kruger's place. The Sommerfield land is now owned by the Lawrence Krugers. (See also SOMMERFIELD — Winnett and GREENFIELD — Blakeslee)

SPOON, James (Sec 21-17-26) Jim Spoon homesteaded about three miles northeast of the Welter School. Jim had three sons — Roy, Walter and Glen; and one daughter, Elizabeth. Roy and his wife came later, but did not homestead. Walter and his wife came only to visit. Glen was younger and lived quite some time with his dad. Elizabeth was ill and came later, but passed away soon after coming to Montana. The Spoons all came from Pennsylvania.

There was very little tillable land on Jim's homestead. It was presumed that he raised some cattle. How a lot of these people survived is not known. Glen eventually married Elma Mutch. They lived with Jim for awhile, then moved to the Paul Johnson place. One summer they went to Washington to pick apples.

Roy lived around Winnett on different places, but finally moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, where he and his wife lived out their lives. Glen and Elma moved to Fairfield, Montana, with a lot of other resettlers. Later they moved to Westport, Washington, where Glen worked as a commercial fisherman. They had five children — Lorraine, Monte, Lloyd, Gary, and Marilyn. Glen is deceased. Elma lives at Issaquah, Washington. Walter and his wife also lived at Westport, Washington. They are both deceased. (Submitted by Agnes Lindseth)



Mabel, Ralph and Evelyn Strait

STRAIT, Jacob (Sec 33-17-24) Jake Strait homesteaded in 1912, just across the road and south of the Blakeslee School. They had four children — Mabel, Evelyn, Ralph and Hugh. Jake was one of the school's first trustees.

When the Blakeslee family moved away, Jake and his wife, Grace, ran the post office for several years. They were the last family to run the store in the area. Jake was a victim of the dreaded spotted tick fever. The Strait family later moved to the St. Ignatius, Montana, area. The homestead is now owned by Bob Fleharty.

SULLIVAN, Mary Mary Sullivan came from Minnesota with her grown children — John, Catherine and Mayme. They all homesteaded in the area. Soon after, John, who owned land in Sec 5-15-26, and his family returned to Minnesota.

Catherine married Jake Kelzer; Mayme married Frank Brug.

SWANSON Mr. Swanson homesteaded in 1912 on land east of Herman Kruger.

TAYLOR, William (Sec 8-16-26) Catherine Taylor Barr wrote her family's history: "A young man had a dream to come to America to make his fortune. He was also tired of the job of delivering milk to customers for his father, who was a dairy farmer. He was William Taylor, better known to his friends as 'Billy.' He was born at Tomchill Parish of New Deer County of Aberdeen, Scotland, on February 12, 1883. His father was James Taylor and his mother, Margaret Smith Taylor. He had five brothers and six sisters. He was the eldest son.

"Canada was the logical place to go, since Billy had cousins there. When he was in his early twenties, he and some of his friends sailed for the New World and adventure. In 1908 he came to Straw, Montana, where he had heard there was plenty of opportunity for ambitious young men.

"His first job was herding sheep for Forbes Leslie, a large sheep rancher who had several herds of sheep. Bill advanced from herder to camp tender for the herders,

and was kept busy keeping them in supplies and moving the camp wagons to new locations.

"Another job that he had at Straw was hauling supplies to the surveyors, who were working on the homestead plots. He spotted a nice piece of land and filed on it for himself. However, before he was able to prove up on it, he took seriously ill and landed in the hospital, one of the first patients in the then new hospital at Lewistown, Montana. Things worked out well for him in spite of being sick, because he had an opportunity to sell his homestead at a nice profit. He sold it and used the money to pay his hospital bills and put the rest into savings toward a trip back to Scotland.

"From Straw he went to Grassrange. This was about 1910. There was plenty of work there. The railroad was being surveyed, so he hauled supplies for the surveyors. The country was becoming settled and both the Great Northern and Milwaukee railroads were extending their services. The Milwaukee was building from Lewistown to Grassrange and then east to Winnett. The Great Northern, building from Lewistown to Hobson, Stanford, and Great Falls.

"More homestead sites were also being surveyed east of Grassrange, so Bill hauled supplies and helped the settlers however he could. While doing this, he found a spot to his liking next to the sheep ranch of his old friend, Forbes Leslie, who had moved there after selling out at Straw. Bill filed on the spot and later proved up on it, putting up a little one-room shack and building some fences. He now had a place to call home. He made a little extra cash showing prospective homesteaders where the available sites were located.

"While Bill was in Grassrange, he drove the stage between Grassrange and Lewistown. This was before the railroad went through. It was a two-day trip. Six horses pulled the stage. The Charters Hotel in Grassrange was his home base. Tina French worked there, and he used to



Bill and Katy Taylor

take her out once in a while.

"In the fall of 1910, he found he had enough money saved so that he could return to Scotland for a visit. A couple of his friends went with him. They had a great time visiting with families and renewing old acquaintances. It was while Bill was at a ball that he met the girl that he decided he wanted for his wife, namely Catherine Gray, the daughter of Thomas Gray and Catherine Yule Gray. She had one brother and one sister.

"He courted her, entertained her, and one day at 'high tea' in her home (and before asking her), he asked her parents if they would be willing to let her go with him as his wife. Since there were no objections, the young couple became engaged. This was in the spring of 1911 and it was time for Billy to return to Montana. On his way back, he took time to look for a ring. He found one, a Montana sapphire, in Aberdeen, and mailed it to Catherine from there.

"His younger brother, John, came with Bill and his friend, Billy Cameron, back to Grassrange. There was work to be done to be ready for the arrival of his bride-to-be.

"He and his brother, John, went down to the bad lands where they cut trees and had them sawed into lumber. They hauled the lumber back to the homestead and built an addition to the homestead shack that Bill called home.

"To earn necessary funds, he worked for his friend Forbes Leslie. They built a big barn at Leslies. Bill was again the dray-man, hauling the lumber for it. It was while hauling lumber that he nearly lost his life. He was crossing Box Elder Creek when his lead team jack-knifed. One horse went down and before Bill could get it free, it drowned. Bill thought he was going to be drowned, too, before he was able to get the rest of the struggling horses loose and out of the creek. The little creek didn't have much water in it, except in the spring or during a cloudburst — then it would run bank full. It was during one of these high-water times that they were hauling the lumber.

"In the meantime, Catherine Gray was busy getting her trousseau together in preparation for going to America to be married. She learned from her future mother-in-law of another young couple, a Mr. and Mrs. George Mutch, who were newly married and were to be going to America to Lewistown, Montana. Arrangements were made so that she could go with them. Plans were that they would sail from Liverpool, England, on the new ship, the Titanic. Circumstances changed their plans, and they sailed for America from Glasgow, Scotland, instead. They were very shaken when they learned the Titanic had hit an iceberg and gone down!

"During the trip, Billy's future bride learned that the Mutches knew the people that she was to stay with in Lewistown (Mr. and Mrs. Bob Gray). She also learned that George Mutch had taken a homestead at Welter, a stage stop, which later became a post office and was not too far from where her home was to be.

"Bill was to meet his fiance in Harlowton, but he wasn't

there, so she rode the 'jaw-bone' to Lewistown. Such a long tiresome ride it was. She was sure he would be at the depot in Lewistown, but instead, his friend, Billy Cameron, met her. When they got to the Gray's home, there was Bill standing on the porch waiting for them. It seems there had been a severe rainstorm and the roads were terribly muddy and the going was unusually slow. He was still soaking wet when he got to the Grays.

"Catherine learned, to her surprise, that Bob Gray was a second cousin of hers. They lived on Spring Street in a house that still stands, the second one above the tracks on the north side of the street.

"The young couple were invited to another Scotch friend's, the Mr. and Mrs. Bill Gowans, for dinner. They enjoyed a fine meal and visit and later took a drive around the town. The streets were terrible — muddy and full of ruts. She was silent a while and then asked Billy, 'Are you ashamed of me, or why are we taking all the back streets?' He said, 'My dear, this is Main Street.'

"They were married at Grays' house on April 13, 1912, by the Rev. Jacob Mills. Their witnesses were Mrs. George Mutch and Billy Cameron, who stood in for Bill's brother, John, who couldn't make it to the wedding.

"It was a two-day's drive in the buggy to get from Lewistown to their home. They were overnight guests of Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Wiseman at Grassrange. They stopped for a break at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Al James after leaving Grassrange. Just before they came in sight of the house, Bill teased his very tired bride, 'What are you going to do, I don't have any place to put you.' Then they came insight of the wooden house — three rooms, kitchen, bedroom, and front room. Mrs. Mutch's first house was a sod house, so the new Mrs. Taylor felt very lucky.

"Bill plowed his fields with horses hitched to a plow. It took four horses to pull it. He planted grain and hay. He worked for Mr. Leslie part time, helping with the sheep-shearing and lambing. Mr. Leslie gave Mrs. Taylor some of the bum lambs to raise by bottle. They had some chickens, pigs, cows, and a team of horses and a big stallion, named Colonel. Billy was pretty proud of his stallion and made some money off of him for stud fees.

"There were several young couples from Scotland on homesteads around the Taylors. They would get together on Bobby Burns' birthdays and have celebrations that would last until the wee hours of the mornings. There was no radio or TV at that time, but plenty of home-made entertainment, box socials, Halloween parties, picnics, masquerades, dances, and visiting of neighbors.

"In November of 1913, a daughter came to live with the young couple. Bill took his wife to Lewistown in September, so that she would be near a doctor when the baby came. He found a job with the Lewistown lumber company, hauling lumber, and spent time studying to take out his citizen's papers. He passed his examination and received his naturalization papers dated December 29, 1913. It was noted on the certificate that it was the 138th year of our independence.



Bill and Katy Taylor's homestead

"Going back home, they rode on the new railroad as far as Grassrange. They were to stay at the hotel overnight. It was so crowded that there were no beds left, so they opted to sleep on the floor. A lamp was left burning all night to keep others from stepping on the ones who were sleeping on the floor. The next day they went on home in their buggy.

"In January of 1916, a boy was born at the homestead. Mrs. Taylor decided that since all of her neighbors had their babies at home, she would have this one at home also. A midwife came to stay with them to be there when the baby came. Mrs. Taylor didn't know she was going to have such a difficult time. It caused her to have surgery a few years later. The baby was a big boy and they named him Robert William, after an uncle who was killed in the World War and for his daddy and grandfather. His sister had been named Catherine Margaret after her mama and two grandmothers.

"The little family struggled along. Catherine wasn't too well and finally the children were taken to the Leslie home to stay with the cook, Mrs. Safely, while Bill and Katie went with the Leslies to Mammoth Hot Springs, where there was a Dr. Townsend who later operated on Katie. When she recovered she was able to return home to her family, who were glad to have her back. The Great War was going on and things became scarce and hard to get. They ate a lot of beans and cornmeal. Wild game was plentiful and often there was sage hen, prairie chicken, or cottontail rabbit for dinner.

"In the early 1920s the oil field at Cat Creek struck oil. In a short time the town of Winnett boomed. The Taylors went with Mr. Leslie in his new car to see the oil fields. While they were there, a big gusher came in, spewing black oil higher than the derrick.

"They had a good garden spot at the homestead. The weather was such that they could grow most any type of garden produce. One year was better than average. There were buckets of nice peas, so Katie decided to can some. They carefully processed them and Bill tightened the lids. They were stored in the root cellar, but one day

when Katie went to the cellar for something, the peas were all over. The jars had exploded. After that they dried the peas. They also had a wagon load of watermelons. Billy took them to Winnett to see if he could sell some. Everyone had melons that year, so no sales. He gave some away and brought the rest home to feed to the chickens and pigs.

"The Indians came through the homestead on their way from the Fort Belknap reservation to the Crow reservation. One day a buggy load of them stopped while Katie was in the garden. They pointed to the melons and one Indian lady was very insistent that she should have one particular one off the vine. Katie tried to explain to her that they weren't watermelons, but citron. Nothing would do but that she have it, so Katie gave it to her. The Indian broke it on the buggy wheel and with a look of disgust when she saw it said, 'Heap & \$86 no good.' She got back into the buggy and they drove off.

"The next problem facing the young family was getting the children educated. The nearest school was at Welter, ten or twelve miles away. The neighbors got together and each contributed enough money to hire a teacher to come and teach school for three months. All the children of the neighborhood from ages five to nine were enrolled in the first grade. The teacher stayed with different families a week at a time at no cost, and an abandoned homestead house was used for the school building. The next year the neighbors got together, hauled the lumber, and built a one-room school on the school section and again raised enough money among them to hire a teacher for three months. The next teacher, a Miss Ruth Omland, started staying at the different families, then asked if she could stay the rest of the time with the Taylors. She helped with the work for her room and board and she and Katie became close friends. When she went to teach another three months at the Wild Horse School near Teigen, she took little Catherine with her for an additional three months — making a total of six months of school in the second grade.

"Ruth Omland later married Frank Connolly, who owned the lumber yard in the town of Kolin in the Judith Basin. Connollys learned of a ranch just north of Kolin that was to be up for sale. They talked the Taylors into looking at it. After looking it over and deciding that the 160-acres in the Welter country wasn't enough on which to make a living, that school was a necessity and a problem, and that the family needed a larger house, the Taylors plunged and signed to buy the ranch. Mr. Leslie bought their homestead and they held an auction to dispose of the things they didn't want to move to Kolin.

"In coming to America to seek his fortune, Bill Taylor was not famous in any way, but he had had an active part in the development of the Central Montana area. He came to a virgin country, saw — and helped it become — settled. He lived during an era of fast changing methods of travel and communications — from horse-drawn vehicles to jet planes, from stage-carried mail to televi-

sion. He had his first ride in a Ford plane that was giving rides at a Moccasin Experiment Station Field Day. Katie had her first plane ride on a 747-jet to Los Angeles in 1974.

"Kate Taylor died on December 7, 1979, after being confined in the Central Montana Hospital Nursing Home for two years, as the result of a bad burn she received trying to take a bath.

"At this writing (1988) their descendants include: their daughter, their son, five grandsons, two granddaughters, five great-grandsons, and eight great-granddaughters. One grandson, Philip, son of Catherine, died in 1971, as a result of a service-connected disability."

THOMAS, Alfred Alfred "Allie" and Charlotte "Lottie" Thomas homesteaded one-fourth mile west of the present Blakeslee School in 1912. They are remembered as having the first horn and earphone radio in the area. Many people gathered there to listen.

In 1915 Allie helped Charlie McBroom build the Three Buttes School, which was across from the Neumann buildings. In 1916 they built the Blakeslee School.

Allie Thomas bought the Charles Blakeslee place. Eventually the Thomas family moved to Iowa, from whence they came. Myrtle Fleharty remembers one Halloween in the Blakeslee community when the Thomas boys put the buggy on their parents' house, harnessed the Freburg cow, and put Freburgs' wagon in the pond!

Their sons were Orval (1903) and Marvin (1905).



Henry Hedman, Orval Thomas, Lawrence Kruger, Warner Kruger, Melvin Kruger

THOMAS, James W. (Sec 22-17-26) James W. Thomas, who farmed about five miles east of Welter, ended his own life by taking strychnine and then shooting himself. This rash act was due to his brooding over what was probably tough financial conditions.

THORSHEIM, Bert Bert Thorsheim married Mary Gladys Mead who had homesteaded near her parents in Sec 8-17-26. After their marriage, Gladys also proved up on a piece of adjoining property in Sec 9-17-26. Later



Gladys and Bert Thorsheim

Bert and Gladys bought land on Box Elder Creek where they lived until the 1940s when they sold to Alex Weingart.

Bert and Gladys had two daughters — Margaret and Roberta. They attended the local community elementary schools, and Roberta graduated from Winnett High School in 1937. The Thorsheims made up a popular dance band. Margaret played the piano. Roberta played the violin with her left hand, and Bert played the drums. They were all accomplished musicians, and their music was much in demand.

Margaret was a teacher and county superintendent of schools. (See also THORSHEIM — Winnett) She married Ralph Saylor. (See also SAYLOR — Winnett) Roberta married Lyle Eike. (See also EIKE — Cat Creek)

TURKS, M. N. (W. T. 6-10-21) "Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Turks, who live on the Porter place north of Winnett, were presented with a baby boy last Saturday morning. Dr. Alexander reports that all is well."

WALKER, Willis (Sec 20-16-25) Willis Fee Walker was born in Philadelphia, Missouri, on September 19, 1888. Laura Catherine Hottenstein was born in Maquoketa, Iowa, on July 17, 1887.

Laura Hottenstein and Willis Walker were married on December 25, 1911, at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Penrose S. Hottenstein, near Anabel, Missouri. After a week's honeymoon, the couple settled down on Laura's uncle's ranch near Anabel, where Willis worked and Laura continued her teaching.

In March of 1914 the couple moved to Montana and resided eight miles southeast of Moore, Montana, until 1915 when they homesteaded north of Teigen. Their place was to be known as the Walker Ranch. Penrose was born in 1918 at Grassrange, Montana. The Walkers continued to live at the ranch until 1919, when they moved back to the Hottenstein Ranch southeast of Moore. They also lived on the Clark place in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains, the McConnell place, and the Jones place.

Earl was born in Moore. Laura continued to teach at



Laura Walker

various county schools. Willis continued to do ranch work.

In the spring of 1928 the Walker family returned to their Blakeslee homestead. It was a trip of about six days. The move was made by teams of horses and wagons. The family ate and slept under the stars as they moved. Penrose, age 10, and Earl, age 8, drove cattle under the watchful eye of Willis.

Walkers raised sheep and cattle, and all the farming was done by horse-drawn equipment. In 1940 they began adding more land to the homestead. It grew to 4280 deeded acres. Some of the land was farmed and the rest grazed. In 1946, when Earl returned from the service in World War II, Walkers bought their first tractor. However, they continued using horses at the same time for much of the work.

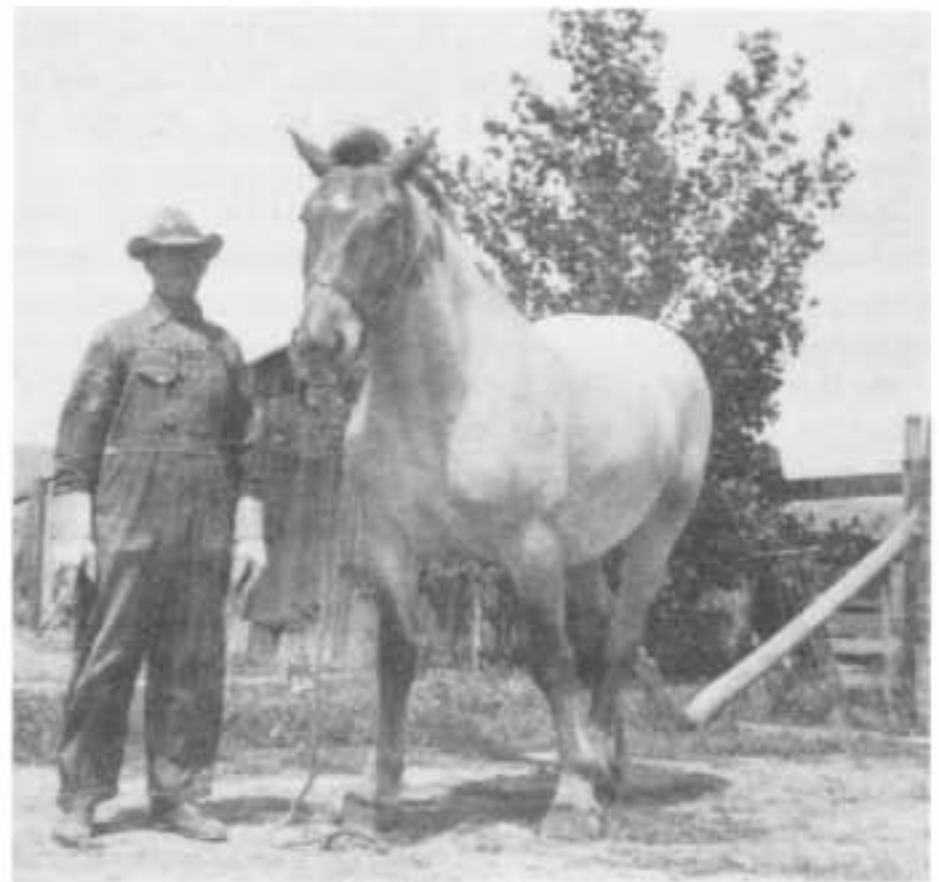
Walkers' nearest neighbors were the Beedies, the Reeds, Andy Eckland, and Raphael Martino.

Laura was educated in Iowa and loved teaching. She taught eleven years in Missouri and twenty-nine in Petroleum, Golden Valley and Fergus Counties in Montana. (See also KRUGER, Warner)

Some of the schools she taught were Dovetail, Wildrose, Long, Blakeslee and Lavina. For several years she was matron of the dorm in Winnett. She also was Winnett Postmaster in 1945. Laura was a Gold Star sister. Her brother, Lonnie, was killed just a few days before the end of World War I.

Willis spent most of his lifetime ranching, and working with horses, which he dearly loved. He was happiest when he was teaching his two sons, Penrose and Earl, all the skills he knew. He and Laura instilled in their boys honesty, love of family and neighbors, kindness and hard work. Their home was always open to friends and strangers alike.

Willis lived his life on the land, except for a short period of time when he helped build a section of the Jordan road with a team of horses. One winter he worked on the section gang of the railroad. In July 1971 Willis died of a



Willis Walker

heart attack at the ranch. He is buried in the family plot at Moore, Montana.

Laura remained at her ranch home until the last four months of her life, passing away on October 10, 1974. She is buried next to her husband at Moore.

Penrose spent the young part of his life at the ranch, but his love of machinery and heavy equipment led him to do construction work spring and summer. He still continued to help with the ranch repairs, calving, branding and with the farming. By his first marriage, he has a daughter, Penny, who lives in Helena, Montana, with her husband.

Penny and Ken have four sons, and Ken has a son who lives in Anaheim, California. In 1958 Penrose married Joan LaChambre Minnerly, and acquired three step-children. After thirteen years of working in Colstrip, Montana, as a dragline operator, he retired to Lewistown in 1983.

Earl was never married, and except for his service in the Army, he lived his entire life at the ranch. He was always willing to give a helping hand to all his friends. Earl died in May of 1975.

In January of 1987 the ranch was sold to Bob and Pat Weingart, ending seventy-one years of ownership by the Walker family.

WARDLE, Charles Charlie and Mrs. Wardle lived on the "Davis" place, later owned by Thorsheims. It is really not known where they came from, but Mrs. Wardle had been married previous to her marriage to Mr. Wardle. A boy, Ivan Darnell, lived with them. He attended the Box Elder School.

The Wardles were good "down to earth" people and took part in community affairs. When they left, they went to Seattle, Washington. Mrs. Wardle corresponded for some time with her neighbors at Welter. (Submitted by Agnes Lindseth)

WARE, Harold Harold Ware and his mother moved to the Welter community in the late 1920s. They came from the Roy area. They moved onto a place previously owned by Jennie Meserve and her family. Shortly after the Wares moved to Welter, a widow lady, Valura Alexander, and her two daughters, Lula and Blanch, came to live with the Wares. Valura cooked part time for Forbes Leslie.

Lula and Blanch both attended the Welter School for a number of years. Harold married Valura. The Wares and Alexanders lived at Welter about ten years. Harold was a good farmer but the ravages of nature forced them to leave. During the dry years Harold, Valura and Mrs. Ware moved to St. Ignatius, Montana.

Lula married Ed Potterf at Roy. Blanch married Ted Wadman, and they lived at Cut Bank, Montana. Ted passed away in 1987. Both Lula and Ed are buried in Lewistown, and Ted is buried in Cut Bank. Harold, Valura and Mrs. Ware (Harold's mother) are all buried at St. Ignatius.

The Wares were good neighbors and Valura was a good cook. They didn't entertain much, but if anyone passed by at mealtime, they were given a good meal.

Lula didn't have any children. Blanch had three. One son, Bill Wadman, lives in Cut Bank; one son, Douglas, married Mary Eager of Winnett; a daughter lives in Wyoming.

Doris Opitz was Harold Ware's sister. The Opitz family lived at Staff. (Submitted by Agnes Lindseth)

(See also EAGER — Winnett, OPITZ — Blakeslee, WARE — Dovetail)

WEINGART, Gerald (See WEINGART — Dovetail)

WELTER, Nicholas (Sec 24.25-17-28) Nick and Rachel Welter came to their homestead from Lewistown. They had five children — Bill, Lucille, Katy, Florence, and Margaret. Nick operated the post office that was named after him. Everyone soon found out they had to have a supplement to their income. Some were fortunate to get a mail route, to work for sheep ranchers, or to do road



Mrs. Welter, Gladys Thorsheim, Mary Kratochvil, Katie Welter Learn; Jean Leslie, Mrs. Kelly, Mrs. George Mead, Mrs. Mutch, Mrs. Colver, Mrs. Wardle, Ella Marshall, Mrs. Lias, Mrs. McEneaney, Alice McEneaney, Margaret Thorsheim, Donna Marshall, Roberta Thorsheim, Evelyn Marshall, unknown

work. It was a hard life for some who had no other income besides farming.

After Mr. Welter died in 1926, Mrs. Welter and Margaret moved to Grassrange. Rachel cooked at the N Bar and on various other ranches and restaurants. She was remembered as a fine cook. She was also a practical nurse. Katy married Arthur Learn. Florence married Cecil Kauth. Lucille went to California. Bill later married Vi Sinclair and lived many years at Petrolia. To my knowledge, the Welters are all alive except Bill. Florence lives in Lewistown and Margaret in Washington. (Submitted by Agnes Lindseth) (See also WELTER — Petrolia; KAUTH — Winnett)

WILKE, William (Sec 23-17-24) The William Wilke family came to homestead in the early days northeast of the Blakeslee schoolhouse, along the rimrocks. When they came, they brought a large steam engine along with their other possessions. A bridge had to be built across Box Elder Creek in order to get the engine to their home.

The Wilkes had a good spring on their property which they shared with their neighbors in the early years until it began to dwindle. Then people in the area had to haul water from the Mike Delaney Ranch.

The Wilkes had three children — Paul, Anna and one younger daughter.

WILSON, Randall (Sec 10-16-25) Mr. and Mrs. Randall Wilson homesteaded on Fords Creek south of Wild Horse Lake. (W. T. 7-4-24) "On June 30, 1924, Miss Pearl Wilson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Randall Wilson, was married to Ed Wiggins. They were married in Roundup and were accompanied there by Mrs. Randall Wilson and Miss Mable Wilson, sister of the bride, and Mr. L. Cejka.

"Both young folks grew up in the Winnett community. They planned to make their home on the ranch of the groom's brother."

Mrs. Randall Wilson was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Moulton. (See also MOULTON — Blakeslee; WIGGINS — Flatwillow)

WIRZFELD, Pierce, Lillian and Nick (Sec 28-17-24) In 1910 Pete and Nick Wirzfeld homesteaded just south of what would be the Blakeslee schoolhouse. Before the present schoolhouse was built, school was held in Pete's tar paper shack. Wirzfelds were related to the Rodekuhrs.

WOODARD, Asa (See DEVINE, Wilson — Blakeslee)

YEAGER, A. O. (W. T. 7-3-31) "A. O. Yeager of St. Paul, Minnesota, visited at the Dan Sommerfield home in Winnett. Mr. Yeager homesteaded on the Minnesota Bench. In 1915 he sold out and returned to St. Paul, where he is supervisor of all public schools.

"This is his first visit back here. He had visited his daughter, Mrs. Roy Greenfield, at Anaconda, Montana, and stopped over for a short visit with his old friend and neighbor, Dan Sommerfield."



A group of Staff community people. From left: "Ben" Fuhs, Lucy Lewis, Mrs. Lias (with hat), Helen Fuhs, Mrs. Mutch (with hat), Annie Leslie, Ella Marshall (behind Marvin Lewis Jr.); Next row: Evelyn Lewis, Evelyn Marshall, Donna Marshall, Marvin Lewis Jr., Billy Marshall, Floyd Lewis, Lester Lewis; In center: Helen Leslie, Burney Marshall; Four in front are: Harry Fuhs, Martin Mutch, Bob Lewis, and Mary Leslie