

SMITH, Earl (Sec 25-15-28) Earl Smith was born in Belgrade, Montana, in 1893. He came to the Jitney area in 1914 and homesteaded on Gorman Coulee. His wife, Editha Parsons, was born in 1895 in Wisconsin. They were married in 1913. Editha's parents, James and Fidelia Parsons, homesteaded about two miles south of the Smith homestead in 1916.

The Smiths had one daughter, Dorothy. She attended the Cat Creek, Follette, and Winnett schools and graduated from Winnett High School in 1934.

In 1928 the Jitney Post Office was moved from the Ernest Hoermann home to the Smith home. Editha was postmaster until the post office closed in 1934.

Earl Smith served on the District #159 school board in 1930. After the family left the homestead, Earl and Hartley Lambert operated a well-servicing rig.

Dorothy married Merle Baldwin and they have lived on the same farm in Fairfield, Montana, for many years.

SNYDER, Melvin Melvin and Della Snyder were living at the Charles Camp in 1921 when School District #198 was formed. The following children were listed on the school census — Thelma (1908), Ruth and Ruby (twins born in 1911), Henry (1915) and Glen (1919). (See also SNYDER — Ashley)

The Snyders moved from the Charles Camp on the river to the main Cat Creek camp east of the 56 holding in 1923. Melvin ran the school bus and they sold milk until they moved to western Montana in 1926.

SONTAG, L. F. "Lou" Sontag came to Cat Creek in the summer of 1920 from Elk Basin, Wyoming, where he was a pipe line superintendent. He was lured to Cat Creek by a better offer from the Homestake Oil company. In September 1921 he became field superintendent for Frantz Oil Corporation and Elk Basin Consolidated. He was instrumental in building the four-inch oil line from Cat Creek to Winnett for the Elk Basin Oil Company.

Mr. Sontag was obviously a very controversial man. He became the general superintendent for the Mutual Oil Company in Cat Creek but resigned in March 1924. The *Lewistown Democrat News* printed a caustic article concerning his resignation saying, in part, "It is said of him (Mr. Sontag) that he was a very good man in his line but was very unfortunate in his ability to handle men and that he probably had less friends among the men under him than any man who ever had charge in Cat Creek."

Mr. Sontag eventually settled in Great Falls, Montana, where he built a lovely home with a conservatory which he turned into a commercial floral shop in 1935. He sold his florist business in 1939.

SORENSEN, Ted Ted Sorenson and his bride were charivariated by the Cat Creek community in August 1938. Ted was an employee of the Homestake Oil Company when the company was sold to Continental Oil.

SPAULDING, Arthur J. (Sec 6-15-29) Arthur Spaulding was married to Minnie Guhrt. (See also GUHRT) She died shortly after the birth of their first child.

Her sister Emma cared for the baby. (See also GUHRT — Ashley)

Art's homestead was in the area of the California Oil Camp which was never a large production area. The *Helena Independent* ran a front page article on the newly discovered oil in Cat Creek on November 14, 1920. The following is quoted:

"Using Arthur Spaulding, homesteader, as an example, some idea is to be gained of what oil lands are worth today in the Cat Creek district. A year ago when his crop failed Spaulding had a shack and a fairly good outfit for an eastern Montana farmer. He offered to sell the land — 320 acres and his complete outfit for \$1500.

"Today Spaulding has received \$25,000 for leases and his royalties by Christmas will be equal to about the same amount. He bought a fine home in Lewistown, a big automobile, and has fitted up an office in the Montana Building where he will collect his royalties, sell some more and, if he uses a bit of thrift, he is a wealthy man instead of a poor homesteader."

All of these dreams did not come true. In 1929 Arthur was managing a service station in Winnett. (See also SPAULDING — Winnett)

SPENCER, Dyrll Dyrll Spencer and his wife and son, Terry, came to the area from Cody, Wyoming, in the fall of 1945. The Spencer and Livingston Drilling Company contracted to drill a test well for Dave Schrock on the Fifer lease. The *Winnett Times* (10-11-45) reported the following news on this well.

"Spencer and Livingston of Cody, Wyoming, credited with drilling in the first producing well in the Ellis sand in the Mosby dome section of the Cat Creek oil field, completed the drilling with only a light portable rig mounted on a truck chassis.

"Skillful handling of the equipment, not designed to drill deep wells, added considerably to the spectacular news of the discovery.

"Previous drillings of tests to the Ellis sand were frustrated by the flow of 10,000-barrel water sands above the Ellis. The drilling contractors successfully mudded off the water, but the pressure produced by the oil discovered in the Ellis washed out the mud, and for a time threatened to ruin the well. Quick work in running casing and a cement job saved the well by only a matter of one or two hours.

"Reaching the pay horizon, Spencer and Livingston stayed on the job for more than 72 hours straight to complete the well, taking no rest until the well was safely cemented."

Spencer and Livingston drilled a second well near the Fifer lease for Brindley and Murphy. (See also LIVINGSTON) In 1948 the Spencers moved to Lewistown, Montana.

SPETH, Carl Carl Speth was a veteran of World War I. He and his brother Mike came to Cat Creek to work in the oil field in the early 1920s. They often played for dances in the community. Mike did not stay in the oil field but

became a barber in Yakima, Washington.

Carl worked in Cat Creek for more than 35 years. He never married. He retired to Lewistown, Montana, where he died in 1974.

STEWART, Virgil E. Virgil Stewart was clerk of the school district when District #198 was formed in 1921. (See also STEWART — Winnett)

STONE, Benjamin (Sec 22.23-15-28) Benjamin Stone was born in 1889 in Illinois. He homesteaded several miles south of Shay and was a veteran of World War I. He went to work in the oil field in Cat Creek in the early 1920s. Ferne Gardner came to Cat Creek as a teacher in 1925. She and Ben were married in 1926. They were active enthusiastic members of the community. The Winnett Times stated that they were the proud owners of a new 1935 Pontiac Straight 8 car in March of 1935.

Ben worked for Continental Oil Company until 1949 when he retired and moved to Billings where they purchased a small farm. In 1960 the couple moved to Mesa, Arizona. Ben died there in 1981.

Mrs. Stone wrote a fine article for the Winnett Times in 1942 about the history of Cat Creek oil field. It is a valuable resource and is available in the Petroleum County Community Library.

STORY, Lorren Fay Lorren Fay Story was the son of Fred and Ruby Story. (See also STORY — Winnett) He married Bernice Bauer in 1941. (See also BAUER — Brush Creek) The couple had three boys — Larry (1942), Jerry (1944) and Alan (1946). The family moved to Cat Creek in January 1946 where Fay worked for the Continental Oil Company. He was transferred to Melstone, Montana, and later to Dickinson, North Dakota.

STORY, Percy Percy Story homesteaded southwest of Winnett. (See also STORY — Teigen) In the 1930s the Storys moved to Cat Creek where Percy had charge of the Hover-Schwartz operation in the West Dome.

The couple moved to Texas in 1942 where they grew citrus fruit for seven years before retiring to Grand Junction, Colorado. The Storys celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in September 1973. Percy died in 1975. Ethel is living in a nursing home in Grand Junction, Colorado (1988).



Mr. and Mrs. Percy Story

STOUFFER, Dent F. Dent Stouffer came to Montana with his parents, Bert and Betty Stouffer, who homesteaded in the Yellow Water area. (See STOUFFER — Flatwillow) Dent worked in Cat Creek in its early years. He married Ada Town in 1928. (See TOWN — Musselshell River) The Winnett Times reported their wedding.

"Miss Ada Town, the popular and efficient county superintendent of schools in Petroleum County was married Saturday June 23rd to D. F. Stouffer of Cat Creek. The marriage took place in Billings at the Presbyterian parsonage. Mr. Stouffer is warehouse superintendent at the Frantz camp and is one of the most popular young men in the Cat Creek field. The newlyweds left immediately on a honeymoon trip through Yellowstone Park after which they will return to Winnett."

The couple was feted with a charivari in honor of them and the James Coxes who were also recent newlyweds.

In May 1931 Dent was transferred by Continental Oil Company to its Ft. Collins office. In 1938 when Mrs. Stouffer returned for a visit, the couple had four children.

TAYLOR, Ike Ike Taylor did not live in Cat Creek but his drilling activity during the second oil boom in 1945-1946 was important to the area. The Winnett Times reported on October 25, 1945, on Mr. Taylor's first drilling contracts in the area.

"A four-well contract has been let to Taylor Drilling Company of Centralia, Illinois, on the R. M. Fifer tract, the farm on which the Ellis sand discovery well was brought in on the 5th of this month.

"Taylor Drilling Company is headed by Ike Taylor, president, and for the past several months has had two rotary rigs in northern Montana drilling wells for the Texas Oil Company. Their rotary rig is being erected over location of Schrock-Fifer No. 2, 660 feet southeast of the discovery well. It is estimated this large rotary will complete a well every two weeks, weather permitting." (For further information concerning the speed of the Taylor drilling operation, see the introduction to the Cat Creek oil field.)

Ike moved to Montana and set up his headquarters in Lewistown, Montana. He drilled many wells in central Montana. He was appointed to the Montana Oil and Gas Commission by Governor J. Hugo Aronson. Ike is quoted as saying at that time, "I got into the oil business in 1917 and I didn't know much about it except that it was expensive if you didn't get oil. That is about all I know for sure about it now after 42 years of it!"

Mr. Taylor died in 1962.

THOMAS, Israel Edward (Sec 3-15-28) "I. E." Thomas was born in 1864 in Indiana. He married Flora Harshbarger in 1881 and the couple had two sons, one of whom died in infancy. Sylva, born in 1896, journeyed to Montana with his parents in 1910. (See also CAT CREEK - Introduction)

Sylva served in World War I and returned to the family farm. In 1929 he died following an appendectomy and was buried with military honors in the Shay cemetery. His



Mr. I. E. Thomas, one of Cat Creek Basin's oldest settlers

mother, Flora, had died shortly before, leaving Mr. Thomas grief stricken. He made arrangements to sell his property in November 1929, and returned to Kokomo, Indiana to make his home with his sister.

In a letter to the editor of the *Winnett Times* in 1930 he reported, "Times are very dull here with factories either shut down or running one-half to one-quarter capacity. Prices here in Kokomo are as follows: Wheat, 73 cents; Corn 85 cents; Oats, 30 cents; Potatoes, \$1.00; Hogs, per cwt., \$7.85; Eggs, 30 cents; and Butterfat, 30 cents."

I. E. Thomas died in 1944 and was buried with his wife and son in the Shay Cemetery.

THOMPSON, Oscar A. (Sec 11-19-27) Oscar Thompson came to Montana at age 16 from Fish Creek, Wisconsin. He worked near Roy, Montana, and homesteaded west of Valentine before working in the oil fields at Cat Creek. He married Maude Peters on August 27, 1927. (See also PETERS — Musselshell River) The couple made their home in Cat Creek where Oscar worked for Continental Oil Company. He was transferred to Kevin, Montana, and later (in 1941) to Kansas. He also worked in Lance Creek, Wyoming, for Continental. When Oscar retired in 1956 he was superintendent for the Rocky Mountain Division of Continental Oil Company.

Oscar and Maude had two daughters — Patricia (1928) and Estella.

THOMPSON, Ross Ross Thompson was one of the first teamsters in Cat Creek. He married Mildred Callahan in 1924.

THOMSON, Oscar (Sec 19.30-15-29) Oscar homesteaded about three miles southwest of Cat Creek. The following article was submitted by his daughter, Ida Nielsen of Uvalde, Texas:

"My father, Oscar S. Thomson, and his family arrived in the United States from Sarpsborg, Norway, in 1887 when he was twelve years old. Growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he became a skilled house painter and worked in Chicago where he met and, in March 1912, married my

mother, Mary Belle Moore, nee Moren, of London, Kentucky.

"Not a farmer, but lured by the opportunity to acquire land and work and hope for an independent, prosperous future, he came to Montana that same year to homestead on 320 acres near Winnett, bringing my mother and her five-year-old daughter by a previous marriage (Elizabeth).

"In October 1913 my mother returned to Chicago for my birth where hospital facilities were available and where she could stay with friends until I decided to see what this world was all about. Three weeks after my decision she brought me back to Winnett.

"I never learned how the homestead was developed or what crops, if any, were raised, but there was no income from it so my father went back to Chicago to work and, to 'prove out' the homestead, mother stayed, alone with her two small children in our two-room house on the prairie. Dad had rented a wagon and team of horses to haul lumber from Lewistown the same day they first arrived and built the house himself, so we at least had shelter, especially needed during the long winters when, as mother recalled, the temperature could drop to 45 degrees below. We also had a good well and an outdoor cellar to store vegetables from our garden which Mother watered, plant by plant, under the dry summer sky.

"Our nearest neighbors were Henry Coxon and his cousin, Nellie Ashley, also homesteading on the adjoining half-section. They lived in a dugout sod house, one big room dug into the side of small hill, rather dark, with a dirt floor, walls and roof, but which struck me as a very practical, 'climate-proof' arrangement. In 1939 my husband and I went to my old home place, driving through a storm of grasshoppers that clogged the cars's radiator and covered the roads, and visited with the Coxons. They were still living in the sod house but ours had collapsed into a pile of lumber, a sad ending to high hopes.

"Dad was convinced there was oil in the vicinity, having been told by a geologist that the area around us was located at an anticline where oil might be found, and there was some oil activity already going on there, so having given up on realizing anything from the land itself, he hoped that what perhaps lay underneath it might be far more productive. An excerpt from one of his letters reads, 'When I was out here we had an oil boom but it didn't last long enough. They drilled, but I think they did not go deep enough; it cost a lot of money and I did not have the capital. There is oil there, all you have to do is strike the right spot.' He and my mother divorced in 1937 and Dad deeded the homestead to me with the advice that I keep it in case oil was discovered. He had it under lease to the Bureau of Land Management for grazing, but I didn't continue the lease and instead permitted Mr. Coxon to use the land for his own purposes. During that time Shell Oil and then Sun Oil took leases on it for several years, then dropped them.

"It was impractical to hold the acreage only to pay taxes on it but I was loath to let it go, partly because of the low price offered by one agent (\$2.50 per acre), and

partly because the land had a tinge of romanticism for me — I suppose it represented a piece of the 'Old West' as depicted in Charles Russell's paintings and Zane Grey's novels. However, practicality finally prevailed. Coming to terms with the elusive oil, I sold the homestead in about 1965 to Leo Solf, a rancher who owned the surrounding land, but in deference to Dad's dream, and perhaps still impressed by it, retained some oil rights.

"During the time Mother was at the homestead alone, she ran a cafe in Winnett, doing the cooking herself. She obtained a Blackfoot Indian woman to take care of my sister and me. The woman had a little boy who was my only playmate, my sister being six years older and interested in her own friends. The woman dropped me and my collar bone was broken so Mother took me to the doctor in either Winnett or Lewistown. He gave me a wooden whistle that had a loud, piercing sound, and I blew it constantly; very soon afterward, the Indian woman left, taking her little brave with her. My playmates then were a pet pig and the plentiful rattlesnakes — at least every time I saw one I ran to pick it up and play with it, but always at the final moment I would be snatched to safety. I asked my mother once if that hadn't been a great worry to her, and after a long, reflective look, she said, 'Yes, it was ... I was always afraid you'd get to the creatures before I could rescue them.' But I know that, actually, she dispatched them with a hoe.

"There was other wildlife. Mother told of watching antelope stomp on the snakes until they killed them, and once my sister, walking home from school, began imitating coyote calls. Her call was answered and soon others joined in, sounding louder and louder — she finished her journey at a run! Some children rode horseback to school and others, like Elizabeth, walked. The only transportation we had was a horse and buggy, which couldn't be spared for the whole day.

"It was a hard life for Mother but she stood up to it well, coming from old pioneer stock in Kentucky. She was joined for a time by her brother, Dan Moren, who lived in a tent nearby. He came to homestead also, but mainly came out of concern for his sister. He left when he



Dan Moren in front of his homestead tent

realized she was capable of dealing with her situation and was determined to stay as long as necessary to fulfill the terms of the Homestead Act. In October 1916, on my third birthday, we returned to Chicago to join my father. I still vaguely remember the dusty green plush seats and shoe box of fried chicken which was a part of train travel in those days.

"I really learned very little about my parents' life on the homestead because neither talked much about it, Dad almost not at all, and Mother mentioning mostly her neighbors, whose names I don't remember now, and how helpful they were, and the dances or socials that were held occasionally.

"It was a venture that didn't pan out as expected so I think they put it out of their minds. In any case, their experiences in Montana surely weren't as difficult as the Depression that hit some thirteen years later. And we all did treasure the 'free' land out West we possessed and thought of it with pride."

THORSEN, Lorenz C. (Sec 18-15-29) Lorenz "Shorty" Thorsen was born in 1885 in Frislev, Denmark. He left Denmark to come to the United States on his 25th birthday (August 6, 1910). He often told of the steamship crossing. There were many first-class passengers on the ship, and in the lower part of the ship there were cattle and horses being shipped to New York.

Shorty got a job on a dairy farm in New York and the next spring went to Aberdeen, South Dakota, where he worked on a ranch. In the fall of 1911 he went to Lewistown, Montana, with his Aberdeen employer who brought his threshing crew and machinery to work in the Montana grain fields. Shorty stayed in Montana and the following spring filed on a homestead about three miles west of Cat Creek.

On March 24, 1921, Lorenz was married to Etta Dobson. Etta was a widow with children still at home. (See DOBSON — Musselshell River) They made their home in Cat Creek from 1922 until 1929 and Shorty worked in the oil field. Etta's children went to the Cat Creek School.

In April 1929 Shorty divorced Etta and returned to his ranch where he raised purebred Hereford cattle in later years. He and Bessie Barden were married in 1946. They sold the ranch to Norris "Pete" Dobson in 1969 and purchased a home in Malta, Montana. After Bessie died in 1970, Shorty returned to Winnett to make his home. He lived in a nicely furnished mobile home on a lot near the high school. When he died in 1980, he bequeathed the mobile home and lot to the school and the furnishings to the public library.

TROCHTA Mr. Trochta was superintendent for Continental Oil Company in Cat Creek in 1927 at the time he was transferred to Lovell, Wyoming.

VANCE, Jacob Jacob Vance was born in Fairview, Utah, in 1893. He married Hazel Feaster. (See also FEASTER — Petrolia) The Vances had three children — Donald, Della and Alma.

Jacob was a foreman for the Mid Northern Oil Company in Cat Creek in the 1920s. The family moved to Kevin, Montana, where he was an oil patcher. Later he worked for the United States government at Malmstrom Air Force Base for 25 years.

Mr. Vance died in 1969 and Hazel continues to make her home in Great Falls, Montana (1988).

VAN TASSELL, Ginevra (Sec 12-15-28) Ginevra and her brother Albert Van Tassell (Sec. 7,17,18-15-29) homesteaded about three miles west of Cat Creek about 1913 to 1914. Ginevra was the first teacher in the new log schoolhouse built by the Cat Creek Basin community in 1914. (Miss Grace Miller had taught the first school in 1912 in an abandoned log building.) Ginevra (sometimes spelled Genevieve on teacher records) taught in various other rural schools during the 1914-1920 period.

Albert returned to LaSalle, Michigan, where another sister lived. He was killed in an automobile accident on January 28, 1932.

VINCELLETTE, R. E. Mr. Vincellette was married to Frances Pierson. (See also PIERSON — Winnett, Brush Creek and Cat Creek) He was employed by Continental Oil Company at Cat Creek in 1938.

VOGEL, Charles J. (Sec 23-15-28) Charles Vogel was born March 16, 1889, in Rapids City, Illinois. He came to Montana in 1911 with his brother-in-law, Ado Rogge. (See also ROGGE — Cat Creek) Charles did not stay in the area very long. It is believed he returned to Illinois where he married Lova Baietto on June 1, 1927, in Rapids City, Illinois. She died in 1964, Charles in 1965.

VONTVER, Simon A. "Sy" Vontver was born in Lillehammar, Norway, in 1890. He immigrated to Austin, Minnesota, in 1908 and homesteaded near Little Crooked Creek in 1919. He married May Anderson the following year.

Sy began working for Continental Oil Company in about 1923. May was a teacher and she taught several terms in the Cat Creek School. She was elected to the position of Petroleum County Superintendent of Schools for two 2-year terms (in 1928 and in 1930). Mrs. Vontver was also a talented and accomplished writer. She had several articles published in *Frontier*, a literary magazine of the northwest, and the *Montana Educator*, the magazine of the Montana Education Association. She also had a short story published in *O'Brien's Short Stories of 1929*. May was very active in American Legion Auxiliary affairs, as well.

The Vontvers had one son, Louis (1936). He became a doctor.

In 1937 the Vontvers took a vacation to Norway on the steamship *Grippsholm*. It was an exciting adventure for them, and several programs and news articles relating to their trip were given for the benefit of the community.

Sy was transferred to Lance Creek, Wyoming, in March 1943, and later to Elk Basin, Wyoming. He retired in Billings in 1955. He died in 1974.

WALES, Mr. Mr. and Mrs. Wales lived in the Frantz camp in 1924. Mrs. Wales was a member of the Frantz Camp ladies' club. When they left in March 1924, the Ross Thompsons moved into their cabin.

WALKER, John John and Minerva Walker homesteaded near present-day Yellow Water dam. (See WALKER — Flatwillow) The Walkers left the homestead in 1920 and John worked for a dray line in Winnett. When oil was discovered in Cat Creek, he helped haul freight between Winnett and Cat Creek. In a short time he found employment in the Cat Creek oil field as a pumper for Continental Oil Company. After their daughter, Madalyn, graduated from high school in 1925, the Walkers made their home in Cat Creek. They lived in Cat Creek until John's retirement when the Walkers moved to Great Falls to make their home with their daughter.

WALSH, John John Walsh and his wife lived in the Cat Creek oil field in the mid 1920s. Their daughter, Nellie, was mentioned in the school news, and their son, Kenneth, drew the attention of the Winnett Times in April 1924 when he ran into a barbwire fence and was seriously cut about the throat. Dr. Berry repaired and sewed the wound.

WELLS, Alfred B. (Sec 3-15-29) Alfred "Bert" Wells was born in 1893 in Fairview, Wyoming. In 1914 he took out a homestead north of Cat Creek. He served in the Army during World War I and was active in both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Soon after oil was discovered in Cat Creek he began work in the oil field, a vocation he followed all of his life. In 1924 he married Alice Avi Martin of Belt, Montana. The couple had one daughter, Fern.



James Wells with wife Theadocia holding granddaughter Betty Cooper at the homestead near Cat Creek

Bert worked for Continental Oil Company at Cat Creek and in Wyoming until he retired in 1959. He died in 1969. Alice still makes her home in Billings, Montana (1988).

WELLS, James Merritt James Merritt Wells was born in 1856 in Kankakee, Illinois. In poor health as a young man, he was told by doctors in Joplin, Missouri, that he had only six months to live when he was 20 years old. (He lived to be almost 94!)

James left Missouri and went to Texas where he joined a trail herd to Oregon. He took on a partner and the two engaged in trapping, and for seven months did not see another white man. He was in Wyoming in 1876 and then settled in Montpelier, Idaho, where he met and married Amanda Theadocia Campbell. They were to become parents of 11 children. The couple lived in Idaho, moved to Wyoming and in 1912 settled a few miles north of present-day Cat Creek.

Amanda was a respected and hard-working woman who was often called upon by neighbors in times of illness because of her nursing ability. She died in 1943. James died in 1949.

Two sons homesteaded in the Cat Creek area (See separate accounts) and two daughters lived in the area as young women. LaRue married Ed Harris (See also HARRIS) and Dorothy married Joe Woods.

WELLS, Merritt T. (Sec 34-16-29) Merritt T. "Mate" Wells, the son of James and Amanda Wells, was born in Star Valley, Wyoming, in 1885. He homesteaded on land north of the Cat Creek oil field in about 1911. During the peak settlement days he was a homestead locator — in



Merritt Wells with his sister LaRue Harris and nieces Jean Harris and Betty Cooper

other words, he located homesteaders on available land for a fee.

Mate was a bachelor. He dug a large chicken house in the bank and kept a bunch of laying hens, and he had several Holstein cows. He also raised a garden. He was a staunch democrat and after Hoover was president he said, "During Hoover's administration I changed clothes with my scarecrow three times!"



"Mate" Wells' camp outfit leaving Winnett on his way to the homestead near Cat Creek

From time to time Mate worked for other people. He freighted supplies to the Cat Creek oil field in the early days and worked for A. B. Mitchell a short time. He retired to Winnett in 1970 and served as Justice of the Peace. He died in 1974.

WHISONANT, Dudley Dudley Whisonant arrived in Montana for the first time when he accompanied his father from South Carolina to the Dovetail area in 1916 to file on a homestead. Young Dudley spent two years in the north country of Petroleum County before moving back to South Carolina with his family.

He stayed in the Carolinas until 1922. At that time he moved to Chicago and on February 25, 1928, he took Borghild Lunde as his bride.

Borghild had been in the United States nearly five years since landing on August 21, 1923, from her native land of Bergen, Norway. Her trip had taken a total of ten days by ship. One of the memories she recalled was sighting the Statue of Liberty as the band on the ship played "You Are my Sunshine."

In 1931 the couple and their two small children, Lillian and Donald, moved to Petroleum County near Dovetail. Another son, Joe, was born in March of 1937.

Dudley joined into partnership with an old friend, James Wright, and they engaged in the ranching business on Blood Creek. (See also WRIGHT, James — Ashley) The partnership decided to move their headquarters to the Gorman and Balding holdings on Box Elder Creek in the spring of 1940.

Donald was killed in a horse accident in 1944. Lillian married Arthur Moore and later moved with her husband to their ranch on Flatwillow Creek near Hassetts. Joe attended Box Elder School and Winnett Grade and High School. During this time, he met Jackie Trump, daughter of Edna and Elliott Trump, who leased and lived on the Ernest Hansen Ranch on Box Elder Creek. Jackie attended school at Flatwillow, Box Elder, and Winnett High School.

Joe stayed on the ranch with his folks until he leased the ranch with an option to buy it in 1964. After leaving the ranch, Dudley and Borghild worked construction and finally settled in the cafe and hotel business. They operated cafes and hotels in Roy and later in Lavina. Dudley passed away in 1982 and Borghild in 1985.

Dud and Borghild were noted for their ability to raise garden produce, especially cantaloupe and watermelon, without much rain or irrigation. Borghild always welcomed friends and strangers and was known for her ability to cook on a wood-burning range.

The Whisonant Ranch was quite small. Dudley worked at odd jobs, and the family milked cows and sold eggs and cream to make ends meet. In March of 1990 the Whisonant Ranch will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Joe and Jackie were married in 1957. They are graduates of Winnett High School in 1955 and 1956 respectively. Their marriage brought forth two children — Don Scott (1961) and Robert Joseph (1963). Joe has worked the ranch since he was big enough to work and

continues to do so at this time. He attended Rocky Mountain College and earned a B. S. degree in education in 1960 and has taught school, coached and counseled continuously for the past 29 years, along with operating the ranch.

Don and Bob helped on the ranch while living at home. Both are graduates of Chinook High School and Montana Tech with degrees in petroleum engineering. At this time both are employed in the oil industry. Bob is married to the former Peggy Funk, and the couple has two sons, Jacob and Colton.

The little place along Highway 200 eight and one-half miles east of Winnett has served as home for the Whisonants for nearly fifty years, and God willing, will continue to do so for many years to come. (Submitted by Joe Whisonant) (See also WHISONANT — Winnett)

WIEGERT, H. C. Mr. Wiegert was a roust-about for the 56 Petroleum Company in 1924. He married Nan Peters (See also PETERS — Musselshell River) and the couple had two sons.

WILDSCHUTZ, Matthias (Sec 14-15-29) Matthias "Matt" Wildschutz was born October 3, 1905, in Granville, Iowa. He came to Montana in 1917 and homesteaded in what was to become the heart of the Cat Creek oil field. He enlisted in the Army and served overseas throughout World War I. He remained in Germany with the army of occupation until 1919.

Drilling for oil began on his property in 1920 and on January 23, 1921, the Wildschutz No. 2, drilled by Mid Northern Oil Company, came in a producer. Another producer came in five days later. The Winnett Times reported on August 25, 1922, that the Wildschutz properties led all other producers in the Cat Creek field with a total production of 72,000 barrels to that date.

Matt married Alice Burnside on May 10, 1921. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Burnside, homesteaders in the Winifred area.

Matt and Alice made their home in Lewistown, Montana, and Matt invested in ranch property in the Buffalo, Montana, area. He died in 1942 leaving Alice with the responsibility of managing the property. She weathered all the storms — improving the property with reservoirs, wells, planting a lovely shelter belt and building up a fine herd of cattle. Alice resides in a rest home in Lewistown (1988).

WILEY, Mr. and Mrs. The Wileys lived in the Frantz camp until February 1924. When they moved, their cabin became the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Armagost. Mrs. Wiley was a member of the Frantz Camp Ladies' Club.

WILLIAMS, Helen Helen Williams taught the intermediate grades in Cat Creek in 1931-1932. She lived in a one-room cabin, a former oil company office, furnished by the Continental Oil Company. An account of her memories of that school term were related in a story published by the *Lewistown News Argus* on December 20, 1981. The following are excerpts from the article.

"In late August 1931 I sped merrily across the North Dakota-Montana state line into the Land of the Big Sky armed with a teaching certificate for Petroleum County and not much else. . .

"I learned that the main roads (in the county) were the widest with the deepest dust, and that side roads usually didn't have carry-off ditches on each side. Most of the local mileage was on 'natural roadbeds.' . . . It was so nice to be able to see over and beyond the 'breaks' in the landscape — so different from the shut-in feeling in the wooded area of the mountains of Tennessee or Virginia. I was soon able to look across toward the river and know whose car was swinging the curves long before they drove past my little terrace . . .

"I recall the night of full moon in December when the air was full of snow and mist through which we could still see. I watched Nig, the cookhouse spaniel (shut out by the unsympathetic cook) padding across the street to my cabin. He learned fast where he could get sympathy!

"I enjoyed camp, but have you ever read Bret Harte's *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*? We had those characters — the slick gambler, the 'fancy lady,' the young unfortunates who were cared for by the 'questionables.'

"The Christmas dance at Bowen School was a big event annually. We were fortunate in our weather. We danced, ate and danced until the wee hours grew bigger . . . Dancing in high heels was a definite hazard due to the condition of the floor, but no one complained. We arrived back in camp at sunrise . . .

"I remember the weird feeling I had when I looked to my left across from the green grocery department in Eager's Mercantile and saw the hanging samples of entirely different articles . . . I remember the full page advertisement for holiday dinner week — and the small 'black box' after-thought at the bottom of the page 'CASKETS ORDERED.' How I wish I had kept that one!

"The camp was a good place to learn what I wanted to know about Montana. I like to tell my little folks here of the bull snake that came into the schoolhouse looking for a drink — and that I was not afraid of it! About the horse that one bright morning took me straight out across the prairie to the lark's nest we had examined the night before, and stopped stone-still beside it.

"We had what was needed to make a good community. We had our pleasures and our problems, but I would not have missed it. It has been my nearly 50-year hope to return, and I might. Strange things do happen to me."

WILSON, Frank M. (See also WILSON — Brush Creek) Frank Wilson and his wife Della moved to Cat Creek when the oil field was first being developed in the early 1920s. He worked there until 1945 when the couple returned to Washington, Iowa, where they had farmed before homesteading in Montana.

The Wilson's son, Harve, also worked at Cat Creek. He married LaVonne Stewart in 1938. They had a daughter born in 1941 and a son born in 1944. Harve worked in Bremerton, Washington, during World War II.

WINNETT, Arthur Arthur Winnett was the son of Walter and Mary Winnett. He was born October 1904 at the Winnett Ranch and spent most of his life either on the ranch or in the oil fields.

Art married Katherine Niles, the daughter of Warren Niles, early-day homesteader on Calf Creek. (See also NILES — Musselshell River) Katherine was a schoolteacher and she taught in the Cat Creek School from 1930 until 1933.

Art had the Cat Creek stage route in the late 1920s, and in 1930 he resigned as the Cat Creek mail carrier and accepted a position with Mid Northern Oil Company. In 1932 he went to work for Continental Oil.

Art spent three years in the Seabees during World War II, serving in the Pacific. He was a motor machinist mate in charge of nineteen engineers. Part of their duty was maintaining the 225 horsepower diesel engines on the landing craft the Navy was using.

He returned to Cat Creek after the war and when William Armagost was transferred, Art became production foreman for Continental Oil. He was transferred to Melstone in 1962 and retired in 1965. He died in 1976.

WITHROW, Earl Earl and Molly Withrow lived in Cat Creek in the late 1920s. They had one daughter at that time, Annabell Rose, born in 1925. The Withrows moved in 1931.

WOLF, James James Wolf and Harry Sheets were saved by a cat from a fire which broke out in the Mitchell cabin where they were sleeping. The cat jumped on Mr. Wolf's face and woke him. Oil had overflowed from the oil stove and the walls and floor of the cabin were on fire. (W. T. 1923)

ZIESKE, Malda Malda Zieske taught the Cat Creek School in 1958-1959. She and her husband, Roy, came to Cat Creek from Billings, Montana. They had two children, Jolene and Lynn. The family moved to Thompson Falls, Montana, where Roy managed a lumberyard.

ZINTZ, John (Sec 10-15-28) John Zintz, according to Floyd Maine's history of the Cat Creek Basin, was one of the very earliest settlers in the basin.

ZOLLERS, Mrs. G. F. (W. T. 6-24-21) "Mrs. G. F. Zollers and associates in the Montana Bell Syndicate have completed plans to commence drilling operations on their holdings in SE½ SW¼ Sec 22-15-29. Quite a number of Winnett people have holdings in this vicinity, and are much interested in the drilling of the well, and inasmuch as Mrs. Zollers is the first woman operator in the field, further interest is added.