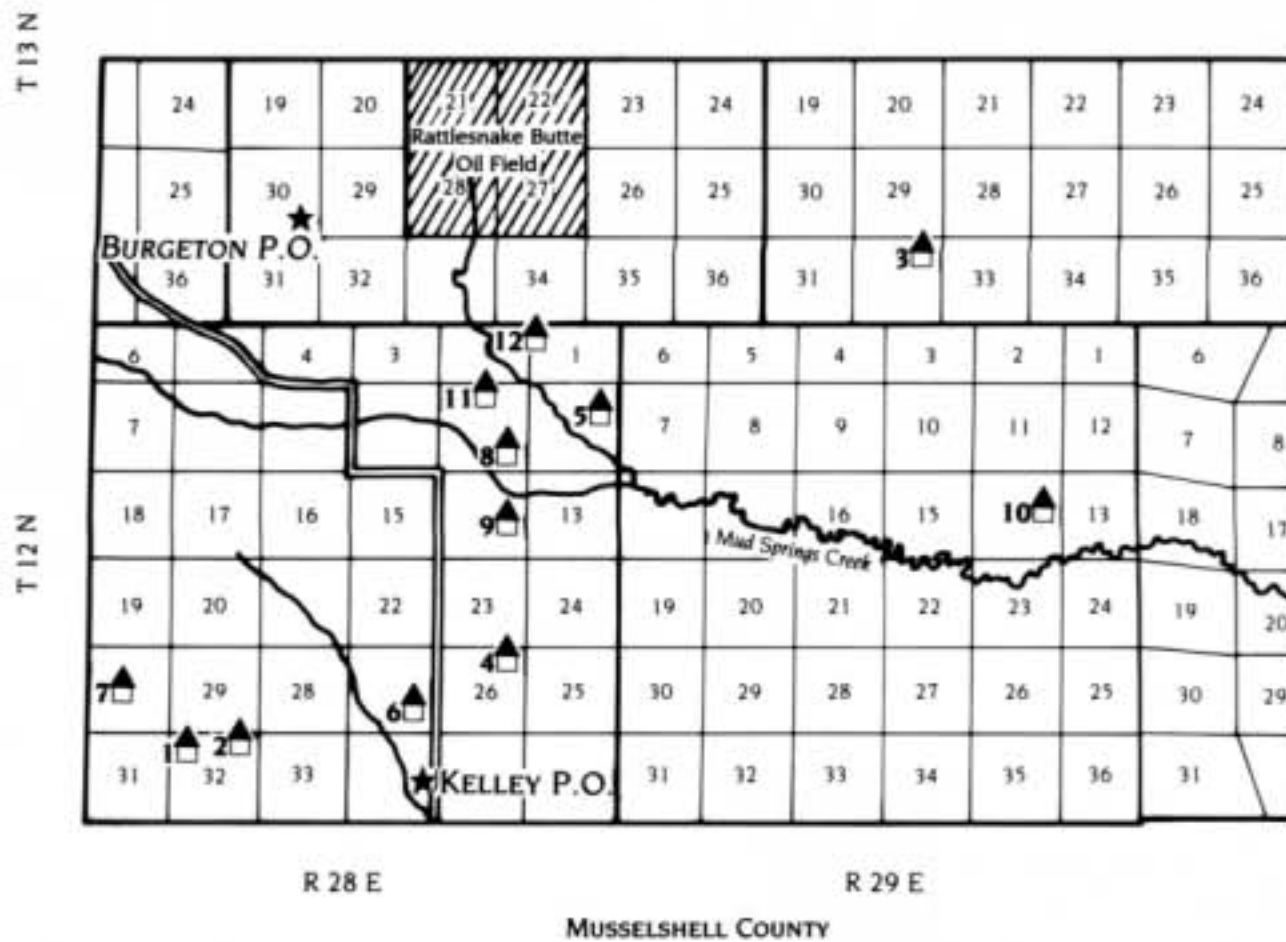


Kelley – Burgeton



- SCHOOLS**
1. Castle Rock (Caldwell)
 2. Dixon (Twin Butte)
 3. East Burgeton
 4. Flannigan
 5. Hodges
 6. 1st Kelley
 7. 2nd Kelley
 8. Kocer (Holecek)
 9. Mackrill
 10. Minor
 11. Rocking Chair Butte
 12. Sheldon (West Burgeton)

Legend:

- House icon: School
- Star icon: Post Office
- Thick solid line: State Highway
- Double line: County Road
- Dotted line: Trail (1986)
- Line with cross-ticks: Railroad

Scale: 0 1 2 3 MILES

North Arrow: N

Inset Map: PETROLEUM COUNTY



Old Kelley invitation card



Now obsolete postmark and address



Six girls return to Kelly in 1989: Erma Dreisbach Hoffman, Virgene Munson Gamble, Muriel Black Munson, Kathryn Hodges Keebler, Mary Kroetch Poetter, Ruth Hodges Freburg



Kelley Post Office



Ora attends Kelley gas oasis

Kelley Community History

The North Willow Creek basin in which the Kelley community was located contains approximately 17 townships. It is bounded on the north by the Flatwillow Creek divide, on the south by the Musselshell River divide, and on the west by the foothills of the Little Snowy Mountains.

The Kelley community, located in the northeast quadrant of the basin, is, in general, subdivided into two areas, fairly equal in scope. The Mud Springs area was shaped like a hand. The thumb was a short coulee running north from the Mackrill place. The index finger came down to the east past Sarvis, Neff, Kozumpleck, Holecek and Kocer. The middle finger drained an area starting near Rattlesnake Butte and running south-eastward past the Sheldon, Kaufman and Hodges homesteads. The ring finger started at the Rasmus Nielsen homestead, down past the Starkweathers, and south by east to join the middle. The little finger had no homesteaders, as it ran south through a railroad section. Teepee rings along its banks showed signs of a previous owner.

Musselshell Hill, a feature of the Mackrill Ranch, exhibited an outcropping of oyster shell imbedded in red clay. This, along with a scattering of other fossils, would lead one to believe the area had once been covered by a shallow tropical sea. In fact the early homesteaders gathered oyster shell and grit for their chickens by robbing ant hills.

Dinosaurian remains found in some sections remind us of former inhabitants of the area in the Cretaceous period of the Mesozoic era some 135,000,000 years ago.

The Howard Coulee part of the Kelley community was largely contained in three drainages running southeastward from the divide separating the Mud Springs drainage. South of Howard Coulee were John Weimer and John Loffel on the North Willow Creek drainage, just about the only exception to the two most populous areas. Schellenger to the north, Tiller to the west, and Lynne Black to the east would pretty well establish the outer boundaries of the Howard Coulee district.

Many of the earliest claims were made on choice flat farmland. Where these claims happened to be on gumbo, the claimants for the most part stayed only long enough to prove up. One of these unfortunates was Kelley, whose name was drawn out of the hat to name the post office.

There does not seem to be any documentation of who first used the prairies and water supplies of the community which became Kelley. Undoubtedly there were sheepmen who found it of value before the influx of homesteaders of 1910 and later. In fact, it has been reported that Jim Wilson, a big sheep man from Flatwillow, lost a whole band of sheep in a blizzard on lower Mud Springs Creek when they drifted over a rather steep bank and were buried under a huge drift.

Most of the community was settled between 1910 and 1915. The post office was established in 1913 and Charles Roth was the first postmaster — the office being in his home (NE¼E¼ Sec. 34-12-28). Bohumil (Bill) Holecek was appointed first mail carrier of the route from Musselshell to Kelley. Mail was delivered on Tuesdays and Saturdays by horse-drawn wagon in summer or by sled in winter until the advent of cars — a round trip of about 40 miles.

In 1918 Charles Roth and family left the community. Ray Dreisbach not only took over the Roth farm, but Mrs. Ray (Ora) Dreisbach was appointed postmaster. Except for a period from October 1923 to April 1926, during which time Clarence Dreisbach was named to that office, Ora served until July 1, 1938.

Burgeton

By 1917 there were sufficient settlers in the extreme northwest area of the community to establish the post office of Burgeton on February 28, 1917. Charles L. Burge was the postmaster and the office was located in his home. It gave service to some people who would have been forced to travel 20 miles. With the advent of cars and the exodus of homesteaders, the office was discontinued after only two years, on January 15, 1919.

However, the Burgeton community was to gain a little fame in later years. Although geologists had declared the area around Rattlesnake Butte a poor possibility for oil development, in July of 1938 a Canadian oil company decided to gamble and drill a well in Section 22-13-28. That company later contracted with Watson Oil Company for the well's completion. The venture encountered a financial deficiency and was ended in August of 1942. (See also HAWKS, HOWARD — Winnett)

But all was not lost. That first attempt had located 437 feet of oil-bearing sand. In January of 1946 Dave Schrock, Harry Schwartz Jr. and J.E. McKenna moved Ike Taylor's drilling rig to a spot only 355 feet from the first abandoned well.

The new well, known as Schwartz-Government #1 was located in the SW¼ SE¼ Sec. 22-13-28. It was completed the first of March in 1946, coming in as free-flowing from a "stray sand" between the second and third Cat Creek sands. An excellent description of the potential of this discovery appeared in the Winnett Times of April 11, 1946:

"The well is expected to produce better than 100 barrels of 32 gravity oil daily. Disposition of the production has not been announced. One of the phenomena of the new well is that it is practically absolutely free of sulphur. Pennsylvania crude oil has a sulphur content of one-tenth of one percent, the Rattlesnake Butte oil has a sulphur content of less than three-hundredths of one percent, the only oil found in the United States with such a low sulphur content. This factor makes it a crude much in demand by refiners because of the less expensive refining process."

The second well was drilled on land owned by Mr. Alvin

Clausen. He, as homesteaders and other settlers abandoned the area, became the owner of eleven sections of land in and around the awakening oil field.

Of further interest concerning the second well, is the fact that J. Hugo Aronson, the "Galloping Swede", future Governor of Montana, was responsible for the excavation of the rotary pits before the drilling began. No record on completion of the well was found.

Numerous other explorations were conducted at this site, and there were many dry holes. By 1985 there were about six wells producing from the Amsden sands. One gas well was completed. The gas from it is used for the pumping operation of other wells. Oil continues to be hauled from the production of a few wells in 1989.

Dim Trails

Every area has its share of once important dim trails. By 1914 the Mud Springs Creek area had already built homestead fences across what was known as the Melstone Trail. The homesteaders were still using the southern portion as the main road to Melstone, the principal railhead at that time.

Once a trail was established, it was the practice of teamsters, when the ruts became too deep for the comfortable use of their teams, to move over and straddle one of the ruts. This way the horses had a track to follow and hence helped prevent travelers from becoming lost on the unending prairie. When Clarence Dreisbach fenced his homestead just north of Mud Springs, he fenced across about ten deep ruts. This could lead us to believe that perhaps the trail had been established by the military. Anyway, it was out of use by 1914, and other trails were being established.

What was called the Wood Road for the Mud Springs area crossed the creek just below the Hodges buildings. Part of the homestead was left unfenced to accommodate the trail. It was a busy trail as everybody needed posts and firewood, and the only "convenient" source was in the cedar breaks about 15 miles to the east. An additional 10 miles would reach the heavier timber east of the Musselshell River.

When the Milwaukee Railroad built into Winnett, two main trails were established for the Mud Springs area. A branch of the old Melstone Trail picked up much of the eastern part of the area. This led west from the Rasmus Nielsen homestead, north and west past the Schwarz place and across Flatwillow Creek at the Bachman place.

The western area had a trail over the "hogback" past the Naujok homestead, west and north past Swan Munsons and crossing Flatwillow Creek at the Lepper Ranch.

Most of the Howard Coulee area made use of the Kelley-Musselshell stage road and the Flatwillow-Musselshell stage road. All of these trails had their share of gumbo, steep hills and treacherous coulee crossings. This factor alone doubtless caused the abandonment of many homesteads.

Schools of the Kelley Community

The first school in the Kelley community was under the governance of Weede School District #107. Located in Sec. 13-12-28, it had an attendance of at least seven pupils. Ellwood Gross was the teacher from January 4, 1914, to March, 1914.

On February 28, 1914, the Kelley and Circle Bar communities petitioned for their own district, to be formed from School District #107. That school district was #121 in the Kelley community. Two schools were established — one at the homestead of Harry Hodges where Nels Fradd was the instructor from September to December 1914; the other one was known as the East School in Sec. 32-13-29 or, later on, the East Burgeton School. Clara Chesley taught a very short term from November 9 to December 4, 1914.

On October 3, 1914, Kelley School District #138 was created from Circle Bar District #121. First trustees were J.W. Dixon, Karel Holecek and Harry Hodges. Then, hardly before the ink was dry on those creation papers, School District #149 was withdrawn on September 15, 1915, from District #138. First trustees were John F. Wingo and Oliver Carr. In the meantime, Kelley School District #138 set up a school called the Holecek School in Sec. 11-12-28 and hired Bertice Greenfield as instructor from April 19 to July 9, 1915; also, they hired Leon H. Cave to teach a term of three months from May 13, 1915 to August 4, 1915, in a small building at the Caldwell homestead in Sec. 32-12-28. This was known as the Castle Rock School.

The Board of Trustees of School District #149 then had the supervision of the former Holecek School. Changing the name to Kocer School, although in the same location, they hired Mr. C.N. Frankville for their district's first

school for a three-month term from September to December, 1915. They also provided a teacher for students in the northeastern part of the community — Mr. Herbert C. Sarvis — in 1915.

Meanwhile in Kelley District #138, plans were proceeding to build two permanent schoolhouses. Site elections were held, a bond election was passed, and bids were let to Mr. Otto Moore, a Kelley homesteader and contractor. He was to build a schoolhouse, coal and wood shed, and two toilets at each site. The total of his bid was \$1852. Earl Dreisbach was later paid one dollar for digging the holes and setting up the toilets. Mr. John W. Dixon and John E. Flannigan were each paid one dollar for one acre of land for the school sites. Schools were named Dixon (NE corner of NE¼ Sec. 32-12-28) and Flannigan (NE corner of NE¼ Sec. 26-12-28). The buildings were all completed by the spring of 1916.

Homer Richardson was the first teacher in the new Dixon school for a spring term of two months in 1916. C.H. Johnson also taught a two month spring term in the new Flannigan School.

In District #149 a building was placed near the Rocking Chair Butte, about ¼ mile north of the former Kocer School. Mr. Sarvis taught there in 1916, followed by Miss Lily Cooley in 1917. Miss Clara Chesley was teacher for the East Burgeton School. She was succeeded by Stella Paullus in 1917 and Ruth Straight in 1918. That school was then closed.

In 1918 District #149 had closed the Rocking Chair Butte School and built a permanent standard school building on Sheldon land in the SE corner of the SE¼ of Sec. 2-12-28. This was named the Sheldon School. Bertice Greenfield was engaged to teach the nine-month



Sheldon School 1919-1920: (Back l. to r.) Forrest Hodges, Evelena Hawkins, teacher; Ivan Hodges. (Middle) Robert Kocer. (Front) George Kocer, Otis Neff, Henry Holecek. [Beside Rocking Chair Butte]



Kelley School 1928-1929 Back: Chris Miller, Floyd Miller, Carl Andersen, Marie Dreisbach, Muriel Black, Mrs. Mae Abraham, teacher; Middle: Mildred Miller and Mary Kroetch; Front: Wilbert Andersen, Jack Black, Walter Andersen, Jim Black and Tina Miller.

term. Also in 1917 Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Minor, a couple in the community who had adopted two children, were far removed from any of the existing schools. District #164 had been formed from part of District #149 and that district provided a teacher, Esther Hodges, to teach in the Minor home in Sec. 14-12-29. School was held in the teacher's bedroom upstairs. In 1923 the Dixon schoolhouse was closed; also the Flannigan School was moved to the SE corner of Sec. 27-12-28, just ¼ mile north of the Kelley Post Office. This was known as the Kelley School. In 1935 there were only two school-age children in the Kelley district. The teacherage, which had been built in 1927, was moved 3 miles west to accommodate those two students. Beatrice Blair was the teacher. It was the last term of the Kelley School. In October of 1935 the Sheldon School closed. That was the end of education in the Petroleum County portion of the Kelley community. During all this time the Small, Biehl, East Side and West Side schools of Musselshell County had educated students of the south end of the community. Schools in both ends often cooperated in presenting Christmas and other programs and track meets. The teachers who taught the twelve schools of the Petroleum County portion of the Kelley community are listed on the following pages.



Kelley School 1925-1926 Back l. to r. Teacher, Mrs. Zula Howell, Carl Andersen. Middle l. to r. Ruth Hodges, Muriel Black, Mary Kroetch, Blanche Howard. Front l. to r. Jack Black, Walter Andersen, Astle Howard



Kelley kids at West Side School in Musselshell County: Back: Two of the Purviance boys; Middle: Martha Loffel, Ruth Loffel, Walter Andersen, Purviance boy; front: Vernon Caldwell, Lida Loffel, Sara Loffel



The county superintendent visits! Back: Co. Supt. May Vontver, Virgene Munson, Louise Brummett; Front: Kathryn Hodges, June Hodges



Kelley School picnic in rimrocks near Andersens about 1928.

Teachers — Schools — Locations — Dates

CALDWELL OR CASTLE ROCK (SW¼NW½ Sec. 32-12-28)

Dist. 138 Leon H. Cave 5-13-15 to 8-4-15

DIXON SCHOOL (NE¼ Sec. 32-12-28)

Dist. 138	Homer Richardson	5-8-16 to 6-30-16
	Guy Schellenger	9-25-16 to 6-9-17
	Guy Schellenger	9-17-17 to 10-12-17
	Ruth Straight	11-5-17 to 4-30-18
	Ruth Baker	9-23-18 to 5-16-19
	Mrs. A.C. (Myrtle) Caldwell	10-20-19 to 6-4-20
	Catherine Barnard	9-3-20 to 4-22-21
	Emma Johnke	9-6-21 to 2-24-22

EAST BURGETON (Sec. 32-13-29)

Dist. 121	Clara Chesley	11-9-14 to 12-4-14
Dist. 149	H.C. Sarvis	1915
Dist. 149	Clara Chesley	1916
Dist. 149	Stella Paullus	1917
Dist. 149	Ruth Straight	1918

FLANNIGAN SCHOOL (NE¼ Sec. 26-12-28)

Dist. 138	C.H. Johnson	5-1-16 to 6-23-16
	Lynette Blair	9-9-16 to 5-17-17
	Jessie Moore	9-19-17 to 5-3-18
	Jessie Moore	9-9-18 to 5-3-19
	Frank Hutchins	10-6-19 to 5-21-20
	(No School)	1920-21
	Grace Streich	9-6-21 to 2-24-22
	(No School)	1922

School Closed
Moved to Kelley School Site

HODGES SCHOOL (Sec. 12-12-28)

Dist. 121 Nels Fradd Sept. to Dec., 1914

HOLECEK SCHOOL (SE Corner SE¼ Sec. 11-12-28)

Dist. 138 Bertice Greenfield 4-19-15 to 7-9-15

KELLEY SCHOOL (SE¼ Sec. 27-12-28)

Dist. 138 Amanda O. Swift 4-9-23 to 7-27-23
Mrs. Jessie (Howard) Hodges 9-1-23 to 11-25-23
Mrs. Mary Feaster 11-25-23 to 4-29-24
Mrs. Zula Howell 1924-25
Mrs. Zula Howell 1925-26
Winnifred Passey 1926-27
Harriet Culbertson 1927-28
Mrs. Mae Abraham 1928-29
Mrs. Good 1929-30
Evelyn Melius 1930-31
Evelyn Melius 1931-32
Evelyn Melius 1932-33
Mary Feaster 1934
Beatrice Blair (at 30-12-28) 1935

KOCER SCHOOL (SE Corner SE¼ Sec. 11-12-28)

Dist. 149 C.N. Frankville Sept. to Dec. 1915

MACKRILL SCHOOL (Sec. 14-12-28)

Dist. 107 Ellwood Gross 1-4-14 to March 1914

MINOR SCHOOL (E½ Sec. 14-12-29)

Dist. 164 Esther Hodges 11-12-1917 to 3-8-1918

ROCKING CHAIR BUTTE (S½ NE¼ Sec. 11-12-28)

Dist. 149 Herbert C. Sarvis 1916-17
Dist. 149 Lily Cooley 10-28-17 to 6-12-18

SHELDON (OR WEST BURGETON) SCHOOL (SE Corner SE¼ Sec. 2-12-28)

Dist. 149 Bertice Greenfield 1918-19
Evelena Hawkins 1919-20
Sylvia Brummett-Maude Hawkins 1920-21
Maude Hawkins 1921-22
Guy Schellenger 1922-23
Mildred Holecek-Louise Schellenberger 1923-24
Miss Bowden 1924-25
Marie Killham 1925-26
Pearl Myers 1926-27
Azalea Spaulding 1927-28
Cordelia Wagar 1928-29
Minnie Sprung-Frances McDaniel 1929-30
Mrs. Lamp 1930-31
Esther Sauer 1931-32
Esther Sauer 1932-33
Winnifred Hennebry 1933-34
Nellie Cvelbar 1934-35
Nellie Cvelbar 1935—

School Closed in October, 1935

Kelley Residents

Somewhere in the world there is an Indian papoose whose ancestors lived in a teepee outlined by one of the teepee rings. Somewhere there are children whose ancestors traveled on the dim wagon trails near Mud Springs crossing. There is no known record of the activity of those people, so there are no stories to tell about them. But, scattered over the state and nation, and

possibly other parts of the world, are the progeny of those known to have resided within the boundaries of the Kelley community during the first seventy years of the twentieth century. It is for them that this history is written. It is dedicated to them, their ancestors, and all who lived or struggled there for years or for a very short time.

ADAMS, Blake Oren (Sec. 20-11-28) Blake, as well as his brother, Pope, and two sisters, Miriam and Kathleen, all homesteaded in the Howard Coulee area. Blake's wife died when their only son, Reuben, was four years old. Reuben was raised with the help of his aunts, Kathleen Arnold and Miriam Loffel. Blake died from a heart attack while at the Tiller home in Lewistown in 1935. He was buried at Musselshell, Montana.

ADAMS, Kathleen Kathleen was a sister to Blake, Miriam and Pope Adams. She also homesteaded in the same area as her brothers and sister. She married Wayne Arnold, a barber from Musselshell, Montana. They later moved to California.

ADAMS, Miriam (Sec. 8-11-28) Miriam homesteaded between 1910 and 1913 in the Howard Coulee area (south of what was then the south Fergus County line). She taught in Westside School District #57, Musselshell County, for a number of years. A neighboring bachelor figured out that a man should not live on the land alone and was able to convince her of that same fact. As a consequence, she became Mrs. John Loffel.

ADAMS, Pope (Sec. 4-11-28) Pope homesteaded in the Howard Coulee area between 1910 and 1913. At the Fourth of July celebration at Flatwillow in 1921, he won the cracker-eating contest. In 1927 he and Pearl Myers, daughter of a former homestead neighbor, were married.

They lived just across the Musselshell County line, but went to Kelley for their mail and were an important part of the Kelley community. Because of Pearl's teaching experience, their home and her supervision were often used for the administration of the seventh and eighth grade State School Examinations.

They were good farmers, but the dry years and the devastation of their crops by grasshoppers in 1936 forced them to leave. They settled on a farm near Kamiah, Idaho.

Pearl wrote in October 1985 about their times at Kelley and after their move to Kamiah: "My parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Myers, lived near enough after we were married that we could always call on them for help when needed. Neighbors worked together on various tasks like butchering and harvesting. One could always depend on a neighbor to get a doctor or whoever was needed in an emergency. Horse-drawn machinery was used.

"My husband, Pope Adams, passed away in March of



Pope and Pearl Adams

1967. My parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Myers, sister Isa, and brother George, had all passed away before then.

"Our six children are grown and married except for one daughter. All live in various places in the West — one son in Japan. I'm alone in my big house here now — only my youngest daughter, Miriam, and her husband have a house right near. She works as a waitress at a cafe in Kamiah and drops in nearly every day.

"I have thirteen grandchildren. I visit my children and grandchildren during the winter. Quite a few of my kids and grandkids were here to help me celebrate my 82nd birthday on the 20th of August. My middle son Bob and wife Yosuko were here from Japan, so we all had a great time together. He teaches English in a medical college in Miyazaki City, which is on the South Island of Japan. My oldest son, Bill, is working on building a log house near here. He lives north of San Francisco and comes up here for part of the summer.

"I think the Kelley monthly community club meetings that were held at various homes were the best times of fellowship that I can remember."

ANDERSEN, Anton (Sec. 30-12-28) Anton was born in Denmark April 5, 1888. He filed for a homestead near Kelley in 1913. Also in 1913 he married Emilie M. Johnson of Minnesota. They had three boys — Carl, Wilbert and Walter.

Carl attended grade school in the Kelley area and graduated from eighth grade from the Kelley School in 1929. He attended Winnett High School for a time and worked at the Aristo Theatre. He later married and had one child. The Winnett Times of May 17, 1929, alluded to some of his interests in grade school:

"The dinosaur relics in the Kelley country, by the way, are beginning to attract considerable attention. Last year Mr. Cottom, the Sunday school missionary, interested several persons in Lewistown in these finds and members of the Lewistown High School faculty, so we are told, came out and brought some of the bones to the High School Museum. This spring Rex Haight, principal of the Grass Range High School, whose hobby is geology and archeology, has already made a trip to Kelley to see for himself the dinosaurian remains.

"It is one of the Kelley school boys, Carl Andersen, who is the original discoverer of the prehistoric finds."

"Wilbert was born March 6, 1918, in Melstone. He attended Kelley grade school and graduated from the eighth grade there in 1930. He went into the service of his country and, in so doing, lost his life on August 2, 1943. At twenty-five years of age he was laid to rest in Hawaii."

Walter was born June 8, 1922. For grades one through four he attended Kelley School. Grades five and six were spent at West Side School in Musselshell County — five miles south of his home. For grades seven and eight a school was established that was only ½ mile south of his house. He graduated from Musselshell High School in 1940. He worked on the family ranch that summer and



Mr. and Mrs. Anton Andersen

then joined the Air Force. He was discharged in 1945 and returned to Stevensville. He married Ella Reich. They have two daughters, Mary Sanders and Shirley Campbell; two sons, Victor and Dan. All were born at Hamilton, Montana.

Emilie Andersen died April 25, 1952. Anton Andersen married Miss Minnie Johnson in 1956. Anton died September 1, 1961. Emilie and Anton were both buried in Hamilton.

Howard Hodges reminisced about the Andersens: "My mother assisted at the birth of their first child, Carl, and spent about a week with them. She didn't want anything for her services, but Anton was real proud and insisted she take a new saddle he had brought with him. Anton was a very hard worker. Except for the terrible drought in the 1930 s, he would have succeeded, if anyone could. They sold their ranch and moved to Stevensville, Montana, in 1940."

An article in the Winnett Times of September 25, 1925 stated: "Mr. Andersen has just completed a modern five-room farm home costing in the neighborhood of \$5000. The new home has a full basement with a coal chute, furnace room, and all modern conveniences. It is a home anyone could be proud of, and upon its completion was paid for by the returns from Mr. Andersen's farm. Mr. Andersen is a Petroleum County farmer who has solved the farming problems of this section and makes a good profit from his farming operations each year."

Gravel for the concrete work for the Andersen home was hauled by wagon from Mud Springs Creek, a distance of nearly 8 miles.

Mr. Andersen served as school trustee of Kelley School District #138 in 1923.

BARNARD, Russell The Kelley items in the 10-7-21 issue of the Winnett Times stated: "Mr. and Mrs. Russell Barnard had a sale on Thursday of last week. The family will move soon to Illinois, Mr. Barnard's former home, to make their home there. The community regrets losing this splendid family, and the good wishes of all will go with them to their new home." Mrs. Russell Barnard's people lived in Lewistown.

BIEHL, Fred (Sec. 23-11-28) Mr. and Mrs. Fred Biehl owned a very large ranch in the Kelley community, in fact, their ranch and home was Kelley's show place. They had a beautiful two-story white house equipped with electricity. There were also large barns and sheds and pit silos. They were the first people within a large area to install milking machines; and a news item in the Winnett Times of 1923 stated that the family was making an "average of \$100 a month on cream checks alone."

Fred Biehl owned a threshing machine. His outfit was pulled, and the separator was powered, by a huge iron-wheeled, steam-powered engine. He not only threshed in the Kelley community, but in some years took his equipment to the Judith Basin and worked there the whole harvest season.

Theirs was a large family and it was quite traumatic