# Musselshell River
# Missouri River

SCHOOLS
1. Athearn
2. Fort Musselshell (Rukavina)
3. Gairrett
4. New Rukavina
5. Weingart Home

- School
- Post Office
- State Highway
- County Road
- Trail (1986)
- Railroad

0 1 2 3
MILES

N

PETROLEUM COUNTY
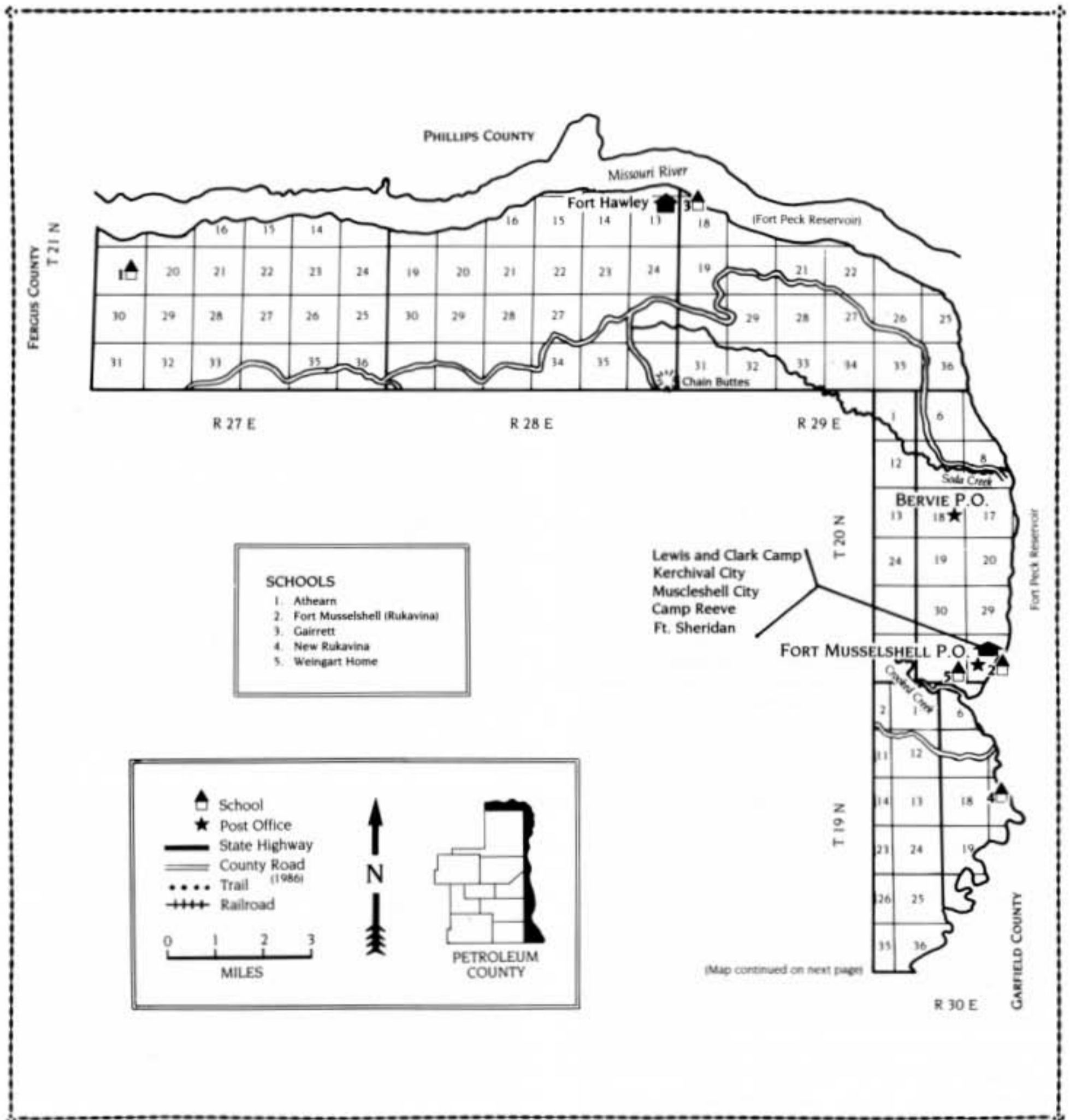
Swimming horses across the Missouri River at Rocky Point


Rocky Point saloon in 1885


Treacherous ice jam — 1979 (a typical spring hazard along the river)


The old UL Ranch headquarters located on the north side of the Missouri River from the mouth of the Musselshell where the Missouri makes a sharp bend


Keith homestead at the mouth of Lodgepole

# Early Missouri River Settlements

The rivers provided the highways for the early development of Montana, and the Missouri River was the mightiest river of all. This put what was to become the northern boundary of Petroleum County on the "main road!" Though Petroleum County is only three townships (or 18 miles) wide at its northern border, the Missouri River, with the UL bend and its other twists and turns, gives Petroleum County about twice that many miles of river shore.

In its eastward flow, the Missouri River makes a bend to the south to meet the Musselshell River. Then it turns sharply to the north leaving a thin peninsula of land, perhaps six miles long bounded on each side by the Missouri River, and with the mouth of the Musselshell River opposite its southern most tip. This bend is known as the UL Bend. Riverboat captains sometimes allowed their passengers to disembark and walk across the narrow, grassy, two-mile-wide peninsula of land while the steamboat made the thirteen-mile river trip around the bend.

Lewis and Clark camped near the mouth of the Musselshell River on May 20, 1805. Lewis wrote in his diary: (original spelling maintained) "We halted at the entrance of the river on the point formed by it's junction with the Missouri determining to spend the day, making the nececsary observations and send out some hunters to explore the country. The Muscle Shell river falls into the Missouri 2270 miles above it's mouth, and is 110 yards in width, it affords much more water than streams of it's width generally do below, it's courant is by no means rappid, and from appearances it might be navigated with canoes a considerable distance . . . it's banks abrupt and about 12 feet high yet never appear to overflow; the waters of this river is of a greenish yellow cast, much more transparent than the Missouri . . . the Missouri opposite to this point is deep, gentle in it's courant, and 222 yards in width.

"The hunters returned this evening and informed us that the country continued much the same in appearance as that we saw where we were or broken, and that about five miles above the mouth of shell river a handsome river of about fifty yards in width discharged itself into the shell river on the Star, or upper side; this stream we called Sah-ca-ger-we-ah or bird woman's River, after our interpreter the Snake woman."

Little did anyone realize the controversy which would be sparked a century and a half later because of this journal entry. Indians, trappers, hunters and explorers all referred to the same little river as Crooked Creek, and the earliest maps of the Montana Territory show it as such. In the late 1970s, however, an overzealous Easterner was at least partially effective in changing the name of the creek to the Lewis and Clark Expedition's name. Many local Montanans view the name change with disdain.

Ralph Miracle (former head of the Montana
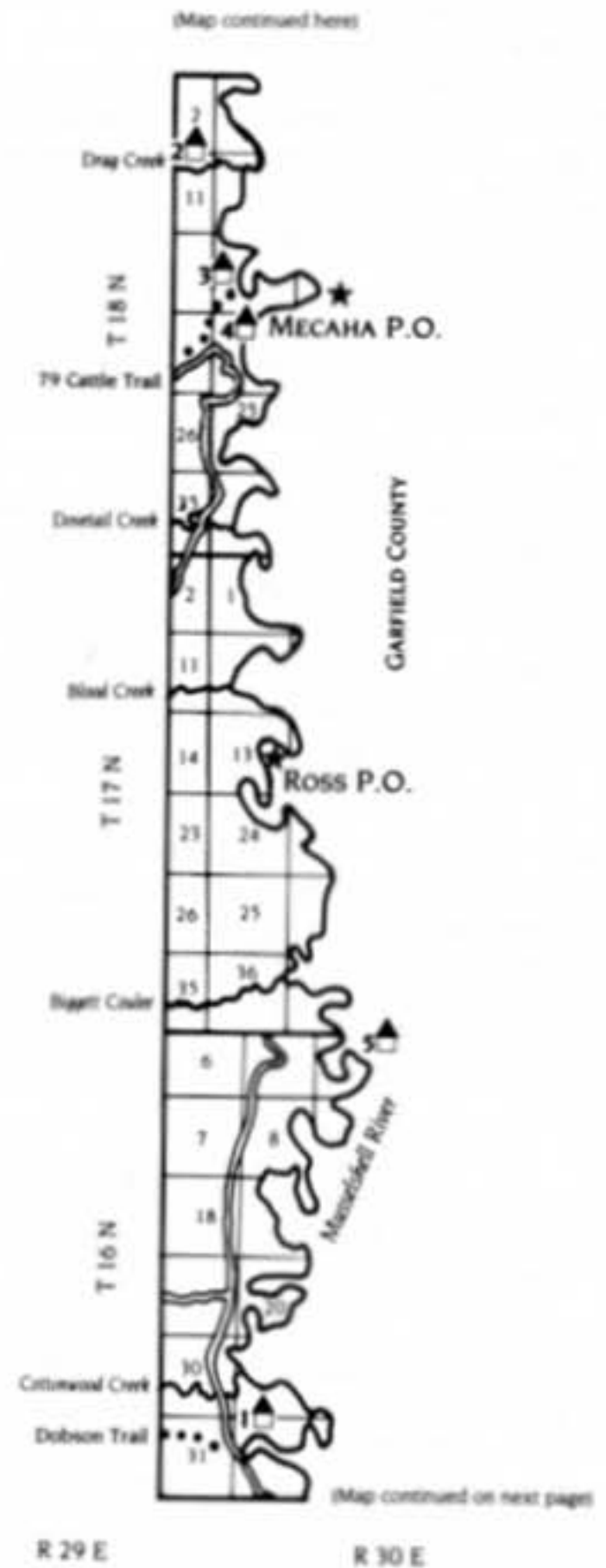


SCHOOLS
1. Dobson
2. Horseshoe Bend (Atwood)
3. Lone Star (Marks, Mecaha)
4. Mecaha (Nordquist)
5. Ross

Stockgrowers Association), as an amateur historian, did extensive research on the early Missouri River trading posts just above the Musselshell River. He states, in an article published by the *Yellowstone Corral of the Westerners* in 1975, that the first buildings attempted above Fort Union (the fort at the juncture of the Missouri and the Yellowstone Rivers) were at the mouth of the Musselshell River. They were built by a party of trappers led by Major Andrew Henry. Mr. Miracle says the party "built four rough log huts connected by a palisade where they spent the winter of 1822 . . . among the 21 men in this party were famous mountain men Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger and Daniel Potts. Their destination was the beaver-plenty streams far up at the sources of the river."

Explorers and trappers navigated the Missouri River during the next 40 years and short-lived trading forts and posts sprouted here and there along the way. In 1855 a treaty was signed with the Blackfeet Indians — The Lame Bull's Treaty — creating a legal Blackfeet domain extending from the Rocky Mountains east to the mouth of the Milk River and from the Canadian border south to Three Forks and the Musselshell River. This included, of course, all of present-day Petroleum County.

If gold had not been discovered in western Montana in the early 1860s, this treaty might well have remained in effect longer than it did, and any large-scale development of freighting or travel along the Missouri would probably have been slowed. The combination of the discovery of gold and the end of the Civil War quickly led to "gold rush" proportions, however. Steamboat travel was new, the first steamboat having reached Fort Benton in 1860, but by 1865 thirty to forty boats per season were unloading their goods at Fort Benton. Passengers and freight were transferred to stagecoaches and wagons to travel a laborious 130 miles via Prickly Pear Canyon to Helena. Enterprising businessmen began looking for a shorter, easier route from the river to the gold camps, and for a route which could be used for more months during the year than the Fort Benton route could be used. Low water often delayed steamboat passage beyond the mouth of the Musselshell.

In the spring of 1865 William Berkin (See also BERKIN — Flatwillow), who had been freighting for the American Fur Company from Fort Benton to Virginia City, led a party of eleven men seeking a better road from Virginia City to the Missouri River. He traveled a route from Boulder, White Sulphur Springs, Martinsdale, along the Musselshell and then to the east end of the Snowy Mountains, down Flatwillow Creek and to the mouth of the Musselshell. He was harassed by Indians both coming and going, and his plans for a freight road withered and died.

The next year, 1866, the Rocky Mountain Wagon Road Company attempted to establish a town called Kerchival City at the mouth of the Musselshell River. (The territorial legislature even named the town as the county seat of Dawson County only to have all of their actions rescinded when the legislative session was voided!) The anticipated freighting business did not materialize and Kerchival City did not survive. It is said it was washed away by the river.

According to the research of Lieutenant James H. Bradley, another attempt was made to build a settlement at the mouth of the Musselshell River in 1868. This time the project was undertaken by the Montana Hide and Fur Company of Helena. A party under the direction of James Brewer plotted a town on the south bank of the Missouri River and also built a warehouse. The town was known as Muscleshell City. (Note old spelling of Muscleshell.)

According to Lt. Bradley, "Colonel George Clendennin, his brother Richard, and James McGinnis . . . arrived at Muscleshell soon after the Montana Hide and Fur Company and . . . before the following winter there were eight buildings lined up along the riverbank and approximately 50 people residing in the area. Besides the residents, the Gros Ventre and Crow Indians traded quite frequently at the post. This all resulted in considerable activity in the new settlement."

Because of frequent skirmishes with the Indians, troops from Camp Cooke were sent down from their camp at the mouth of the Judith River to keep peace at Muscleshell. In 1868 the troops set up Camp Reeve a short distance from the town. (Note the use of the word "camp." Camp very often signified a military installation while the word "fort" often meant trading post.) After a skirmish with the Indians in which two soldiers were killed, the troops withdrew to Camp Cooke because of a shortage of supplies for the winter.

During the winter of 1868-69 the Sioux kept the settlement in a virtual state of siege.

New hopes for the inhabitants of Muscleshell City arrived with the spring, however. The government directed a survey for a military road from Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, to the mouth of the Musselshell River, where a one-mile-square military reservation was proposed. Captain Clift was in charge of the survey. Unfortunately the war department did not officially sanction the idea of the military reservation, and again the town was without protection.

Meanwhile Indian activity increased. Several woodhawks (men who supplied steamboats with fuel) were killed, a white woman was shot and scalped but lived to tell the tale, and several others were killed while attacking an Indian ambush. It was here, or perhaps at one of the woodyards, that the legend of "Liver Eatin" Johnson was born. (See BROWN — Ashley)

In the summer of 1870 the Montana Fur Company closed its business, and slowly the other traders, with the exception of Clendennin, did likewise. Colonel Clendennin stayed on, consolidated the vacated buildings to improve his trading post and renamed the settlement Fort Sheridan. Indian harassment continued, however, and business was limited largely to trade with the Indians. When the Diamond R Transportation Company established the town of Carroll in 1874 on Hutton Bottom

about three miles upriver from what was to become the Petroleum County line, all hopes of a freighting and trade center at the mouth of the Musselshell River vanished. Colonel Clendennin moved his buildings and stock of goods to the new location. Though Carroll was outside the bounds of Petroleum County, it is of interest to note that the fate of Carroll and nearby Wilder and Little Belt Mountain City was similar to that of Kerchival City, Muscleshell City and Fort Sheridan. The river graduallly consumed them all.
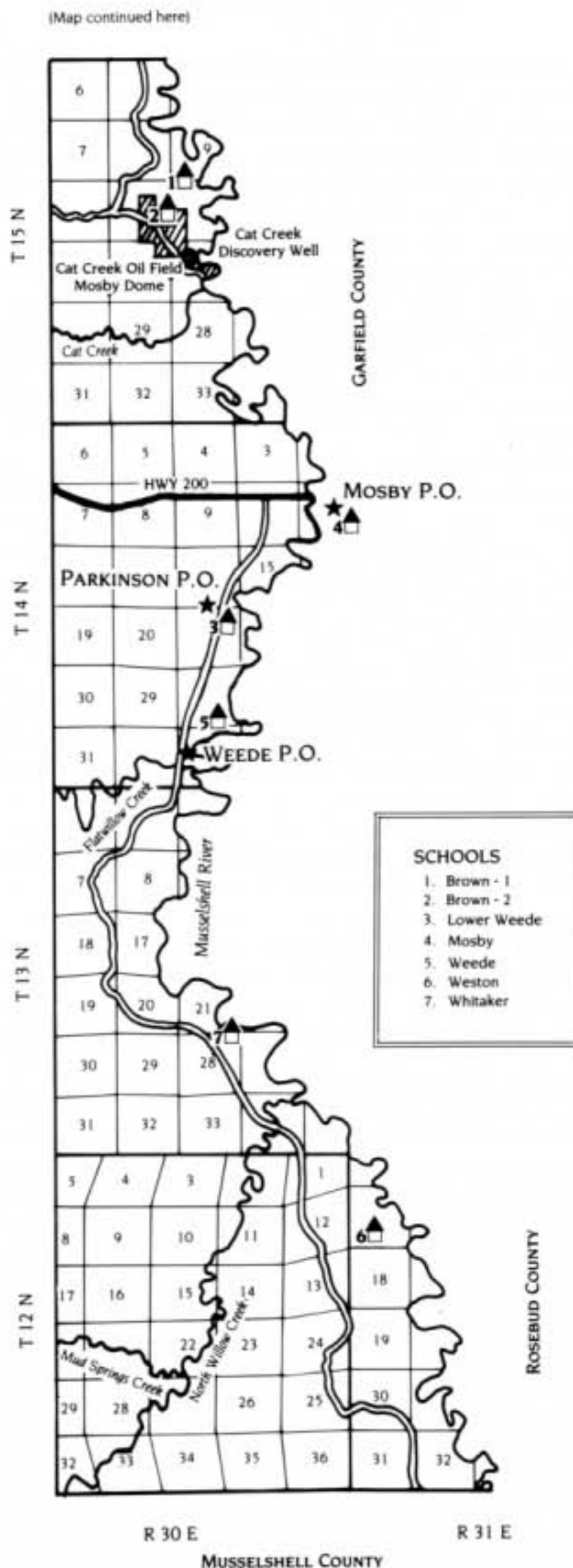
# Pony Express

Another note of historic interest to Petroleum County during this era was the oh-so-brief Pony Express route from Fort Abercrombie (near present Fargo, North Dakota) to Helena which crossed the Missouri River near the site of Fort Hawley. According to Ralph Miracle, Fort Hawley was built by the Northwest Fur Company about twenty miles above the mouth of the Musselshell River. "Over the years,"says Mr. Miracle, "this site showed the vagaries of the Missouri River. Fort Hawley was built on a point on the north bank of the river. In time it was cut off and made an island and finally became attached to the south bank and ended up across the river."

The post office department awarded a contract for the Northern Overland Mail Route to Major Charles A. Ruffee and Carlisle Doble on April 11, 1867. The original route crossed North Dakota, entered Montana near Ft. Buford, followed the Missouri River to Fort Peck (a trading post near the mouth of the Milk River), continued along the Milk River until it made an arc south to Fort Benton and followed the Prickly Pear Canyon road to Helena. After a series of problems with Indians (and urging by the backers of Kerchival City who hoped to benefit their enterprise), the route was changed from Fort Peck onward and, instead of the northerly Milk River route, it stayed on the north side of the Missouri until it crossed the river at Ft. Hawley. It then continued across the Judith Basin to Ft. Howie (not far from today's Martinsdale), to White Sulphur Springs, across the mountains through Diamond City and into Helena.

Old records indicate service over this route was begun about the first of October 1867. Indians, severe weather, and inadequate supplies all contributed to the collapse of the venture in the spring of 1868.

# Telegraph Line

After Ft. Maginnis was established in 1880, a telegraph line was built connecting the fort, via Ft. Galpin on the Milk River, with Ft. Buford. It crossed the Missouri River near the same Ft. Hawley crossing the pony express had used, though the trading post itself had been abandoned by 1869. "Telegraph Ridge" and "Telegraph Creek" can still occcasionally be found on modern-day maps as landmarks of the brief years this line existed. (Ft. Maginnis was closed in 1890.) A rural school in the 1920s also carried the name Telegraph Ridge School.



(Map continued here)

SCHOOLS
1. Brown - 1
2. Brown - 2
3. Lower Weede
4. Mosby
5. Weede
6. Weston
7. Whitaker

MUSSELSHELL COUNTY

# Vigilantes at the Mouth of the Musselshell

More fiction than fact has been written about vigilante justice on eastern Montana's cattle ranges. There are several things of which one can be reasonably sure, however. "Stuart's Stranglers" (as the vigilante stockmen became known) did hang some renegade horse thieves near the mouth of the Musselshell River in July 1884.

Rustling was common and cattlemen had become exasperated knowing the law did not have the capability or the resources to control the thievery. The Missouri and Musselshell breaks provided ideal refuge for the rustlers. Here they could alter cattle or horse brands, and then proceed across the Missouri into Canada where the booty was sold.

Several incidents took place near the mouth of the Musselshell. Billy Downes had a trading post of sorts located at a woodyard near the mouth of the river. Granville Stuart, in his book *Pioneering in Montana*, says Downes had a place "ostensibly to trap wolves, but in reality to sell whiskey to the Indians." In early July 1884 a committee of vigilantes found about 50 stolen horses in a corral just up the river from Downes' place. The horses were recovered and, according to Oscar Mueller, Lewistown historian who did considerable research on the subject, four men were killed in a gunfight and one man, "California Jack" (an escaped criminal with a $10,000 reward offered for his capture), was hanged.

Later the same day several, but not all, of the vigilante party proceeded down the river to Downes' fort where they reportedly hung Billy Downes and another man, both of whom were accused of dealing in stolen horses.

Similar vigilante incidents occurred during the month of July both up the river near Rocky Point and down the river at Bates Point. In all, probably 15 men died. Many cheered the vigilante action, others condemned it; but Oscar Mueller observed, "From then on, the Stock Inspectors took over the job of enforcing the laws, and peace descended upon the range in Central Montana." ("The Central Montana Vigilante Raids of 1884," by Oscar O. Mueller, *Montana Magazine of History*, Volume 1 — January 1951)

# Post Offices along the Missouri

A post office was established at Carroll in 1874, and it operated intermittently until 1882. Wilder's post office, a short distance upriver, was established in 1886 and operated until 1939. Though these post offices were outside of present-day Petroleum County, they served the residents along the entire stretch of the Missouri River to the mouth of the Musselshell.

It may be of some interest to note that Fergus County, at the time it was created in 1885, did not reach as far north as the Missouri River. Choteau County included both sides of the river until 1889 when Fergus County purchased the strip of Choteau County south of the river for $2500. The area at the mouth of the Musselshell River has also been part of several counties. In 1864 when Montana became a territory, it was within the western border of Big Horn County. The northern half of Big Horn County became Dawson County in 1869, placing the area in the immediate vicinity of the mouth of the Musselshell in Dawson County. It was finally acquired by Fergus County and became a part of Petroleum County in 1925.

For less than two years (June 22, 1898 to October 31, 1899), a post office operated below the mouth of Alkali Creek on the east side of the Musselshell River. The post office was named Vincent, and Walter V. Looke was the postmaster. Even Dennis Lutz in his fine book titled *Montana Post Offices and Postmasters* had difficulty determining the actual site of this post office. Official records only list it as being in Dawson County.

Albert Adams, before his death in 1988, was interviewed by the Petroleum County history group, and he recalled that his parents received mail at Vincent when they first came to the Musselshell River. In this taped interview he states the post office was located just below the mouth of Alkali Creek (Sec. 30-19-30).

In 1901 a post office named Kismet was established east of the mouth of the Musselshell River, almost opposite the site of abandoned Fort Musselshell. The mail came from the newly opened Jordan (1899) Post Office. Kismet consisted of a post office, store, warehouse, and a ferry which crossed the Missouri. The first postmaster was Heath Eaton. The area flooded in about 1908, the postmaster drowned, and the buildings were washed away (See also TOWN). According to John Town, the post office of Kismet was moved across the Missouri to the UL Ranch and operated for several years with ranchers taking turns carrying the mail from the Leedy Post Office.

The Leedy Post Office opened in 1903 and served river patrons until 1938. It was located on the north side of the Missouri River downstream from the Musselshell River.



*Old Fort Musselshell Saloon*

Walt Fletcher's store, saloon and post office at Fort Musselshell, 1913

Nichol (1906-1907), Legg (1917-1936) and Ceekay (1932-1937) were other north bank post offices which served patrons on both sides of the river. The post office map at the front of this book will show their locations.

On June 18, 1913, a post office was officially designated at Fort Musselshell near the site of the earlier fort. The settlement consisted of a ferry and store-saloon. Mollie Fletcher was named postmaster. The post office closed in 1915 but reopened in 1917 and operated until 1922. At that time, John Town moved the post office three miles north and changed the name to Bervie. Bervie was the name of a town in Ontario, Canada, where Mr., Town's mother had spent her childhood. The post office operated until 1932 with John Town as postmaster.

# Schools

School District #124 was created February 28, 1914, and a school was opened in Sec. 32-20-30. Some of the children attending the school were: Dundom, Tripp, Rukavina, Messier, Milesnick, Vlastelic, Matovich and Gauthier.

The schoolhouse burned during the winter of 1918. The following fall, school was held in an old bunkhouse on the Rukavina place. School at this site was discontinued in the early 1930s.

Several home schools operated in the district — one briefly at the Tony Weingart home in 1933, and one in the Alex Weingart home from 1938-1941.

District #204 was created in 1924 from the northern portion of District #124 and parts of District #101 in Fergus County. It encompassed an area along the Missouri River from Wilder to the eastern edge of the newly formed Petroleum County. The district operated as a joint district for about ten years. Though school was held under various names and at various locations, there are no records to indicate two schools operated at the same time. The school simply moved to the locations most convenient for the students. Baucke, Gairrett, Athearn and McGinnis children were some of the children listed on the school census for 1924.

Amanda Swift wrote of the school in December 1925: "The school in J/D #204 east of Wilder, which has just been built, houses a dozen children who were many miles from any school."

# Roads — Ferries — Bridges

During the late 1920s there were a number of proposals for a north-south road linking central Montana with the "hi-line." Various communities vied for the route. Winnett, of course, was among the competitors. In 1930 a graded road was completed from Winnett north to the Missouri River. A bridge was constructed across Crooked Creek, and the community had visions of a main thoroughfare going through Winnett to Malta.

Donations were solicited from Winnett businessmen for the purchase of a new cable for the ferry across the Missouri near the mouth of the Musselshell, and on August 16, 1930, a huge picnic, rodeo and bowery dance was held to celebrate the opening of the road and ferry. The Hon. Tom Stout and Teddy Blue Abbott spoke on the early history of Fort Musselshell. According to the Winnett Times, 500 carloads of people attended!

Plans were made to have a filling station on the south side of the Missouri River, and Phillips County began work on a road north of the river to Malta. The distance from Winnett to the ferry was 55 miles, from the ferry to Malta 75 miles.

Ferries operated at various times (both before and after 1930) across the Missouri River at Kismet, Leedy, Fort Musselshell and Rock Creek (Wilder-Carroll-Rocky Point area). It was common practice, however, to swim the river on horseback or to cross it on the ice in the winter. Numerous tales of such crossings are to be found in the text of this chapter.

For a number of years it was hoped a bridge would be built across the Missouri near the mouth of the Musselshell. Hopes dimmed after Fort Peck flooded the area since the channel became much wider. It was not until the Fred Robinson Bridge (upriver some 50 miles) was completed in 1961 that year-round traffic could cross from central Montana to the hi-line.



Fort Musselshell ferry about 1915 with Martin Matovich, Ed Henneman, Jack Richardson, John Castor, Roland Matthews and Dell Bunn aboard

# Fort Peck Dam

In the 1930s Fort Peck Dam was constructed across the Missouri River near the site of the old trading post of Fort Peck almost 100 miles down the Missouri River from the mouth of the Musselshell. The dam materialized as a result of a massive New Deal work project.

The idea of a dam across the Missouri River had been considered long before the 1930s, but it had been thought to be too expensive by other administrations. Roosevelt saw it as an opportunity to employ thousands of people and benefit thousands more who lived along the flood-plagued river all the way to New Orleans. As early as 1927, Army engineers had begun surveys and soil tests to determine the feasibility of the project.

In October 1933 a Winnett Times headline announced "$25,000,000 is Fort Peck Allotment." The money was allocated by the Public Works Administration for the first phase of construction. The work was to be directed by the Army Corps of Engineers. It was estimated at that time that 6500 men would be employed and that the dam would cost approximately $60,000,000.

Fort Peck Dam was completed in 1939 at a total cost of over $100,000,000. It is the largest earth-fill dam in the world, containing 125,600,000 cubic yards of earth. It is over 250 feet high, four miles long and creates a lake 135 miles long with more than 1500 miles of shoreline.

All of the grand statistics of the project meant little to the handful of landowners along the Missouri and Musselshell rivers who were forced to give up their homes and their livelihood to the waters of the reservoir. (Many references will be found in the following pages concerning the Corps of Engineers and their takeover of the land.) These people were hearty souls who had survived the rigors of weather, isolation and economic disasters. It was their home. Many left with heavy hearts and more than a touch of bitterness.

The entire region adjacent to the flooded lands had become a part of the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge.

# Musselshell River Settlements

The 1880s brought an end to the great buffalo herds, the last of which roamed Montana between the Missouri and the Yellowstone. Buffalo were replaced by cattle. This added an entirely new dimension to eastern Montana and the Musselshell River area. Prior to this time, white inhabitants had been limited to transient trappers, hide hunters and explorers. This "big open" to the east of the Musselshell River, however, became the range for a number of large cattle outfits in the 1880s — among them the 79, the Hat X, the LU Bar, the N Bar and the CK. To the west of the river the DHS (with headquarters near Ft. Maginnis), Kohrs and Bielenburg, Robert Coburn, Henry Sieben, N. J. Dovenspeck, N. W. McCaulley, C. D. Duncan, Stuart-Anderson, W. C. and G. P. Burnett, F. E. Lawrence, Adolph Baro and Amos Synder were among the first to use the open range.

Many of the people who settled along the Musselshell either came in with, or worked for, the early cattle outfits.

Their family stories are sprinkled with references to these ranch names.

An 1897 Montana map does not show a post office east of the Musselshell River between the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. The settlements were all along the rivers and, later, along the railroad. (Jordan's post office opened in 1899, Cohagen in 1905, Ingomar in 1910, Brusett in 1916.)

The earliest post office on the Musselshell River in eastern Montana was the town of Musselshell at Musselshell Crossing, 30 miles down the river from present day Roundup. (Not to be confused with Fort Musselshell or Muscleshell City at the mouth of the Musselshell River.) It was established in 1883, the same year Grassrange and Flatwillow received post office designations. These three settlements were all stops on the Junction City-Fort Maginnis stage route.

# Mosby

It was not until 1897 that another post office opened on the Musselshell River, and it still was not within what would become Petroleum County. This new post office was Baldwin (1897). Postal records indicate its first postmaster was Edward Baldwin. Very soon after it opened, however, it moved into the home of William and Mary Mosby (Township 9-Range 30) not far from what was to become the town of Melstone. (Melstone's post office did not open until the coming of the railroad in 1908.)

When the Mosbys moved down the river, the post office moved with them. In 1904 the family moved to the present Mosby location on the east side of the Musselshell River at what was known as Half-Breed Cross-

ing. The post office was officially named Mosby with Mary E. Mosby as postmaster. After Mary's husband died, Mary gave up the post office, and her son Herb's wife, Susie, became postmaster in 1915 (See also MOSBY).

George and Delora Gates took over the Mosby Post Office in 1919. George built a store and his wife was postmaster until 1923. Other Mosby businesses during that era included a hotel built by Herb Mosby in 1920 which burned in 1923, and a garage and blacksmith shop owned by Charles McWilliams.

Francis Boulden took over the store and post office in 1923. The Bouldens added a filling station to their business, and Francis served as postmaster until 1929

*New bridge across the Musselshell River near completion in 1933*

provement of a route from Lewistown to Jordan and Glendive. During 1931-1932 a contract was let to grade and gravel the road from Box Elder crossing to the Musselshell. The contractor agreed to hire local men and teams for as much of the work as possible. He hired 40 four-horse teams and offered to feed both horses and men for $1.00 per day.

On October 17, 1932, a contract for $47,481 was let for the construction of a steel bridge to replace the old wooden structure. The bridge was completed and a grand opening held on July 15, 1933. There were speakers, a baseball game, a rodeo, a boxing match and a free dance using the entire length of the bridge as a dance floor. Over 3000 people attended and 500 couples were said to have danced on the bridge. This bridge served for forty years until a new concrete-steel bridge was constructed a short way upriver in 1973.

In April 1946 the Winnett Times reported an oil strike on the East Dome. "The deep sand producing area of the Cat Creek field was extended 4½ miles to the southeast ... when Hanlon-Gov't. No. 1 on the field's hitherto unproductive east dome came in bailing nine barrels hourly of high gravity oil." The East dome which is only a few miles east of Mosby is not to be confused with the Mosby dome which is closer to Cat Creek. (See map of oil domes in Cat Creek section.) A Jet Fuel Refinery was built in 1952 by William M. Hanlon and York Oil Company. It was organized as a facility for marketing high gravity crude oil from the Cat Creek East Dome Field. The products refined were gasoline, jet fuel, JP-4, stove fuel, diesel and heavy fuel oil. The refinery operated until 1973.

when his wife, Pearl, was officially appointed postmaster, a position she held until her death. Her son became postmaster in 1953 and served until 1976. At that time the post office became a CPO (Community Post Office) of Winnett. Kenneth Boulden is presently (1988) the CIC (Clerk in Charge).

The Mosbys operated a ferry at Half-Breed Crossing until about 1918 when a wooden bridge was built. The western approach to the bridge was washed out in 1922, causing a source of contention between the local residents and the Fergus County Commissioners who were responsible for its repair. In November 1924 the Winnett Times reiterated some of the problems. "Many Garfield County farmers are marketing their products in Winnett. To do this they have to ford the Musselshell River near Mosby. The Fergus County approach on the bridge has been out for nearly three years and will very likely remain out until Petroleum County commences functioning and replaces the approach. Hauling from Garfield County to Winnett makes a decidedly long trip by team ... When it is taken into consideration that Mosby is 25 miles east of Winnett, one can fully realize the difficulties of farming in Garfield County — difficulties that have been added to by the neglect of the Fergus County Commissioners to replace the approach to the bridge."

Residents of eastern Petroleum County and Garfield County were, at that time, vitally interested in the proposed Great Northern railroad's Winnett-New Rockford cutoff. They were sadly disappointed when the rail line did not materialize.

In May 1925 the county commissioners from Garfield County and the newly formed Petroleum County held a planning session with a joint picnic at the Mosby bridge to consider plans for repairing the bridge. It was advertised as a gala affair. The Winnett Times reported ". . . the picnic is more of an old-time get-together meeting. You are to bring your own eats. There will be nothing for sale and nothing to buy. The fishing, swimming, and all other pleasures are free. A rare opportunity for the old to grow young, and the young to grow foolish!"

The bridge was made serviceable again and served until July 1933. In the early 1930s the State highway began im-



*Bridge at Mosby is finished and ready for the opening dance!*

# Schools

According to Dawson County school records, the school district in which Mosby was located was created in 1904 as a part of Dawson County. The district reached from the Missouri River south to the Rosebud County line. The individuals signing the petition for the school district were C. K. Nordahl, W. H. Mosby, J. B. Huff and John Hill. The first trustees were W. C. Niles, John Hill and W. H. Mosby with Maude D. Niles as clerk. Twelve children were listed in the 1904 census. Emily Henderson was believed to be the first teacher.

The first school was built by John Hill Sr. and the Mosbys. It burned in March 1928 and the old Mosby pool hall was used for school for the balance of the year. A new school was built northeast of the original location about ½ mile. It was later moved farther north to accommodate more families. In 1967 a trailer house was purchased for use as a school. Alma Rowton taught this school until it closed in 1975.

Some of the other schools which operated east of the river in the Mosby area during the 1920s were the Twin Butte School, the Canyon Creek School and the Youderian School. Later, in the 1950s, these rural schools operated — Williamson School, McDaniel School, Whoop-up School and Brown School.



Postmarked Weede, delivered to Weede
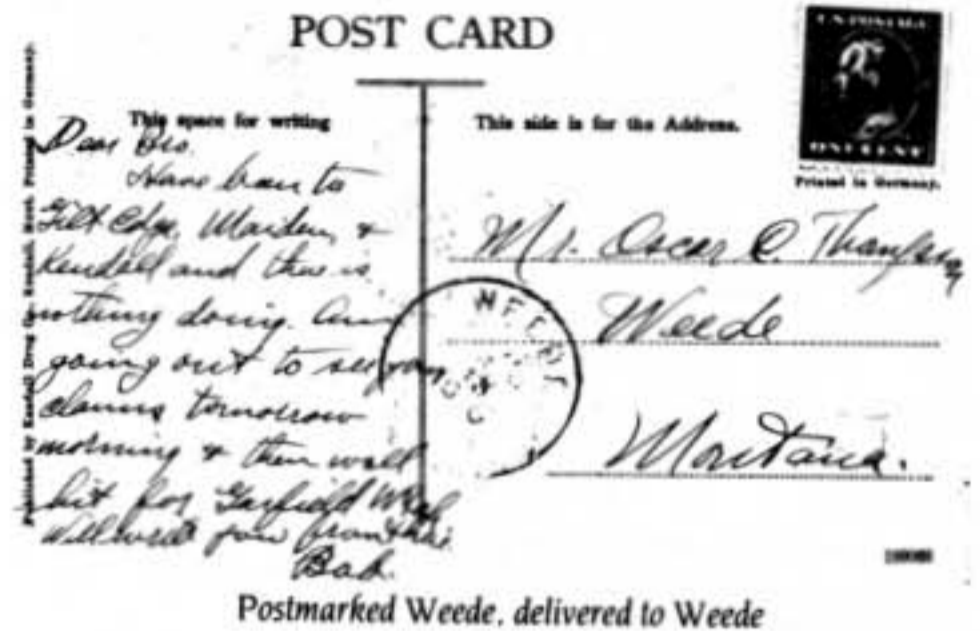
# Weede — Parkinson

Weede was located near the point at which Flatwillow Creek flows into the Musselshell River. It is a location mentioned by old-timers and historians as being a favorite Indian campground. According to legend, Pike Landusky established a trading post in the area before moving on up Flatwillow Creek to his post at the mouth of Pike Creek. (See also LANDUSKY — Flatwillow)

When a post office was approved for Weede in 1901, there were only two other post offices (Flatwillow 1883 and Edgewater 1900) in what was to become Petroleum County. Sarge W. Weede was named the first postmaster. Though the post office did not serve a large number of patrons, it served an extremely large geographic area including Ashley, Cat Creek Basin, Petrolia, and across the river east nearly to Jordan. The mail route came from the town of Musselshell, and the route was extended down the river when the Ross Post Office opened in 1906.

The Polk Directory for 1904-05 lists Weede as a "a country post office 90 miles southeast of Lewistown; 75 miles north of Junction, the shipping point on the Northern Pacific Railroad; and 120 miles northeast of Billings, the banking point. Lizzie Park, postmaster." Among the property owners listed were A. J. Boyle, homesteader; John Dyer, laborer; George W. Gates, barber; John Hill, stockman; W. H. Mosby, saloon; K. E. Park, cattle; John O'Dea, cattle; Edward Parkinson, surveyor; S. D. Parkinson, rancher; H. E. Pollard, mail carrier; Angelo Watterson, rancher; S. W. Weede, rancher.

The Weede post office operated from 1901 to 1911. In 1911 it became known as the Parkinson post office and was moved several miles north with Fred Martin as postmaster. In 1914 it again became known as Weede and Mrs. W. Boyle was named postmaster.

# Schools

Weede School District #107 was created on February 28, 1913, from District #26. It was a large district which was later divided into several smaller districts. The first trustees were S. D. Parkinson, C. L. Findley and R. A. White. The clerk was Angelo Watterson, and the first teacher was Florence Parkinson. The land for the school was acquired from George Gates in Sec 22-14-30. A second school location was also acquired in Sec 33-14-30.

Further up the river (in the southeast corner of the county which never had a post office) school district #164 was formed in 1916. The first trustees were W. C. Weston, B. J. Smith and J. E. Hensley. Hannah Raa was the first teacher in what was known as the Weston School. She taught for 57 days and was paid $65 per month. Another school also operated in the district — the Whitaker School. For a very short time District #164 also provided a home school in the Minor home. (See also Kelley chapter)