



The Fail family: Dave (in back), Casey, Lena and Alvin

FAIL, Lewis A. (Sec 5-15-30) Lewis Alvin Fail, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Fail, was born in 1878 in Illinois. He received his education in Iowa and Illinois.

Lena Munson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Nels Munson, was born in 1877 at LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Lewis and Lena were married in 1909. They came to Montana in 1913. When Lewis first came to Montana, he worked for George Ayers (father of Roy E. Ayers, a former governor of Montana), whose ranch was west of Grassrange. He filed for a homestead on Chippewa Creek and moved his family there when he got their house built.

Lewis Fail was known as "Uncle Jim" by members of the family in Wisconsin and Illinois. In Montana he was known as "Casey," a name he got in 1916 while operating a threshing outfit in the Grassrange country. One day he was driving one of the huge old-time tractors, pulling a thresher. Coming down a steep grade something went wrong with the clutch on the tractor. At the bottom of the grade was a farm house, at the turn of the road.

Fail doubted that he could get the outfit stopped in time and told the two men who were riding on the tractor with him to jump. Fail stuck to the machine and somehow got the outfit stopped, with the front of the engine only inches from the house. Occupants of the home fled in terror when they saw the monster bearing down on the house. Because of this incident, Fail was dubbed "Casey," and the railroader's moniker stuck with him all his life.

In 1921 Lewis was persuaded to go to work at the Cat Creek oil field. After working a few months there for the 56 Oil Company, he moved the family to Cat Creek. (See also FAIL — Cat Creek)

In 1928 the Fails bought the Alexander Dixon Ranch on the Musselshell River. Lewis and Lena had three children — Isabelle (1911), David (1917) and Alvin (1920). Isabelle started school at Chippewa and transferred to the Cat



Alvin, Dave and Casey Fail — butchering a hog at the Dixon place

Creek School. The boys, David and Alvin, went to the Cat Creek School, then graduated from Winnett High School.

Lena Fail died in 1941, and Casey died in 1965. They are buried in the Winnett Cemetery.

David Fail served in the Army in World War II. He and his brother, Alvin, ranched in partnership on the Fail Ranch. They lived there until 1972, when they sold the ranch to Jack Hanson. They had built their cattle herd to 550 cows before they sold the ranch. David married Dorothy Burr Fredrickson in 1974, and they lived in Missoula. David died in 1977.

Alvin Fail stayed on the ranch until 1972, when the ranch was sold, then moved to Phoenix, Arizona. Alvin married but had no children. (See also FAIL — Cat Creek)

Isabelle Fail married Robert Schaeffer in 1952. (See also SCHAEFFER — Cat Creek)

FAULKERSON, Glen At first Glen Faulkerson lived at the mouth of the Musselshell, near Rukavinas. Then he filed a 320 acre homestead claim on a large flat above the Musselshell River. This flat, now called the Faulkerson Flat, is thought to have been caused by a pre-glacial slide in the rough Missouri-Musselshell breaks that left a 2000 acre flat and also caused the UL Bend in the Missouri River.

Glen Faulkerson married Ivy Coon, daughter of A. R. Coon. (Marcus Matovich)

FAUVER, Phillip H. (Sec 34-13-30) Phillip Fauver homesteaded and later sold to J. A. Bunting. This land is now part of the Benson Ranch.

Jay (1908), Leon (1909) and Etha (1910) are listed as the children of Phillip and Kate Fauver, in the census of District #164. The last listing for them was the 1920 census for this district.

FLETCHER, Walter Walt Fletcher is said to have come to Montana with a Long S trail herd in the early 1900s. According to an article written by John Town for

the Winnett Times on July 16, 1964. Walter Fletcher and his family visited the John Town family in the early summer of 1912, looking for a site to start a ferry. Mr. Fletcher liked the looks of the old Fort Musselshell site, and so he set up a ferry and store-saloon. The first summer Walter used a little cable ferry which the Towns had built for their own use. Mr. Fletcher did freighting as well.

Mollie Fletcher became postmaster for the newly established Fort Musselshell Post Office in June 1913. Walter died in January 1914. Mollie ran the place for a time. (The post office was closed from August 1915 until November 1917.) She married Jose Flores and they moved across the river into Dawson County. They moved to Colorado in 1921.

FOX, Ed (Sec 2-17-29) Ed Fox, "Wolfer," came to the Lower Musselshell River area from the Great Falls and Belt, Montana, areas. While trapping wolves, he would stop at a place on the mouth of Dovetail Creek. He filed a pre-emption claim there in 1902. He moved his family there in 1911. His family consisted of his wife, Ada, his sons, George and Fred, his daughter, Alta, and granddaughter, Alice Martin.

Alta married Berry Roberts; Fred married Leora Edwards; George married Odessa Atwood. Alice married Bert Wells.

Bears roamed the area, killing cattle and sheep. One day Ed trailed a bear up a coulee with the intention of killing it. After several miles, he realized he was in a "dead end" coulee, and the banks were too steep for him to climb in a hurry. He high-tailed it out of there before the bear could get him.

Ed was buried in 42 degree-below-zero weather on a pinnacle overlooking Dovetail Creek, where he had asked to be buried. Ed was a very large and heavy man. It took four saddle horses pulling a homemade sled to haul the body up the hill.

When Ed died in 1918, John Winters and Martin Wangsness went up the hill to dig his grave. John said to Martin, "Martin, I hope when I die, it will be just as tough and miserable to dig my grave." Martin looked at him and said, "Vel You! If you promise to use it, ve could just move over and dig another one now!!" (Marcus Matovich)

Ada Patterson Fox, born in 1854, died in 1939 and is buried at Winnett.

FOX, Fred (Sec 35-18-29) Fred Fox, the son of Ed and Ada Fox, was born in 1892 at Belt, Montana. He came to the Lower Musselshell area with his family in 1911. When he was a young fellow, he and Rudy Clavitter built a raft to cross the Musselshell to get their mail. They would land at Sheldon Coon's, then walk upriver to the Ross Post Office. This particular time, they got their sack of mail, walked back, and pushed the raft back into the water. They had floated about a mile when they hit a large cottonwood tree that had just caved into the river. This tipped the raft, dumping the boys.

Fred was unable to swim, but Rudy was an excellent swimmer. Rudy managed to get Fred up on the tree, and

he got the mail sack from the raft, which was still stuck in the tree, and gave it to Fred. Rudy then started for shore, only to sink out of sight. The body was never recovered. Fred yelled and hollered until Walt Allan came and rescued him, just before the tree broke loose and floated away. (Marcus Matovich)

Fred married Leora Edwards in 1918. They lived on the homestead until about 1926, when they moved to Winnett. Fred died of the flu in 1928 and is buried in the Winnett Cemetery.

FOX, George E. (Sec 17,20-18-29) George Fox, son of Edward and Ada Fox, was born in 1890 at Belt, Montana. In 1911 he moved with his family to the Lower Musselshell. Both he and his family took up homesteads at the mouth of Dovetail Creek (Sec. 2-17-29).

Odessa Atwood, daughter of Wesley J. and Catherine Coon Atwood, was born in 1891 at Milan, Missouri. In the spring of 1911 she moved with her family to the Lower Musselshell, where they took up homesteads at the mouth of Drag Creek (Sec 2-18-29).

George and Odessa were married in 1929 at White Sulphur Springs. After their marriage, they moved into Winnett.

Odessa told her family of an incident on the homestead: "I rode horseback to visit and stay overnight with my sister. The next day my nephew, who was not very old, rode double with me back home. On the way, I said to him, 'So, you had a birthday last week.' He answered, 'Nope, Ma didn't have any baking powders!' Just goes to show you how important 'baking powders' were to a homesteader." (See also FOX — Winnett)

(Alice Fox Sandaker)

GAIRRETT, John (Sec 19-21-29) and **GAIRRETT, Newton** (Sec 12-21-28) John Henry Gairrett was born in 1888 in Holt County, Missouri. Julia Adelpia Smith was born in 1897 at Craig, Missouri. John and Julia were married in 1914. They had four sons — John I. (1915), Kenneth E. (1917), Paul L. (1923) and Dale Q. (1926).

Dale and his wife, Katherine Hanson Gairrett, (See also HANSON — Dovetail) submitted the following article. "The John and Newton Gairrett families came to Montana in 1913. They spent about a year working on different ranches, then built a boat and floated down the Missouri River and homesteaded in northern Petroleum County. To the north in the background were the Larb hills, and further down was the mouth of Beauchamp Creek.

"To make ends meet, they took horses and wagons into Canada at harvest time. The wives cooked and the men worked in the fields. They remember many of the people they met or saw.

"Ray Henneman was considered a drifter, as he would come and go at different places. Abe Bittison was a horse thief who tried to steal their horses more than once. Jake Parker tried to shoot Newt and almost shot Wayne, Newt's son. They had gone to Roy, Montana, for groceries. Jake Parker was killed by Alkali Ike.

"The boys remember some men coming to their place in fancy suits and big cars. They ran the car off into the river and left. The Canadian Mounties came looking for them but didn't find them. The boys realized later that these guys were gangsters.

"There was a school at Ceekay and one farther down. Some of the teachers the boys remember were Ray Holzy, Miss Sweeney, Abbott, Ray Carey, Parker, Miss Fessenden, and J. Fullmer.

"Walking to school one time, the boys didn't know they were being trailed by a mountain lion. Some of the neighbor men heard the cat squall, went to investigate and found that it had trailed the boys almost to the school. The boys shoes were homemade and they had wrapped their feet in gunny sacks to keep them from freezing.

"John and Newt took the team and went to town for groceries — 100 pounds of sugar, dried fruit, lard, coffee, 50 pounds of salt, beans, macaroni, and other basics for survival. It usually took about four days each way to make a trip, due to weather and distance. John and Newt started home with their goods and their most precious cargo, a jug of whiskey. They had a little drink. They weren't worried about getting lost as the teams would go home.

"Many miles later and more drinks down the road, the boys were merry to say the least. They didn't notice that the tailgate on the wagon had come down and they were losing some of the grub. Some coyotes noticed they were dropping off grub and followed the wagon, eating the things that fell off. When they arrived home they saw what had happened and crawled off the wagon in fits of laughter. One of the boys asked Uncle Newt how it could have happened. He said that the coyotes must have done it.

"Fred Machler was a regular around our place, so when he didn't come around for a few days, the boys were sent to see if something was wrong with him. They found him very sick and asked him what was wrong. He told them that the coyote ate his cows, so he ate the coyote.

"In 1924 John bought a Model T Ford and drove it back from Missouri. He came through Hardin and Pryor (Montana), and had to ford creeks everywhere. This car was going to solve a lot of transportation problems, but it also led to some interesting episodes. The mighty Missouri was the biggest means of travel. In the winter it was a highway, fewer miles and easier going, but there were the drawbacks, such as the air holes in the ice. John, with his ingenuity, tied big long poles onto the car so that if it broke through the ice, they wouldn't lose the car. He and a neighbor went to town for groceries. When they came home, the car did break through the ice and they lost all the groceries and got themselves very wet.

"Homesteading wasn't all fun and glory. Our folks lost lives, livestock, their homes, and a lot of good friends. They moved to Billings in 1936, then on to Clark, Wyoming, in 1938."

GARTHOFNER, Ben Ben Garthofner is a well-known western author and artist who now lives in Phoenix, Arizona. The following was submitted by him.

"My father and mother, James and Alice Garthofner, moved from 24 miles northwest of Chinook, Montana, to the Missouri River, 65 miles south of Malta and settled on a river bottom on the south side of the river (downriver from the UL Bend) in the spring of 1911, when I was six years old. It was a free country at that time, sort of a last frontier. There were no roads up and down the river valley or in and out, either. We gouged out the old buffalo trails and made a road out of the valley so we could get out with a team and wagon. Some lived in log houses with dirt roofs and some with dirt floors. There were not many living in that country then. We lived mostly off the land on wild meat, river fish and a garden.

"We lived there (on the north side) from January 1911 until the ice went out of the river in April, then moved everything to our location on the south side in a rowboat. It took two or three years to clear the river bottom of sagebrush and rose bushes. My father plowed sixty-five acres and planted it to alfalfa and slowly developed a herd of cattle. The range was free then. I helped my father around the ranch and took a man's place from the time I was nine years old. I worked on real roundups, helped trail many herds of cattle, and helped swim many across the wide Missouri River. I operated three ranches for myself in Montana at different times. We didn't have any active law there. I was over forty years old before I ever had a hunting or fishing license.

"I first went to the Leedy School to a Mrs. Harris, working for my board and bed at the H. B. Varney Ranch and walking two miles each way to school. I got three and a half months schooling that year. I worked on the Tripp Ranch on the Missouri, for bed and board to go to school at the Tripp School for three to three and one half months each year.

"I ran away from home when I was 14 years old to go to school, as my father kept me on the ranch so much to help him. When I ran away, I got a job working for Bill Howard of Old Musselshell Crossing, a little town on that river. I worked for \$2.00 per day, driving four horses on a fresno, building roads. That winter I worked for my board and bed at Bob Conley's ranch and walked three miles each way to school. After the terrible flu epidemic my school closed, for so many teachers had died. I finished school around April, working at Bill Howard's livery barn in Musselshell for my board and bed. That year I got my longest term of school, four months of schooling that year, just starting into the sixth grade in April, when my father came and took me home. I never went to school again.

"My brother Donald was born in Malta August 11, 1911. My brother Stanley Vernon was born at the Gallinger Ranch February 27, 1914. My sister, Lucile Lavina, was born on another ranch March 7, 1916.

"I knew a lot of people along the Missouri River and the

Musselshell River. The summer of 1919 was very dry, followed by a hard, cold winter. In the spring of 1920 I rode up the Musselshell Valley. There was never a time that I couldn't see dead cattle or horses around me. That winter broke many ranchers. When I ran away from home in the fall of 1919, I passed through Ingomar on the Milwaukee Railroad, which amounted to just a wide place in the road, yet it, at the time, was known as the sheep capital of the country, for it sheared more sheep each spring than any other place on earth. They were drilling for oil, then north of town with an old type "spudding" drill because the rotary drill had not come into use then. They did strike oil there. At the same time they drilled at Mosby and struck oil there, too.

"Bud Secrest was ranch foreman on the old UL Ranch in the big bend of the Missouri River. That old ranch amounted to seven river bottoms. Bud was a great man to play pranks on people but nothing to do any harm. He had nothing but friends everywhere. The Town family ranched just across the river from the UL. Richard Town and his wife had two boys, John and Bill, and two girls, whose names I have forgotten. In winter Richard sent his wife and children to Malta so the children could attend school. He owned a small brick home in Malta.

"One time Richard came across the river ice with his old Model T Ford, with the brass rim on the radiator. He had beef, potatoes, eggs and other foods from the ranch to take to his family in town. He drained the water out of the radiator and took everything that would freeze into the house and stayed all night with Secrest and his wife. During the evening Bud asked Richard if he would bring him back a gallon of whiskey. Richard, a little Englishman who hated booze and tobacco, refused. All the begging by Bud did no good. Next morning they filled the radiator with hot water, started it, put the food back into it, and Richard left. The evening before, after everyone had gone to bed, Bud got up and took all the eggs out of Richard's crate and replaced them with small potatoes. Richard got stuck in a snowdrift and had to come back to have Bud pull him out with a team. Bud said, 'Now, Richard, will you bring me back a gallon of whiskey?' Richard replied, in his English accent, 'Weel, I might bring ye back a quart.'

"In the winter of 1915, Jim Kipp gave a dance. Bud hooked four horses to a bobsled and took everyone from the UL to the dance. Toward morning Bud's boy, a four year old, became ill. Bud wanted to take the boy and go home, but his wife refused. There had been a drifter come to the UL early in the winter. Like many grub-line riders, he helped feed cattle and did other work around the ranch and stayed on. He was at the dance. Bud took the child and started for the door to go home when his wife yelled, 'Stop him.' This drifter reached up on the log wall, took down a 30-30 rifle, and shot Bud through the heart. The man's name was O'Reilly. It was hard to believe, but O'Reilly was only given two years in the Deer Lodge penitentiary. Shortly after he was released, he was killed in a car accident west of Malta.

"I remember some of the hills along the Musselshell River were covered with scrub cedar, growing thick as sagebrush. One of the families I knew was the Nordahl family. They were nice people. I stopped overnight for the first time the spring of 1920. One of the boys, Eddy, became a good friend of mine. He learned to play a violin in that old bunkhouse on the ranch and once played on a radio station in Minneapolis and St. Paul for a year or two. But he got lonesome for the smell of sagebrush, quit, and came back to Montana.

"I knew the Songer brothers and their mother, Mrs. Smith. Alvin and Clarence were good cowboys and bronc riders. There was a celebration and a little rodeo put on at the mouth of Lodgepole Creek on the Musselshell every 4th of July for a number of years. Mrs. Smith always brought several freezers of homemade ice cream, and it was so good! Alvin always rode a bronc and we boys rode cows and steers.

"Berry Roberts ranched on the Musselshell, as well as an old-timer named Bill Coulee. At one time Bill had an electric orchestra in his house. He must have had an electrical plant to furnish the power.

"In about 1917 there was a large family named Nordum living near the UL Bend. They had a daughter named Ruby, who was 16 at the time. She was an attractive young lady and had her admirers, including George Parker and August 'Alkali Ike' Shellito. Ike called on Miss Ruby quite often. He worked hard, trying to make a good ranch of his homesteaded river bottom. One day, George Parker and his half brother, Hansen, rode down to Ike's ranch and ordered him to leave the country, giving him until the next day at noon to be gone. The next day when they rode up to Ike's place, Ike was ready for Parker. Parker said he could see Ike had not left and shot at Ike with his single action Colt six-shooter, but missed. Ike shot Parker with his 30-30 rifle right through the lower spine, but he was not sent to prison. He married Ruby and they had one daughter. Ike later lost his mind and was sent to Warm Springs, Montana.

"One of the well-known men of the country between Jordan and the Musselshell was Ross Ricks. They called him 'Bones' because he was tall and skinny. He had the misfortune of being born tongue-tied. When he talked, a person had to pay close attention to follow what he was talking about. When he worked for the 79 Ranch, he was badly hurt, so they sent him to Rochester, Minnesota.

"Bones was a person who loved to tell big, windy stories to strangers. He told his nurse he owned the 79 Ranch and several thousand head of cattle, which was true of the 79 at that time. Before it was time for him to return to Montana, he and the nurse had become quite close and even talked of marriage. So Bones had to tell her the truth about himself. He told her he only owned a couple saddle horses, a riding outfit, and a bedroll, and that he worked for \$40.00 a month. Even so, she later came to Montana. They were married, got a small ranch, and raised at least one son.

"One time Bones was traveling down the dirt road east of Sand Springs when he ran out of gas for his Model T Ford. He walked about three miles to the gas station. The attendant had never seen Bones before. Bones walked in and said, 'Runned out ob das down wode, need tan.' The young man looked at Bones and said, 'Mister, I can't tell what you want.' Bones replied, 'Das, Das, Das. Dod dan, tant you unertan pain endish?' He never seemed to mind that people laughed when he was talking.

"For several years after we settled on the Missouri River, we made one trip to Malta for supplies. It was necessary to take our wagon apart and cross it in the rowboat, as well as swimming the team. It took a day and a half to make the trip to Malta. There my father bought lumber for a wagon box and put the supplies in it. When he got back to the river, everything had to be crossed in the rowboat. Sugar cost \$6.00 per hundred and flour \$4.00. Levis cost \$1.50 a pair, and a fine box of apples cost 85 cents. We raised our own pork and cured it. By raising a big garden and canning most of it, we had our vegetables and other food.

"That old Missouri River Valley is now under water from Fort Peck to Rocky Point. That lake spoiled a lot of great ranches with owners who were free and very happy. The only good it ever did was to furnish power. The Musselshell Valley is a fine ranch country where they irrigate the fields and raise livestock."

MY DREAMS

In all my dreams it always seems
I'm living in the past
With good old friends I used to know,
I'm back there, home at last.

And everything about my dreams
Is so real in every way.
I'm young again, so are my friends
We're not this old and grey.

Sometimes I ride those long, dim trails
I knew once long ago,
I'm on a real cow-horse again
Just swinging high and low.

Smell of sagebrush fills the air,
Cattle scattered far and wide,
Larks a singing all they can,
My love for this I'll never hide.

Those old log homes of cottonwood
Were homes to everyone.
They shut out howling blizzards,
The rain and boiling sun.

I never dream of city life
That's where I live these days.

I'll never learn to like it
I'll never like its ways.

I hope when my time comes
To top that last divide,
It'll be just like my dreams
With old friends by my side.

I'll ride a horse I've rode before
On trails I won't forget
And always be with those good folks,
The best a man has ever met.
(Ben Garthofner — 1971)

GATES, George (Sec 21-14-30) The late 1890s found two young men coming to the Musselshell River as cowboys. Their names were George Gates and Ed Parkinson. They liked what they saw and stayed in the area until they became old enough to claim a homestead. George married his buddy Ed's sister, Delora (Rolla) Parkinson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Silas Parkinson. After a few years on the homestead, they moved to Mosby and operated a store for several years.

Their children, listed in the school census for District #107 were: Louise (1903), Mary (1905), Margaret (1911), Jean (1914), and a son, Delno S. (1917).

Delora died in 1918, and George moved his family to the Flathead. Delno S. came back to the Lewistown, Montana, area as Doctor D. S. Gates, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. He was well-known throughout the area and often attended the local stockgrower meetings.

GAUTHIER, Henry The following was contributed by Agnes Gauthier Schaff. "Henry Gauthier, the only surviving son of Louis Gauthier and Leocadie Fortier, was born on June 29, 1894, in Weedon, Quebec, Canada. There were also nine daughters in the family. His family moved around quite a bit, and it was while they were living in Regina, Montana, as a young man, that he met his future wife, Evelyn Ledoux. Evelyn, a daughter of James Ledoux and Georgiana Frazier, was born in Fall River, Massachusetts, on May 7, 1894. Her family moved around quite a bit, too, before coming to Regina. In about 1916 Evelyn, her parents, and a younger adopted sister moved to some land along the mouth of the Musselshell River. Evelyn and her father each homesteaded land.

"On October 1, 1917, Henry Gauthier, my father, and Evelyn Ledoux, my mother, were married in Regina. They lived there a short time. My father then bought my grandfather's share of the homestead land on the Musselshell, moving there. My grandparents, the James Ledoux, moved to Frenchtown, Montana. It was there my grandmother passed away on May 24, 1929. My grandfather lived there a few years longer and then returned to live with us.

"To this union ten children were born — Louis (1919) at Mecaha, Agnes (1921) at Frenchtown, Alice (1922) at Mecaha, James (1925) at Mecaha, Lawrence (1926) at

Mecaha, Frederick (1928) at Mecaha, William (1929) at Malta, Richard and Rita (1931) at Mecaha, and Raymond (1936) at Lewistown.

"Raymond died at birth and is buried in Lewistown, Montana. The remainder of the family grew up on this ranch at the mouth of the Musselshell River.

"Our post office was Mecaha, about 10 miles up the river. We received our mail twice a week. I'm sure more than one means of transportation was used. Horses and wagon or horseback were the most common, but no doubt a car or such may have been used, as motor vehicles came into use during our lifetime there. I remember we had to cross the river and go two or three miles to where the mail carrier left the mail.

"Our county seat was Jordan, Montana, as we lived in Garfield County, but my father very seldom went there, probably just to do the necessary business. He usually went to Winnett to shop for groceries, etc., but needless to say, it wasn't very often. We were 58 miles from Winnett; and not having a car until 1929, my father went shopping with horses and wagon, as I remember, only once a year. The trip took approximately five days. The roads were just steep, winding, dirt roads coming out of the river bottom, so were impassable a good deal of the time. For medical care, we went to Lewistown, Montana.

"My older brother, Louis, and I attended the Fort Musselshell School. It was about two and a half miles from our home, across the Musselshell River. He went there for two years and I, one year. We usually rode horseback to school. But when the river was high, we would cross in a rowboat and then walk the remaining distance to school.

"A school was opened on our side of the river when I started the second grade, as there were enough children of school age by then. It was called the Anderson School, probably because school was held in the bunkhouse on the Ed Anderson Ranch while the new school was being built. This school was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from home, on land donated by our neighbor, Carl Ralkvam. A portion of the schoolyard was on our land. The school was built by fathers of children attending this new school. My older brother, Louis, obtained his high school education by correspondence. When I finished eighth grade, I stayed out a year, waiting for my sister. Alice and I attended Sacred Heart High School in Miles City, Montana, boarding at the Ursuline Convent for two years.

"The sale of the portion of our land which would be under the back-up water of the Fort Peck Dam was finalized in 1936. In the summer of 1938 my parents bought a ranch between Columbus and Absarokee (Montana), and we moved just before school started that fall.

"Sadness befell our family the next spring. Our little sister, Rita, was struck and killed by a bread delivery truck while walking home from school in May 1939. She was almost seven years old at the time. She is buried in Columbus.

"My grandfather Ledoux moved to our new home with us. He died April 24, 1945, at the age of 89. He, too, is buried in Columbus. My brother, James, is also deceased, passing away April 11, 1961. He is buried in the Rosebud Cemetery near Absarokee.

"My parents lived on this ranch until the fall of 1955, when they retired and moved to Laurel, Montana. They had a very good life, in spite of the many hardships of their younger years. They enjoyed traveling, but above all they enjoyed their large family. At the time of their deaths, there were seven surviving children, 32 grandchildren, and 45 great grandchildren. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary October 1, 1967, and their sixtieth anniversary ten years later. Our father passed away at the age of 90, March 23, 1985, in Billings, Montana. Mother passed away May 17, 1986, in Laurel, at the age of 92. Both are buried in the Laurel Cemetery.

"My brothers, sister, and I all live in the Laurel, Columbus, and Absarokee area, with the exception of Lawrence. He joined the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in 1950 and is presently living in Raymondville, Texas."

GIBSON, Fred Although Fred Gibson never made a permanent home in Petroleum County, he, and men like him, had a definite influence on the settling of the area. He spent his entire life in the West when white-man history was being made.

Fred, the only son of Henry and Merry Gibson, was born in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 1879. He was orphaned at the age of fourteen, and it was at that time that he started cowboying as his only line of work.

In 1908 he came to Montana, landing in Miles City. His first job was with the N Bar working for Tom Cruse. He later worked for the H Cross mostly as rep with the 79 wagon.

In 1916 he married Myrna Garfield and settled in Garfield County 26 miles north of Sand Springs, Montana. He served as Sheriff of Garfield County from 1928 until 1935. Fred and Myrna had two sons, Robert and Richard. Fred died in 1949. The following poem by Badger Clark depicts his sentiments:

"When my old soul hunts range and rest,
Beyond the last divide,
Just plant me in some stretch of West
That sunny lane and wide,
Let cattle rub my tombstone down
And coyotes mourn their kin,
Let hawses paw and tramp the mawn'
But don't you fence it in!"

Myrna married Walter (Bill) Haynie and moved to Winnett in 1961. (See also GARFIELD and HAYNIE — Winnett)

James Richard Gibson (Dick) was born in 1918 at the ranch at Benzien, north of Sand Springs. He received his education in Garfield County. Dick acquired some earth-moving equipment and started building dams. He stayed

with this line of work until 1958, when they moved to the John Winter Ranch on the Musselshell. Dick is very mechanically minded and inventive. He has turned many a "piece of junk" into a useful machine.

In 1947 James Richard married Hazel Winter, daughter of John Winter and Hellan Hill. They had five sons — John (1948), Daniel (1949), James (1953), Joe (1955), and David (1961). John married Margaret Gribble and has two children, JoAnn and Judd. They live in Jordan. Daniel died at the age of two months. James married Renie Irish and has two children, Randy and Berry. They live in Jordan. Joe married Sandy Lervich and has two children — Janie and Ty. Joe works for Bill Brown at Sand Springs. David is unmarried and lives in Billings.



Dick and Hazel Gibson (40th Anniversary)

GIBSON, Henderson Linville (Henry) Henderson Linville Gibson was born in Saunders County, Nebraska, on December 4, 1867. In 1899 he married Margaret Elizabeth Bradberry at Wahoo, Nebraska. The couple had the following children: LeRoy (1902), Pearl (1904), twins Veda and Velma (1906), Darrell (1909), James J. (1912), and Charles R. (1915). Guy Eathan was born at Calf Creek in 1919.

Henry came to the river in the fall of 1916 and settled on Calf Creek. He went into partnership with Guy Bump on a ranch on the Musselshell. Maggie and the family followed in 1917 and settled in the home Henry had built. They stayed on the place until 1941, when they moved to Winnett. Henry died in 1944, and Maggie in 1945.

LeRoy Gibson lived on the ranch until 1933, when he moved to Portland, Oregon. During World War II he worked in the shipyards. He returned to the river in 1945 and got the mail carrier contract. He purchased one of the first four-wheel-drive jeeps to be used on the river. With this vehicle he was better able to travel the roads on his mail route. However, there were still many times he had to revert to the high clearance, four-legged mode of

transport. Roy retired from the mail route in 1967 and moved to Miles City, where he lived until his death in 1974.

Pearl Gibson married Knute Nordahl in 1923 and spent the rest of her life on the river. (See also NORDAHL) Veda Gibson married George Allan. They lived in Great Falls. She passed away in 1981. Velma Gibson spent her life on the river. She made her home with Pearl and Knute from 1935 on. Darrell and Charles left the area to work and live elsewhere. James passed away at home in 1920. Guy Gibson worked for the Montana State Highway Department from 1947 until retirement in 1981. He served in the Army in World War II. He married Barbara Jessen and had three children — Don, Bill and Wanda. They lived at Miles City, where he died in 1986.

GILFEATHER, Thomas J. (Sec 13-17-29) Thomas Gilfeather came to Helena, Montana, in the 1890s as a railroad engineer from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He met and married Cora Sandidge in 1896. Cora, daughter of Charlotte (Dixon) and Larkin Sandidge, was born June 10, 1879, near Helena, Montana. Both her parents had come to Montana as children during the Last Chance Gold Rush of the 1860s.

Thomas and Cora came to a pioneer log home about 25 miles north of Mosby in 1902. They helped organize a school for the Carl Nordahl, Adams, and their own children. After three of the four Gilfeather children died of diphtheria, the school was moved to a more central location. Mr. Gilfeather started the Sagebrush Post Office and it ran from 1904 to 1905, then in 1906 the Ross Post Office was established in the Gilfeather home. It was named for a friend of Tom's, and Gilfeathers ran it until 1935.

Patrick Gilfeather recalls, "The houses were log with sod roofs over hewed logs and rough lumber. Furnishings were limited. However, Mother had a piano that was later lost in a schoolhouse fire. It was mainly cattle country, with hay being developed on the bottoms, and some small grain and corn. My father raised watermelon and cantaloupe and hauled them to Lewistown to trade for winter provisions.

"My father was justice of peace and we had a few neighborhood squabbles tried in the bunkhouse.

"We shipped cattle by trailing them 100 miles to the railroad. It was a ten-day trip and I got to make my first trip at the age of thirteen. I was the lowly horse wrangler. I graduated to a herd driver and had the privilege of trailing with Fred Gibson, who had trailed from Texas.

"Mother claimed that she fed more horse thieves than any other woman in the world. Lodgepole Creek, Calf Creek, and Blood Creek all emptied into the Musselshell near our place. When the thieves were running from the law, they would come down one of these creeks, hit the river, then go north into Canada. Our place was about the only place they could get a meal. Al Morgan, of Fergus County, was the most frequent sheriff in pursuit and he made many stops at our place.

"Mother was clerk of the school district for many years. People used to come to her at the Ross Post Office to have her help them with their mail orders from catalogues. People expecting mail or packages would come to our place and stay, sometimes a week, waiting for whatever they were expecting."

Thomas and Cora had eight children. Three died from diphtheria. The others were: Charles (1901), Patrick (1911), Thomas (1912), Clarence (1916), and Robert (1921).

Thomas died in 1931 and Cora continued to live on the river until 1940, when she moved to Helena to care for her mother, Charlotte Tuohy. She later sold the home place and moved to Great Falls, Montana, where she died in 1955. (See also TUOHY)

Charles Gilfeather took over operation of the family ranch. He married Jacqueline Melton in 1939. They had two sons, Thom G. (1940) and Jack (1942). Jack was killed in a gun accident in 1954. Jacqueline wrote the Lower Musselshell news for many years. She had a very picturesque way of wording her items. Charles was a long-time member of the Montana Stockgrowers and an organizing member of the Williams Coulee Grazing District. Charles died in 1962.

Patrick Gilfeather married Margaret Raitt in 1937. They had three sons — Gordon Grant, Frank and Glen. Pat became an attorney and lived mostly in Great Falls. He died in 1988. Thomas Gilfeather never married. He lived in Great Falls. Clarence Gilfeather married Viola Corrigan and had three children — Randall, Robert and Teresa Lee. He was a land appraiser and lived in Portland, Oregon. He passed away in 1976. Robert Gilfeather married Darlene Stefanatz. They did not have children. He spent many years in Saudi Arabia, retiring to Dillon where he had the Metlen Hotel. He died in 1986.

GREEN, James (Sec 19-16-30) Jim Green, son of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Green, was born in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma in 1899. He came to Petroleum County in 1916 and filed on a homestead.

Jim worked as a ranch hand along the Musselshell River



Jim Green, Pat Riley, Alfred Ripley, Norman Taylor, and Sheck Coon

and spent some time working construction. The following item was taken from the Winnett Times, 1950: "Shorty Saylor and Jim Green took first money in the wild cow milking contest during the Labor Day Rodeo at Musselshell. Prize was a fine nylon rope and \$23.75 cash.

"Saylor was the roper and Jim did the milking. Jim had filled the bottle and was about to head for the judges with it, when a bunch of cows ran over him and upset the bottle. He went back to milking and filled the bottle a second time, only to be knocked to the ground again, spilling part of the milk. With Saylor about to play out on his end of the cow, Green again pulled more milk from the wildly protesting cow. He made it back to the judges in third place, but was awarded first because he had the most milk." (See also GREEN — Winnett)

GREEN, O. T. and O. M. Otto and his brother Oran (O. M.) homesteaded near the Musselshell River. O. T. was the first postmaster of the Mecaha Post Office. (See also GREEN — Flatwillow)

GREEN, Wallace Paige Wallace Paige Green was born in 1901 in Indian Territory, Oklahoma. Margaret Underwood was born in 1903. They were married in 1923 in Ohio and came to Montana in 1924. They lived east of Cat Creek on the Musselshell River near James and Cora Weaver, who were Margaret's legal guardians. The older children attended school in Cat Creek until their parents moved to Winnett in 1934. (See also GREEN — Winnett)

GRIEBEL, William F. (Foreword by June Griebel Woodall) "My dad, William F. Griebel, was born in 1889 at DeWitt, Iowa. He left home when he was twenty-one. He planned to see some of the country so he worked wherever he could. He was working in Hardwick, Minnesota, where he met my mother, who was teaching school there. When her school was out in the spring of 1911, she planned to go to Moore, Montana, where her folks had bought a farm. Dad decided to go along, so they went by train and arrived at Moore in June of 1911.

"Mother had a job teaching school for the year of 1911-12. She and Dad planned to marry as soon as her school was out, but her father got sick and died. Since it the custom to go into mourning for a full year after a death, she taught school again the next year.

"In March 1913 Dad and Mother were married and settled down on a farm Dad had rented about fifty miles east of Lewistown. Dad and Grandmother filed on their homesteads in late summer of 1913."

William and Martha Griebel had four children — Nadine (1914), June (1916), Bill Jr. (1920) and Jack (1922).

The following are excerpts from memories written by William F. Griebel: "I had a chance to go to Garfield County to help Dow Bowen build a homestead cabin for him and his aunt, Miss Dorothy Bowen. We built these out of native sawed lumber just as it came from the sawmill. It was sure wet and heavy. Mr. Bowen had a six-horse team, and I had a four-horse team. We had good bedrolls and a grub box, but because Mr. Bowen had not planned on so

much time in the mud, we ran out of food before we arrived at Winnett. It was 28 miles from Grassrange to the Winnett Ranch. There was no town at this time, but Mr. Winnett had a small supply store of groceries, etc.

"We left Grassrange and it took us seven days to go to Winnett. We would only pull a short distance and then have to unload the lumber, put all the horses on one wagon, pull the wagon out of the mud, carry the lumber to the wagon, and start out again for a short distance, only to begin the process over. The wet, sticky gumbo would go clear to the hub of the wagon. I would make a rough guess that we carried this lumber about seven miles. Sure was a terrible thing. We would carry the lumber about 100 to 150 feet each time we were stuck.

"We finally arrived at Winnett. It was only a post office, as I said before. We renewed our grub box supplies, including coffee, bacon, lard, bread, and several other things too numerous to mention. Our bread would freeze at night, so we had hot cakes for breakfast. It cost us one dollar per horse for hay, but we had our own oats for horse feed. We got up long before daylight, went over, and fed our horses.

"We emptied our grain sacks, so I told Bowen to hold the sacks and I proceeded to pull the heads off of twelve or fourteen chickens that were roosting on the partitions and mangers. So we started out again. We stopped at the McDonald Creek bridge, about a mile east of Winnett, and we skinned the chickens, as we had no way to scald them. We were now set pretty good for meat.

"We finally arrived at Mosby Post Office — just a river ranch home. Herbert Mosby was the owner. We made it about two miles past this place and into the river breaks, they called it, and decided to camp for the night. We used to fill our large coffee pot when we started out in the morning and put it in the grub wagon, but this day it had upset. We didn't know it until we made camp and I was so thirsty that I was spitting cotton.

"We saw a camp fire a long way off, so we started out to find it, thinking they would have water. We went up one hill and down the other and finally got to it. We found four men dry camped who had no water but said a couple men were out looking for water, so we waited. Before long they came in and threw their empty buckets down in disgust, so Bowen and I went back to camp. We had some time finding it but finally made it. We had one can of tomatoes, so I opened it and drank half of it and ate some of the tomatoes.

"I didn't sleep much on account of the thirst I had, but next morning we started out again. We had only gone two miles when we came upon a young Austrian, Walter Leligdowicz. He was camping and had dug out a spring; the water in it was as clear as crystal and cold. I took a small drink and gee, did I get sick! I was sick in bed in the tent for two days. We then started out again and arrived at Dow's homestead, about ten miles from the spring. We did not have a thing to haul water in, outside of a bucket, so we couldn't go ten miles to the spring for only one

bucket of water. We found an open water hole and I used to go over and dip up enough water for our coffee. The water being boiled is all that saved us. Finally, a bunch of range cattle found this water hole. They would walk into the water hole and eventually had it almost dry. I would have to dip the water out of the hoofprints for our coffee, let it settle, drain the water off, and then make our coffee. We could still feel the sand between our teeth. We had strained the water but still got the sand.

"We unloaded our lumber and started to build cabins. We made good time, but we worked from daylight to dark, stopping only to cook our supper before dark and then continue to work as long as we could see. We were almost done (had been working about two weeks) and had run out of everything but a little flour. Bowen went down to Mr. Niles' place — he was an old-timer there and a very nice gentleman. He let Bowen have some lard and coffee. We did not have any baking powder so we had to almost burn our pancakes to get them done. They would be as hard as hardtack.

"We finally ran out of building material and started for home. Before we left, Mr. Niles came by on horseback and had a nice visit with us. He offered to locate mother-in-law, Mrs. Weigart, and me on a half section homestead for fifty dollars each, which was not too good a thing for me. He had been told I would have a good oat crop, so he said, 'You can bring me two big loads. I'll pay you seventy-five cents per hundred and seventy-five cents to freight them in here.'

"I took him up on it, and when I threshed my oats, I got my brother-in-law to come over, and we took him two big loads, \$190.00 worth of oats. After paying \$100.00 for the homestead locations, I had \$90.00 cash to take home. Mother-in-law had been notified that they were going to foreclose on her farm, so she had no place to go. She had been given one year grace to stay on the farm. She and I went to the land office and filed on our half section homesteads in August 1913.

"When we arrived on the homestead, we found they had a resurvey and it had made some changes in our homestead lines. The party who had filed on the east half-section had built a dugout on this west half-section so we moved into it and stacked up our lumber to be used at a later date. There were dirt floors in the dugout and we had to keep the floor dampened down on account of dust being stirred up. I began to cut logs for our new cabin, and finally had enough cut; but winter was setting in.

"I managed to get the logs laid up for the cabin; of course, I had to notch all the corners. We put up a good big log in the center for a ridge log and then put a log halfway up on each side, also for support of the roof. Then we cut nice straight-grained logs, cut them the right length, split them, and laid them with the flat side down. Of course, we had to knock all the slivers off, lay them side by side, and split short, wedge-shaped pieces and put them in the cracks between the roofing and split logs. We would then go to the creek, where we could get real

gumbo, mix it like plaster, and plaster it over the roofing. Eighteen or twenty inches of dirt was piled on top of this.

"Next, we had to split pieces and nail into the logs on the sides of the cabin. If we did not have cement to fill up the cracks, we would use gumbo to close the cracks. Our cabin was fourteen by twenty-eight feet, with two windows and one door made out of plain boards. We sure had a nice cool house in summer, warm in winter. We never did have a heater while living on the homestead, but I bought my wife a nice copper-clad four-hole cook stove. All we ever burned in it was wood and our cabin was always nice and cozy, even in the coldest weather. It had a rough floor in it, and some of the knots had fallen out, but I had not had the time to put tin over them.

"We had a neighbor from Kansas who chewed tobacco. Our floor still had knot holes in it and he would make a spit shot at one, splattering all around it. It would sure make my wife mad. I hurried and put tin on all the knot holes. Then he would lift one of the stove lids to spit, and it would splatter, sputter, and bounce all over the stove. My wife was furious.

"That fall I planted my winter wheat and worked at building fence for homesteaders. That spring I put in fifteen acres of spring wheat. I got the winter wheat harvested; but before I could harvest the spring wheat, there was a prairie fire, started by live coals that fell out of the ash pan of the thresher when the threshing crew was moving to another field. Most of the fields around there had been fenced up for three or four years, with the grass standing about eight or ten inches tall.

"It really went; a stiff wind was blowing and the fire took on something terrible. The thresher was about one quarter mile west of the house and when the fire went past our house, there was a roll of fire about four feet high. There was nothing for about three hundred feet around our house that would burn. Therefore, we escaped the fire. The fire seemed to burn off the grass, roll over it, and go on. I had my binder setting on the prairie and the roll of fire rolled up on it and burned all the woodwork off of it.

"I had my plow at the potato patch (about one quarter mile from the house) so got on the back of one of the horses and made a run for the plow. When I got back, the fire had gone by, into the coulee, and had cut me off from getting to my spring wheat, which I had stacked. The fire got to it; by nightfall you would never think there had ever been any wheat there. It burned and blew it away.

"We had no water well, so I put a barrel on a platform surrounded by a couple of small logs, about six inches in diameter and six feet long, hitched a team of horses to this, and traveled about two miles to get the water to drink and cook with. Every time I turned around, the barrel was empty. My neighbor had a small amount of water, but could only get a pailful every three or four hours, so we could not get any water there.

"When there was snow on the ground, we would melt snow for drinking and cooking. We were in the winter of

1914-15. I dug a nice root cellar or cave, as they sometimes were called, to store our vegetables and other garden produce, and any other freezable things. My brother-in-law and I started to dig a well. We got down about 25 feet, but we could only get about a bucket per day. We had to go down and dip it up; the water was not very good, as it was seeping out of shale and soapstone.

"My wife asked me to cut some green willows with forked sticks. The sap was just coming up in them. She wanted me to see if I could witch water. I asked her if she had lost her mind and she said, 'No, I have heard of some people doing it, and it wouldn't hurt to try.' So I cut several green willow forked sticks and threw them in the wagon.

"After we got home, I cut myself a nice willow fork and started where we had begun to dig the well. As I cut back and forth across the coulee from the well we dug, every time I got to the cabin, the willow would turn down. I tried to keep it from turning down and would twist the bark off the willow. I went down the coulee about fifteen rods to a wash in the coulee, and the willow turned for me. I thought maybe it was the willow, so I got another willow, tried the same thing over, and had my wife watch the proceedings. I got the same results as I did in the first place.

"I then took my pick and shovel, dug in this wash, and was down about six feet (about fourteen feet from the top of the coulee). It was sundown now, and my wife came to tell me supper was ready. I left my pick and shovel in the hole. The dirt was pretty sticky. I had to stand on my shovel handle to get out. I went down to the wash the next morning, and the water was over the top of my pick and shovel handle. I fished my pick and shovel out and got my brother-in-law to help me dig a well up on the coulee bottom proper.

"We dug down eighteen feet and when I was down at this depth, I found a nice, flat bottom that looked like rock, but it was full of veins. These were about one inch in diameter and gave the impression of a map. I used my pick to dig and rake this formation. I struck my pick into the center of the well and the water gushed up about twelve inches. I was sure surprised! It came to a height of four feet right away, and we never could bail it dry. We did not have a pump so we put up a pulley and a bucket on each end of the rope. When one bucket went down, the other came up. It was the nicest water — real soft, just like rain water. My wife was jubilant over the water-witching episode.

"When people began to find out about me witching our water well, they came from all around to see us and see if it was true. They asked me all about it, but all I could do was to tell them that I did not believe in it myself. I showed them just how I did it and asked them to try it, but none of them was able to get the results that I did. So they asked me if I would try to witch a well for them. I, again, did not like to do this, as I couldn't make myself believe it. They offered to pay, but I told them, 'Absolutely not!'