

BOHN, Ray (Sec 12-14-28) Ray and Tillie Bohn moved to the former Charles Bohn Ranch in 1945. There were no school buses in those days, so the family spent winters in town so the children could attend school. They moved back to the ranch for summers. They were looking forward to a bountiful wheat crop one year, when a terrible hailstorm hit in the night and completely wiped them out. Undaunted, they gathered the grain as hay, purchased some cattle, and fed the crop to them.

Their best luck came when they purchased the Dell "Shorty" Huotte place in the Brush Creek country. They reaped a crop of alfalfa seed the first year that paid one-half the cost of the place.

They acquired more land here and there over a period of time and lived in the Petrolia area until son, Rex, was married in November 1958. Ray and Tillie moved to Winnett permanently, and Ray commuted between the ranch and home. (See also BOHN — Winnett; and WADMAN — Ashley)

BOHN, Raymond Rex (Sec 12-14-28) Rex Bohn, the son of Ray and Hulda "Tillie" Bohn, was born August 5, 1937. He grew up on the ranch, helping to care for the crops and the cattle. He went to grade and high school in Winnett and graduated in 1955. He played on a winning basketball team that went to divisionals at Havre after winning the district championship. He attended college at Havre for two years, studying ranch management.

JoAnn Rose Johnson, daughter of Joe and Phyllis Rukavina Johnson, was born in Malta July 3, 1937. Her parents moved to Bridger where she attended grade and high school through her junior year. In 1955 they moved to Grassrange where she graduated from high school. After graduation she went to Billings, where she worked as a secretary for the Winter Hardware Company.

Rex and JoAnn "Josie" were married on November 14, 1958, at the Methodist Church in Lewistown. They have one daughter, Kelly Rae, born **October 8, 1959**. She graduated from Winnett High School in 1978. She was active in basketball, track and the rodeo club. Her high school basketball team went to the state tournament in Miles City in 1974, and they placed fourth. In 1975 the team went to the state tournament in Glendive and they took third place. Kelly attended college in Bozeman for one year and Dawson Community College for two years.

Kelly was a barrel racer, team roper and breakaway roper, winning the Kids' All Around Saddle in 1975. She took first place in Ladies' Barrel Racing at the National College Finals in Bozeman and won the Ladies' All Around Cow Girl Saddle in 1981. She also has done winning team roping with her father.

On November 20, 1982, Kelly and Jeff Gorrell of Beach, North Dakota, were married in Lewistown at the Methodist Church. They have two children — Colt and Clint.

Rex has been active in the Winnett Rodeo Club, serving as president with his wife Josie as secretary. He qualified and participated in the Old-timers' Rodeo in Reno

November of 1988. There, with Jack Shields as header and Rex as heeler, the two were entered in the team roping.

Rex served on the Winnett school board when the new school was built and completed in 1974. He has served on the Petrolia Water Users' Board and is presently on the ASCS and BLM boards in Lewistown. He leases the Damschen place (formerly the Ernest Hansen Ranch) where he raises grain, hay, and cattle; this is in addition to his own land holdings — the former Ray and Charles Bohn Ranch.

Josie was a member of the local Rancherette Club of the Petrolia-Box Elder community, serving as president and secretary. She is presently on the Petroleum County election board (1988).

BOWEN, Harry (Sec 1-14-27) Harry B. Bowen and his wife, Jennie, lived on Harry's mother's homestead for ten years. Harry and Jennie played for dances in the area: Harry the violin and Jennie the organ or piano. Two of their children lived there also — Oris Bartlett Bowen and Rhea Jennie Bowen. Later the family moved to Spring Creek near Lewistown, where the rest of their children were born — Lois, Elizabeth, Lloyd Thomas and Erma Jo Bowen.

Harry worked in the U. S. Gypsum plant and later had a mail route. He retired in Lewistown where he passed away in 1976. He had been a farmer for most of his life.

This homestead became the property of O. L. Gershmel and sons. (Ethel Bowen Lelek)

BOWEN, John Dwight and Elizabeth (Sec 1-14-27) J. D. Bowen and wife, Charlotte "Elizabeth" Bowen, came to Moore, Montana in 1910 on an immigrant train with their four children — Ralph Dwight, Harry Bartlett, Elmer LeRoy and Mildred Jeanette Bowen. Ethel was born later (1914) at Moore.

Elizabeth Bowen took up a homestead in 1913 which later became the Gershmel place. According to records in the Winnett courthouse, she must have added to her homestead with a desert claim, making a total of 240 acres in all. The Bowens' son, Harry, and his family lived on the homestead for ten years.

Mildred attended the Winnett School for about two years. Ethel also lived in Winnett, being about two years old when her folks moved to a ranch on Casino Creek near Lewistown, Montana, in 1916. They lived there until moving to another place on the fairgrounds and later retired in Lewistown. All of the family were tillers of the soil.

Ethel Bowen married Charles Lelek of Lewistown. (Ethel Lelek)

BOWEN, Ralph (Sec 8-14-27) Ralph Bowen and Lydia Guhrt were married in Alberta, Minnesota. Soon after, in about 1915, they came to Montana and settled in the area southeast of Winnett beyond the rimrock. Lydia took up a desert claim to add to Ralph's homestead.

There were two water wells on the Bowen land, and



Ralph Bowens' homestead

water from the wells was piped to the huge reservoir atop the rimrock to supplement the Winnett water supply.

The Bowens sold garden produce, milk and eggs in the town of Winnett. Lydia was an excellent seamstress and sewed for different people of the community and town.

Virgil, a son, wrote that he believed his parents, or at least his mother, spent winters elsewhere during the early homestead years, as he was born in Minnesota in 1918. Two other boys were born to the Bowens — Basil (1916) and Roland (1922).

The boys all attended school in Winnett. Basil died in 1935. Virgil graduated from Winnett High School in 1935. He attended college and then enlisted in the Marine Corps, from which he retired as a major in 1966. He married Margaret Boyer of San Francisco, California, in 1949. Two daughters — Sandra and Robyn, and two sons — Craig and Kelly were born to them. Roland married Carol Nelson.

The Ralph Bowen family moved to Fairfield, Montana, in 1938. In 1943 they moved to Great Falls, Montana. Lydia died in December 1954 and Ralph in May 1955. (See also GARRITSON and GUHRT — Cat Creek)

BRAATEN, Henry Mr. and Mrs. Henry Braaten came to this community to work for Clinton Hassett. They worked for Hassett at two different times, leaving at one time to go to Kalispell where some of their grown children lived. Their son, Dale, was asthmatic, and they thought the Kalispell climate would be better for him. In December 1959 they returned to the Hassett place where they lived in the remodeled Box Elder schoolhouse.

The Braatens have six children, several of whom attended Box Elder School and Winnett High School. Their



Henry and Margaret Braaten

names are: Edgar; Kenneth (who was killed in a highway accident; Duane, who raises hogs near Kalispell; Dale, who became a carpenter; Keith, who is presently a shearer of sheep; and Elaine Braaten Parsons, the wife of a dairy farmer, who now lives in Wisconsin. All the children are married and have children.

Henry and Margaret retired and moved to Kalispell. They help the children with their work when they are able.

BRATTEN, Alvin (Sec 31-14-27) Alvin "Shorty" Bratten, son of George and Elizabeth W. Bratten, was born February 5, 1887, at Clay Center, Kansas. He came to the Winnett area in 1911 with his brother Ward.

Rose Merten, daughter of Fred C. Merten, was born August 13, 1887, at Aberdeen, South Dakota, and received her education there. In 1915 she moved to Winnett and went to work in the local Winnett State Bank. For a short while she and her brother, John, lived in a small house in Winnett. When Fred and Emilie (her stepmother) settled on the farm on top of the rimrock, she and John lived with them. Then it was a long walk to and from her work every day. But Rose stated that it was her boss, Hamm Greene, who inspired her to keep on working and making the long daily walk for several years.

According to a letter written by Louisa Wilson to her future husband, George Deethardt, dated January 2, 1920, Shorty and Rose pulled a fast one on their neighbors when they were married. She wrote, "Rose Merten and Shorty Bratten were married at the parsonage Christmas Eve after the entertainment was over at the Aristo. It was right around midnight. They are living in the Morrow house. (The Morrow house was on the north slope of the rimrock south of town.)

"No one knew much about it — they kept it pretty quiet. She came down to work on Friday and Shorty Gairrett saw her leave Shorty's house up there. When Shorty Gairrett saw Shorty Bratten, he asked him if he was married. Don't know what Shorty told him, but Shorty Gairrett said they were going up to charivari them that night.



Alvin "Shorty" and Rose Bratten at Corvallis

Shorty Bratten said, 'All right, but if you come up there and I'm not married, you will have to set up the treats.' Shorty B. bluffed him, but the boys said they were going to charivari them last night."

Shorty and Rose only lived in the Morrow house a short time before they moved to Shorty's homestead about six miles southeast of Winnett. They ranched there through the good and bad years until 1939, when they moved to a ranch at Corvallis. They lived there for five years, then moved to Hamilton where Rose worked for a time as an aide in Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital. Alvin passed away there in November of 1953. Rose passed away in September of 1979.

The Brattens had two children, Orland and Lorraine. Both attended Winnett schools. Lorraine married and had four children — Janice, Denise, Linda and Margaret. Orland married and lives in Hamilton and had two children — Robert and Dwane. Orland still owns property in Winnett. This, besides innumerable friends, gives him an excuse to return often to his childhood "stomping grounds."

He wrote, "When we lived on the homestead, my folks walked to town much of the time, mostly, I believe, as an economic measure and sometimes because the roads were impassable, even with horses. When my sister, Lorraine, and I were in school, the folks bought a small house in town; and Mom and my sis and I would live in town during the week and go to the ranch on weekends."



Alvin "Shorty" and Ward Bratten (circa 1930)

BRATTEN, Vird Ward Vird Ward Bratten was born in Latham, Missouri, on December 8, 1887. He came from a family of four brothers — Jewel, Alvin, Roscoe and Paris; and four sisters — Birdie, Cora, Ora and Jenny. Stella Cheney was born in Nevada, Missouri, in November of 1891. Stella and Ward were married in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1910.

Ward heard of homesteads in Montana, so he, Stella, Wayne (9 months old) and Ward's brother, Alvin, came to Montana and filed on adjoining homesteads on Elk Creek, about six miles south of Winnett. Ward was disdainful of the "sod busting" in Kansas and thought the big plows

wouldn't find a place like this; however, it wasn't long until more homesteaders arrived with walking plows, barbed wire, and other equipment thought necessary to make a living on a 160-acre homestead.

Stella taught in the country schools. Her scholars were neighbors — not too far from the Elk Creek homestead where Brattens lived.

About this time Washington passed an act stating that if one had filed on a 160-acre tract, they were eligible for an additional 160 — if the additional acres joined the original homestead. Ward released his Elk Creek homestead to his brother, Alvin, and went some thirty miles north and filed on a section, 640 acres along Blood Creek. This was rough terrain and one was entitled to more acreage. This land was about six miles from the Musselshell River, the only permanent water near his homestead.

By this time the couple had another baby, Kenneth, on the way. Though the location was thirty miles from a town and a doctor or help, he kept this homestead and proved up on it. He then went back and bought his original homestead from his brother. Stella again taught in the Bratten School in 1921. She and her pupils gave a Halloween party at the Beer home. Fifteen pupils and as many grown-ups made a full house. The program consisted of recitations, music, and stories. The prize awarded for the best ghost story was given to Stella.

Preferring office work to ranch life, Stella accepted a position as bookkeeper for Ryan Grocery Company of Great Falls in 1928, and worked there for several years, later following the same type of work in Los Angeles, California. The boys remained on the ranch with their father.

Ward bought the east end of the Walter Winnett Ranch in the spring of 1929. Then the banks went broke and Ward found it difficult to make ends meet. There was no money for groceries or hired help. Wayne quit high school to help his dad.

With Wayne's help, Ward stayed on the ranch, and in about 1938, times changed for the better; the two of them eventually built up a fine ranch.

Ward died after an operation on a brain tumor in 1946. He had sold his interest in the ranch to Wayne.

Stella returned to live in the town of Winnett in 1948. She died in May of 1972. (See also BRATTEN — Winnett)

BRATTEN, Wayne The following was written by Wayne Bratten in 1979: "My birth certificate states that I was born on a farm near Garland, Kansas, June 24, 1912, son of Ward and Stella Bratten. When I arrived, I was known as the cyclone baby. About three months before I was born, my parents were eating supper in a two-story frame house. A Kansas cyclone came up and after the wind let up, the house was upside down, standing on its roof and leaning against a big oak tree.

"Farmers were just starting to plow up western Kansas, good grassland, to raise wheat. After I was born, and my parents recovered from the shaking up of the house being turned upside down, my father got a job firing one of the



Wayne and Ruth Bratten, their faithful dog, and Gov. Hugo Aronson

big steam tractors. This did not last very long . . . My parents brought me here in March 1913, when I was nine months old. I caught whooping cough on the way. I heard Dad say that several times he thought they were going to plant me in the head of a coulee on the homestead. There was no doctor here at that time. It was some home remedies that kept me alive. I attended whatever local school was handy and started high school in Winnett. I quit high school in 1929 to help my dad, who was having financial problems on the ranch. The banks had closed, and money was a scarce item.

"Ruth Welton (born in Kansas) came to Winnett to teach in Winnett High School in 1929. She had just graduated from a good-sized university down in Kansas. Winnett, at that time, looked like a frontier to her. Train fare back was expensive, so she stayed and came to like the west and its people.

"Ruth came from a school-teaching family; her father served as superintendent of various Kansas schools. The five girls in the family became teachers, too. The one brother died of the flu at an Army camp in 1941. Her mother was also a schoolteacher before marriage.

"We were married in 1934 and that started a whole new life for her. She came into a bachelor camp, a new way of life, and different kinds of people. Cooking for a hay crew was a very new experience. She always said that she was glad to have a creek close where she could throw her failures as a cook over the bank.

"1936 was not only dry but we had grasshoppers on top of the drouth. We had to sell all the cattle, got \$35 a pair for cows and calves, and the buyer lost money on them.

"There was not even enough grass for the horses, so Ruth and I shipped the horses to the Blackfoot Reservation. Ruth got a job teaching in an Indian school on the edge of the reservation. Her salary was \$80.00 a month and we could live in a two-room teacherage. We were there two years.

"Dad stayed on the home place, and in 1938 the drouth broke and things began to look better. We moved back to Winnett in 1938 and have been here ever since."

Wayne began to purchase the small ranches of those who had given up trying to garner a living from a few acres. In time he was the largest land owner in Petroleum County; and this eventually placed him in very good financial circumstances. The Brattens, in the end, owned all the McDonald Creek land originally owned by Walter J. Winnett as well as many sections of grazing land.

Ruth always found time to help out with community and school affairs. She was totally dedicated to the Republican party, Methodist Church, Eastern Star, Nile, Rebekahs, and Theta Rho Girls. She was often called upon to referee girls' basketball games. For many years she was the conductor of the high school's junior-senior grand march at prom time. She was serving on the school board when the new high school was completed in 1951.

At Christmas time in 1949, the students of the Winnett Elementary School held an election to select the local man that they thought was most like Santa Claus. (Wayne had previously acted as Santa at Christmas programs.) Wayne came out with the most votes, and at an especially planned program, Leo Solf, master of ceremonies, presented Wayne as Mr. Santa Claus. Lenora Hassett presented Ruth (who had been elected in an independent poll) as Miss Merry Christmas.

This may have been prophetic. In 1980 the Brattens established a \$1500 scholarship for a graduate of 1980, based on need, citizenship, and academic ability. This was only the first of the Brattens' altruistic gifts. (See BRATTEN — Winnett)

The Brattens built a fine new home in Winnett when Wayne retired from ranch work. Ruth did not get to enjoy it for long. She passed away in November of 1980.

CARRELL, Kenneth W. Kenneth Carrell, son of Annette and Ambrose Carrell, was born November 12, 1948. The Army drafted him in 1967, and during that time he married Ramona Margaret Manz. They had two children — Charles L. and Petra Annette.

After his Army duty, he worked with his father and also at the Gambles Store in Lewistown for a time. He is presently (1989) working at Clinton Hassetts.

He is the Commander of Sandman Post No. 95 of the American Legion.

CAVIN, William J. (Sec 2-14-27) (W. T. 4-29-21) "W. J. Cavin, one of the early settlers in the Winnett country, and who still retains possession of his farm east of Winnett, returned from Anaconda Tuesday, having spent three years in that city. Mr. Cavin will spend the summer

on his farm." Mr. Cavin owned land about five miles east of Winnett.

CLARK, Allison J. (Sec 30-14-29 and Sec 25-14-28) Mr. Allison J. Clark, a bachelor, appears to have been the first established resident of the Petrolia area. He obtained his land from the United States Government in 1884. At that time he gave Flatwillow as his address, as that was the only post office in the area at that time.

In 1886 he received a homestead patent on 120 acres of land. Since the area was part of Fergus County at that time, his legal work was handled in Lewistown.

He raised race horses, and having come from England, may have brought men and horses with him from there. He constructed a race track about a mile west of the ranch on a flat near a tributary of Flatwillow Creek, thus Race Horse Coulee got its name.

He turned the homestead over to relatives in England. The relatives formed a Dakota Grazing Livestock Corporation to handle the affairs, and the corporation was sued for a small debt Allison owed Handel Brothers.

The place was sold successively to Charles A. Broadwater, to John Rowley, to Nellie Messenger, to Ernest H. Hansen — who sold a half interest to Christ Nelson, to Carl Ida Thompson, and finally to Oscar C. Thompson — who in turn sold a 1/3 interest to John W. Beck.

CLAUSON, Carl (Sec 9-14-28) Carl was born October 6, 1880, in Sweden. He came to the United States as a young man and worked as a carpenter, first in North Dakota and later in Lewistown, Montana. He homesteaded about nine miles southeast of Winnett in the Petrolia area.

Being a very good carpenter, he built many of the homestead houses in the community. He walked to his work and carried his tools from one job to the next. During World War I he left to work in the shipyards.



California-style homestead and two children, Les and Vern Thompson, astride the chicken brood coop

An interesting note on Carl appeared in the December 3, 1926, issue of the Winnett Times: "Carl left on the train before Thanksgiving enroute to Lewistown. He was carrying a big, black, bulging leather grip which contained a big, black wild goose. He had shot it a few weeks previously, and kept it in cold storage at the Enterprise Meat Market."

In 1940 Carl sold his homestead to Al Bohn and moved to Winnett. He continued to work as a carpenter and had living quarters in the Wide Awake Garage. He died August 12, 1958, and was buried in the Winnett Cemetery. His only known survivor was John Klassen of St. Landby, Kappsta, Sweden.

CONVERSE, Selah L. (Sec 14-14-27) Selah was born March 11, 1887, in Albert Lea, Minnesota. He homesteaded about eight miles southeast of Winnett in 1913. He served his country in World War I. Marie Walker, born August 14, 1897, came with her parents from Lewistown to Winnett in 1917. She had graduated from Fergus County High School and had received some additional teacher training.

In September of 1917, Marie was chosen as teacher of the Circle Bar School in the Petrolia area and served there for two terms ending May 19, 1919. One of the pupils in that school was Myra Bohn.

While teaching there she met and, on May 29, 1920, married Selah Converse, a hard-working local farmer. To earn some needed cash because of his new family status, Selah went to the Judith Basin to work in the harvest fields in August of 1921. Marie stayed with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel C. Walker, during that time.

Marie and Selah had four children while living near Winnett — Donald, Gene, Earl and Alta Mae. Donald, Gene, and Earl attended the Winnett Elementary School. Alta Mae was only two years old when the family, after some good and some not-so-good years, joined with other ranchers in the exodus to Fairfield, Montana, in 1937.

CORBIN, Hezatone (Sec 10-14-27) (W. T. 7-18-24) "Eight years ago H. T. Corbin homesteaded on a quarter section of land about three miles east of Winnett. The land lays up a large draw, in the upper end of which a small spring flows the year around.

"During the eight years of his residence on his homestead he has developed the place until today an inventory shows a splendid orchard containing cherry and crab apple trees, currants, gooseberries and a large patch of everbearing strawberries; a garden in which flourishes a famous Scotch variety of potatoes averaging 14 to the hill, watermelons, cantaloupes, and practically all other kinds of vegetables. Tomato plants are in bloom and will soon be bearing.

"With handling the orchard and the large garden, Mr. Corbin has found time to seed winter wheat, alfalfa hay, sweet corn, popcorn and field corn. His fences are all in perfect condition, his machinery under cover, his

premises perfectly clean and orderly, and his house, barn and root cellar a delight to look into.

"Mr. Corbin has developed this nonirrigated quarter section to this point during his eight years of residence on it. The land has proven its productivity and given goodly returns in beauty, pleasure and money for the time and effort expended.

"Mr. Corbin is satisfied and pleased with his dry land quarter-section farm and is a constant booster for the agricultural possibilities of Petroleum County."

Hezatone later moved to Winnett and bought a home on Broadway — north of the railroad tracks. He later sold his home to Mr. and Mrs. Russell Quigg. He moved to Los Angeles to live with his sister. His brother, Frank, lived in the Cat Creek country.

CORNUE, Harvey (Sec 18-14-28) Harvey E. Cornue was born in Hebron, Illinois, on January 18, 1887. He had attended a business college, but due to a recession, there was no job for him in the area at that time. He was not needed on the home farm, so he came to Montana to take up a homestead. The property was located about four miles north of the present-day Petrolia Reservoir. A one-room tar paper shack served as his home for a few years.

To help eke out a living, he hauled freight from Lewistown to the Cat Creek oil field with a six- or eight-horse team or sometimes with mules. The trip would take two days, with one layover at the Winnett Ranch and one at the Ayers Ranch west of Grassrange.

Martha Freed came from Ohio to homestead with her brother, Elden Freed. This homestead was about one mile north of the present Petrolia Dam. She was a schoolteacher. Martha and Harvey were married June 2, 1918, and lived in Harvey's homestead cabin.

Harvey loved horses, raised Percherons and Belgians, and broke them to work. Each fall he would ship a train carload of horses to his brother's farm at Hebron, Illinois, and they would have a big sale. All farming was done by horses at that time.

When the horse market gave out due to the influx of tractors, Harvey raised more cattle and wheat. Each fall



Martha and Harvey Cornue

he and others shipped their cattle by train to be sold. Some of the owners always went along, living in part of the train car, to take care of the animals on the trip and to see that they were properly handled at the stockyards in Chicago.

Later, Harvey worked at the Agriculture Adjustment Act office in Winnett. That office took care of records for President Roosevelt's farm programs which were designed to reduce surpluses.

In 1936 Harvey was elected Petroleum County Commissioner, an office he held for 16 years. He was one of the commissioners who worked very hard to establish the county manager form of government. He was a member of the school board of District #121 for many years.

Martha taught, after she was married, at the Circle Bar School and the Pilgrim School (sometimes known as the Jerue School). During World War II, when teachers were very scarce, she taught English at Winnett High School. She also taught at Upper Flatwillow for a time. She took her turn at being one of the teachers who gave, and also graded, the seventh and eighth grade state examinations.

The Cornues built up a fine ranch from the homestead started in 1912, and they were highly respected in the community. Mrs. Cornue was a master at arranging community programs and parties.

In 1954 the Cornues moved to Winnett. They bought the former Sullivan house from Otto and Myrtie Senst. Mr. Cornue passed away in July of 1969, and Mrs. Cornue and Kathryn bought a home in Lewistown. Mrs. Cornue passed away in December 1972.

The Cornues were parents of four children. The first children (twin boys) died at birth and were buried in the Winnett Cemetery.

Annabel was delivered by her aunt, Dr. Hazel Freed, at Grassrange, Montana, on April 13, 1924. She graduated from Winnett High School in 1942 and from Montana State College at Bozeman. She worked as a medical technologist until she married Robert Durnford in 1948. She and Robert have two children — Joyce Durnford Rashid and James Durnford.

Kathryn also was delivered at Grassrange by her aunt, Dr. Hazel Freed, on March 9, 1926. She attended country schools. When Cornues sold their ranch and moved into Winnett in 1954, Kathryn became a very capable and industrious helper at the Rimrock Dairy. In spite of some physical impairment, she washed bottles, wrestled cases of milk, drove the delivery station wagon door-to-door, and cheerfully delivered the milk. When the dairy went out of business, Kathryn worked for the school district. After moving to Lewistown, she married Fred Ferrell, but now lives alone there.

Among the papers Mrs. Cornue left her family were the following memories with note attached: "I wonder whether anyone except my own girls (Kathryn and Annabel) and Lola and Ruth (nieces) will ever read this. I hope some of the next generation can weave a romance into it and write a book."

"In 1912 about the only kind of recreation in the homestead country was the neighborhood dance. If someone had a cabin 12 feet by 25 feet, it was large enough to have a dance in. The bed was taken down (there was usually only one room) and put outside as well as other furniture — which wasn't much. The news of the affair was spread by grapevine and they did a good job, too, as all came within a radius of fifteen miles. The young people came by horseback, but young married folks with small children hitched the team to the buggy or the farm wagon and stopped along the way to pick up the neighbors.

"It was understood that each lady took a cake or sandwiches for lunch, and the bachelors provided the coffee. The cabin was lighted by kerosene lamps. Early in the evening, the men stood around outside and exchanged local gossip and within the house the women did the same.

"When the fiddler arrived, they began to tune up and the boys came inside to claim their partners. People were isolated, so this get-together was really an occasion. We had no cars, electric power, or telephones. Thus everyone entered into this dance wholeheartedly. It was democratic. The girls danced with whomsoever asked them whether sixteen or sixty, saint or sinner. There were no strangers. Some boys wore hobnailed shoes, some chaps, some dress suits, some overalls — dress made no difference. Every girl was a lady, and due respect was paid to her.

"Buffalo Gal, Comin' Through the Rye, and Skip to my Lou were favorite tunes and when the fiddler struck up a square dance tune, the rafters nearly came down. The bashful boys limbered up and came in, too, to swing the girls off their feet amidst happy laughter and friendly banter. Sometimes the couples got all mixed and then that caused even more fun.

"About ten o'clock the children got sleepy, and as they dropped off one by one, the mothers put them on the floor close to the wall of the room or under the chairs; or if the dance was in a schoolhouse they pushed the desks against the walls and put the children to bed on them. They were covered up very carefully with coats. A scene of this kind is described much better in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*.

"At midnight, lunch was served which was washed down with coffee strong enough to float a horseshoe. The



Hauling a huge log for firewood (1919)

musicians rested for awhile, then were playing again until daylight. There was reason for this long dance session. There were few fences and very few trails, so it was unsafe to go home before daylight. An experience of being lost on the prairie was not one to be sought after."

This is Mrs. Cornue's description of the winter of 1919-1920. "The wheat crop was a complete failure; there was not enough to cut for winter hay. At that time all the homesteaders had a few cattle and horses, which were the only source of income.

"A heavy snow fell in October which did not all melt until April. In January there were several feet on the level, so stock could not get even sagebrush to eat. Everyone was out of feed. Stock became poorer and poorer. The ranchers had to go to the railroad in Winnett to buy hay which would come in on the train at uncertain times.

"Harvey would start with his four-horse team at 5:00 a.m. Sometimes the thermometer stood at 25 degrees below zero. Snow was so deep that he would have to shovel snow for several rods in order to get the wagon through. Then when they arrived in town, the train would be late and they would load; they never got home until almost midnight.

"We wives would be home alone worrying for fear something had happened, then rejoicing when we finally heard the rattling of the wagon up the road. Sometimes he would be gone all day and come home without hay, as there was not enough to go around. That meant that the cattle would be hungrier and would bawl around. Some got so weak that they had to be pulled up by the tail. Hundreds died. The prairies were dotted with dead animals.

"People near creeks cut down trees so the animals could eat the tender brush and buds. In the spring, the losses were so great that many homesteaders loaded their few household goods on a wagon and left, for I do not know where, but I hope it was to better places. Others, like ourselves, would have left as paupers; but all we had was invested here, so we stayed and finally became fairly successful financially. Not all years were bad."



No forage anywhere (1919)

DAMSCHEN, Kenneth (Sec 12-13-29) Kenneth Damschen and his wife, Alberta "Bert," came to the Petrolia area in 1964 with the children — Randy (6),

Warren (4), Keven (3), and Faith (1). They settled on the ranch which previously had belonged to Kenneth's grandfather, Ernest Hansen.

For the first few years, Ken was a typical rancher of the area. Then after some experimentation, he became engaged in handling leaf-cutter bees. He found that, with their use, he could increase the productivity of his hay meadows seven-fold. Based on his own success, he decided to go into the business of selling and leasing his bees. The bees were leased to several alfalfa seed producers.

A female leaf-cutter bee "trips" the blossom of the alfalfa plant so that seed pods can form. Ordinary honey bees shy away from this tripping action, not liking to be struck on the head. The leaf-cutter is more aggressive and fearless and, consequently, is more valuable in the production of seed. (A complete article on Kenneth's bee operation can be found in the history files at the Petroleum County Community Library.)

Ken continued the Damschen Pollinators business, selling and leasing bees and producing fine crops of alfalfa seed until his death in 1979. While pursuing one of his favorite pastimes — big game hunting — he died instantly of a heart attack.

Randy, who had graduated from Winnett High School in 1976 and was attending college at Bozeman, came home to help on the ranch.

Bert, Faith, Hope and Cara moved to Lewistown in September of 1979. Randy, Warren and Kevin stayed on the ranch for a time and handled the Pollinators portion of the business. Since then, Ken's brother, Robert Damschen, manages the property.

Randy and his wife, Laura, have four children — Haden, Jared, Kenyon and Savannah. They live in Colville, Washington, where Randy is a logger.

Warren graduated from Winnett High School in 1977 and married LaRae Arthur. They live in Davenport, Washington, where Warren is a construction contractor. They have three children — Shilo, Shannon and Shayna. (See also ARTHUR — Winnett)

Kevin graduated from Winnett High School in 1979 and attended Big Sky Bible College for one year. In September of 1980 he was severely injured in a motorcycle accident. He is now in a nursing hospital in Lewistown, Montana. Although he cannot communicate, he does respond to attention and seems to enjoy company. He always has a big smile for his mother, who still has the hope that a miracle could happen.

Faith graduated from Lewistown Christian Alliance High School in 1980 and attended college for two years. She and her daughter, Kendra, live in Colville, Washington, where Faith operates a day care center in her home.

Hope graduated from Lewistown Christian Alliance High School in 1983. She worked in California for a time, then attended the College of Great Falls, where she met and married Brian Sukut. Brian graduated from aero-tech school in Cheyenne in December 1988. They live in Missoula and have a daughter, Paige.

Cara graduated from Fergus High School in 1985, did some traveling, and is now a nurse's aide in St. John's Lutheran Home of Billings, Montana.

"Bert" is now married to Harold Heath, who works in the gold mines at Zortman, Montana. They currently (1988) live in a cabin (which Bert really enjoys) during the week and return to their Lewistown home on weekends.

DIVINE, Arthur A. Arthur Divine, his wife and two boys, Lyle and Don, lived on Sec 10-14-28 for about ten years. There they had a frame house sided with shingles. Arthur owned the first Fordson tractor in the neighborhood. Mr. Divine, a retired railroad clerk, also delivered fine sermons at the Circle Bar School.

Mrs. Divine was affectionately known as "Aunty" Divine. She helped deliver both of the Grobe boys, William and Pete, when Dr. Alexander of Winnett was late in arriving.

DONNELL, Arthur H. Art and Nannie Donnell lived one mile east of Winnett on McDonald Creek. They were the parents of three children — Harvey (1902), Lucille (1903) and Ethel (1907).

Harvey graduated from Winnett High School in 1923, went on to college and became a registered pharmacist. Lucille and Ethel both attended Winnett schools. Lucille later became a director and supervisor for Ellison-White Chautauqua Co. Her first schedule required her to be two months in Montana, two months in Utah, and two months in California. She was considered a top-rate director by the company.

DOYLE, Cornelia A. (Sec 20-14-28) Cornelia Doyle's homestead was just west of the F. C. Bennett place. Conditions in this particular area were described in the Winnett Times of 11-4-21:

"Pat McNurney and Roy McGowan drove a large herd of cattle belonging to Mrs. Doyle and Mr. McNurney down into Howard Coulee where they will find better feed than in this valley where the grasshoppers took the grass, cleaning the ground completely in spots, which together with the limited number of acres planted last spring, leaves good pasture very scarce."

EIKE, Larry M. (Sec 18-14-29) Larry, son of Lyle and Roberta Thorsheim Eike, was born November 14, 1940, in Lewistown, Montana. He grew up in Cat Creek, Mosby and Winnett, where he graduated from high school in 1959. Pretty much on his own from an early age, he worked at Mosby for Bud Shaw, who helped him make it through high school.

Joyce Anne Retterer, second daughter of Clyde and Clara Retterer, was born August 16, 1941, in Summerville, Ohio. Her father moved about a good deal on construction jobs, so she lived and attended school in a variety of places. She attended Winnett High School.

Larry married Joyce Retterer on January 29, 1959, in Roundup, Montana. He worked for the Ostler Ranch for one year. Some small part-time jobs kept him busy until he moved to the Thompson Brothers Ranch to work for them.

Three children were born to Larry and Joyce — Kevin Duane (1960), Bert W. (1961), and Lisa Marie (1963). The children grew up on the Thompson Ranch, as their father worked there for fifteen years.

After 1972 the children got on the school bus enroute to Winnett at the Aasrud place, as Larry and Joyce had purchased that ranch after the death of Joyce's uncle, Alden Aasrud. All three children graduated from Winnett High School. Larry and Joyce continued to operate the ranch together until the summer of 1988, when Joyce decided to move to Livingston to join her sister, Marilyn Eike. Larry is still at the ranch.

Lisa Marie married Barry Forgy on November 14, 1976, and they have a son, Skyler. Bert married Bobbye Wise on Labor Day, 1987. They reside in Melstone, Montana, where Bert works for an oil drilling company. Kevin also lives and works in Melstone. He vows to remain a bachelor.

FEASTER, John John Feaster was born in Hillsdale, Illinois, in 1861. He married Mary Jane Bruch of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, in 1893. In 1913 the Feasters came to Montana. John came in a railroad freight car loaded with all of the family's belongings, so he could care for the livestock. At Sheridan, Wyoming, the engine of the train blew up, killing the engineer and two brakemen.

The Feaster family consisted of John and Mary and their children — Ethel (1896), Hazel (1898), Alice (1900) twins John and William (1902) — all born in Nebraska. They first settled north of the Snowy Mountains. John was postmaster for the tiny post office of Jones. In about 1917 the Feasters acquired property two miles south of Winnett on the hill east of present-day Highway 244.

Mrs. Feaster was a graduate of Doane College, Crete, Nebraska. She taught school in Nebraska as well as in the Winnett community. Among the schools she taught in the area were Kelley, Yellow Water Basin, Elk Creek, Three Buttes School, and Winnett.



Mr. Feaster "was sure not to vote for any Republican!"

Mr. Feaster was an avid voter and never missed an opportunity to cast his ballot. He first became eligible to vote in 1882 and cast his first ballot in 1883. His first presidential ballot was cast for Cleveland in 1884. During his lifetime of voting, he failed to appear at the polls only one time, and that was an off-year election in 1895. He was busy husking corn in Nebraska and couldn't get to the polling place. He came from Billings to Winnett in November of 1950 at 89 years of age to cast his ballot in the general election. A staunch Democrat, he told the clerks of the election that he brought his magnifying glass along so we wouldn't make a mistake and vote for a Republican!

The Feasters celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary on June 13, 1943, at the home of their son, John, in Billings.

The Feasters' oldest daughter, Ethel, married Art Barnes who homesteaded near Yellow Water. (See also BARNES — Flatwillow) Hazel graduated from Winnett High School in 1921. She worked in the post office, for Homer Geis, and for Elmer Eager before marrying Jacob Vance. He was a foreman for Mid Northern Oil Company at Cat Creek. After their marriage they lived in Kevin, Montana. In later years, Jacob worked at Malstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls. The couple have three children — Donald, Della and Alma. Mrs. Vance is still living in Great Falls (1988) at age 90.

Alice Feaster married George Olds in 1919. They lived in Lewistown, Montana. Alice died very suddenly in 1931, leaving seven children — the youngest being only two years old.

William Feaster graduated from Winnett High School in 1922. He married Esther Kolahr in July 1925. For a time he was a tank builder in the Wyoming oil fields. In 1942 he was promoted to farm boss for Continental Oil Company in Ville Platte, Louisiana. He became production manager for the company and traveled in Texas and Louisiana until his retirement. The William Feasters have four children — William, Arlene, John and Cara Lou.

John Feaster stayed and worked in the Winnett community for a number of years. He was a special friend of the Sibberts and often helped them on their ranch. In 1941 he married Mildred Michaelson, who came to Winnett as a teacher. They made their home in Billings, where John was connected with the stockyards. John died in 1963. (See picture SCHULTZ — Teigen)

Mary Feaster died in 1943, John Sr. in 1952.

FISHER, Andrew Andrew Fisher was born in Appleton, Wisconsin, in 1871. He married Emma Bernard of Dodgeville, Wisconsin, on April 16, 1896. Following the marriage, he and his wife moved to Sisseton, Roberts County, South Dakota, where they took a homestead on government land. They lived there until 1916 when they came to Montana. Andrew purchased a homestead relinquishment on McDonald Creek about seven miles east of Winnett. They had three sons — Charles, Theodore and Clifford, and one daughter, Myrtle (Myrtie).



Andrew Fisher



Myrtie (Fisher) Senst, Otto Senst and Clifford Fisher



Myrtie Fisher and her mother, Emma Fisher



Ted Fisher, wife and child

Mrs. Fisher passed away in 1930. Charles and Theodore both moved to Fairfield. Clifford moved to Portland, Oregon. Myrtie married Otto Senst of Winnett. (See also SENST — Winnett)

Andrew Fisher passed away at the Winnett home of his daughter in August 1939. He is buried in the Winnett Cemetery beside his wife, Emma.

FISHER, Clifford (Sec 5-14-28) (W. T. 1-12-34) "An auction sale, that will draw plenty of interest over the county, will be held on Monday, January 22, at the Clifford Fisher ranch, eight miles east of this city on the highway. The goods to be auctioned off include 40 head of cattle, 13 head of horses, farm machinery, and other articles.

"Mr. Fisher, a resident of this section for 20 years, declares he is going to change locations and wishes at this time to dispose of his goods."

FISHER, Roland (Sec 30-14-28) Roland Fisher owned a small place on Flatwillow Creek. He had cattle for a time, carrying the Flying W brand. He built a good set of buildings — log house, barn, granary, smokehouse, and sheds. Roland left in the late 1920s.

The place was purchased by Lou Griffith, father of Bruce Griffith of Grassrange, Montana. Griffiths owned the farm for four or five years and then moved to Grassrange. Thompsons later bought the land from the county for taxes and still own it today.

FLEHARTY, Earl (Sec 24-14-28) Earl, born in Corning, Iowa, on July 14, 1909, came with his parents to the Minnesota Bench in 1912. He married Mary Botch in 1928, and they moved to the John W. Beck Ranch of the Petrolia Bench in 1936. The Fleharty's raised sheep, alfalfa hay, and alfalfa seed. They also milked many dairy cows.

They had four children — Marilyn, Lois May, LuAnn and Alvin James. Marilyn went to the Petrolia School for some of her elementary schooling. When Lois May and LuAnn were ready for school, the family lived in town during the week.