

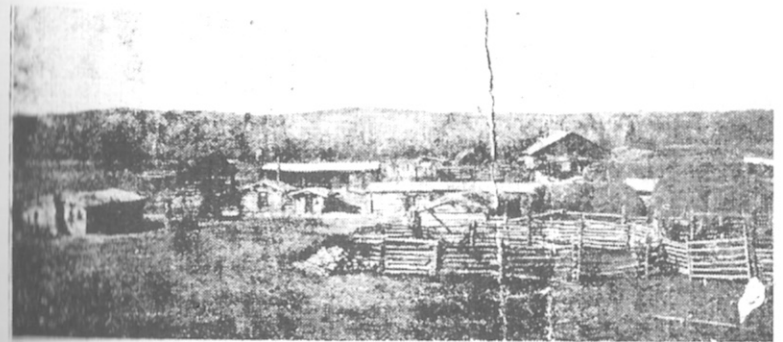
# Chapter 1

## When It All Began

People were moving west and by 1900, Montana was a last frontier of open country. The Pacific states of California, Oregon, and Washington were settled and the country west into the Dakotas; but because of the geographical location, Montana had very few settlers outside of towns that grew up around gold mining and some big ranchers who drove their cattle many miles to a railroad.

The need for a railroad through Central Montana was great. The one planned was the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. This railroad would extend from Chicago to Seattle. This would be the answer to the settling of Central Montana, and in particular, the area in the vicinity of the location of Melstone, just west of the "Big Bend" on the Musselshell River.

### The Passing of the Famous "R L" Ranch



The above picture of the home ranch of the Ryan Bros. Cattle Co., on the "Big Bend" of the Musselshell River, was taken in 1895, but represents history of this locality antedating that period by more than twenty years. It marks the location of the first and largest ranch in this section of Montana, and is of historical prominence from the fact that in those pioneer days, when the buffalo hunter and the

### The Passing of the Famous "RL" Ranch.

Before the railroad there were some early settlers around Melstone's site. The biggest and most famous for Melstone's settling, before the railroad came through, was the "RL" ranch located on the "Big Bend" of the Musselshell River. This establishment was known to cattlemen from San Antonio, Texas, to the Canadian border. The original owners of the "RL" were Matt Ryan and

George Lang. Later successors of the famous ranch were the Ryan Brothers, sons of Matt Ryan.

Being the first and largest ranch in this section of Montana, it considered many cowboys. Among the great number of ranch hands, the following were the ones who stayed around Melstone and later owned their own ranches: Con Kennedy, James Cunningham, John Chandler, Thomas and Mike Finnen, J.K. Holmes, Dick Chandler, C.W. McLean, Wright Harvey, and George Christenot.



J.W. Cunningham

Ryan and Lang purchased cattle in Washington and Oregon. They trailed the cattle to Cheyenne, Wyoming where ranchers bought them to be taken to great cattle ranches in Wyoming and Nebraska.

In those early days, a trail herd numbering from 1,800 to 2,200 was only average. The cattle were accompanied by a regular caravan composed of cowboys, cooks, mess wagons, equipment wagons, and saddle horses.



One of the camps at the "RL" Ranch.

In the early 1880's, Mr. Lang retired from the firm. This marked a change in both the name and the activities of the ranch. At this time the Ryan Brothers took over the ranch.

In 1882 they bought six herds of cattle in Washington and trailed them to the Snake River in Idaho. In the same season they continued the drive to Montana's "Big Bend" country in 1883. Their location at the time was on what is now owned by Boyd Kincheloe.

In 1884 they purchased improvements owned by two buffalo hunters at the mouth of Lost Horse Creek just southwest of Melstone, where the ranch was definitely established.

Many of the old buildings still stand well preserved on the land of the late Guy Hornocker, which is now owned by Harold Hougen.

Time scattered the pioneer brothers somewhat. Matt was killed when a horse fell on him while working cattle. Jepp lived in Los Angeles, California and Tom worked on a stock farm in Kansas. Eth was a resident in Billings, Montana.

Other early settlers in this area were C.W. (Bill) Cooley. His ranch was located six miles east of Musselshell. The Lewis Neace ranch was just west of the coming town site. Then there was the Brockway homesite a little to the north of the Neace's. Now on the north east side of town was J. Andreas, Colliers and Arthur Wilkerson. Yes, the need for a railroad was great, as the long cattle drives to market were not practical for small ranchers.

Before the railroad came, life was hard. The houses were logs, made of one or two room structures with dirt sod roofs. Some women papered the logs with newspapers which were read many times from the walls. Each

covering made these houses a little warmer, as the heating stoves and cook stoves only kept the area close to the stoves warm on bitter, cold days. A few people had fire places built of native sandstone.

The food was simple, mostly homemade bread, slab pork, beans, potatoes and dried fruit with chicken, canned beef or smoked pork. Most homes had a smoke house to cure the meat. Salt peater was used to put on meat in barrels to keep it from spoiling. Ice was put up in large chunks and covered with saw dust to use during the summer. Homemade ice cream was the treat at all community gatherings.

The most "looked forward to" event of the year was the fall roundup when cattle were gathered and late calves branded. At this time, they were sorted for brands. Those which were chosen to be sold were put on a bunch to drive to market many miles away over on the Yellowstone to the Northern Pacific Railroad. This took several days. Cattle men were assembled with a cook wagon and extra horses. When the men got to town, and the last one of the railroad cars, they took off for the nearest saloon to spend their savings on girls, whiskey and poker.

The cattle men had gotten about \$40 per head for their cattle. A year's supply of staples must be bought. These staples must include: sugar, flour, side pork, necessary clothing, and shoes. The women had been left home to look after children and chores. The men did the shopping from a long list made by their wives, which covered many months. They gave their lists to the General Merchandise owner and he made up their loads. This was before shopping carts and check-out girls. The store owner had much more responsibility than the modern clothing to sugar and flour. They were not displayed as attractively as the store of the 1970's, but were every bit as necessary.

#### HISTORY OF THE OLD CUSTER ROAD

Leaving the old Yellowstone Trail a short distance from the old cemetery above Junction is an old road leading to Musselshell, Flatwillow, Grass Range and old Fort MaGinnis, Giltedge and the mining camp of Maiden. The location of this road has changed but little between the Yellowstone and the Musselshell--thanks to the Yellowstone County Commissioners.

After crossing the Musselshell, the road becomes a thing of the past. This road was first traveled by a government expedition on their way from Terry's Landing to their newly located post called Fort MaGinnis. Shortly after this road was located, Jim Carpenter and his Blackfoot woman built a road house at Wolf Springs. Larry Reed with a Crow woman located on the south bank of the Musselshell near a shallow ford called the Lower Crossing of the Musselshell. For several years after Reed located the place was called "Reed's Crossing". John Fattig with a woman of the Blood Tribe and J.H. Healy with Gros Ventre woman located eighty miles north where the river swung to the west. These two couples served meals and allowed travelers to spread their beds on the dirt floor in stormy weather. However, if the weather was pleasant you were far better off under the trees.

Carpenter and Reed sold booze and Healy did a little bootlegging. In 1881 the stampede to the Maiden Mine started. By 1882 the old road was the main traveled route to the new mining camp, the Sun River country and all northern Montana. Freighters came from the Black Hills, Cheyenne, Sidney, western Montana and the Fort McLeod country in Canada. These were happy days for the Squawmen who owned the Road Ranches. They took in lots of money but gambled most of it away.

We are going as far as Musselshell over this old trail and our driver should know something of its history for he has been going over it several times a year since 1882. As we mosey along, he will do all the talking. The cobblestone monument on the left was erected to the memory of his day, Bill was a big man of Junction, both physically and mentally.

Underneath one of these mounds lies the remains of Nicky Emerson who was thrown in the hoosegow at Fort Custer for stealing the silver off a coffin that he was hauling from Custer Station to the Post. Across the coulee to the east is the Old Half-Mile Racetrack where the noodle Redman occasionally cleaned up on his white brothers. Three miles out we pass old Stony Face, showing an almost perfect profile of an Indian looking down at the Yellowstone and waiting for the return of the buffalo.

Another mile and we are near the rock where Dad Shields, the stage driver was held up and robbed of the mail and express by a sixteen year old Pease Bottom boy. Dad's lady passenger passed out and the old man blew tobacco smoke up her nostrils and revived her.

On a November night in 1882 Til Graham came as near swearing as he ever did. His bull outfit was loaded for Fort MaGinnis and they got this far for the first day. They had forded the Yellowstone and the men were wet and cold. They made camp, unyoked the oxen and the boys made a big log fire. There was about four inches of snow and zero weather. Til Graham was just back from a trip to Sun River and the wagon sheet he had been using for a bed tarp had to be used for a wagon cover. Tillman bought a bed tarpaulin in Junction to the tune of \$12 and about here he spread it out after shoveling away snow, shook out his blankets with Mormon Anns all fine and dandy, then he brought the trap over and tucked it in all around and said, "By James River I bet I sleep tonight". About 2:00 a.m. a part of a burning log on the hillside rolled against Til's new tarp and he came near having roast ham for breakfast. Til was a heavy sleeper and the fire got mighty near to where he lived before he woke up. After rolling in the snow and becoming fully awake and seeing his nice new tarp half burned Tillman so far forgot himself as to say, "By GRAD-DAM some darned rooster gave that log a shove". Who knows!

Climbing FIVE MILES is a puddin to what it was in the old days. The old road used to go straight up--you can see it off to the left. It would take an outfit of thirty to forty wagons all day to get to the top when the roads were bad. Along here somewhere Morphine Joe wandered off the road and they found him dead under his spring wagon ten days later. One horse was on his

side in the mud, the other horse astride him, still hitched to the wagon and alive.

Ahead, where the sand drifts, is Seven Miles--an old freighter's camp. Water two miles west.

Here at the foot Nine Mile Hill in the late 80's a troop of soldiers stopped for their mid-day meal. Frederick Remington, the artist, and a nephew of P.T. Barnum were along as guests of the officer-in-charge. As Remington stepped from the ambulance he slipped and the last time I saw Frederick, a dog-robber was scraping the mud off him.

Here at Nine Mile, Draper's herder turned his sheep loose, followed the narrator to Billings and killed a man and woman that night in Jeff Brewer's rooming house.

There are Mexican Buttes, 13 miles from the Yellowstone. The Mexicans are in that gully on the right covered with a rock to fool wolves. He left Junction one hot July day headed for the Musselshell hunting for a job of sheep shearing. He had a half gallon of whiskey but *no water*. TOO BAD!

A few miles further and we are passing the place where the old Butte Road house stood, built 1882 by McClain to catch the traffic to the Maiden Mines, and any loose change the soldier had. Whiskey at 50 cents a drink, take it or leave it and after one snort you would wish had left it. Mac would occasionally have a wild woman out from Junction to liven things up. Later the Ryan Brothers bought the spread and put a man named Berry and his wife in charge. The saloon was turned into a bunk house for the stage tender and drifters headed either way. Nothing of this is where Milt Endaley's chaw of Battle Ax Plug hit when his trail wagon loaded with barbed wire turned over rolled down the hill. There is about a mile of this sand, and believe me this is always tough! After we get out of here we strike a pretty fair road. This black ridge we are crossing is the southern outcropping of the Bull RL Ranch. Thousands of dollars worth of fine horse flesh was shipped from the old RL Ranch to the Eastern markets. Among others thoroughbreds was "Montana" who won \$75,000 at Sheepshead Bay.

After the beef shipments from Custer cowboys would be stringing out of Junction for a week, head north to their different outfits with anywhere from two to a dozen horses in a bunch. The Flatwillow, Maginnis and upper Musselshell boys followed the old freight road, but the Ryan Brothers' punchers cut out here. Many a bottle was filled and many a "so long fellers" was shouted at the spot.

In the patch of timber is where the Government Expedition made camp their first night out from Terry's Landing. They had a little water for camp use but none for their stock and the miles were proclaiming their thirst. Some time in the night a civilian driver in the Quatermaster's outfit was awakened by a dog, Wolf, lying down beside him and the Wolf was muddy. Early in the morning the man crawled out, took his dog and found plenty of water within a mile of camp. The place has been called Wolf Springs ever since. Nothing is

left of the old Carpenter Building at Wolf Springs. They burned years ago as did several sets of buildings erected during the 20's.

It was here that Carpenter killed Jim Reed, a young fellow whom Carpenter found drunk on his bed when he returned from an antelope hunt. Carpenter opened the door, Reed raised up and was shot through the head with a 54-70 Sharpe rifle. When tried, Carpenter's wife was not allowed to testify against him and he was turned loose on his own recognizance. Carpenter was last heard of on the McKenzie River in Hudson Bay Territory.

Carpenter was a famous hunter. He was also suspected of being a member of a gang of horse thieves that Reeves Anderson's Vigilantes, captained by Flopping Bill Centrell put out of business in 1884. One day in 1884 Jim Carpenter got a tip from a man named Martin that the Vigilantes would wind up their activities by a raid on Wolf Springs. He immediately saddled "Old Buck" his old war horse and split the wind. He headed for the mouth of Carpenter Creek 15 miles north where his brother Bob and partner Pomp Dennis had a cow ranch. Several years later Pomp told how Jim came riding up to where he and Bob were working on a corral. His horse white with lather, Jim was bare headed, his long hair hanging to his waist and his stiff white shirt sprinkled with tobacco juice. He said "boys, get your guns and a lot of ammunition and come over to my place this evening". Granville Stuart's stranglers are coming tonight to burn the ranch and hang me, but with you boys and the men stopping with we, I believe we can stand them off".

Pomp did remark that "if the Vigilantes had any intention of cleaning up Wolf Springs they would not be advertising it, and they could have nothing on Carpenter for he had not been sober enough the past year to steal a horse". Carpenter replied that if anyone of them owned a good horse and saddle they had enough on him to hang him. Bob and Pomp went to Wolf Springs that afternoon and took an old buffalo hunter friend with them. The men barricaded the doors and windows and waited all night but no Vigilantes showed. Martin got spooky about 9:00 o'clock, traded for a fresh horse and pulled out with a man named Bill Hexie. They camped about five miles from the Springs and a few days later Martin was found with a rope around his neck hanging from a limb of a dead pine. He was buried under the tree and a part of the rope was hanging from the limb ten years later. Hexie showed up after three or four years but was not at all talkative. An old friend asked where did he cross the Yellowstone. Hexie said that if he did he never saw her!

The fall of 1883 and spring of 1884, a mail route from Custer to Fort Maginnis was established and stage stations were built at the Buttes, Wolf Springs and Reed's Crossing. Wolf Springs was a noon stop and for several years the owner of the stage lines and his family lived at the Springs. Eventually a post office was established and a telephone line was run into Musselshell and connected with the Billings line.

During the late 1890's thousands of sheep were shorn here and the wool freighted to Custer. Poker games ran all night and business was so rushing that an extra bartender was put on. Nothing left now but some tumbled down

shacks built about 1916 by a man from Illinois who bought several sections adjoining. He lost several members of his family during the 1918 flu epidemic and returned to Illinois. Better get away from here before your driver starts cussing, for it surely grinds into his bones to think of his place now and what it used to be.

A few miles and we are over the Divide and headed down the fork of Hawk Creek. About two miles east of where we cross the Mussleshell divide there is a red butte near the head of Carpenter Creek. Granville Stuart is reported to have told that while he and Flopping Bill were on the way home from his ranch at the head Fork Creek to the Yellowstone with a pack outfit they made camp near the red butte. Bell said that he hadn't taken a look for water. He came back about midnight with two fresh Indian scalps, saying he took them down on Buffalo Creek. Sounds fishy.

Halfway between Wolf Springs and Musselshell we pass the site of an old stage station used in the winter to shorten the drive and make it easier for the horses. The stock tender at Wolf Springs called his place the "Need-more" and Johnnie Larett called his place "The Pinchgut".

The first ranch we pass is on Hawk Creek located by Harry Gross and Jack Vendee in 1883. Harry and Jack had a restaurant in Billings where Luzon stands. They were ambitious and in their pursuit for wealth got a little careless about ownership of calves they put their brand on. After doing their little chore for the state they soon drifted to the southwest.

The creek bottom for the next three miles was a part of the old Kurts and Larswn Ranch. This outfit located here in 1883 with a big bunch of Minnesota dogies and made plenty of money for a couple of years. The fall of 1886 they were afraid of range conditions in the Bull Mountains and moved their stock to the Crow Reservation where they lost nearly a hundred percent of them.

Wright Harvey lives across the creek on part of the old ranch. He is about the only one left of the old "honest-to-good punchers" who forked broncos in the 80's. He must be about a hundred. Anyway he has gone through more grief and hilarity than most men during their first hundred years. But he does most of the roping for his neighbors. He breaks his own horses and doesn't have bad ones to ride as he did a few years ago.

In the distance you see Musselshell town. On our left, the cemetery. Several men lie here who died with their boots on. El Cooley who was shot by Bill Harney in a quarrel over the ownership of a sheep camp. John Matt was shot during a poker game by George Shepherd. Three suicides and several who met accidental death or died from exposure.

There are several fine residences in Musselshell. A big expensive school building; some substantial business houses, a little church house, some mighty fine families and lots of bright kids.

At one time Musselshell had two stores, a bank, three saloons, two hotels, and two blacksmith shops. A real newspaper, a good stiff poker game and dances that were attended by people from Canyon Creek, Pease Bottom, Grass Range, Forest Grove, Junction or any place within 65 miles.

Al Foote or Charley Ball from Billings, the Weber family from the Snowies or a cowboy with a fiddle and another with mouth organ harp furnished the music.

No More cowboys riding into saloons. No More poker games with Kicking George bawling his head off or Gross Ventre Johnnie turning his chair around to bring luck. No More bullion from the Old Spotted Horse Mine at Giltedge passing through with Reese Anderson's guard of six mounted men armed with Winchester on the way to Custer. No long haired squawmen around with kinnikinick and trying to buy a little tobacco from freighters. No More the smell of burnin Cotton wood coming from the lodges. Not even an Injun dog to crack with a bull whip.

Written and compiled by

Bill Jacobs, Musselshell, Montana

#### CHARLES JENNEWAY

Charles and Nellie Jennaway come to Montana from Butterfield, Minnesota in April of 1915. They came on an immigrant train that carried household belongings, horses, a wagon, and two pups. Charles Wolff, Nellie's father came with them. He was 56 years old at this time, but a pioneer at heart.

They came on the Milwaukee Railroad to Lewistown where Charles Wolff and Charles Jennaway were taken by a promoter to Melstone and to the homestead 20 miles to the south on Weed Creek. There Charles Wolff bought the relinquishments on a homestead and Charles Jennaway filed on the 1/2 section next to him.

Nellie Jennaway stayed with the wagon and their possessions just outside Lewistown for two weeks waiting for their return. She was 26, and for company had the two pups, Jack and Lady, and the two horses. She put up a tent and waited in this wild unknown country with coyotes answering the pups from the distant hills. Not far away were other tents in which a band of Gypsies were camping.

After two weeks the men came back and the long track of more than 100 miles began up one long hill and down another. Would they ever get there? And when they did--it was a desolate lonely sight. One little four room frame house and nothing more than prairie, sagebrush and the lonesome call of the coyotes always lurking in the hills.

Gramps, Charles Wolff, had spent his money on buying his 1/2 section of land so they felt they must stay with him. The 1/2 section to the west was open to be homesteaded so Nellie and Charles put in their application for the 320 acres. They got their deed signed by the President of the United States.

Work had to be done to comply with the Homestead Act. Some land must be plowed and living quarters built. The homesteaders were required to live six months of each year on their own land to "prove up" on it. Charles Jennaway, with the help of his father-in-law, constructed a two room shanty on their 320 acres. They built it in a sheltered draw to protect it from the

northerly winds. A stove pipe went up through the roof and the cook stove was all the heat they had. The colder months they would live with Gramps in his house which had plaster and a brick chimney.

In the spring of 1916 their first child was born. She came two weeks early and a doctor was not in attendance until after little Elizabeth Mabel (Betty) was born. A neighbor, Martil Karman rode to Custer to get the doctor and by the time the doctor arrived the baby was born with only Charlie to help Mrs. Kilgore, a midwife. She stayed the required 10 days that women spent in bed after the birth of a child.

Betty was the only baby in this area for a couple of years and all the bachelors made over her. There was Mr. Friech, a mile to the west, Jack Johnson and Carl Carlstrom to the northwest. A mile to the east was Mr. Percell.

Nellie Jennaway was the first woman in this area, but others came the next year. Mr. and Mrs. White came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with their four children. Two daughters, Olive and Lois, and two sons, Milton and Horace. They settled about four miles to the south.

Later Olive married Jack Johnson and Lois married Carl Carlstrom. Mr. Percell married a lady from Idaho. They were an older couple but became the best friends of the Jennaways. Telephone lines were installed along fence lines and neighbors called each other on crank telephones. This was a convenience that the women enjoyed.

Gramps built a barn, shop, grainery, chicken house, hog pen and installed a windmill over 30 ft. dug well. Money was scarce. They bought a few cows and several horses. This was 1918. Then the winter of 1919 was a bad one. The wind blew and the thermometer dropped and the cattle froze where they stood. The carcasses were thick in the shelter of the bluffs along the Weed Creek. When spring came they went to see their banker in Custer. He was Mr. Sharp. Things looked bad with only a few cattle left and borrowed money at 10 percent. The banker helped them another year and a few more cattle were purchased from some neighbors who were selling out and leaving. The years were better and by 1928 the debt was paid with enough money left to buy their first car.

Hazel was born in 1919 and Morris in 1920. This completed the family. In 1923 Betty was old enough that she must start school, but there was no school close by. About five miles to the south was the closest school. They had to do something, so they moved to a rented place one half mile from the school where the children could walk. Only three or four children attended by 1923. In the earlier years more settlers had been there, and the school house was a large one room building with an entrance. The Elson readers were taught along with writing, spelling and arithmetic. The seats were the type hooked together by the seat of one and the desk of the one behind.

The house the Jennaways lived in was a two-story frame house built in a bank. Two rooms downstairs and one large room upstairs with window on

ground level. It was a wonderful place in which to play. The sand rocks were fun to play on and, of course, the milk-fed calves made great pets.

Milking cows became the source of cash income from which the staples of flour, sugar, coffee and dried fruit were purchased, in large quantities to last six months at a time. The men usually made long trips of 25 miles to Custer or Melstone a couple of times a year. They went with wagon and horses.

The children grew strong and healthy on sunshine and freedom of the wide outdoors. School only lasted four and one half months and then the teacher moved to another school to be closer for a few other children. Betty started high school in Musselshell in 1928 and then went to Custer to finish. Boarding out was the way this had to be done at about \$1.00 per day. By the time Hazel and Morris were old enough to go to school, the depression was on. Gramps stayed with the children in a little rented cabin in Custer. He was 75 years old now. In 1935 he died of a heart attack after a case of flu.

Nellie and Charlie Jennaway moved to Melstone when they bought Jim Holmes' place on the Musselshell in 1947. They lived here until their deaths. Charles died in 1952 and Nellie in 1962. Morris, their son has their homestead and the Jim Holmes' place at the present time.

#### ROBERT WILSON

Robert Wilson was born on February 8, 1878 and he died May 5, 1937. His death was caused from a heart attack. Mrs. Wilson Suter was born in 1890. In 1906 he came to this area but he didn't like what he saw so he returned to Stover, Missouri. In 1907 he came back and stayed. He came by train both times. He settled where Mrs. Suter is living now and he had a hotel. The name of the hotel was the Wilson. No matter how tough things were, he always kept his sense of humor. Robert did have some hardships while living in Melstone. Once his band of sheep were killed by a train and another was that a fire burned down their hotel, home and clothing. Their only child is Laverne, who lives on his land. After Robert Wilson died, Mrs. Suter married Paul Suter.

#### TOM FINNEN

Tom Finnen and his brother, Mike were bachelors who lived by Queen's Point and ran sheep. He is thought to have come from Nebraska in the early 1900's. Pete Harvey now owns his land.

#### RENE DE JAEGER

Rene was born in 1899. He came to the United States by boat from Belgium with a load of horses to New York. From there he went to Grand Meadow by train. Rene experienced many types of work. He farmed in Minnesota for two years, ranched in Miles City and worked at the stock yards for two years. Before finally settling in Melstone, he settled in Jordan and Bigmar.

## ARTHUR S. KINCHELOE

Arthur Kincheloe was born August 21, 1890 at Turon, Kansas, the youngest of ten children born to Alexander Boling Kincheloe and Nancy Katherine Stout. He spent his childhood in Oklahoma.

Art arrived in Montana in 1910 at the age of 20 and found employment with a dray service and livery barn which operated out of Roundup. He also drove a dray line between Lewistown and Miles City when the railroad was being laid, this bed has since been abandoned.



Art and Mary Kincheloe.

After quitting the dray service, Art moved to Washington but later returned to the Big Hole Basin country to try his hand at raising sheep. Art then moved back to the Melstone area where he was employed by Matt Leffrig as a shepherd. It was during this time, in 1914, that he and his brother Don staked out claims for homesteads located 16 miles northeast of Melstone.

World War I began and in October, 1917, Art and Don enlisted in the Army. Art was assigned to the Horse Cavalry and saw action in France. He was honorably discharged in May 1919 and returned to the homestead. Don, however, died in France.

Art Kincheloe married Ruth Dutton in Miles City on July 1, 1920. Ruth Dutton was originally from New York. In 1929 the family moved down on the Musselshell River to settle on the Keg Handle Charlie place, eight miles northeast of Melstone. He spent the rest of his life there.

Art took an active interest in the betterment of the community and served as a member of the school board for several years. He had the largest family of graduates from Melstone school.

Art and Ruth Kincheloe had seven children, three sons, Boyd, Wendell, and Wade; and four daughters, Mrs. Miysee, Mrs. Keith Hendrix, Mrs. George Nielson, and Mrs. Morris Jennaway.

Mrs. Ruth Kincheloe passed away in 1962 and Art followed her death in August of 1968.

## FRANK AND CLARICE DREES

Early in the year 1910, three girls attending Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, were inspired by a classmate to move west and begin homesteading. They decided to come to Montana for 14 months (the length of time required to "prove up") and then sell their land and have "a lot of money" to spend while in college. So, in April of that year, Sadie Treglvan and Jewell Ross of Carrol, Iowa and Clarice Fisher of Des Moines with Jewell Ross' maternal grandfather, Perrigo, of Manning, Iowa started out on the new railroad line. Their destination was the Judith Basin country near Lewistown, Montana.

On the way out, a Milwaukee "land man", who was on the train for the express purpose of trying to let "land seekers" interested in settling the country along either side of the railroad, persuaded Grandpa Perrigo and the others of the party to disembark at Bascom, Montana.

So the group gave up on the plan of going to the Judith Basin country and disembarked at Bascom, staying at the rooming house connected with and in the town site building. The idea was to get a section of land and three girls were to get a section of land and build a house in the exact center of the section. Each one of the four was to have a bedroom in the house. There would be a living room and kitchen in the center. This would now be called "communal living".

But on trying to find a whole section they hit a snag, as none suitable for their plans was to be found, plus the fact that the land "out south" couldn't be reached easily except by going to Melstone, the railroad town to the west, fording the river at the R.L. Ranch and taking the road south. Another snag was that the land wasn't as yet open for "homesteading" except by "squatters rights" as the U.S. survey hadn't been accepted by the government.

Then Grandpa Perrigo felt it was too rough a life for him, so after helping the rest of the group pick out 160 acres individually, he left for his Iowa home, and the three girls were on their own.

Al Osten, Walter Mohler and Fred Watts hired Eric and Matt Hjelvik to build cabins for them on land they had chosen. Eric and Matt had come earlier and had filed on land near the town of Bascom along with the Edward Schroeder family, Dr. Hedges, a Melstone dentist, and Dr. A.T. Gilhans, Melstone's first M.D.

The cabins were buildt and close neighbors were the families of Louis Whitcher, his father in law, Mr. Cazare had broken a 20-acre plot of sod on his homestead and planted flax as a first-year crop.

On the right side of the road out south was the Louis Whitcher family. They lived in a two-story log cabin, as did the Andrew Benson family. Farther south was the Melchoir Maart family with Melchoir's brothers, Wilhem and Louie close by on homesteads. Still farther south were the John Heides, William Wilsons and the John Dougalls. The Virgil Jennings family also lived in that vicinity.

In August of 1910, Frank Drees of Carroll, Iowa came to Montana with Jewell Ross's father and brother to look for homesteads. Frank Drees bought a relinquishment of 120 acres right across the river in Rosebud County. His nearest neighbor was a man by the name of Fleming who worked in the Milwaukee Roundhouse. William Fleishman, a railroad employee, and Tony Erekeneff, a maintenance man at the Milwaukee depot were also friends of Frank Drees. Frank Drees was the Freight Cashier at the depot. Frank and Clarice were married.

#### ALBERT FOSTER

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Foster came to the Melstone area in 1913 from Great Falls, where Mr. Foster had worked with a crew building grain elevators in the northern Montana wheat raising areas.

They homesteaded in the Sand Springs area, rolling with the many punches the homesteaders had to face. Summers were spent on the homestead and winters in Melstone. Mrs Foster worked as a cook in Rose's Cafe, both where the Antlers Bar now is and in the old building behind it, which was one of the original cafes in the town. Meanwhile, Mr. Foster worked his team and wagon. Among some of his jobs were helping with excavation for the water tank on the top of the hill. This is the same one we are presently using. He also hauled the bricks for the old school on top of the hill.

After the start of the coal mine at Carpenter Creek in 1916, Mr. Foster worked there during the winters. At the time of the fall migration to earn monies, Mrs. Foster stated that this was the last trip to the homestead. Anything left behind was abandoned, as was the lot of many homestead belongings.

So the family leased a farm, the Gordon place, and stayed in the area. From time to time additional land was leased. The family lived at the old Carpenter Creek mine and on the old Haling place before moving to the place Lestley Foster now lives. This is the old Chandler place.

There were three children, all who attended high school in Melstone. Two children still live in the area.

#### FRED FIENE

Fred Fiene came to Melstone by railroad. He homesteaded 10 miles north of Melstone. Tom De Jaegher owns the land now. His wife's name was Clara. They had no children. Mr. Fiene did mostly farming and ran a few cattle. He died in 1962. She died a few years later.

#### GUST ANDERSON

Gust Anderson homesteaded where Geno Minnie now lives. This is located thirteen miles northeast of Melstone. He is Buster Anderson's father.

#### LEWIS NEACE

Lewis Neace came here in 1903 and he was considered one of Melstone's first pioneers. While he was here he ran horses and cattle. At different times he made coffins and other carpentry work. Later, he traveled to Washington.

#### CHRISTOFF RITSKI

When he came in 1917, he lived five miles north of Queens Point. Like so many other homesteaders, Mr. Ritski traveled here on the train from Appleton, Minnesota. He was born in Germany on November 8, 1815 and passed away on May 15, 1924. As of right now, Harold Hougen owns his land. Mrs. Frieda Wilson Suter was his daughter.

#### FRANK COLLIER

Frank Collier and Kate Joyce were united in marriage at Brookfield, Missouri in 1906. That same year they journeyed to Melstone to try their luck at homesteading.

They traveled by train, stopping in Billings and at the junction, which is now Custer. After arriving in Musselshell they transferred their belongings onto the stage and finished their trip to Melstone.

Homesteading was not an easy occupation. Quite a few families were forced to move because of hail and drought. In 1936, the grasshoppers came to ruin many farmer's crops.

The land which the Colliers homesteaded is 15 miles north of town. It was sold to Wendell Kincheloe during the fall of 1968.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Collier had two children, Raymond and Margaret. Frank passed away in 1952. Still living are his wife and daughter.

#### KEG HANDLE CHARLEY

Keg Handle Charley had a lot of money but he lived in a rough old shack, ate poorly, and dressed in tattered dirty clothes. He was known in Central Montana as an eccentric, frugal, lone wolf type of individual. He became one of the richest men in the valley and lived like the poorest.

When he died in 1926, he was worth a quarter of a million dollars. This money was given to 13 charitable organizations mostly near St. Louis, Missouri. Several relatives shared the remaining portion.

According to William Gremmert, who once homesteaded on a spread adjacent to Keg Handle's, Charles J. Andreas was born February 22, 1826 in St. Louis, Missouri.

In the late 1870's, Andrea came to Montana and tried his hand at placer mining in the Confederate Gulch area near White Sulphur Springs. Most of



the money he made mining was sent home to St. Louis where his family invested it. Eventually the Andrea family came to own extensive real estate holdings and utility and transportation company stock in St. Louis.

In 1880, Andreas went to work as a cowboy on the James Snall ranch. Snall owned the "Keg Handle" ranch a few miles east of Roundup.

It was here he picked up the "Keg Handle" nick name. He rode on the famous Musselshell Valley roundups when the ranchers along the Musselshell River would drive their cattle down the flats near the city of Roundup for branding and shipping. It was said by Jim Buckey, who rode with Charley, the "Keg Handle" kept to himself and learned the reputation as a lone wolf.

The only time Andreas stepped out of character and tried to be "one of the boys" he did not do too well. The incident happened on one of the roundups in the early 90's. Andreas was coiling his lariat when Buckey rode by. Apparently Keg Handle got an urge and lassoed Buckey and pulled him from the saddle. Buckey was taken by surprise. As Andreas was holding his sides, guffawing with his boisterous, coarse laughter Buckey slipped free and knocked Keg Handle down, beating him. After that episode, Charley became more of a lone wolf than ever.

In the 1890's, Andreas left the Snall's ranch and filed on a homestead of his own. He settled about seven miles north of Melstone along the Musselshell River. He evidently met with financial success and continued to send almost all of his money to St. Louis.

His frugality reached the point to where he would even deprive his body of needed food and energy.

Keg Handle was noted to live for a week at a time on a diet of sourdough pancakes three times a day. At other times he would whip up a batch of pancakes in the morning and open a can of beans at noon and make a bean sandwich. If there were still some leftovers at night, he'd make more bean sandwiches.

When he came to town, Charley would buy crackers and cheese and eat them while walking the street or setting in solitude in a doorway.

Old timers who knew him say they never knew him to take a drink.

His usual sleeping place in town would be in a chair on a hotel porch or on a wooden bench or floor in the train depot. He was never known to have spent even a nickel.

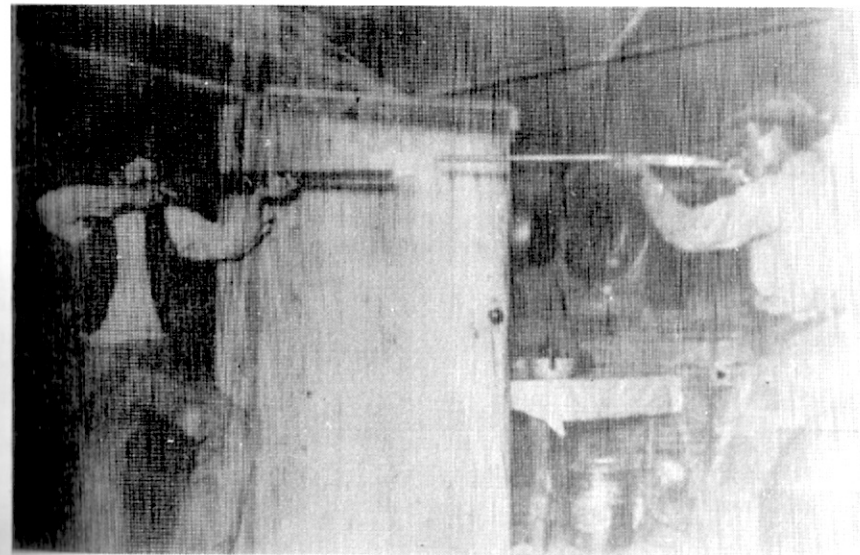
The Andreas homestead was situated near the trail used by ranchers and homesteaders in the Musselshell crossing for supplies.

Charley's hospitality varied. At times, he would welcome traveler's and permit them to stay over night in his cabin and share the beans and pancakes.

At other times he was extremely hostile toward strangers. Bill Gremmert tells of the time he was visiting Charley and was ready to take pictures of him when a stranger rode up and asked to spend the night. Keg Handle told him he wasn't welcome.

"You can eat my food, I don't mind," Charley said, "But I'll be hanged if your horse is gonna eat my grass. Now get out of here!"

It is said the traveler got out of the cabin long enough to go to his horse and take his rifle from the saddle holster and return to the cabin.



Keg Handle Charley

Meanwhile Charley saw the stranger coming back so he picked up his own rifle and as the stranger kicked open the door, the two men faced each other with their rifle barrels pointed at each other's heads. The stranger stood there for a second then angrily turned around and left.

Then there was a time the better side of Charley showed up. A neighboring homesteader deserted his wife and family, leaving them destitute. When Charley found this out, he rode into Melstone and ordered food and clothing for the family, but he made the store clerk promise not to tell who paid the bill. When the family left, they departed not knowing their unknown benefactor.

Keg Handle was considered a good horseman, and for years his only method of transportation was horseback. As the years went by, he began to ride a buggy because of being over weight and having kidney trouble, arthritis, and anemia.

In August of 1926, he was ill, but refused to go to the hospital. He told Earl Miller of Melstone to stop by the cabin every few days to see if he was alright. Miller promised to do so and fetched Charley some water and groceries, and fixed some kindling in the stove for him.

Apparently Andreas died shortly after Miller left. He had probably under gone pain before his death. He was found on the floor of his cabin, face down. Groceries, water and some kindling were untouched.

Coroner F.M. Booth of Forsyth attributed death to chronic nephritis, a kidney disorder, had been caused by anemia. He fixed the date of death August 10, 1926. Keg Handle Charley was seventy years old.

Charley's will was found tacked in an old clock which stood on the floor of his cabin. Also a checking account with a balance of \$30,000 with a St. Louis bank was discovered. His body was sent to St. Louis for burial.

#### DICK CHANDLER

Dick Chandler was in Melstone in 1903. He ran cattle and worked for the R.L. Ranch.

#### SHORTY MIDKIFF

Shorty was born in Rockville, Missouri. He came to Great Falls first, and worked for two years. He then bought land near Bascom in 1915. He then ran a meat market from Ingomar to Musselshell. He had a wife and three children. They were Billy, Douglas, and Allyne. Allyne now lives here with her husband, Vern Stevenston, east of Melstone.

#### CLIFF AND MARY COLBURN

When Mrs. Colburn came to Melstone in 1908 there were no houses to live in, but there were seven saloons. All they had to live in were tents and railroad cars, which were located south of the tracks.

Colburn's house was not built as planned, Cliff Colburn and his boys were stacking lumber on a wagon. While moving the lumber, the wagon broke down, so the cabin was built where the wagon broke.

They had three daughters. The first to be born was Eileen, and ten years later, Doris and Dorothy, the twins were born. Mrs. Colburn, died in 1947 and Eileen passed away in 1965. Mary Colburn, who was in her early 90's, died from a stroke in the spring of 1972.



Mary Colburn

#### CHARLES AND ITASCA METTILE

Charles and Itasca Mettile, with two daughters, arrived in Melstone August 14, 1914. The three ladies came by passenger train, but Charles came in the immigrant car which contained their worldly possessions: all household things and one buggy and lone horse, Old Diamond, plus chickens, some farm machinery, a milk cow, Boss, and two heifers, Bell and Daisy, and other various things. They came from Homer, Minnesota, a little village on the Mississippi River.

Grandmother Breed had come out before and filed on a homestead. She was a widow of a Civil War veteran, so Charles and Itasca moved to that quarter section as soon as a house was built. Until then they lived with Mary's Aunt and Uncle, George Haling, south of Melstone.

In Minnesota, 160 acres was a lot of land, but they soon found out it wasn't much in Montana. Fifteen acres had to be farmed to prove up on the homestead. Grandma Breed hired this done the first year.

Charles soon went to work as a car repair man for the Milwaukee Railroad in Melstone. Later he worked as car repairman at Carpenter Creek. Itasca and her daughter Evelyn took turns staying with him and doing the cooking, as someone had to stay on the farm all the time. One time Grandma Breed was staying with him. Charles had had a chest cold so he had turpentine and lard mixed up to rub on his chest. Grandma Breed decided to make bread, so she saw this, (supposedly lard) and used it for shortening in the bread. Needless to say, the chickens ate that batch of bread.

They probably went through many things that would be called hardships now days, but they never really thought of them as such. Charles had typhoid and was in Miles City hospital for weeks.

In 1921 they lived in Melstone for a year. In the spring, they moved to the place where Tom and Helen Hougen live, which was the John Neace place. Charles had inflamitory rheumatism and had to quit the railroad, so he farmed on shares for his son-in-law, Bryon Neace. During this time, eggs were as low as 4 cents a dozen and Itasca sold butter 20 cents a pound.

When they first came to Montana, a lot of their groceries were purchased from Savage and Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was always exciting when the order came. Clothing was purchased from Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck Co.

Itasca was born March 12, 1875 in Homer, Minnesota and died November 29, 1961. Charles was born April 26, 1873 in Atumwa, Iowa, and died in September of 1944.

Mary married C.J. Harvey and they now live on part of the original homestead southeast of Melstone. Evelyn married Bryon Neace and they live with their son in Washington.