

Chapter 10

Melstone in 1972

Most of the present day businesses in Melstone were started operating in the late 1960's. However, the Drug Store which started operating in 1910 is in a building that has been standing for many years. The hardware part of the store used to be a bowling alley and a bar that was owned by A.L. Smith. The soda fountain was installed in 1925 when Phil Hoffman had the store.

Don and Ethel Pease came to Melstone in 1944 where Don worked for the railroad. Then they went to Baker for a year and to Miles City for six months. In 1958 they came to Melstone and bought the store from Phil Hoffman where they have been operating the O.K. Drug and Hardware Store for 14 years. They have two children, Joe and Penny, who are both high school graduates of Melstone.

The Triangle 3 Grocery Store's owners, Jim and Evelyn Anderson, were raised in the Melstone area. Evelyn was born in Carpenter Creek and went to school at Melstone for all twelve years and graduated in 1947. Jim was born in Roundup and his family ranched north-west of Roundup.

There are two garages in Melstone, Charley's Garage and Jake's Garage. Charley Church had ranched in the Hysham area before coming to Melstone in 1968. He worked for the Big Chief Well Service and for Jake Zaharko's Garage when he first arrived. On June 5, 1971 he started his own business by renting the Diamond M Garage from Duane Walker and opened up Charley's Garage.

The other garage is Jake's Garage, which Jake Zaharko has had for 21 years. He came to Melstone in 1940 from the little town of Sumatra. When coming to Melstone, he worked for the railroad with the steam engines. For 11 years he was with the railroad, he showed students how the steam engine worked. Then on June 20, 1951 he started his own business by opening the garage. He started the delivery of gas in 1954 and in 1960 he bought his first wrecker and has had two for his work the last five years. Jake's Garage was broken into five times within a two-year period and \$500.00 to \$1,500.00 was stolen each time. Jake is also the Mayor of Melstone when he was elected in 1971 for a two-year term. The first time he was Mayor of Melstone was in 1965.

The Big Chief Well Service, owned by Ron Stanhope, has been operating since 1963. The Stanhope family has lived in South America and Laurel before coming to Melstone in 1962 where Ron worked for Auby Aldrige. In 1967, the building where the family lives and where Ron's big garage is, was completed. His main jobs are servicing and repairing oil wells, completing oil wells, and shallow drilling. He now has three big units and employs 10 people. Stanhope's ran a laundromat for five years before it was

closed down in 1971. Big Chief Well Service has now been purchased by Rick Houston.

The USI Axelson in Melstone was built in 1968. The Axelson is the second largest pump manufacturer in the world, as there is also a shop in Europe. Some of the people that worked here before Mike Thornburg were: Jake Crumline, John Harvey, and Don Olson. Mike's main job is repairing the pumps but other companies make boats, pots and pans, and caterpillars.

John Balock is another person who has gone all twelve years of school at Melstone. He was born on Carpenter Creek in 1927 and grew up in this area. In 1945 he graduated out of a class with only five people in it, four girls and one boy. In 1950, John and his partner, Randall Mills, went into a business together moving dirt. Their first year of business brought in a profit of about \$20,000.00. Now John brings in a profit of about a quarter of a million dollars each year. Four years later John bought Randall Mills' interest out and started his on his own.

The Balock Excavating Inc. does many different types of jobs. Some of its jobs are: digging trenches and installing pipe lines, general dirt moving, building and graveling roads and it also handles some concrete business. In 1968 they had a laundromat put in the convenience of the town. The architects, J.G. Linck and Company, who designed the new school also designed Balock's laundromat. John Balock has been a great help to the Melstone community, as he is also a Chief of the Melstone Fire Department.

The Melstone Fire Department was organized in 1959. They now have about 12 members in it and they have three trucks: one for Rosebud County, one for the Musselshell County, and one for the town. The officers are: Ray Keeler who is Chief, Al Bassett who is the Assistance Chief, John Mikesell who is the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Melstone Fire Department is a non-profit organization, so the firemen members have dances and suppers to keep the organization going.

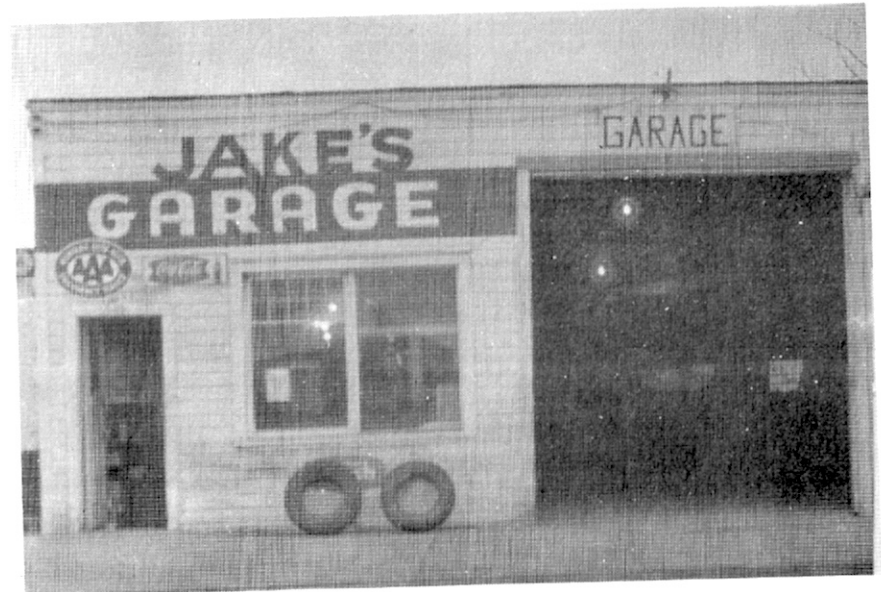
Mr. and Mrs. Duane Walker came from Billings in 1963 because they thought that a smaller town was a better place to raise a family and to get acquainted with the people in the community better. Duane started his business with the Diamond M Garage and delivering bulk on January 6, 1963. Eight years later he leased out his garage to Charley Church, who has the Charley's Garage now, but he still delivers gasoline and propane to many families.

Duane's future plans are to stay in Melstone until retirement time and retire here. He also wants his own propane bulk instead of getting from the gas plant. Their three children are all Melstone High School graduates.

The Miller family came to Melstone in 1963 from Lewistown when Herb started working for Duane Walker delivering gas and working at the service station. In 1968, the Millers leased the Diamond M Cafe from Duane Walker. In the latter years of the 1960's they left the cafe to Walkers and bought the Antlers Bar and Motel from Jack and Velma Teats. In the bar they have a

backbar that was built in 1912 and worth around \$20,000.00. This backbar was also used in a movie.

The Melstone Post Office, which has been here since 1908 is located at the end of the first block going north on Main Street. The Post Master now is Herb Oster who has been here since August 16, 1963. The Post Office was originally located in the front of the bank building. In October of 1964, the Post Office Department leased the present building from Joe Pelter and has been located there since. Over the years there has been an average of approximately 300 people living in Melstone and there has been between 145 to 155 boxes rented at all times.



Jake's Garage.

Johnny Stevens went into the trucking business in February 1953 with only two trucks and Dorothy was elected to drive one of them. For seven years the Stevens followed the oil wells, hauling either water or oil for the rigs. In April, 1965, the J & J Trucking Company was organized when Jim Charlton joined the Johnny Stevens Trucking Company. Presently the company have 13 men employed: 6 men are in Havre, 3 are in Cutbank, and 4 men are here at Melstone. To do all of the necessary hauling that has to be done, the company has 14 trucks which are usually used at all times.

Jessie Peltzer, owner of the Sportsman Cafe and Bar and the Hotel came to Melstone in 1951. She bought the cafe and bar from Donaldson and started operating it in 1953, then in 1956 she bought from Mrs. Suter the Wilson Hotel. She has been operating it since then and also made a beautiful flower Garden just south of the hotel. She spent much time and effort making that lot pretty. Jessie also now has a pool table in her cafe where many of the

young people of Melstone spend much of their time playing pool.

The Kanta Trucking Company is owned by Joe Kanta. Joe was born on a ranch east of Sumatra and graduated from the Sumatra school there. When Joe started his business eight years ago, in 1964, he was in Wyoming and had two trucks. Hauling water, mostly to oil wells are his two employees, Johnny Miller and Evert Linseliglar, who use for transportation one of his four trucks. Joe has had a hand in many of other types of work as he has worked at being a rough neck, hauling mail, worked in the filling station in Ingomar, and he has also worked at farming. He and his wife, Sandy, have three children; the oldest one is in the third grade.

A.J. McAlester started the construction for the Ginther Gas Plant May 1, 1965 and it was completed 2 months later as the first engine was started up in July, 1965. During the construction there were 53 men employed. There has been two tragic accidents that have happened out by the gas plant claiming two lives. Bud Hillman was killed by the Rive Separator when he was transferring gas and it caught fire. This accident happened on April 7, 1968. About a year later there was a terrible explosion when the hot-oil accumulator tank blew up. This explosion happened on July 3, 1969 which claimed the life of Ennis Tull. Bernard Stanerson was also put in the hospital for terrible burns. The explosion burned down the whole gas plant so in February of 1970 Jay Pierce Construction of Oklahoma started to rebuild a better and a safer gas plant.

Jim Wilson, Jr., the superintendent of the gas plant now, started working there on May 20, 1965. His assistant, Bill Kent, started a few months after Jim did and has been Jim's assistant since February 1, 1970. Jim went to grade school in Custer but came to Melstone to finish his four years of high school here. After he graduated in 1951, he joined the Navy and spent three years in Korea. He now has a ranch south of Melstone and has three children where the youngest one started school in the fall of 1972.

The plant has gone down hill a little, as it use to put out about 30,000 gallons of gas and propane but it now puts out about 9,000. The number of men employed has also dropped down to eight men as there were at one time twenty-two men employed. There is about 175 miles of pipe line just around the gas plant. Although there has been hardfeelings, heart aches, hatred, men working there and dying, the gas plant was still working in 1972 and giving work to many men around this community.

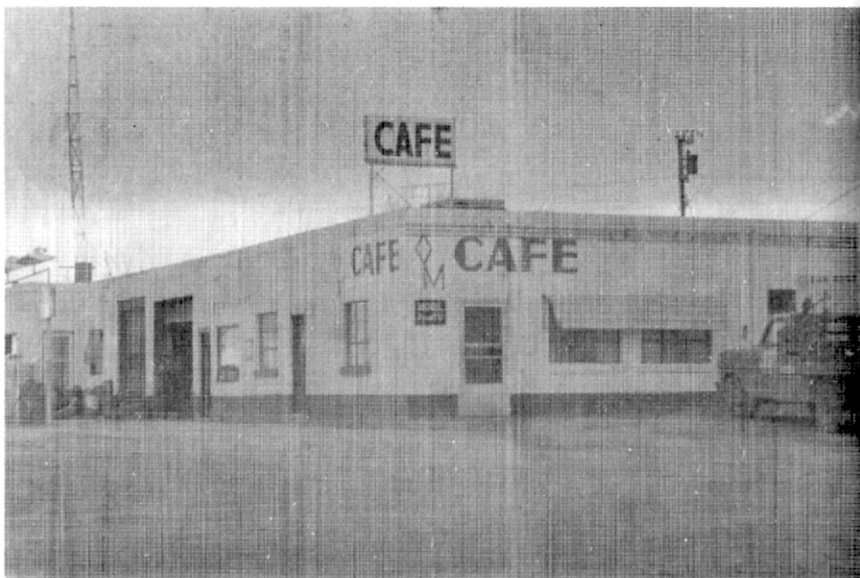
The railroad now, since midnight April 15, 1972, has been running straight through from Harlowtown to Miles City without changing crews at Melstone. Since the closing of the railroad bunkhouse, the businesses in Melstone have suffered a loss of business as the railroad men no longer need a place to stay or anything to eat.



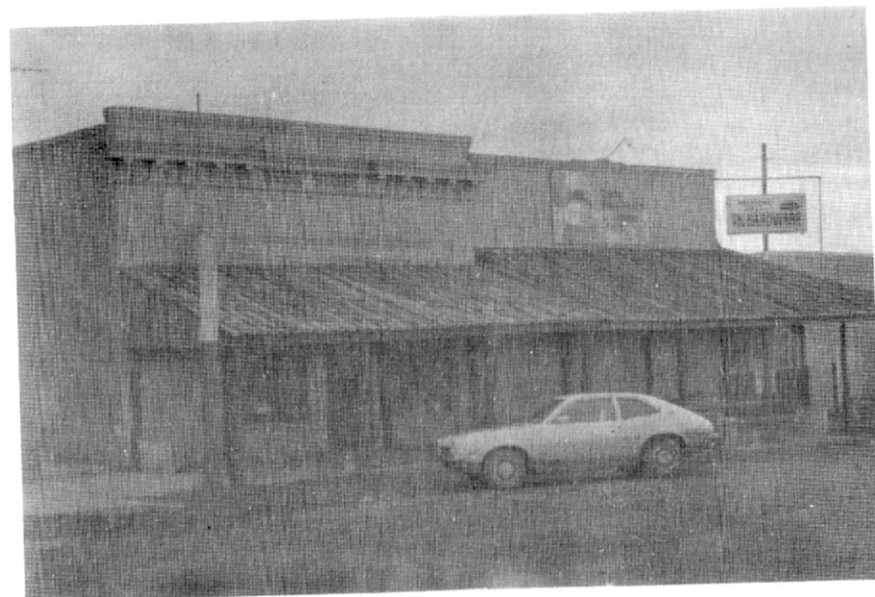
J & J Trucking.



Kanta Trucking.



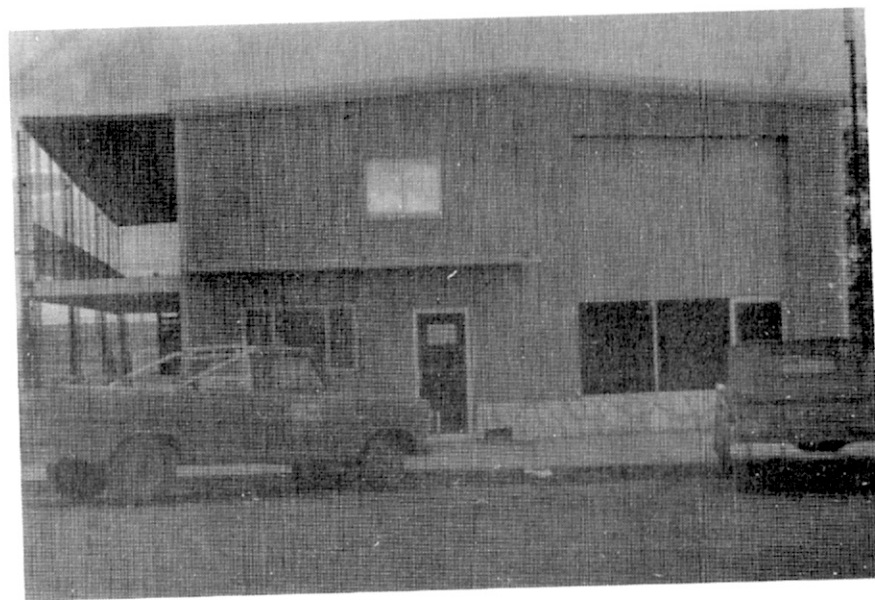
Donna's Diner and Charley's Service.



The Drug Store owned by Don Ethel Pease.



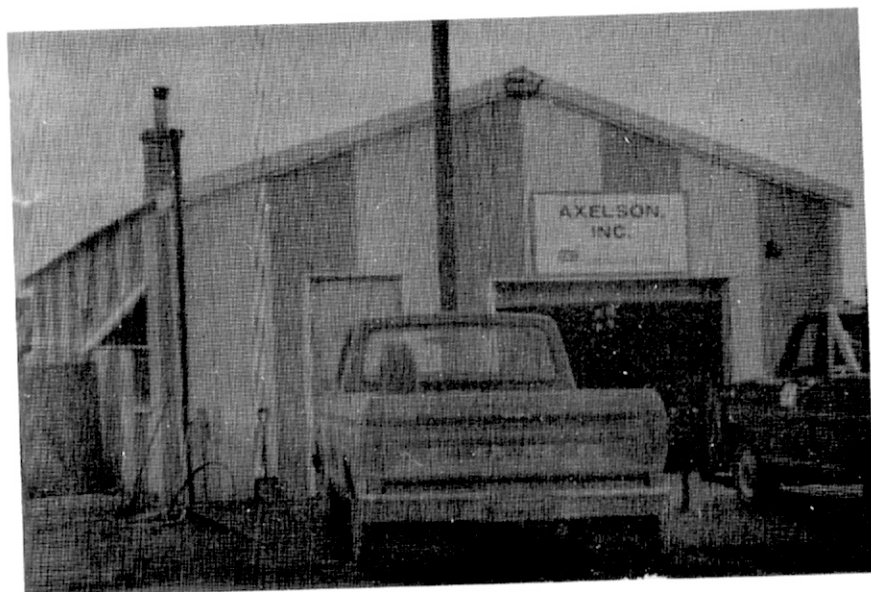
Antlers Bar.



Big Chief Building owned by Rick Houston.



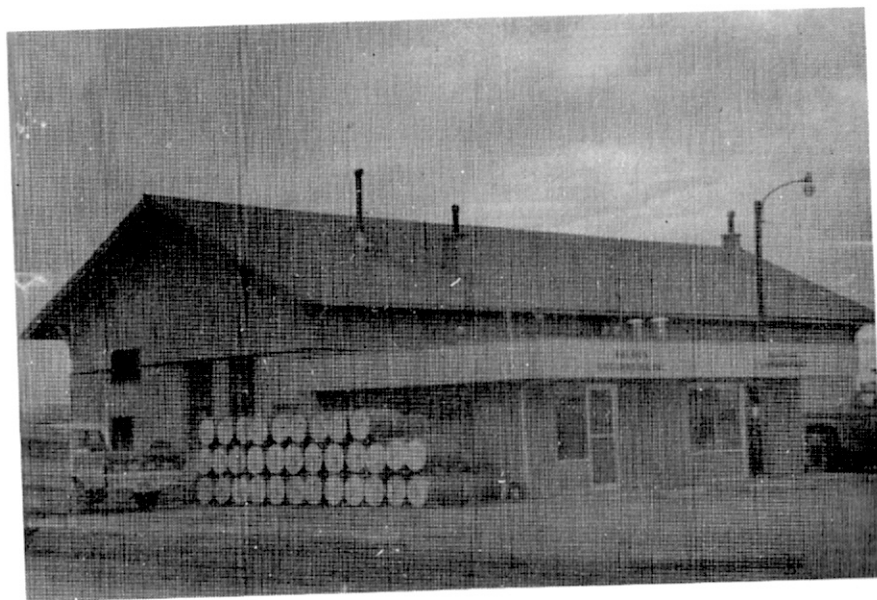
United States Post Office.



Axelson, Inc.



Sportsman Bar and Cafe.



Balock Excavating, Inc.