

Chapter 4

Railroads Bring Settlers

The *Helena Daily Record* of last Monday evening contained a write-up of Melstone. It is reproduced as follows:

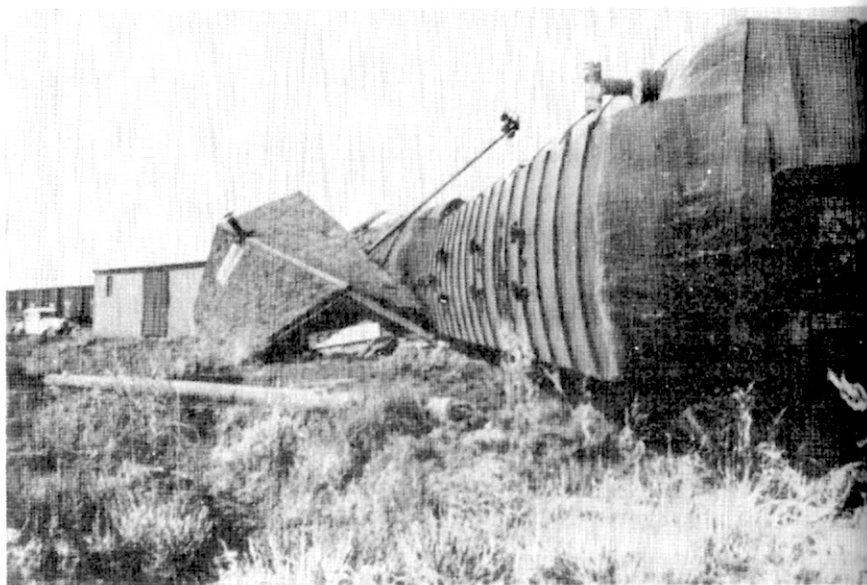
"Six short years ago, when the Chicago, Milwaukee, & Puget Sound railway scripped the tract of land of which the townsite of Melstone is a part and put on the market the original townsite of twenty-four city blocks, the pioneer of the present citizenship took the Milwaukee's hunch and moved in on the ground floor. Nature, which has so persistently smiled on all prior by favoring the occasion with an ideal opening day for the advertised sale of town lots, as if seemingly to say, "Come on, boys don't be afraid, time will demonstrate that the Milwaukee's hunch is good". Time has demonstrated that the hunch was good. Things are going here and will be all summer, the old townsite of twenty-four blocks has been all threshed out and a new addition of half the size of the old one has just been placed on the market, and it is being readily sold. Melstone, like the sister cities of Harlowton and Three Forks, is strictly a creation of Milwaukee road. It is located at the foot of Bull Mountains, overlooking the banks of the Musselshell River, by which it is materially drained and from which it is supplied with never-failing source of pure, clean running water.

Being located as it is, 112 miles from Miles City and 107 miles east of Harlowton, it is a divisional point in the main line as well as the junction of the proposed Melstone-Lewistown branch to Great Falls. Here is located one of the model round houses of the company which has been under the continuous management of the same foreman. Since the day of its foundation the coal bunkers and watering tanks, where 100,000 gallons of water and thousands of tons of coal are used daily for engine and round house purposes, while the pay roll ow the company approximates \$75,000 a year, that finds its way through the local channels of trade. Six years ago there was nothing in sight except the hills upon which town is located.

There is today a happy, prosperous, incorporated little city with a mayor and four aldermen and live wire Chamber of Commerce, that during the year just closed increased 76 per cent in population and did a building business of \$126,000. It may be fairly said that Melstone is well represented in the way of up to date substantial business houses and hotels that would do credit to a city of 10,000 people. The private bank of Messrs. Wiley, Clark, and Felton, with deposits of \$132,842, as shown by its statement of January 13 of this year.

At Japan station, six miles west of this place, a span two and a half miles long is already graded to the shaft of the mine, upon which is reported the rails will be laid this spring. From Melstone to Lewistown, via Grass Range, the route of the proposed Melstone-Lewistown branch, the distance is about

ninety miles, with that portion of the line from Lewistown to Grass Range already completed and in successful operation and firm belief, among the well informed, is that the remaining distance of about sixty miles only, from Grass Range to this point, will be completed in the very near future.

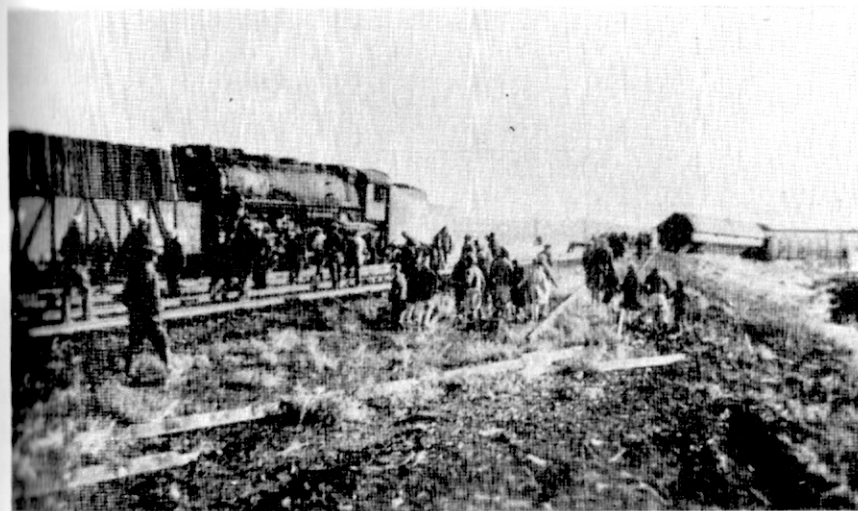


Wreck at Geneva-1934

The lands around Melstone are gradually increasing in value, and while the town is free from unreliable, sensational real estate promoters, Messrs. J.O. Absher & Co. of Melstone are giving their entire attention to realty matters. This company is therefore in position to furnish reliable data concerning local conditions.

In 1908 the railroad first came through Melstone. This was the beginning of the town. The land which the railroad was built upon was bought by the Milwaukee Railroad in 1906. This land unlike other land obtained by the railroads, was not purchased through land grants. In 1906, the Milwaukee Railroad purchased one hundred and twenty-five acres of land from the Sante Fe Pacific Railroad Co. The land that was purchased is the land that Melstone is now built on.

The Railroad Station is almost the same today as it was when the building was first built. The east end of the station was used for a baggage express room. The railroad station had three operators, one agent, two clerks, one cashier, and one baggage man. The agent was Mr. George Haling, and the cashier was Mr. L.N. Field.



Wreck at Geneva

The rip track and roundhouse brought numerous people to Melstone for employment. The rip track, which was an area set aside to repair equipment except engines. The roundhouse employed two engine crews which worked day and night.



Roundhouse in Melstone