

EXPLORING Central Montana's PAST...



MISSOURI BREAKS HISTORICAL HOMESTEADS AUTO TOUR



Bureau of Land Management
Central Montana District Office
Lewistown, Montana



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

In commemoration of the Homestead Act of 1862, the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Central Montana District invites you to embark on a tour of historic homestead and community sites. Since these sites are located in the remote area of northeastern Fergus County, there are a few preparations and precautions that need your attention:

- Much of the tour route traverses unimproved, dirt roads. You'll need an automobile with semi-high clearance (e.g., SUV, jeep or pickup) in good mechanical condition which has a large capacity fuel tank because, more than likely, you'd rather avoid having to be towed to town.



Tom Hutton pulling a surveyor's car up the river hill with his team

- The tour takes a minimum of four hours to drive. Inform a reliable person of your travel plans and what to do if you fail to return at a given time.
- Pack extra food, LOTS of drinking water and additional gear just in case of an unforeseen delay.
- Check the weather forecast and choose a nice, **DRY** day to take the tour. Contact the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge's Sand Creek Station located near the beginning of the tour route (406-464-5181) to confirm that the road surfaces are dry before departing. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TAKE THE TOUR IF THE ROADS ARE WET**; the ground turns to gumbo--a greasy, gooey, clayey mud that is impassable.
- A radio is essential to keep updated on current and forecasted weather conditions. A cell phone might come in handy; however, service is spotty in the tour area.
- Stay on the designated tour route; off-road travel is prohibited. Several of the sites are on private land and are not accessible unless you have secured prior permission from the landowner(s).
- The roads are narrow with some blind curves and hills. Yield the right-of-way to livestock, wildlife and uphill traffic. Stay alert and drive defensively.
- Keep an eye out for rattlesnakes and cactus when you're exploring the sites.

HOMESTEADING IN CENTRAL MONTANA

The homestead boom in the United States truly began with the first Homestead Act in 1862, but it was the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 that greatly accelerated the settlement of Montana. This act expanded the amount of land permitted by the Homestead Act of 1862 from 160 acres to 320 acres. When the latter act was signed by President Taft, it reduced the time required to prove up from five years to three years; it also permitted six months' absence from the claim each year.

Inspired by the Enlarged Homestead Act and the propaganda spread by the railroads, thousands of homesteaders poured into central Montana between 1903 and 1918. Many came in covered wagons, bumping over the rough trails, in search of a productive piece of land on which to stake their claim.



Wagon train

The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul and the Great Northern railroads promoted the fertile lands that were free for the taking. The railroads had good lands for sale, too; lands that the government had given them for laying the tracks westward. They offered special rates and transported entire families and their belongings west in hopes that once the settlers raised crops and livestock, they would utilize the railroads to ship their commodities to market.

The homesteaders took up claims on much of the government land which had previously been used as free, open range by the cattlemen; they built shacks, plowed under the native grasses, put in crops, and fenced their acreage. The countryside became dotted with homestead shacks and trails became roads as more and more settlers traversed the land.



*Homestead shack drawing by
Marie Webb Zahn*



William Zahn family homestead north of Joslin, Montana -- 1914

Towns and smaller communities consisting of a post office and sometimes a store sprang up all across the prairie. Schools were also built near some of these locations. Lewistown became the main merchandise distributing center. In less than two decades, the immense grassland of central and eastern Montana was divided up into small tracts of land.



*Jack Baucke plowing new field for Tom Hutton;
Tom Hutton riding Whiteman*

During the decade that followed 1909 (known as the boom years), rainfall was plentiful and crops and market prices were good. The Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916 further increased the amount of land available to 640 acres.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1917, many men went off to serve their country. Some were killed in the war; others never returned to their homesteads.



Frank Carter family homestead east of Joslin, Montana

The year of 1919 was the driest of record followed by a long, hard winter. This marked the beginning of a decade of drought; many banks closed during the early 1920s due to

the declining economy and extremely liberal loan policies. Adding to the misery, hordes of grasshoppers and cutworms infested the country. Many more homesteaders starved out and left, some departing so quickly that dishes were left on the table.

The following sites along the tour route are numbered to correspond with their locations on the map in this brochure. **It is recommended that you set your odometer to “0” at the beginning of the tour route at Sand Creek Station; mile-ages from that point to each location are shown in the text and on the map.**

The stories you are about to enjoy are courtesy of several past and present residents of northeastern Fergus County. Some of the stories have been abbreviated to accommodate space limitations. The BLM sincerely thanks these folks for fastidiously documenting the area’s history, allowing it to be shared with all of us.

1 JOHN CAPTURE INDIAN TRUST HOMESTEAD

(3.0 Miles)



John Capture Indian Trust Homestead landscape

John Capture, a Gros Ventre Indian of the Fort Belknap Reservation, was allotted an Indian Trust Homestead Patent on 40 acres at this location on March 19, 1927. It is unknown whether Mr. Capture made any improvements on this land. He was allotted two additional tracts of land totaling 360 acres located on the Fort Belknap Reservation north-northwest of Hays, Montana, on the same date. A community center at Hays is named after Mr. Capture.

2 MAULAND & ANDERSON RANCH (11.2 Miles)

Nils Anderson was born August 17, 1862, in Egersun, Norway. He came to the United States in 1889, stopping in Minnesota and later in North Dakota. In 1892, he came west to Big Timber, Montana, where he met John Mauland. John Mauland was born in Stavanger, Norway, on April 11, 1872, and immigrated to Montana in the early 1890s.

These men formed a life-long partnership in 1896, and two years later, came to Fergus County where they engaged in sheep ranching on a large scale. They first ran sheep on Lower Dog Creek at the mouth of the Judith River. By 1905, they felt the range had become too crowded so they relocated to the Two Calf area, 25 miles northeast of Winifred.

In 1914, due to further invasion of homesteaders on the open range, Nils and John made their last move to the Missouri River. In 1919, they sold most of the sheep and switched to raising cattle using the brand Bar SF. They continued to build up their ranch holdings as time went on and began irrigating the hay land which greatly increased the yield.

Odin Mauland, John's nephew, stayed with them for a time before Joe Mauland joined them in the late 1920s and became the ranch manager.

In 1928, they built a new log house with the help of Tom Howard, master log architect. This was the newest and nicest home built along the river before the Army Corps of Engineers bought out the river places for the Fort Peck Dam Project.



Nils Anderson and John Mauland in front of their new log house

John was a culinary expert and did all of the cooking; however, at haying time, he did the stacking when they put up loose hay. Nils rode horseback and used to ride a pretty, shiny black that he called "Mexico." He always rode with a spur on his left boot, but none on his right.

Nils managed to ride up to Wilder for the mail, even when he was an old man. He would come early, have a little nap in the big Morris chair and visit for the day. John traveled with a team and buggy in the earlier days. They had a good buggy and a Democrat (two-seater) in the machine shed in later years. In 1929, they bought a green Model A Ford sedan; John made one attempt to drive and had a confrontation with the woodpile; Joe did the driving after that.

Nils passed away on December 7, 1945, at age 83; John died on November 28, 1946, at age 74. These men were well respected for their good character and honesty and were good neighbors and friends. John was survived by eight nieces and nephews from the Big Timber and Lewistown areas. Nils had no relatives in this country. Both are buried in the Lewistown City Cemetery.

Joe Mauland took over the river ranch from his Uncle John and Nils. On May 19, 1947, he married Laura Wright and they continued to live on the ranch until 1968 when they leased it and retired to Lewistown.



Joe and Laura (Wright) Mauland wedding photo, May 19, 1947

3 KLEIFGEN HOMESTEAD (15.0 Miles)

The Agnews, Brannons and Kleifgens came to Montana in 1919 and made cash entry, staying only one year before returning to Indiana. The log cabin where William and Elsie Kleifgen homesteaded still stands between Wilder and the Smoky Johnson Hill, continuing its silent vigil over the Missouri River Breaks.

This homestead is on private property; please stay on the tour route.



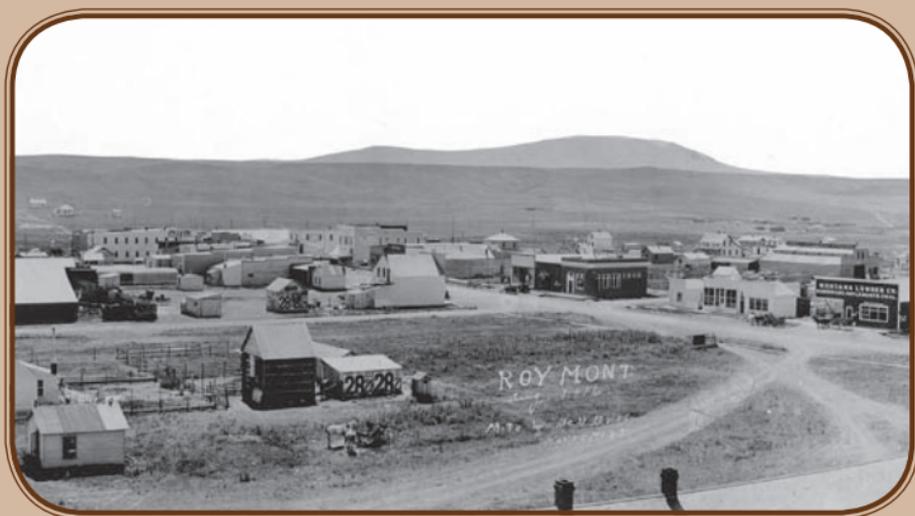
William and Elsie (Agnew) Kleifgen Homestead west of Wilder, Montana

4 WILDER / WEBB HOMESTEAD (16.4 Miles)

Prior to 1914, mail came to this area from the north side of the river via the Great Northern Railroad along the Hi-Line. Then in 1914, the Milwaukee Railroad completed a rail line to Roy, Montana, and a mail route was established between Roy and Wilder (then located at Rocky Point). In 1918, the Wilder Post Office was moved from Rocky Point to Luella M. Belyea's homestead on top of the river hill.

Elma M. Petersen was born on December 1, 1879, in Denmark. Her family immigrated to the United States in 1880, settling in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Petersen was a tailor and Elma was the third of seven children.

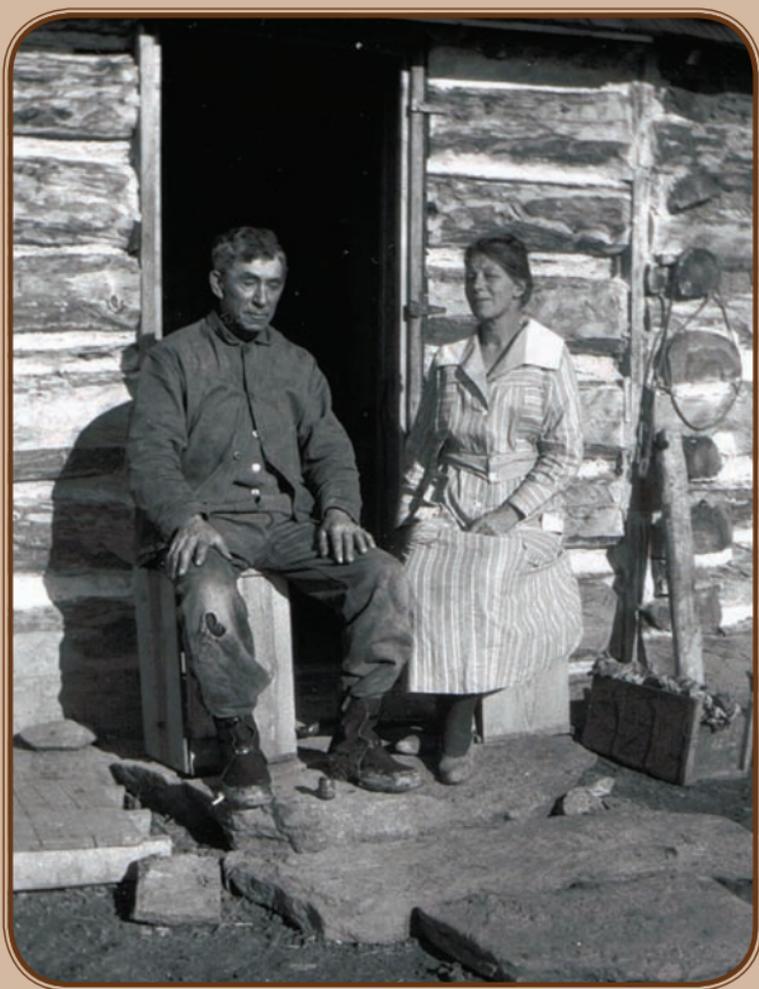
After completing school, Elma enrolled in registered nurses training, graduating in 1908. She devoted the next 11 years to nursing before following her brother Jim's footsteps to central Montana to homestead in 1919. Jim had a homestead 10 miles northeast of Roy, Montana, and he and a close friend and neighbor, Steve Webb, had sparked Elma's interest in homesteading out West.



Roy, Montana -- 1916

Elma packed up her belongings and boarded the train for Montana, leaving the comforts of city life and the remainder of her family behind. Riding the train to the end of the line at Roy, she continued on 35 miles further northeast by team and wagon to a place called "Wilder" near the intersection of Sand Creek and Wilder Trails. Elma bought a 440-acre relinquishment and an additional 200 acres of bottomland along the Missouri River. She also decided to try her hand at marriage and, after a short courtship, Steve Webb and Elma Petersen were wed in August 1919.

Meanwhile, back at the Wilder Post Office, Luella Belyea had a slight consumption problem (of the alcoholic type) and was discontent with living in the remote Missouri River Breaks. As soon as she proved up on her homestead, Luella decided to leave the country and turned the post office over to Elma on November 4, 1920.



Steve and Elma (Petersen) Webb at Wilder, Montana -- 1919

In addition to the post office, Elma ran a small store. Popular items were candy bars and a variety of tobacco products including: Prince Albert and Velvet pipe tobacco; Horseshoe and Star chewing tobacco; Lucky Strike, Chesterfields and Camel tailor-made cigarettes; and Bull Durham for the cowboys who liked to roll their own. The store also carried canned goods, crackers, dried rice, fruit, coffee, corn, oatmeal, flour, sugar and salt. Everything was in bulk and had to be separated out and weighed as it was sold. Coffee beans had to be ground when purchased; later, vacuum-packed coffee became available.

Periodically, Steve would make the three-day round trip to Roy by horse and wagon to get supplies for the store. The mailman would also bring out small quantities of supplies on the stage.

The Webb residence and the Wilder Store and Post Office were all housed in one building constructed of cottonwood logs. The store and post office were located in the original log structure which had been moved up the narrow, switch-backed river hill from its former location at Rocky Point. Steve built on two rooms which served as their living area. A bunkhouse was also available for overnight stoppers.

Because of its proximity to Rocky Point and the ferry crossing, Wilder was located on the main north/south passage through this part of the country. During the prohibition, a continual stream of bootleggers transporting bonded Canadian liquor from Canada into the United States passed through Wilder en route to Billings, Montana. Many of the bootleggers, usually armed with derringers or other types of firearms, were overnight stoppers at the Webb's.



Wilder Post Office and Store, and Elma (Petersen) Webb Homestead

There were always extra mouths to feed, either stoppers, hired hands or patrons. One of Elma's first challenges was learning to bake bread on a wood cookstove. During the holidays, Elma would fix big dinners and welcomed nearby neighbors to join them since Wilder served as the central hub of the sparsely populated country. In the evenings, the menfolk retired to the post office and told stories for entertainment as there were no radios. Newspapers, letters and hearsay were the main forms of communication.

In those days, life from one day to the next was quite a physical challenge; there were no modern conveniences and homesteaders had to innovatively and efficiently use every resource available just to survive.

Electricity was nowhere near a reality; only gasoline and kerosene lamps were in use. Wood stoves were utilized for heating and cooking, with wood being harvested from timber on the homestead.

Elma washed clothes using aluminum tubs and a washboard, hanging them out on the line to dry, or rigging up a makeshift line in the house during the cold, winter months. Ironing was done by heating flat-irons on the wood stove, a hot chore in the warm, summer months.

Drinking water was hauled by team and wagon either from a well on their river place or one located near Jakes' Reservoir, 10 miles southwest.

There was no refrigeration, but they had a root cellar to keep food cool in the summer and to prevent it from freezing in the winter. The Webbs also had an ice house filled with big blocks of ice packed in straw to keep perishables cold. The blocks were cut on the Missouri River and hauled up the river hill. Later on, they were able to buy an ice box, a very helpful modern convenience!

Steve and Elma milked cows to supply cream, milk and butter. Chickens provided eggs and poultry meat in the summertime. Their upland property at Wilder was used for grazing and pastureland. They raised crops and gardens down on the river place which was located five miles below the homestead. They harvested alfalfa seed and wheat on the river place which was sold to the elevator in Roy for extra income.

Elma's medical skills were an asset to the community since the nearest hospital and doctors were in Lewistown, 70 miles away. However, in March 1922, Elma was also in need of medical care since, at age 44, she was expecting her only child. Deciding that it might be wise to go back to Chicago for the birth, she bundled up and caught a ride on the stage to Roy. From there, Elma boarded the train to Lewistown, and continued on to Harlowton where she boarded the mainline bound for Chicago, which took five days. Elma stayed with her sister Margaret throughout the remainder of the pregnancy and little Marie was born on April 13, 1922. Six weeks later, Elma and baby made the long trip home to Wilder.



Elma (Petersen) Webb and Baby Marie at Wilder, Montana -- 1922

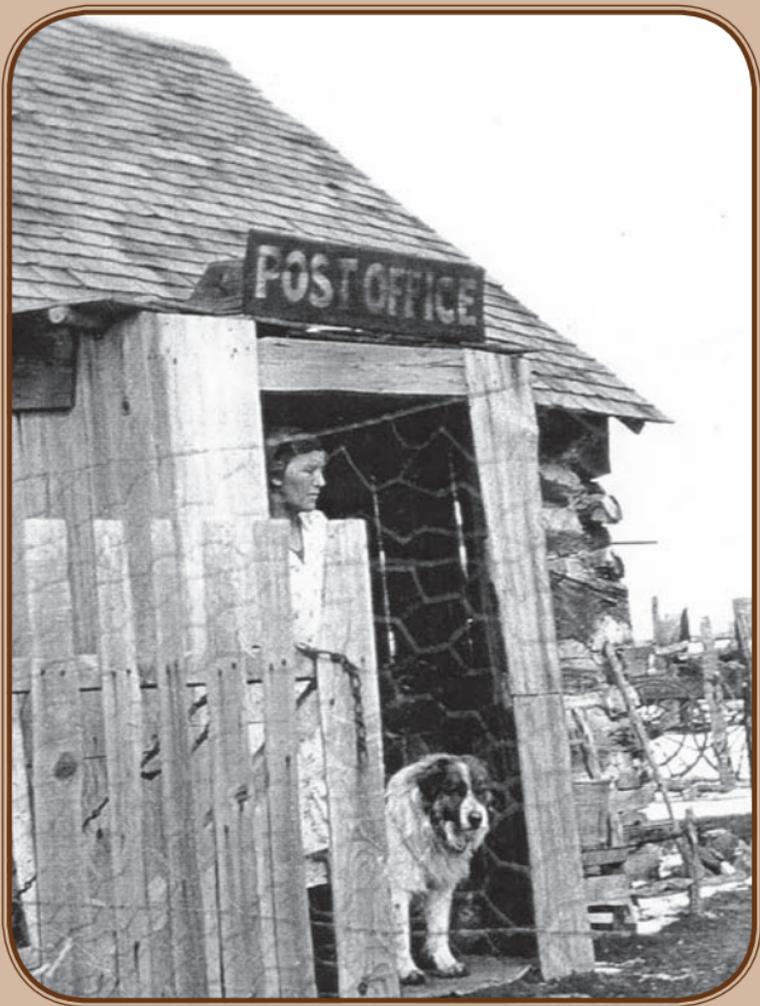
The Webbs used a team of horses and a wagon for transportation for many years. In 1928, they decided to go modern, and bought their first car, a Durant.



Steve Webb's team, Dewey and Sally, pulling the Roy Stage (W.E. Jones, mail carrier) out of the snow

Elma never learned to drive an automobile because of a traumatic experience which occurred shortly after they got the car. The Durant had stalled down by the main road and Steve wanted to get the car home and put it in the garage. Elma had been trying to learn to drive so he situated her behind the wheel to steer, tied a rope to the car, and began pulling it with his saddle horse. Everything was going fine until they started through the gate where there was a slight decline. The Durant rolled ahead and Elma couldn't think of how to use the brakes to slow it down and it hit the horse's back legs. Even though the horse was unhurt, that was the end of her driving!

Postal patrons came from both sides of the river and spanned a 30-mile strip up and down the river. The post office was open 24 hours a day and also served as a polling place for elections until its closing in 1939. Elma sold money orders, cashed checks, received and distributed the mail, and was a notary public. At that time, silver dollars were the main currency in use. There was a large amount of trapping being done and many of the parcels brought in were animal hides being shipped to tanneries.



Elma (Petersen) Webb, postmaster at Wilder, Montana -- 1920-35

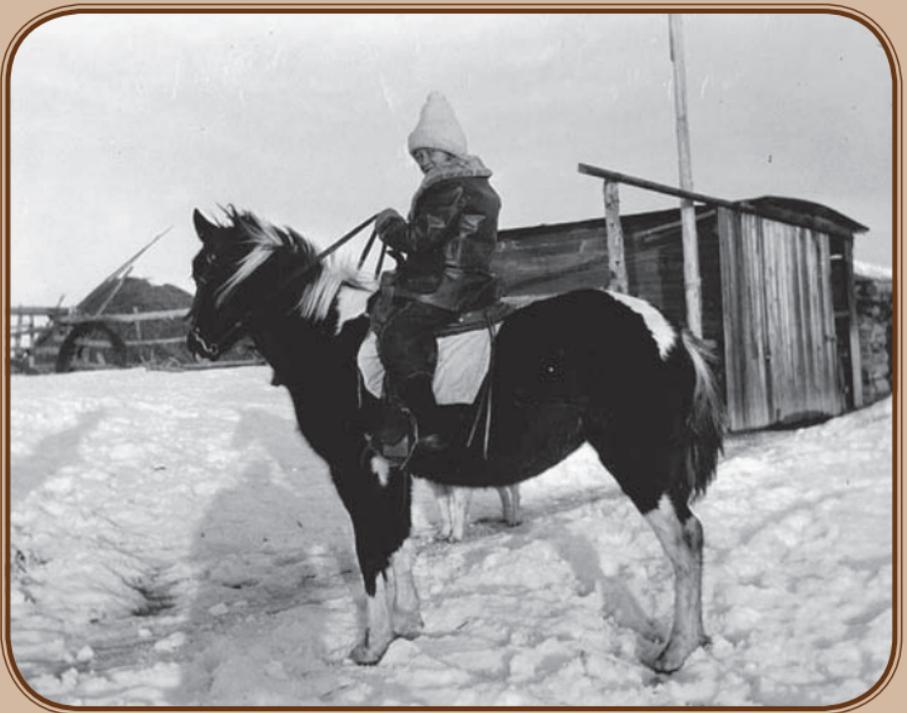
The Depression hit in 1929, followed by the dry years. Crops were sparse; the Webbs had to sell most of their cattle and there was not even an alfalfa or wheat crop on the river place. Steve and Elma did manage to raise a garden and a small amount of hay to feed a few cows, barely enough to survive.

As automobiles became more common in the community, the Webbs decided to make a necessary addition to their establishment. In 1930, Weiluffs from Lewistown installed a gasoline pump at Wilder.



Lillie Jakes

Even though there were very few women and children in the Wilder area, Marie knew everyone who came to Wilder to get their mail. She had a keen sense of adventure and was always busy with her animals or roaming the Breaks on horseback. Schools were few and far between which necessitated boarding away from home during the weekdays to attend school and riding miles to and from home on the weekends.



Marie Webb heading off to school

In 1933, the Army Corps of Engineers began purchasing the land along both sides of the Missouri River in preparation for construction of the Fort Peck Reservoir. A combination of factors – the Depression, the dry years and the favorable prices offered by the government – contributed to the decisions of many homesteaders to sell out.

At age 75, Steve was suddenly taken from Elma and Marie on October 13, 1935, due to a heart attack. Not only was Elma grief-stricken by the loss of her loving companion, but she was faced with making a difficult decision; should she and Marie stay in Montana or return back East? If they stayed in Montana, could they survive by themselves? What about the

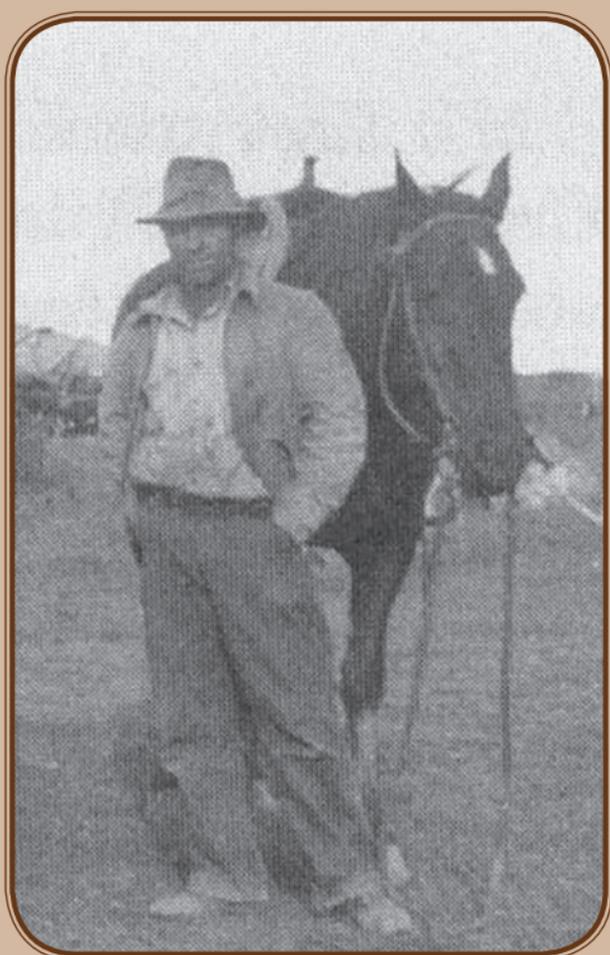
livestock – how would she feed and water them during cold weather? Could she take care of Marie, the animals, the store, the post office, the crops, the garden and everything else alone? Yet, how could she leave Wilder and the life that she and Steve had built together? Would Marie be able to adjust to the congested city after having the freedom to roam the wide, open prairie all her life? Winter was coming on and she did not have much time.

What a heart-wrenching decision, but finally, she knew what she must do. An auction sale was held to liquidate most of their stock and belongings, the homestead land was leased, and Elna Brumfield Wright was enlisted to take over the Wilder Store and Post Office. On December 15, 1935, with 13-year old Marie behind the wheel of the Durant, the Webbs began the long journey to Chicago, Illinois.

On June 4, 1936, Elna put her brother-in-law Stanley Wright in charge of the store and post office. Bertine Mathison leased the Webb Place and became postmaster in 1937. Fire destroyed the building and the post office was discontinued on November 30, 1939.

5 PETERS HOMESTEAD (16.9 Miles)

Ernest Peters was born January 1, 1890, in Hanover, Germany. He received his schooling in Germany and came to the United States in 1904. He first lived in Nebraska, then came to Montana, where he moved from Lewistown to Hinsdale and several other communities before homesteading at Wilder in 1916.



Ernest Peters

From 1916-18, Ernest carried the mail between Wilder and Roy. At that time, Wilder was still on the river and it was a long, hard trip between the two places. There was freight and occasionally passengers to carry along with the mail. Ernest used a Model T Ford when the roads were dry; the remainder of the time, he either used his team and spring wagon or rode horseback.

Mr. Peters was a sheep shearer and worked at this job with a partner, Hugo Raw from Hobson. They went out tagging before lambing; shearing was done in the summer for the large bands. He ran some horses and his brand was N Slash Diamond.

Ernest worked on the Works Project Administration (WPA) dams that were built in 1936 northeast of Roy. In 1939, he sold his homestead to the government and moved to Valentine. Later on, Ernest took a job on Plum Creek, northwest of Hilger, and was there until 1971, when he moved to Lewistown.

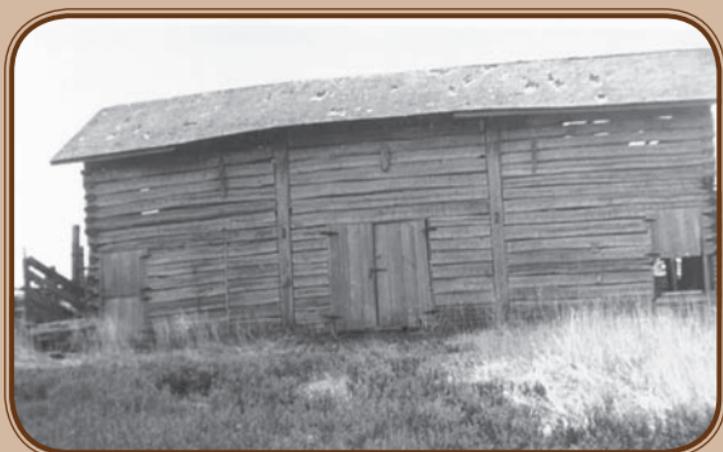
Ernest married Pearl Anderson in April 1977; sadly, she passed away in October of the same year. He was very active and still drove his Volkswagon at the age of 96. Ernest passed away on June 20, 1986, after a short illness and was buried in the Lewistown City Cemetery.

Only a few remnants of the Peters Homestead remain.

6 **ROCKY POINT / WILDER / TURNER HOMESTEAD** **(22.5 Miles)**

A shale reef at Rocky Point Crossing on the Missouri River provided a solid bottom and a low-water ford. The flat on the south side of the river had been the site of one of the many woodhawk camps during the steamboat era. There was a ferry at this location which served as the crossing point for north/south travel in this part of the country.

In 1880, C. A. Broadwater, a Helena merchant, financier and entrepreneur moved upriver from Carroll to Rocky Point, where he erected a 40-foot by 90-foot two-story trading post. He named the settlement "Wilder" after Amherst Wilder, his business associate from St. Paul, Minnesota.



Broadwater Trading Post at Rocky Point/Wilder (first location) -- 1966

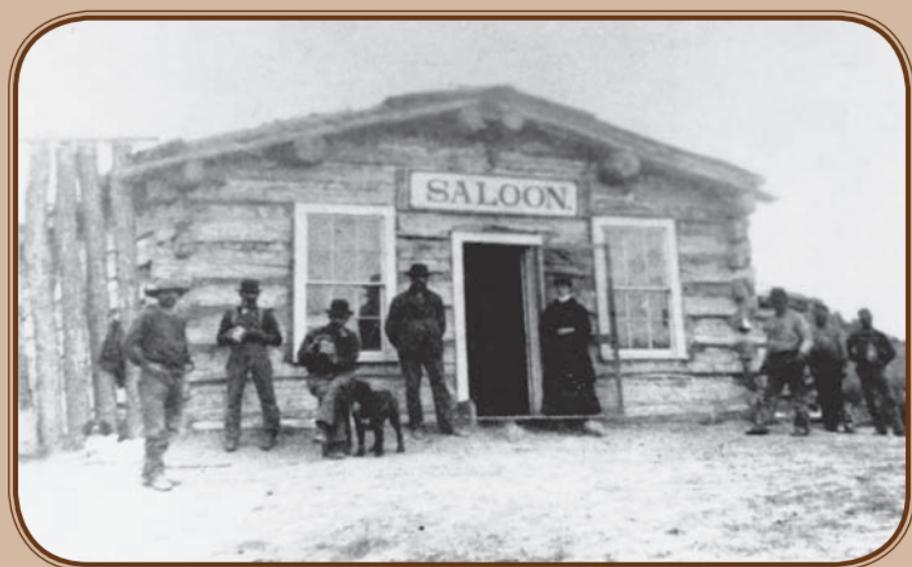
Gold discoveries in Maiden and the Little Rockies increased interest in Rocky Point as a landing point for the mill machinery coming upriver by boat. During low-water periods, many larger boats bound for Fort Benton were forced to unload here. Their cargoes were then freighted overland, picked up by smaller boats or stored until the next high-water season.

Rocky Point also received cargo en route to Fort Maginnis and Fort Assiniboine, the last two forts built in Montana. A detachment of 19 men was sent to Rocky Point to guard government shipments en route to Fort Maginnis.

In 1882, a military telegraph line was completed from Fort Buford, North Dakota, to Fort Maginnis, via Rocky Point where an office was established.

In 1885, Rocky Point/Wilder had grown to include one store, one hotel, one feed stable, two saloons, a blacksmith shop and the ferry crossing.

M. F. Marsh ran the hotel and one of the bars that reportedly was a haven for horse thieves and cattle rustlers. Newspaper reports indicate that Kid Curry worked for Marsh at this saloon for a time and later built a log cabin near Rocky Point where he and brother Loney dispensed alcohol.



*Wilder Saloon at Rocky Point/Wilder, Montana;
Milton F. Marsh, Proprietor -- 1885*

In 1886, Wilder became a post office and served as a polling place for area residents. That same year, 53 votes were cast in the general election from Wilder.

In 1888, Marsh's saloon burned down and he moved his business to a nearby rental building.

In 1889, Montana became a state and all of the Chouteau County land south of the Missouri River was traded to Fergus County for \$2,500 and Wilder became part of Fergus County.

As the century ended, Rocky Point remained an active river crossing with an operating post office, store, saloon and ferry. The ferry served the Goslin Stage Line which ran three stage coaches on the north/south route via Wilder, carrying passengers between Malta and Fort Maginnis, Flatwillow or to the railroad at Junction City (now known as Custer).



Wilder Ferry at Rocky Point/Wilder, Montana, (first location) transporting Malta Stage en route to Fort Maginnis -- before 1890

In 1907, Elmer Turner took over the store and post office at Wilder. He also bought the ferry and maintained it until 1929, when he used the wood to build a log shop. Elmer lived there until 1935, when the government purchased the valley for the Fort Peck Dam Project.



Rocky Point/Wilder, Montana (first location) and Elmer Turner Homestead

In 1918, the post office was moved to Luella Belyea's homestead on top of the river hill.

7 **MARCOTTE / HUTTON HOMESTEAD (29.7 Miles)**

Tom Hutton was born in Webber's Falls, Indian Territory, later to become Oklahoma. He was part Cherokee and was one of twins, his brother dying at birth along with their mother.

He attended Kemper Military School in Boonville, Missouri, where he knew Will Rogers, who was also a student there. After graduating, Tom went to Texas and worked for the Turkey Track Cattle Company, trailing a herd of cattle from Canadian, Texas, to Cadillac, Canada. He then worked for the Canadian Pacific Railroad at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Winifred Fuller was born in Milton, North Dakota. She was one of eight children, four boys and four girls. When she was in her teens, the family moved to Swift Current, where she went to work in town.

Tom and Winifred met at an ice skating rink in Swift Current, and married on January 19, 1911. Two years later, they moved to Malta, Montana, to work on a local ranch. Tom soon began looking for a place to buy and in 1917, he purchased a ranch from Raphael and Georgina Marcotte, two bottoms down from Rocky Point. Eventually, Tom and some of the neighbors built a three-room log house.



Tom and Winifred (Fuller) Hutton's new log house

On August 1, 1918, their daughter, Jean, was born at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lewistown. Jean fondly recalled having a wonderful childhood, fishing in the river with her dad and hunting bunnies with her mother. Mother Hutton would put Jean in an apple box on a hand-sleigh and pull it through the snow to visit Lucille (Grandma) Heitz, who lived on the next bottom upriver.



Jean Hutton

The women who lived in this remote country were hard workers. Mother Hutton helped in the field, raked hay, drove the stacker team, milked cows, helped butcher beef and could dress and can 35 to 40 chickens in one day. She canned beef

and pork and made certain that there was butter and milk the year round. She canned fruit in the fall and bought flour, sugar and coffee in large supply, enough to last for the year. It was said that Mother Hutton's cellar was better stocked than any grocery store.



Winifred (Fuller) Hutton

For the youngsters living in the Breaks, getting an education was quite a challenge; most had to live away from home while school was in session, boarding with families that lived near the few area schools. It was also difficult to find teachers who were willing to come to such a remote area.

When it was time to go to school, Jean attended a school downriver and boarded with Jack and Laura Baucke. During the second grade, she attended the Gairrett School; third grade was skipped. She attended the Gairrett School again during fourth grade and was the only girl in school along with 10 boys from area families. The teacher would dismiss Jean early on Fridays to ride her pony home for the weekend, unless there was a blizzard.



Gairrett School (back, left to right): Esther Trusty; Kenneth, Keith, Wayne, Ike and Glen Gairrett; and Jean Hutton; (front): Edgar Gairrett

The following year, Jean attended Little Crooked School and boarded with Clarence and Sadie Baker.

In the fall of 1929, Jean attended Byford School and boarded with John and Ethel Beck. Three years later, she graduated from eighth grade at Byford.

During her four years at Roy High School, Jean boarded with three different families. On weekends, Mother Hutton would take several of the children to the ranch where they would learn the history of Fort Carroll. Jean graduated from Roy High in 1936.

Due to Tom's declining health, the Huttons left Montana in the spring of 1936, and bought a motel at Hot Springs, New Mexico.

8 FORT CARROLL (29.7 Miles)

In 1873, the Northern Pacific Railway ended at Bismarck, North Dakota. This led to a revival of steamboat traffic on the Missouri River the following year. Goods were transported upriver to Carroll, a settlement consisting of two stores, a post office, a hotel, a saloon and an infantry station.



Fort Carroll -- 1880

An overland freight road named the Carroll Trail was established from this location. The Carroll Trail cut what was then known as Chouteau County in half and opened communication with the outer world. It crossed Big Spring Creek just below Lewistown at a location known as Carroll Crossing and continued southwest through the Judith Basin and up the Musselshell River to mining camps at Virginia City, Helena and Diamond City. Freight offloaded from the steamboats was shipped overland to these locations by the Diamond

R Freighting Company using mule pack trains. The freight reached its destination 20-30 days later.

Mail delivery between Carroll and Helena was much faster; stagecoaches travelled the distance in three days. C. A. Broadwater, Mathew Carroll, George Steele and E. G. Maclay, owners of the freighting company, were responsible for the creation of the Carroll Trail.

To provide military protection for the Carroll Trail, Company "F" of the 7th U.S. Infantry established a temporary post named Camp Lewis (later renamed Lewistown). It was located on Main Street between Third and Fourth Avenues and was manned during the summers of 1874 and 1875.

The Indian traders used to come to the trading post at Carroll to get traps, supplies and see the boats steam up the Missouri. The nearby Indian burial ground was a sacred spot.

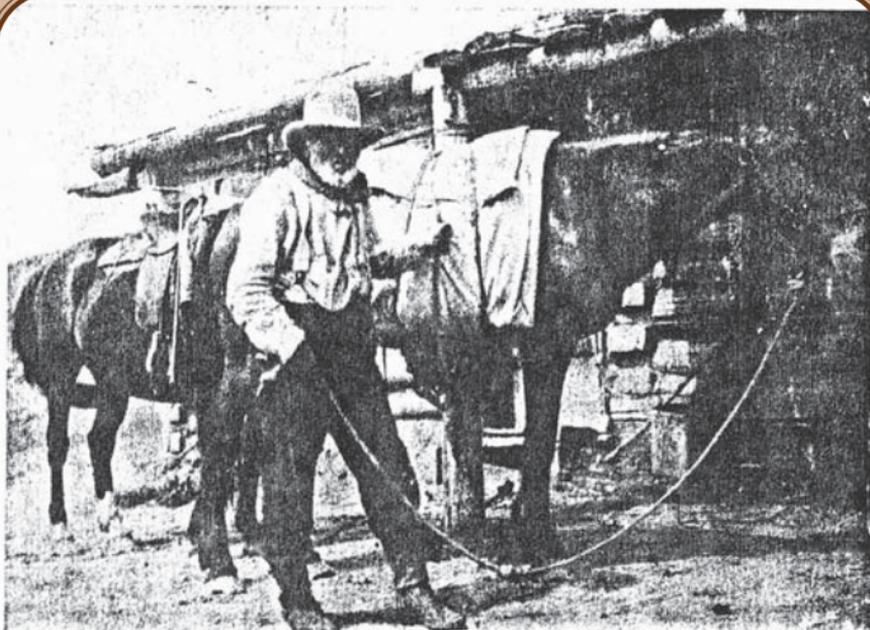
Stacks of decaying wood, which had been cut and corded up for use by the steamboats, remained in the coulees above the Hutton buildings for many years.

The river slowly claimed the location of Carroll. For many years, one log cabin remained at the site. A large timber wolf took refuge in the old cabin and would trip Tom Hutton's traps and eat the bait. The wolf made the mistake of killing Tom's registered mare's colt one night so Tom immediately sent for Tex Alford to come and trap him.

Tex was an old trail drover and trail boss who had worked for the Turkey Track Outfit and had made the 3,000-mile trip from southern Texas to Montana with herds nine times. He ran a saloon on the north side of the river across from Rocky Point. Several days later, Tex rode in and said, "Don't worry, Tom, I'll get him." He used the rottenest bait you ever smelled and trapped the wolf during the first night at the old cabin. Tex refused pay.

Mother (Winifred) Hutton called Tex "Santa Claus" for every December, he would come with his horse loaded with sacks of gifts that he had ordered from the mail order houses; socks for Tom, fruitcake for Winifred and a toy or teddy bear for Jean.

The old cabin went in the river during the spring of 1927, when high water flooded the lowlands and the river's ever-changing current cut new paths in its channel.



JUST AN OLD COWHAND

Dedicated to the memory of Tex Alford

He cared not for show, this gray old man,
With hair unkempt, and whiskers long
A pipe which smelled, and boots well worn,
For he was "just an old cowhand"

Yes "Just an old cowhand", and yet
A heart of gold, a helpin' hand,
A wisdom learned, not gained from books,
And a patience few will ever get.

Did someone say "Just an old Cowhand?"
Ask his dog, his horse, and those he met.
On ranges he rode in days long past,
From Canada's borders to the Rio Grande.

They'll tell you of many kind deeds done,
A life he'd saved at the risk of his own,
A task he'd finished for one who was sick,
And his last crust shared with a needy one.

"Just an old cowhand?" Well, maybe,
But when his tally's checked on the other side,
From the "Big Book" held in the Angel's hand
God grant that ours as good will be.

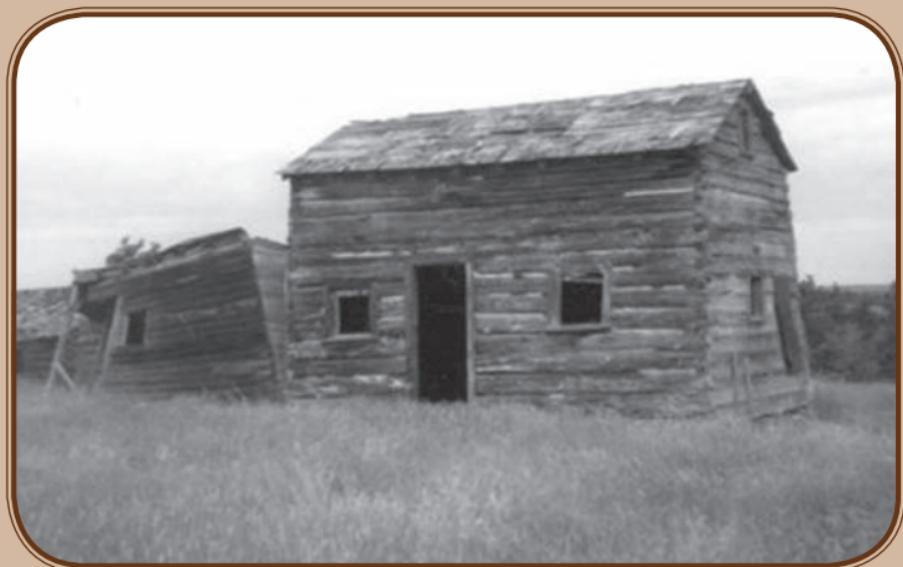
Floyd Hardin, 1951

9 WARTZENLUFT HOMESTEAD (36.3 Miles)

Edwin Wartzenuft and his 16-year-old son, Paul, came to Montana in 1914, where they each homesteaded east of Little Crooked, Montana, near the Fergus/Petroleum County line on the Musselshell Trail.

Paul was born on September 22, 1898, in Blandon, Pennsylvania, where he received his education. The family moved to Zion, Illinois, where they resided before Edwin and Paul came west.

The Wartzenufts built some very fine hand-hewn log buildings. They were masters at the art of hewing logs, squared on four sides with dove-tailed corners to prevent warping and settling. They used wooden pegs to hold the logs together and the buildings held their shape remarkably well.



Edwin Wartzluft house

The 1½-story house had one room on the ground level for the kitchen, dining and living area and one room upstairs for sleeping quarters. All the lumber in the house was hand-hewn, even the shingles. The two-story barn was located in a draw west of the house. It was constructed in much the same way with the lower level situated back in the hillside; the upper story was on the same level as the house. Animals entered the lower level where there were stalls; hay and supplies were stored in the upper level without having to hoist anything up another level. Hay was then dropped down into the stalls beneath to feed the stock.



Edwin Wartzluft barn

In 1926, the Wartzlufts sold their places to Tom Iverson. Edwin returned to Zion, Illinois, where he still had family. Paul moved to Lewistown, Montana, and worked for the U.S. Gypsum Company until retiring in 1965.

Paul Wartzluft and Lucy Mae Williams were married in Chicago, Illinois, on April 14, 1937. She preceded him in death in 1966. Paul passed away on April 1, 1969, at age 70 in Lewistown.

Tom Iverson ran sheep on the property during the summer months through 1957. Lambing occurred during May and June after which the adult sheep were gathered and sheared.

The property was exchanged to the Bureau of Land Management in 1982. Efforts began in 2012 to restore the Wartzenuft barn to its original state.



Iversons shearing sheep at the Wartzenuft place

10 LITTLE CROOKED / MARSHALL HOMESTEAD (48.0 Miles)

The Little Crooked Store and Post Office was named after Little Crooked Creek. Montgomery Marshall ran the post office and store in his home which was located just north of the Wilder Trail. The community hall and school were directly south. After proving up on his homestead, Mr. Marshall turned the post office over to Sadie Carter Baker and went back to Zion, Illinois. The post office was then moved to the Spiker house on the south side of Little Crooked Creek. It was operational from 1916-30. No remnants of the store and post office remain.



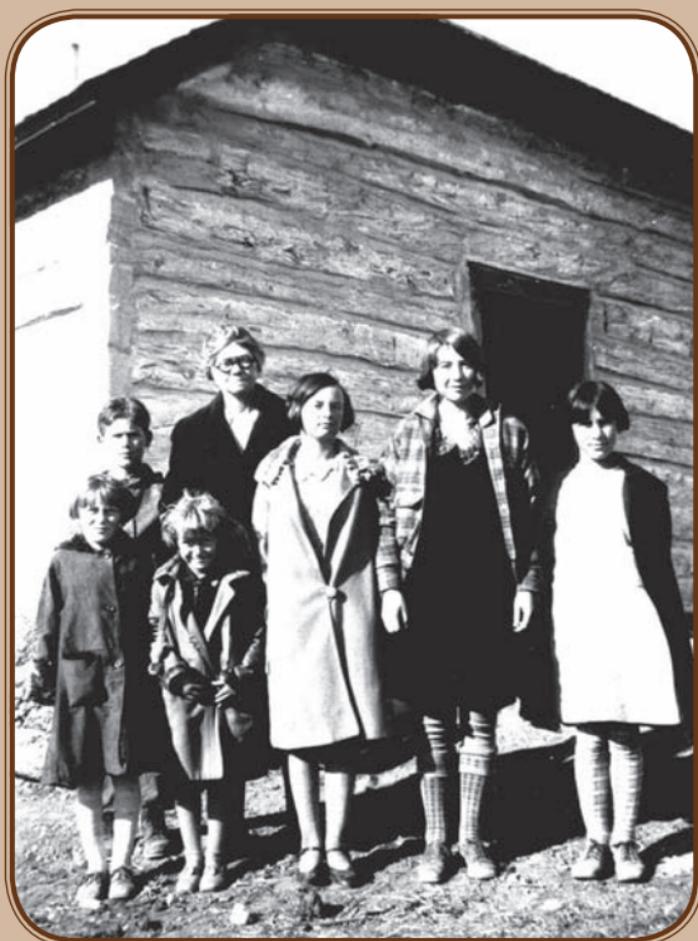
*Little Crooked Store and Post Office; Clarence Baker family,
Sadie Baker, Postmaster -- 1926*

These sites are located on private land; please stay on the tour route.

LITTLE CROOKED SCHOOL

Montgomery Marshall donated the land to build the school and community hall. Logs were hauled by team and wagon from the Breaks. They were hewn on four sides and every few feet, holes were drilled and wooden pegs were inserted to hold the logs in place. The building was 18 feet by 50 feet and everyone came to help when it was time to erect the structure.

A dance was held to celebrate once the building was completed. The first teacher was Flora Sandstrom; other teachers were: Bridget Hickey, Vivian Dickamore, Hazel Duncan Ridgeway, Louise Conner, Mabel Larson Woodcock, Marie Skibness, Myrle Goheen and Bertha Jenson. Charles Morgan was the last teacher in 1934-35.



Little Crooked School -- 1928-29 (back): Marie Skibness, teacher; (middle, left to right): Frankie Stroble, Lola Baker, Edith Broomfield, and Alice Stroble; (front, left to right): Annie Stroble and Marie Webb

Fourth of July celebrations were annual affairs at the Little Crooked Community Hall for several years. People would come by wagon, buckboards, horseback and car from as far away as Valentine, Box Elder Creek and Musselshell to attend these celebrations. The hall was located in the open prairie and there were no trees nearby, but one year, attendees were surprised to find groves of fir trees. The trees had been cut, hauled and “planted” the day before the celebration to provide shade for people to picnic under. An American flag was flown and speakers came from Lewistown and other places. Live music and other entertainment were also provided; it was the event of the year.

The building stood proudly overlooking the prairie for many years but now, only its fallen skeleton remains.

11 BYFORD (54.8 Miles)

Nothing remains of the Byford Store and Post Office which was located on the south side of Wilder Trail. Named after its proprietor, Byford Wagstaff, it was operational from 1915-18 and was housed in a two-room frame house with a peaked roof.



Byford Store and Post Office, Byford Wagstaff, Postmaster, 1915-18

These sites are located on private land; please stay on the tour route.

BYFORD SCHOOL

Byford School was named after the post office and store. It was in District #207 which was formed in 1926 to accommodate the Jakes and Beck children.

The school house was located halfway between the two homesteads. A one-room teacherage was located at the school. Teachers at Byford were: Ada Hurd, Roland Schrier, John Boseth, Arthur Reiland, Elmer Kearney, Helen Weinert, Goldie Kilpatrick, Ole Williamson and Leilla Tullis. The school closed in the spring of 1933. Only remnants of the school's rock foundation remain.



Byford School (back): Helen Weinert, teacher; (middle, left to right): Leta Mae and Melvin Cottrell; Johnnie Beck and Lillie Jakes; (front, left to right): Marie Webb; Earl and Pearl Jakes; and Dilbert Cottrell



Johnnie Beck with his dog team and wagon -- circa 1933

12 JOSLIN (59.0 Miles)

The Joslin Store and Post Office was located west of the Joslin Bridge on Big Crooked Creek and was operational from 1915-21. It was named after Elmer Joslin who homesteaded nearby. It consisted of two boxcars hooked together. Proprietors were David Kelker and Frank Carter. Nothing remains of the structure.



Joslin Store and Post Office -- 1915-21, William Zahn (with freight wagon); Frank Carter, Proprietor; and Miron Lemke (Wilder Stage)

These sites are located on private land; please stay on the tour route.

JOSLIN SCHOOL

The Joslin School was built in 1916 by residents of the community and was located south of the Joslin Store and north of Wilder Trail. It was in District #178 before 1919, and then became District #52. The largest enrollment was in the terms of 1919 and 1922, each having 22 children. With the exception of two years, the school remained operational through the 1933-34 term. Teachers were: Bridget Hickey, Flora Sandstrom, Ivy Davis, Eudora Bontrager, Vivian Dickamore, Josie Hickey, Bertha Dickson, Evelyn Riedel, Ida Mae Steward, Mabel Larson Woodcock, Regina Rainville, Marie Kudzia and Evelyn Kudzia. Nothing remains of the school building.



Joslin School (back, left to right): Henry Dunn, Arnold Zahn, and Emil Kudzia; (middle, left to right): Ernest Zahn, Marie Kudzia, and Joycie Gibson; (front, left to right): Mildred Dunn, Wanda Gibson, Helen Kudzia, Vernon Dunn, and Eddie Kudzia

This concludes the homestead tour. We hope that you enjoyed this trip into the past and that the brief glimpses into the lives of some of the homestead families have instilled an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the day-to-day challenges that these resourceful folks overcame in order to survive. Please feel free to share this experience with others interested in homesteading and in the area's history.

Photos

Front cover: Wilder Post Office at Rocky Point/Wilder, Montana (courtesy of Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana)

Page 5: John Capture Indian Trust Homestead Landscape (courtesy of Zane Fulbright)

Page 16: Wilder Saloon (courtesy of Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana)

Page 17: Wilder Ferry (courtesy of Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana)

Page 20: Fort Carroll (courtesy of Haynes Foundation Collection; Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana)

Page 23: Wartzenluft house (courtesy of Lee Iverson)

Page 23: Wartzenluft barn (courtesy of Lee Iverson)

Page 24: Iversons shearing sheep (courtesy of Lee Iverson)

All other photos courtesy of Betty Zahn Westburg

Lewistown 043250

The United States of America,

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Lewistown, Montana,

has been deposited in the General Land Office, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress of May 20, 1862,

"To Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of Elma M. Webb, formerly Elma M. Petersen,

has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the south half of the southeast quarter of Section twenty-two, the west half of Section twenty-three and the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section twenty-seven in Township twenty-one north of Range twenty-five east of the Principal Meridian, Montana, containing four hundred forty acres,

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor-General:

NOW KNOW YE, That there is, therefore, granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said claimant the tract of Land above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said claimant and to the heirs and assigns of the said claimant forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts; and there is reserved from the lands hereby granted, a right of way thereon for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States. Excepting and reserving, however, to the United States all the coal and other minerals in the lands so entered and patented, together with the right to prospect for, mine, and remove the same pursuant to the provisions and limitations of the Act of December 29, 1916 (39 Stat., 862).

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, Calvin Coolidge,

President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made

Patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the City of Washington, the NINETEENTH

day of NOVEMBER

In the year of our Lord one thousand

nine hundred and TWENTY-FOUR

and of the Independence of the

United States the one hundred and FORTY-NINTH

By the President:

Calvin Coolidge

Timeline Affecting the Homestead Settlement of Lands in the State of Montana

1785: Land Ordinance – On May 20, 1785, Congress enacted the first law to manage newly established public lands. The newly independent 13 states agreed to relinquish their western land claims and allow the land to become public lands, the joint property of all citizens of the new nation. This law provided for the survey and sale of public lands northwest of Ohio, but in tracts no smaller than 640 acres. The ordinance established principles of federal land policy with the next significant change resulting from the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862.

1801: 1801 Act – The law, enacted on March 3, 1801, gave pre-emption or preference rights for pioneer settlers on public lands. They could acquire the lands on which they had settled without prior purchase.

1812: General Land Office – On April 25, 1812, establishment of the General Land Office (GLO) was enacted by Congress. The GLO was responsible for all actions involving the public lands, including the administration of the 1862 Homestead Act starting 50 years later. The GLO became part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1946.

1820: 1820 Sale Act – Passed on April 24, 1820, this act made possible, for the first time, the sale of public lands in smaller quantities (down to 80 acres) to individuals for \$1.25 per acre.

1841: 1841 Pre-emption Act – This act, passed on September 4, 1841, expanded pre-emption (preference rights) for pioneer settlers and promoted the practice of dividing Public lands into small farms of up to 160 acres at not less than \$1.25 per acre.

1850: Donation Land Act – On September 27, 1850, this act was passed. It provided free land to all white or mixed-blood settlers who arrived in Oregon Territory before December 1, 1855. The main requirements were four years of residence and cultivation of the land. This and later donation land acts, foreshadowed terms in later homestead legislation.

1860: Homestead Act Vetoed – On June 22, 1860, President James Buchanan vetoed the first version of the homestead legislation to be passed by both houses

of Congress for many reasons including questioning its constitutionality in disposing of federal land, and that the price of 25 cents per acre (thus the homestead land was not to be free) might fuel land speculation and not benefit the people.

1862: Homestead Act – On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act fulfilling a Republican Party campaign pledge. Shortly after midnight on January 1, 1863, the first homestead claims were filed.

1865: Native American Homesteading – On March 3, 1865, an appropriations act for expenses of the Indian Department included the first opportunity for Native Americans to homestead under the 1862 Homestead Act. It required them to essentially give up their cultural affiliation. It was also one of the earliest laws outlining the course by which they could become U.S. citizens.

1873: Timber Culture Act – This law was enacted on March 3, 1873, and enabled homesteaders to gain patent of up to an additional 160 acres of public land, provided that trees were planted on a percentage of the land.

1909: Enlarged Homestead Act – This act, passed on February 19, 1909, allowed homesteads of up to 320 acres in most western states and territories.

1912: Three-Year Homestead Act – Passed on June 6, 1912, this act decreased the time required to reside on a homestead claim from five to three years.

1916: Stock Raising Homestead Act – This act, passed on December 29, 1916, allowed 640-acre homesteads based on raising livestock such as cattle or sheep. The subsurface mineral estate was reserved by the federal government.

Happy Trails



Alice Hanson's horse, Tarzan, out for a ride

Many thanks to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for their support and assistance in the development of this auto tour.

For additional information, please contact:

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(406) 538-1900



www.blm.gov/mt/st/en.html