



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 9, No. 9

Kalispell, Montana

October 10, 2022

Richard A. Hull, Ye Editor, e-mail: richardahull@charter.net

OCTOBER MEETING

Monday, October 17, 2022

Topic: "Depression Era Civilian Conservation Corps in Glacier National Park"

Presenter: David Butler of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Where: Northwest Montana History Museum, in the second floor historic classroom, 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, MT.

Time: Grab 'n' Greet, raffle and book signings start at 6:00 pm.

No dinner offered, but there are downtown restaurants within walking distance.

Historic Presentation: Program begins at 7:00 pm. No reservations are required, but seating will be limited; so come early. Call (406)-309-0938 with any questions.

Posse members may join the program through Zoom at the following address:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81777542223?pwd=WVFGYXhqTCt4K1ZrTWt2VFhZanhJZz09>

Meeting ID: 817 7754 2223

Passcode: 009968

E-mail Tim Christenson at tim.chris@yahoo.com for more help.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION



CCC workers carry the trans-mountain telephone cable from Logan Pass towards Hidden Lake Pass.

Photo from Glacier National Park archives

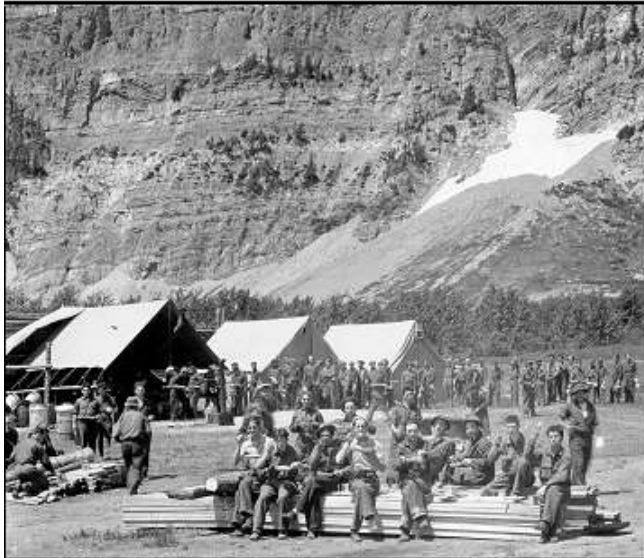
The hidden story of a Great Depression program's major impact on Glacier National Park is the topic of October's presentation.

Between 1933-42 nearly 11,500 young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps labored on new buildings, fire lookouts, campgrounds, trails, a bridge and burying 300 miles of telephone line. All of it was done for \$30 a month, with \$25 of that sent home to the men's families.

Telling the story of the CCC in Glacier Park is David R. Butler, presently of Santa Fe, New Mexico. His interest in the park dates back to summers driving a red bus during college years.

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Creation of the CCC in March 1933, was one of the first acts of Franklin Roosevelt's new administration. Restricted to unmarried men, age 18-25, the camps were run by the Army. But it was the Park Service and Forest Service that assigned the projects. Eight CCC camps were set up in Glacier Park during the first year. Each held about 200 men. Most were wood-frame tents set on wooden floors, and those attendees were sent to camps in warmer area during the winter.



Civilian Conservation Corps camp at Many Glacier
Photo from Glacier National Park archives

Butler uncovered numerous stories while researching his book, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Glacier National Park*. There was a food strike at one camp, when the men objected to meager and poor meals. It was discovered an Army sergeant, with the cooperation of the commander, was embezzling provisions and selling to local stores. Six tons of sugar and two tons of potatoes had gone missing.

One camp had pet beaver, while another boasted of a moose calf that hung around the camp. Mimeographed newspapers, with names like "Glacier Ice Sheet," were published at the camps. Most have been lost to history.

Fighting fires was a major job for the crews. Summers were especially dry in 1933 and 1940. But the worst was 1936, when the Heavens Peak

fire burst repeatedly from the fire lines. In one blow up, the foreman had them drop their tools and run to a burned area for survival.

The young men also spent much of their time cleaning up snags from the huge 1929 fire. A total of 158 rail cars of fencing and firewood were shipped out in fiscal year 1935. A sawmill on



McDonald Creek produced 1.7 million board feet of timber. The western park entrance buildings were built with local stones and timber, and Swift Current Motor Inn erected at Many Glacier.

A major accomplishment was laying a phone line between St. Mary and West Glacier. The seven-mile Hidden Lake-Avalanche portion required 28 tons of wire.

The camps were to be integrated, but the residents – from New York and Pennsylvania – rebelled. The result was a camp just for Blacks on Anaconda Creek on the North Fork.

The CCC also offered classes in auto mechanic, truck driving, surveying, radio and photography, and made it possible to earn a equivalent high school diploma.

The legacy of the young men remains visible throughout the park for those who know where to look.

About the Presenter



David R. Butler

David R. Butler, PhD was a geography professor, for 37 years, with the last 22 year at Texas State University. He is the author of *Early Photographers of Glacier National Park*, and of *Fire Lookouts of Glacier National Park*. He retired to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2019.



FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

October ushers in falling temperatures, tamaracks, and deciduous trees begin to increasingly change their colors. Migrating geese and hunting season all arrive this month. As the end of October nears, we have "all hollows day" also known as Halloween. This is a great time to explore the ghosts, haunted houses, and monsters of Flathead County.

The most active ghost activity is in the Belton Chalet complex in current-day West Glacier. Most notably in the original chalet [current restaurant] is the paranormal phenomenon of the man in the derby hat and carries a satchel. Other incidents around the complex and the train station include a hearing of a sobbing woman, locked doors being unlocked, and footsteps among other unexplained incidences.

A more familiar ghost story resides inside the walls of the Conrad Mansion in Kalispell. Over the years staff and visitors alike have seen or envisioned a young girl walking through the mansion. Also, people have smelled different foods from the kitchen that was empty at the time as well as occasional pipe or cigar scents.

When it comes to monsters, Washington, California, and Idaho may lay claim to Bigfoot, however, we have the "Flathead Monster" that has intrigued people since the early 1900's. This mythical creature is rivaled only by the Loch Ness lake monster in Scotland. Reports over the decades have included everything from a simple wake moving at various speeds against the waves to a long fin breaking the surface to an actual submarine.

All these events/occurrences can be explained away by over-imaginings or outright fabrications. Or could they be true? Regardless, it's that time of year when

imaginings run wild with old horror movies, costume parties, and trick-or-treaters.

One local custom for teenagers is to sneak into the oldest cemetery in the valley, the Demersville, Cemetery at night (preferably near midnight) and explore the marked and unmarked graves.

Once again, I hope to see you all next week at our October meeting and presentation. Remember, only one meeting remains this year.

We will once again forego meetings in December and January.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW 's meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Northwest Montana History Museum at 124 Second Avenue East, Kalispell, Montana.

Meetings begin with a Grab 'n' Greet session from 6 pm. to 7 pm. for chance to get acquainted. Historical attire is encouraged, but not required.

The presentation starts at 7 pm and is free for members and youths 16 and under. Non-members pay \$5.

Historic books will be raffled off as a fund raiser.

All meetings will be broadcast on-line via Zoom for our Out-of-County Corresponding and Brigade members and the members who cannot attend the meetings.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

November: Monday, November 21, 2022

**"Herman Schnitzmeyer: Flathead's
Historic Photographer"** by
Denny Kellogg of Bigfork, Montana

Posse meeting and programs will resume in February of 2023.

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com

FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

Museum in a Historic Railroad Depot

Article and photos by Rick Hull



The Whitefish Depot reflects the signature Tudor and Swiss style adopted by the Great Northern Railway.

Just a short trip north reveals a hidden gem. Tucked away in the corner of the Whitefish railroad depot is the Stumptown Historical Society Museum. This compact museum contains the usual artifacts and memorabilia of a small-town museum.



Rows of binders contain family histories, as well as recollections on logging, train wrecks and more.

But it also includes plenty of research material, such as racks of photographs and a shelf of family histories. Another shelf has typewritten histories of train wrecks, rail operations, logging, businesses, floods, fires and more.

The entire three-story depot is also a key element of the museum. In 1990, when the Burlington Northern Railroad decided to move its offices from the depot, the Stumptown Historical Society put together a community effort that acquired the building and renovated it into a functioning part of downtown.

The museum includes plenty of non-railroad materials, including a display about Dorothy Johnson, author of three old west tales converted to movies. Johnson's short-story collection and other local history books are for sale.

Carnival-style posters, with cutout for faces, allows visitors to have their pictures taken as old-time local photos.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the summer, Monday through Saturday. Currently it is on winter hours, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., though volunteer shortages may arise unexpectedly.

The phone number is 406-862-0067 and the website is: stumptownhistoricalsociety.org



A Great Northern conductor in his passenger service uniform is among the railroad memorabilia on display.

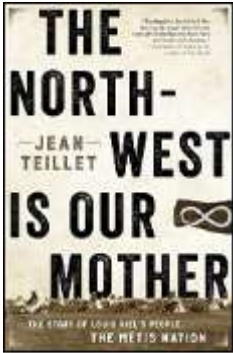
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FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull



Recently I stumbled across *The Northwest Is Our Mother*, by Jean Teillet. about the Metis. I knew Louis Riel's rebellion played a role in



Montana history. But I had no idea how different Canada's history is from ours. And it was no Civil War, consisting of only a handful of minor skirmishes over three months. Though Teillet's says her goal was writing a history from the Metis perspective, the book is even-handed. But don't expect

a biography of Riel. Instead it gives a look at the unique politics of the Canadian frontier.

The Metis had their origin with the voyageurs who canoed trade goods into the wilderness, and hauled back furs in the fall. Many stayed behind and married into local tribes. By the late 1700s they developed their own culture, language and nationality.

There were three strikes against the Metis in the eyes of the Canada's British, Teillet writes – they were too Indian, too French, and too Catholic.

Canada proper, which was not even a nation until 1867, was a small area bordering the Great Lakes at the time. Hudson's Bay Company owned or governed the remainder.

Canada bought out the Hudson's Bay Company in 1868 and was supposed to grant title to the portions occupied by the Metis in the Red River valley. But, through bureaucratic delays and other restrictions, the Metis were pushed out. They moved to Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where the same thing happened. Vanishing buffalo herds and a drought added to their problems.

Riel was a school teacher at St. Peters Mission, southwest of Great Falls, Montana, when the

Metis invited him to argue their case in 1884. A Metis provisional government was formed, and soon declared an armed rebellion. There were four battles against the Northwest Mounted Police and militia in the spring of 1885. Defeat for the Metis came in four-day battle of Batoche on the Saskatchewan River. Deaths in the rebellion were 38 for the Canadians, 33 on the Metis side and over a dozen among the Cree.

Riel surrendered shortly afterward. Authorities dug up a 1351 treason law that carried the death penalty. Riel's lawyers relied on an insanity defense, depriving Riel of a forum to argue about the injustices against the Metis. Though the jury recommending clemency, he was hung.

Many Metis fled to the United States, and they account for three-quarters of the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. A bad of Cree involved in the uprising fled to the Flathead Reservation, and eventually ended up on the Rocky Boy Reservation near Havre.

HarperCollins Publisher. 2019. \$24.99

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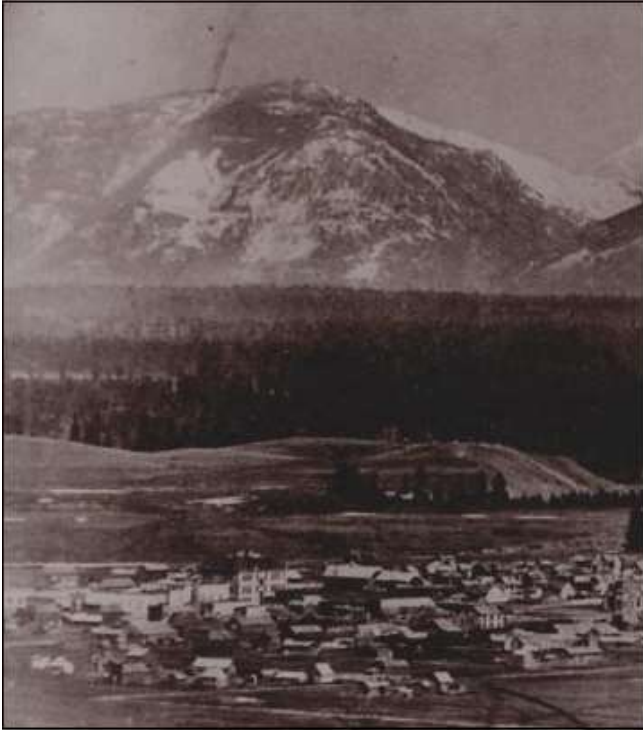
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TRIVIA QUESTION

Last month's question was related to the story about the 1929 fire that swept over Teakettle Mountain and into Glacier National Park.



View of early Kalispell from Lone Pine hill, showing the distinctive clearing on Teakettle Mountain.

Photo courtesy of Northwest Montana History Museum

The question was: How is the 1929 fire related to Teakettle Mountain?

Barbara Boorman and **Pat Walsh** again had the answer. Teakettle Mountain originally had a clearing that looked just like a teakettle. The clearing was wiped out by the fire. **Beth**

Gardner was close it thinking the '29 fire created the distinctive scar.

This Month's Trivia Question

This is an obscure question. The swimming pool at Woodland Park was named Bruckhauser Pool, after the Kalispell mayor .

But what was the source of the pool water until 1940?

Submit your answer to Ye Editor at richardahull@charter.net and we will print the names of all those who get it right.

Posse Gold Stars

Recognizing those members and friends whose generosity has assisted the Posse in so many ways:

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Barbara Boorman and **Pat Walsh**
Trivia Question

THE MAN OF TWO PARKS

By Rick Hull

Kalispell's first elected mayor was an early supporter of Glacier National Park, and played a role in its creation. However it wasn't the only park for which he was known.

Samuel William Carvos Whipps, generally known as W. C. Whipps, spent his early life on the frontier, working his way up from telegraph operator to bank manager.

In March, 1891, he got off the stage in Demersville with \$20,000 and a bulldog named Jack, with plans to create his own bank. He had left his job at a Helena bank to try his luck in the newly settled Flathead Valley.

Though he doesn't get much space in local histories, a lot is known about Whipps. He was a prolific writer who authored articles in the local newspapers and prepared several reminiscences for his children.

In one article he describes a steamboat excursion to Wild Horse Island during which he played poker the entire trip, and never stepped off the boat. He admits playing poker on his wedding night.

Whipps starts his Demersville story by describing the trip by wagon up the east shore of Flathead Lake, which was still frozen. The wagon stopped in Bear Dance for the night, where he and the other passengers slept on the floor of a one-room shack. "I put my grip and clothes at my head and Jack slept there." he recalled.

"I had to await the arrival of my big safe before I could do anything or open up. As a matter of fact I was uncertain and did not know just where I would locate. It was not known where Kalispell would be yet. It had not been located and wasn't for some months after."

The Great Northern Railway was constructing its mainline west and would need to pick a location for its divisional headquarters once the tracks reached the Flathead Valley.

"Columbia Falls was still claiming that it was to be the town, and representatives from there began to offer me every inducement to come there." he continued. "It was a logical place for in the town should have been there, as originally intended by [Great Northern President] Jim Hill. But, when my safe came, I never unloaded it, but had it taken on up there."

Demersville is now-vanished riverboat town located just south of present-day Kalispell. But with railroad construction crews flooding in, it was experiencing a final boom. The only practical route to bring in supplies was by rail to the Northern Pacific depot at Ravalli, by wagon to Polson, and then by steamboat to the north end of Flathead Lake and up the Flathead River to the docks at Demersville.

"I got on a horse and caught my safe just as they were about unloaded it Columbia Falls and had it brought back to Demersville. I had it placed in the building I'd already acquired and in a day or so opened up the Northwestern Bank of Demersville, the first bank in the for Flathead. There I commenced doing business with the determination to remain there until I could judge for myself just where and at what places the permanent town should be. That was a wise decision for I cleaned up



Kalispell Mayor William C. Whipps
Photo - Kalispell City Council Chambers

some \$12,000 there during that summer. Had I gone to Columbia Falls I would've not made a cent.”

Whipps soon developed a lifelong love affair with the Flathead Valley.

“The first two or three weeks I was at Demersville I was most the homesick and discouraged I had ever been in my life, “ he wrote. “Had I not burned all the bridges behind me, I don't think I could've stuck. But after I got opened up and decided I would remain in Demersville at least for the present the homesickness left me. I went fishing the Flathead one day when the ice was breaking up. I got two or three big flat trout and I soon learned I was in a paradise for fishing and hunting.”



The Whipps Building in present downtown Kalispell.

Photo by Rick Hull

When the railroad arrived in Kalispell the next year, Whipps moved his operation there. He organized the First National Bank of Kalispell and erected the town's first brick building.

Whipps was mayor from 1893 to 1896, and again 1910 to 1912. In between he built the “Whipps Block” – the large and ornate brick building that still dominates downtown at Main and Third streets.

During his second term round as mayor, he spearheaded conversion of 43 acres of marsh lands at the end of Second Street East into Woodland Park. Though Mayor John Bruckhauser is credited with creating the modern park with WPA funds in 1936-37, he still referred to it as “Whipps Park.”

Whipps acquired various properties around the valley, including a summer home on Flathead Lake. He also was one of the first to build a vacation home on Lake McDonald.

George Bird Grinnell, who spent his autumns around Many Glacier, was instrumental in creating Glacier National Park in 1910. But it was Whipps who played a role on the west side of the Continental Divide. Learning that the Forest Service was proposing a timber sale on Lake McDonald, he took the issue of turning it into a national park directly to President Teddy Roosevelt.

Whipps was a fierce supporter of the new park. In a 1930 article, he waxes lyrically over the proposed Going-To-The-Sun Road.

It would be, he wrote, “Easily the most wonderful road in America, from an engineering standpoint, and scenic standpoint, starting as it does from Belton, the western entrance to the park, thence going in a northerly direction three miles to Lake McDonald, said to be in its setting of magnificent, wooded mountains. which completely surround it, and in the limpid purity of its waters, one of the most beautiful lakes in the world; thence continuing in a northerly direction along the eastern shore of this attractive lake to its head; thence along the east bank of McDonald Creek, a superb, turbulent mountain stream with several notable falls to Avalanche Creek, crossing this creek three miles from its source in Avalanche Basin, which is one of the unique and grand places of the park.”

“One simply gazes enraptured and realizes at once that only the Master landscape gardener could ever have made anything so grand, so beautiful as this,” he continues.

Later he celebrated the construction of U.S. 2 along the southern boundary of Glacier National Park.

“This road forms a part of one of the transcontinental national highways, destined within a few years

to become the widest known and most attractive of any of them. The traveler rids along and over this marvelous road in a dream of ecstasy with frequent exclamations of delight, admiration and wonder, at the continuous and everchanging views of magnificent mountain scenery through which he is passing.” he declares.

Whipps wrote down more stories, including a hunt in January 1894 when he became lost and barely survived a night in the woods. Another was about the adventures of his dog Jack.

In a tale of a hunting with friends at Ashley Lake about 1932, he starts, “Now I'm going to tell you about my last hunt, three years ago this winter, and it will turn out to be my very last hunt, for I got knocked over the following spring and know I'll never be able to go again.”

Whipps died in 1933 at age 77, six years after the death of his wife Anne. They are buried in the Conrad Cemetery.

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The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued November 14, 2022 (or thereabouts).

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