



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 9, No. 10

Kalispell, Montana

November 15, 2022

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

NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 21, 2022

Topic: Herman Schnitzmeyer: Homestead Era Photographer

Presenter: Denny Kellogg of Bigfork, MT

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/88434088174?pwd=NIRLSUFUekJLWnkxM2Nlc3JleFFFEZz09>

Meeting ID: 884 3408 8174

Passcode: 669523

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

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

Herman Schnitzmeyer is a little known historic photographer of the Mission Valley in the early 1960s.

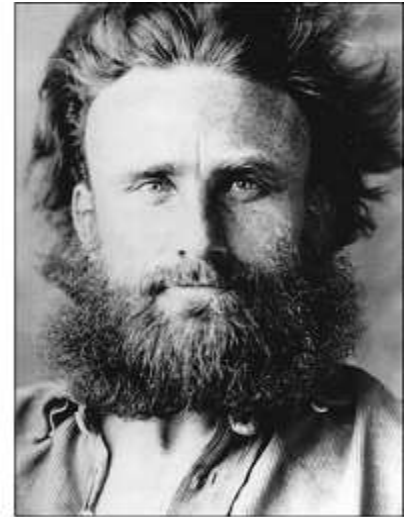
An Illinois native, he studied photography and opened a studio in his home state.

In 1910, he ventured west and filed for a homestead on Wild Horse Island after the Flathead Reservation was opened to homesteading.

Not exactly cut out for the farming lifestyle, by 1912 he turned to photography to supplement his income and teamed up with Louis Desch selling photo postcards of the area.

He produced studio images and documented the growing communities and thriving agriculture of the Flathead and Mission Valleys.

Today, he is known for documenting noteworthy events, including several scenes from the Flathead Lake steamboat era, Teah T. Maroney's first float plane flight from Flathead Lake, and Frank M. Kerr at the groundbreaking



Self-portrait of Herman Schnitzmeyer, ca. 1913

Courtesy of Denny Kellogg

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com

ceremony for the Kerr Dam.

His artistic photographs captured the majesty of the scenery around Flathead Lake and the Mission Mountains.

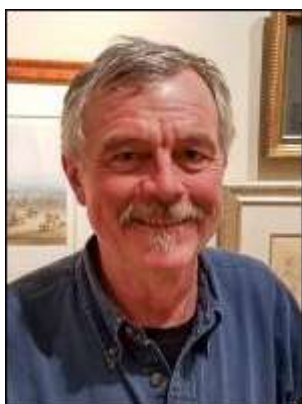
His true love was landscape photography and the next ten years were spent traveling the Northwest.

Settling in Missoula in 1930, he lectured and exhibited at the University of Montana. After his death, with no descendants or business associates to promote his photographic contributions, he faded into obscurity.

About the Presenter

Denny Kellogg, as an educator, historian and award winning cinematographer is the master of this untold story.

His interest in history has been life-long and has guided him to collect and archive art, photographs, and ephemera relevant to the



Denny Kellogg

Montana story. Sharing the knowledge gained from this pursuit is his primary priority. Kellogg's photograph collection consists of close to 900 images, negatives, and early reprints.

A graduate of Iowa State University, he has co-produced two excellent documentary

films: *A Timeless Legacy - Women Artists of Glacier National Park* and *Bigfork – A Montana Story*.

Copies of the documentaries and other books will be available for purchase at the meeting.

He is one of the founders of the Swan Lakers, was formerly on the Board of Directors of the Hockaday Museum of Art and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Charles Russell Museum in Great Falls.



FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG

By Edward "Eddy" Byrne

We close out this year's meetings with the long awaited, rescheduled, and highly anticipated program on Herman Schnitzmeyer presented by Denny Kellogg.

While we are taking the traditional two months off from programs and will kick off the 2023 year in February, there is plenty to do over the holiday season to prepare for next year. And we need your help to further build on our successes.

The final transition to the new team and implementation of the vision we laid out last March will be in place no later than mid-January 2023. Thus far we have our editor and lead writer Rick Hull; Malinda Shafman, Treasurer; Kathy Britton, Deputy Treasurer; and Denise Seehusen, Membership.

Positions we still need to fill include at least two more members for the programs committee; a webpage manager; and an IT specialist to manage the equipment and zoom requirements.

Entering the 2023 year we have over 50 percent of the programs laid out thanks to Ron Beard's work as Deputy Sheriff for Programs. As Ron transitions out this year we will rely on the programs committee to fill out the schedules with quality topics and speakers for 2023 and 2024.

We are looking to bring back a "social hour" prior to each meeting to interact with each other and the guest speaker(s). The location will initially be the adjoining room to the conference room at the museum. An option to meet at Brannigan's Pub in the Library Room for dinner at 5 p.m. is also a possibility next year depending on interest of the Posse.

One additional update to membership is any new members who join throughout the year

will be prorated through the remainder of the year. This will allow all renewals to be due in the January-February time frame.

Remember this is your organization and we can only be as successful as the efforts we put into the organization.

On a personal note, I thank each of you for your continued support and membership and look forward to our next season.

To volunteer or if you have any questions, recommendations, or concerns, please contact me directly at 406-871-6001 or edwardjbyrne860@gmail.com.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW 's meetings are held on the third 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 p.m. to 7 p.m. for chance to get acquainted. Historical attire is encouraged, but not required.

Local history authors will have their books for sale, and will be available for signing.

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

Historic books are 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

Posse meeting and programs will resume in February of 2023.

FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull

In the aftermath of the recent snowstorm, I tackled a fallen tree that threatened the power line in my sister's backyard. The tree won the dispute and sent me to the hospital.

That scuttled my plan to feature Columbia Falls' new museum in this month's column. But Veterans Day slipped past in the interim, which opens a whole other topic of local history.

A full 10 percent of Montanans are veterans. This was probably a surprise to the number-crunchers at Lowes when the store instituted its veteran's discount program. A number of our Posse members are veterans, including the past and current Sheriff.

My military experience proved interesting for someone who ended up a clerk in an air-conditioned office. The draft was hanging over me in 1970 when I graduated from college and my color-blindness squashed hopes of driving a tank, and the good training schools were full. So I volunteered for the draft.

My first year was on the ocean at Virginia Beach. I then applied to go to Thailand. My duty station there was an Army supply headquarters next to the B-52 bomber base of U-Tapao – also on the beach.

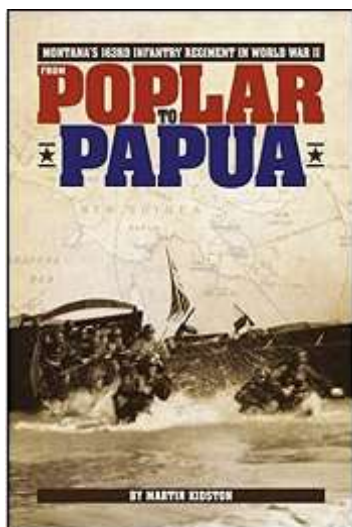
It was fifty years later that I realized I had a role in the bombing offensive that forced North Vietnam out of the south and allowed the American prisoners of war to come home. The last American troops left Vietnam with days of my returning stateside. Of course everything changed when North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam in 1975.

Montana, as state, played a major historic role in our nation's overseas wars. The first was the Spanish-American War of 1898. The conflict was short lived for most U.S. soldiers. But the Montana National Guard was sent to the Philippines, where an insurrection broke out. Montana newspapers published dispatches from the war, but I don't know of a compiled history of

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com

the Montanans' involvement.

The story was repeated in World War II, when Montana's 163rd Infantry Regiment was one of several National Guard units sent to New Guinea. The Pacific island is considered the worst jungle fighting of the war. Disease and terrain were the major threat. Many soldiers cut the seat out of their pants to deal with the constant dysentery.



This time there are two books. *Poplar to Papua*, by Martin Kidston, tells the Regiment's story. *Men Do Your Duty* by Carle O'Neil has accounts by 12 individual Flathead County veterans. I recognize names in the books as fathers of my classmates. It also answered why


several had Australian mothers.

The stories reinforce my premise that an incredible amount of local history lies just beneath the surface, and is waiting to be uncovered.

One question to be researched is what happened to the American-Japanese who appear in group photos of the local National Guard unit prior to the war.

PARKLAND BOOKS

GENERAL OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS
AND PAPER WITH EMPHASIS
ON WESTERN AMERICANA &
NATIONAL PARKS



850 LAKE BLAINE ROAD KALISPELL, MONTANA 59901
(One mile east of Junction of Routes 35 & 206)

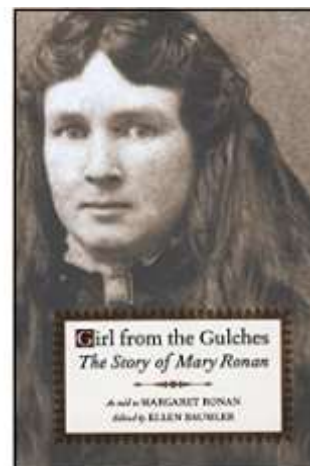
Open Noon til 6 PM Friday, Saturday and Sunday
MARGE & ED ROTHFUSS, OWNERS

Ph. (406) 752-4464 E-mail: PARKLANDBK@AOL.COM

FROM THE BOOK SHELF

By Rick Hull

Girl from the Gulches: The Story of Mary Ronan is a classic of early Montana history. She is most well known as the wife of Peter Ronan, Indian Agent on the Flathead Reservation. A local lake is named after her.



But she had an adventurous life before that, beginning with covered wagon journeys to the mining camps of Colorado, and then Montana. As a child, she witnessed life in some of roughest towns in the West, including Montana's Virginia City and Last Chance Gulch in Helena.

Mary Ronan dictated the memoirs to her daughter Margaret between 1929-32. After sitting in the University of Montana library for near 40 years, the memoir was published. However distribution was limited.

Ellen Baumler of the Montana Historical Society and **Posse** presenter, cleaned up the document and published the new version in 2003.

Mary enjoyed her childhood on the frontier, even as her father struggled to make a living hauling freight. But it was a life punctuated by disease and deaths, including that of her mother and brother. Mary was also a witness to vigilante lynchings.

Her teenage years were spent in southern California in 1869-73. Nearby Los Angeles was a town of 6,000 at the time.

Mary's romance with Peter Ronan are a constant undercurrent in the memoir. He had started pursuing her in Helena when she was just 16 years old. He eventually won over her, and her father, and brought her back from California in 1873.

Peter Ronan suffered several setbacks. His

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com

newspaper office burned down twice and a summer of gold tailings lost to overnight thieves. But he prospered as Indian Agent on the Flathead Reservation. Headquarters were near present-day Dixon, and Mary Ronan said there were always at least 16 people around the dinner table.

Missing from the crowd at the table were any other white women.

Mary's recollections cast a personal note on events of the time. For example, the Nez Perce rebellion of 1877 began with the murder of settlers in Idaho, followed by Chief Joseph's armed warriors crossing into Montana near Missoula.

A band of Nez Perce, who disagreed with the uprising, moved next to the Flathead Agency. The Ronans had to trust that the local Flatheads and dissident Nez Perce would remain friendly.

Another interesting story was how Michelle, chief of the Pend d'Oreille, who gave his Indian name – Plenty Grizzly Bear – to the Ronan's newest son, and was therefore left nameless until he could locate a vacant name.


Published by the Montana Historical Society Press. Trade paperback, 244 pages. \$17.95

NEW MEMBERS

The following have recently joined the Posse:

Dave and Carrie Wick, Columbia Falls
Richard Greenwood, Bigfork
Stacy and Doug Dolan, Whitefish
Rick Trembath, Bigfork

Blacktail Mountain Books



42 First Avenue West
Kalispell, Montana 59901
(406) 257-5573
Hours: 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM
Closed Sundays

Since 1977

www.facebook.com/blacktailbooks
www.blacktailbooks.com

30,000 books and we trade!

TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Last month's question was about the original swimming pool at Woodland Park. It was named Bruckhauser Pool, after the Kalispell mayor who pushed development of the park.

The question: What was the original source of the pool water?

Barbara Boorman ventured that it was the Stillwater River, and was right.

The marshy park was originally drained through a two-mile ditch leading to river.

Then a WPA project paid for pipeline that carried 2,000,000 gallons a day from the river back to the park. The likely source was the water backed up behind the dam near present Whitefish Stage road.

As many as 400 WPA workers were employed on the depression-era project from 1936 to 1937.

But the river water was murky, and it was replaced in 1940 with flows pumped out of a spring in the park.

This Month's Trivia Question

This is a relatively easy question for those who know the history of Glacier National Park.

A favorite book of my youth was *Timber n' Injuns* by pioneer logger C.D. O'Neil. O'Neil recounts the story of Al Reynolds, a early forest ranger in the years prior to the park's establishment. Included in his book is a photo of Reynolds and his namesake mountain.

But the Logan Pass mountain is not named for Al Reynolds.

The trivia question is: Many of the names in Glacier Park, including Mount Reynolds, are connected to what magazine?

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



THE S-S KLONDIKE ARRIVING AT POLSON, MONTANA ON FLATHEAD LAKE

SS Klondike on Flathead Lake arriving at Polson, Montana, ca 1910.

Note: All photos are taken by Herman Schnitzmeyer are from the Denny Kellogg Collection, unless otherwise noted.

Montana's Eccentric, Perfectionist, Philosopher, Rugged Individualist Photographer

Herman Schnitzmeyer was born in 1880 in Hoyleton, Illinois to German immigrant parents; Charles "Carl" and Louise Schwier Koelling. Schnitzmeyer moved from Illinois to the Flathead Valley primarily as a homesteader. When the Flathead Reservation was opened for homestead settlement in 1910, 81,363 persons registered for the available 3,000 homestead sites in the first month. Schnitzmeyer was one of the successful settlers in the homestead drawing and he chose Wildhorse Island as his home. Full of idealism, he named his homestead "Apollo Heights" and set about planting and building, but spent more time philosophizing as he was by nature a dreamer, not a farmer. Not exactly cut out for the farming lifestyle, by 1912 he turned to photography, which he learned as a young man in Illinois, to supplement his income.



Hiawatha Lodge, Wild Horse Island, ca 1930



Dedication ceremony for Kerr Power Dam site, 31 May 1930.

In 1915, he moved to Polson where he returned to photography and opened a studio in the Shepard Hotel. Later he struck up a partnership with another homesteader interested in photography, Louis Desch who handled much of the local marketing of photographs and post cards and who did the elaborate hand-tinting of many of Schnitzmeyer's most famous images, and who framed them in thin wooden frames of a unique design. In 1922, he sold the Polson studio to his apprentice Julius Meiers (who operated it successfully for decades as the Lake City Studio), and began freelance work for the Northern Pacific Railroad.

After gaining a favorable reputation from the community, he sold his Wild Horse Island property to Henry Bierman, a local meat marketer in 1917. Bierman built the Hiawatha Lodge on Wild Horse Island.



Prospective homesteaders disembarking from the NPR at Ravalli, ca 1913.



Chief Koostahtah at the present location of Kerr Dam. It was a sacred site for the Kootenai and Pend Oreille tribes, 1922.



Work gang from the Schnitzmeyer North-ern Pacific Railway Railroad collection



Schnitzmeter's new gravestone in Missoula City Cemetery. Replacement stone installed by Dennis Kellogg. _____ BillionGraves.com

Today, Schnitzmeyer is known for documenting noteworthy events in the Flathead and Mission Valleys including scenes from the Flathead Lake steamboat era, the first float plane flight from Flathead Lake, and Frank M. Kerr at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Kerr Dam. His artistic photographs captured the majesty of the scenery around Flathead Lake and the Mission Mountain Range. Schnitzmeyer also worked on freelance assignments for the Northern Pacific Railroad.

His portraits of Chief Koostahtah are special. Koostahtah was the last traditional chief (1904-1942) of the Kootenai tribal band, the Ksanka (Fish Trap People), that lived in the vicinity of Dayton, Montana. Schnitzmeyer created a series of five posed Koostahtah images as well as one documenting the creation of the first Tribal Council for the Flathead Reservation in 1923.

In 1926, with winter looming and apparently short of funds, Schnitzmeyer sold most of his scenic negatives and some equipment to an acquaintance, Johan W. Rode, who in subsequent years moved to Berkley, California, put his own name on the prints and sold them all across the nation as his own original work.

He moved to Missoula, living in a small apartment in the Penwell Building. He lectured and exhibited occasionally at the University of Montana for a period before his health began to fail. He was reportedly an immense man weighing nearly 300-pounds. He became mentally unstable and died a pauper in Missoula in 1939. Several prominent Missoula citizens served as his pallbearers. With no descendants or business associates to promote his photographic contributions, he faded into obscurity. He was buried by Missoula County in the Missoula City Cemetery.

Herman Schnitzmeyer has been characterized by those who knew him as "eccentric but likeable," "a perfectionist," "a genius with a camera," "a philosopher," "a rugged individualist," and ultimately "an artist." The Flathead Beacon sums up Schnitzmeyer's life best by stating that, "regardless of the reasons for the relative obscurity of Herman Schnitzmeyer and his work, his photographic contributions continue to inspire us and provide a valuable insight to the history and scenic beauty of Western Montana, elevating moments in time to timeless works of art."

This issue of Pony Tracks is Volume 9, Number 10

The Pony Tracks is published monthly except December and January by the
NORTHWEST MONTANA POSSE OF WESTERNERS

Authors of articles hold the copyright to their contributions. All other
content is ©2022 by Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners
c/o Clerk of the Posse, P.O. Box 2803, Kalispell, MT 59903

Notice to Contributors

Copy intended for this newsletter should be sent to the Editor at the e-mail address below.
Copy must be in the Editor's in-box on or before the first of the month in order to make that
month's issue. Copy received after that date will be held over until the subsequent issue.

The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued February 13, 2023 (or there abouts).

richardahull@charter.net

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com