

Upper Swan Valley Historical Society

NEWS & NOTES



SPRING 2021

DISCOVERY—COLLECTION—PRESERVATION—EDUCATION

VOL. XV. NO. 1

Salmon Prairie and Roll Schools A Century of Change

By Steve and Sharon Lamar

Several years after the first one-room schools were built in the upper Swan Valley in 1918, early day homesteaders in the Salmon Prairie area worked together to construct a school on Carl Anderson's land just east of the Swan River in 1920. Neighbors Carl Anderson and Einar Johnson were among the first homesteaders in the area.



Back: Emma Johnson, Mark Anderson, Mrs. Alverta Dielman, Vern Anderson, Raymond Anderson. **Front:** Helen Anderson, Annie Anderson, Arnold Johnson, 1925. Kesterson Collection.

During the past 100 years, many of the descendants of the Anderson and Johnson families have attended the Salmon Prairie School, including four generations of Carl and Ingeborg Anderson's family: Robert "Tuffy" Anderson, Renae Anderson, Kvande Anderson, and Kase Anderson. Einar Johnson filed to homestead in Salmon Prairie in 1917. He and his wife, Fina, developed deep and lasting roots in Salmon Prairie. Many of the Johnson's descendants were students at the Salmon Prairie School. The Johnson's oldest daughter, Emma Johnson Strom, and Emma's daughter, Florence Strom Tucker, both attended the Salmon Prairie School. Florence recalled that she learned more in the 7th and 8th grades under the tutelage of teacher Martha Anderson than all the previous years. "You'd

Roads in the Swan

By Florence Strom Tucker

Excerpted from "Homesteaders in the Swan Valley and How My Grandparents, Parents and I Lived in the Swan for so Many Years,"

"... before the new highway came in or electricity ... the roads were one car wide and very crooked. Summer wasn't too bad, but winter was atrocious. A lot of times you couldn't get to Swan Lake and that's where our mail came two times a week – on Tuesdays and Fridays. You couldn't get to the Missoula county line either. Missoula County plowed, but not Lake County. So Dad would take his Cat and plow the road. First to Swan Lake and then back and then to the county line. The first couple of times he just had a blade and that doesn't push much snow out. So he built a V plow out of lumber and covered it with tin so the snow would slide off of it. And that worked well. I don't know whatever happened to the V plow. It would have been a good museum piece.

I remember a lot of Christmas Eves that Dad was out plowing snow so others could get to their families. He put in many, many hours and lots of fuel. He went to Lake County and asked if they would at least buy his fuel. They said they would, but they never did. He didn't get a dime. You know, with a Cat plowing snow, you go about two miles an hour. And it was 22 miles to Swan Lake one way and to the county line it was five miles from Salmon Prairie one way so it takes time.

I can remember spring time on the old roads also – mud and holes you can't be-

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Salmon Prairie and Roll Schools cont. from p. 1

pay attention when you were in her class,” she said.

The youngest Johnson daughter, Edna Johnson Kesterson, and all of Edna’s five children are alumni of the school. When her youngest child graduated from eighth grade, Edna was presented with a special award for having children in attendance at the Salmon Prairie School for 29 consecutive years.

As a Salmon Prairie seventh-grader in 1997, the Johnson’s great-granddaughter Charleen Kesterson, wrote: “In 1954 the community decided to put up a new building if the district would pay for the supplies.” The modern framed school was built by local craftsman Reuben Kauffman in 1955. The original log school was moved a short distance across the road.

Charleen added, “The old school was traded to a logger for a flagpole that was put in the school yard. That flagpole is still in the school yard today.”

To date, the Salmon Prairie School has been in operation for 101 years and is one of the few remaining one-room schools in existence in Montana.

As the clusters of population shifted in Swan Valley School District # 33 during the 1920s and 30s, some one-room schools were discontinued, and newer ones were built.

In 1921 the Roll School was built west of the Swan River near present-day Kraft Creek Road on the boundary line of the homesteads of Fred Roll and Charlie Lundberg. According to Charlie’s daughter, Mabel Lundberg Stillwell, the school was built with logs cut on the Roll homestead.



L. to R. Reuben Kauffman and Marguerite Wilhelm. 1959 PTA meeting.

Hired in 1921, Marguerite Connor was the first teacher at the Roll School. Students that year included Charlie Roll, Clara Lundberg, Herman and Otto Knoof, Mabel Peterson, and Dobb Wilhelm.

Marguerite later wrote, “We all spent pleasant hours in our pretty school with the new wood stove and sunshine through the windows.”

Miss Connor became better known as Mrs. Marguerite Wilhelm when she married Lee Wilhelm several years later. Marguerite was well-known for her commitment to education. She served as District # 33 school board trustee for 18 years from 1954 to 1972.

The Roll School discontinued operation in 1929. Later that same year, the school burned to the ground in a 6000-acre forest fire in October.

A testament to the longevity of the pioneers who settled in the Swan Valley, several of Lee and Marguerite Wilhelm’s great-great-grandchildren are currently enrolled at the Swan Valley School.

Salmon Prairie School

By Dixie Meyer

In the 40s Salmon Prairie School usually had from 6-12 students in all eight grades. One game we played was softball “work up.” Not enough players to chose sides. We smaller kids could never get the big boys put out. They would always dispute our calls. The teacher would play with us. Sometimes she would stick up for us. The game would continue at the next recess. We learned to catch the ball and run fast.

Another game was “anti-over.” We chose sides. Would throw the ball over the teacherage roof. When the other team caught the ball, they would run around and tag one of us. The tagged person would then go to the other team. Whoever got all kids on their side won. Sometimes the smaller kids would miss when trying to throw the ball over and break a window. Oh, Oh.

There was a big hill we would slide down. Some had skis. I had homemade ones. My dad made them out of a (1”x4”) board. The big kids would make a big bump in the hill. We would get on the toboggan, go down and jump over the bump. It caused lots of spills. We would try to slide clear to the road with our sleds. Fun times.

Our chairs were in a row. The teacher would have us pass our written lesson back to the student behind and we would all correct the lesson. It helped her correct papers. Older students helped the younger ones.

We had fun in school.

My sisters and I usually had to go home for lunch. We lived just across the Swan River. We always were glad when our parents would be gone and we got to take our lunch to school.

Roads in the Swan

Florence Strom Tucker, continued from page 1

lieve. There was one at the bottom of 27 hill. That’s close to where Hulett’s old place is [along Alder Creek not far from where the Salmon Prairie Road joins Highway 83]. You’d take a run at it and maybe you’d make it. If not, you spent the next 3 or 4 or 5 hours sitting on pry poles to jack the car up high enough to get something under the tires to help you move one inch or two. There was another big hole by Jack Johnson’s, which is where Marian Wilhelm [Mathew Seaman] lived.”

Who We Are

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News & Notes is created and distributed by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society. Become a member, donor, or volunteer.

USVHS welcomes all volunteers! If you would like to volunteer contact President Steve Lamar, 754-2745, or Colleen Kesterson, 754-2377. Your support is greatly appreciated!

USVHS RAFFLE FUNDRAISER

Every little bit helps. Your support keeps the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society viable. Raffle sales help us offer programs, create exhibits and pay the many expenses, such as electricity, maintenance, insurance, taxes and upgrades. Thank you for lending a hand by participating in this charitable raffle.



#1 Mark Katrein photo, Alpen Glow on Holland Peak, on stretched canvas, unframed. Donated by Mark Katrein. Value \$125. **Red ticket.**



#2 Lynne Perry painting, donated by Lynne Perry, Value \$300. **Blue ticket.**



#3 Braided rug, handcrafted by Dar Kearney. Donated by Steve and Sharon Lamar. Est. value \$35. **Yellow ticket.**



#4 Load of gravel. Delivery included within a 25 mile radius of mile-marker 37, Highway 83. Value \$220. Donated by Matthew Brothers Construction. **Green ticket.**

Ticket Prices: \$5 each or 4 for \$15

An unlimited number of tickets will be sold in the USVHS August newsletter and will be available at the Swan Valley Museum. The drawing will be at the USVHS Annual Meeting October 22. Winners need not be present to win.

Raffle proceeds support the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society, Inc.

**Tickets available July 4 at the Swan Valley Museum
 and in the USVHS August newsletter, or call 406-754-2238.**

Swan Valley Museum
Winter-Spring Schedule
Open By Appointment
 Summer Schedule: July 4 - September 4,
 Friday & Saturday, noon-4pm
 Also open by appointment



info@SwanValleyHistoricalSociety.org, www.SwanValleyHistoricalSociety.org
 Call Steve Lamar or Fern Kauffman for appointments or to inquire about
 accessibility, (406) 754-2745 or (406) 754-2238.



Winter Travel in the Swan

As told by Paul Wise in a 2020 oral recording with Steve and Sharon Lamar. Paul lived at Salmon Prairie in the 1940s and '50s.

One of my teacher's names was Betty Nicholson. She was from the Kalispell area, and she came up to Swan to be our teacher for several years. One of the years, she wanted to go home for Christmas and, of course, Lake County never plowed the roads. So we were basically all snowed in, you know, for the winter. So, Roy Fox and Bob Fox got their bobsled together and took [it] down to the teacherage, and the men loaded her car onto the bobsled and they took the bobsled up to the [Flathead] county line so she could drive home for Christmas.

I only remember two winters that Lake County brought a bulldozer up and plowed the road open. And one winter a whole bunch of us kids from the neighborhood, we actually walked behind the bulldozer all the way to the [Missoula] county line and back wanting a dose of 'road-out.' And of course over the old roads that was quite a hike. It was uphill and downhill, not like it is today, just one trek, flat. We got up as far as the Anderson place, where Leita is, and Mrs. Anderson [Ingeborg] fixed a bunch of hot chocolate for us kids so we could warm up a little bit before we started our trek back home.

Late 1960s View From Cooney Lookout

As told by Pete Klein in a Swan Valley Oral History Project interview with Suzanne Vernon

There was a light at the bar. And the bar was Liquid Louie's, called the Swan Valley Tavern at the time.

Strom's Store [Swan Valley Centre] had a light. And Conkling, at the Buckhorn, now the Mission Mountains Mercantile, may have had a light but it if did it wasn't visible. And the other light that was visible was Bob Seaman's just a little bit south of Rumble Creek on the West Side of the road.

The road had just been put in, maybe one year or so before then. The main road. The paved road. They were still finishing it north of Swan Lake. And so the logging hadn't really opened up. There had been logging, of course. The heavy logging hadn't started yet. Up high. On the valley floor, yes.

Cold Creek Road was there. Part of the Jim, not the high Jim. The lower Jim Lake road, most of that was there. The four corners road, that goes back behind the store on the Glacier Creek Road, that runs back where Bud Moore's place is, and runs south of there, and it probably connected with the Kraft Creek Road at one time. Kraft Creek Road was in. Holland Lake was here and Lindbergh Lake.

Trailheads in the 1960s

From an 1999 Oral History Interview with Cal Tassinari by Suzanne Vernon.

The trailheads were down in the valley bottom, because there wasn't much logging. So there were long trips in. One in particular that I can remember, Piper Lake was about sixteen miles from the trailhead. And now it's about five and a half. Because all the logging roads and all of that.

So they, you know the trails in general have been shortened. There have been some major concern about that. You know, I can remember, as I say, Piper was classic. I can remember when it was sixteen miles. Then some logging broke it down to something like twelve miles. Then some additional miles to eight miles. And now it's about six to the lake. So it shortened a lot of trails. And one of my jobs when I was here [Swan Lake Ranger District] was to re-establish trailheads.

Everytime you had a logging unit. You had to move the registration box and the signs further up, further in toward the Missions.

Anyway, we tried, and I tried, and I think there was a certain amount of success, in re-establishing a portion of the Foothill trail. The East Side Foothill Trail. That went all the way from, south of Holland all the way up to Lion Creek. You could go by trail that whole length. There was only a small portion intact, I think about four or five miles. I think they still keep that intact. [Today the Foothills Trail runs from Holland Lake to Cooney Lookout.]

Digital Archives Project

The USVHS is continuing to digitally archive and catalogue collections of artifacts, historic photos, books, oral recordings, transcripts, documents, letters and other materials of historic interest, for their long-term protection and to make them available to the public. The oral history excerpts in this newsletter are from transcripts of interviews being digitized for this project.

The USVHS is cataloguing its collections in a museum software program called PastPerfect. This makes it possible to search all records—photos, oral recordings, documents, etc.—related to a given topic by using key words, such as names, places or incidents, to locate a wide variety of information for people who want to learn more about the history and culture of the Upper Swan Valley. The project is funded by the Montana History Foundation.

We are also uploading several of these records—photographs, oral recordings, and videos—to the public computer at the museum for people's enjoyment and learning.

Delivering the Mail

From a 2020 interview of Paul Wise who lived at Salmon Prairie in the 1940s and '50s by Steve and Sharon Lamar

I can recall that [Carl] Toycen had the mail route ... from Swan Lake up there. And he had an old bobsled that he had built a little house on [with a] fire in a stove and a window with two holes in the front partition. He'd pile some wood in there so he could keep the fire going and stoke the fire while he drove the sled. And, it'd usually take him two days. He'd stay overnight and go back the next day. But that's how he delivered the mail in the wintertime.

Dixie Meyer said Toycen checked his trapline while delivering. That's why the mail was often late.

Heat Pump Request For South Room

The USVHS is seeking funds to install a ductless heat pump in the south room of the Swan Valley Museum. The heat pump for the north end of the building has resulted in significant savings in energy and costs, and has helped to protect valuable artifacts and exhibits. We'll need to raise up to \$4600 for the heat pump in the south room. Donations are welcome.

What is It?



Neil & Dixie Meyer Collection

USVHS Priorities

The USVHS priorities are the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Swan Valley. As such our focus is on:

- Discovering and assembling records of historical work.
- Providing educational outreach and research opportunities.
- Preserving historical artifacts and sites of significance.

Recent Accomplishments

- Maki Cabin open with a tool exhibit. (2019)
- Outfitting & Guiding Celebration and Fundraiser at Swan Valley Museum (2019).
- Continuing cataloguing of donations.
- Swan Valley Connections student tour at museum. (2019)
- Tour of the Arts at the museum. (2019)
- Swan Valley School and Salmon Prairie School tour at the museum. (2019)
- U.S.F.S Tack & Hay Shed. (2020)
- Holmes Family Tree. (2020)
- New security system for the Museum & Heritage site with more cameras and remote access. (2021)

Upcoming and Continuing Projects

- Digital research workstation for museum visitors to access home- stead records & other historical information.
- Digital archive system.
- Oral History Project Phase II.
- Outdoor power source for summer events at the museum.
- *Voices of the Swan Book 2.*
- Ben Holland Family Tree.

How You Can Help see page 7.



Gallery



We had a near miss at the Swan Valley Museum & Heritage Site during the January 13, 2021 windstorm.

Two lodgepole trees fell between the Swan River Tavern and the Whalen Homestead Cabin. One treetop broke off and landed on the tavern roof. The tavern deck and railing suffered minor damage.

Tom and Helene Michael bucked up the trees.



Salmon Prairie School, 1943 or '44.

Back: Tom Hulett, Leita Clothier, Teacher Mrs. Bosworth, Valgene Clothier

Front: Karen Clothier, Nancy Clothier, Dixie Clothier



Recipe

Huckleberry Coffee Cake by Alice Meyer
From The Huck Book

Batter

1/4 cup butter
1 1/4 cups sugar
2 eggs
2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
3/4 cup milk
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 1/4 cups huckleberries

Crumb Topping

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup flour
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 cup butter

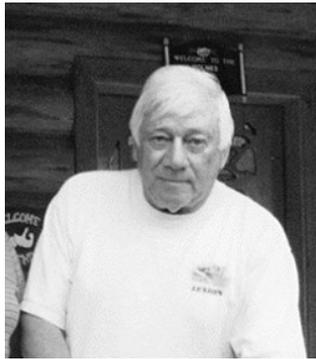
Crumb Topping: Combine sugar, flour, cinnamon and butter. Mix until crumbly.

Cake Batter: Cream butter and sugar, beat in eggs one at a time. Sift dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture alternately with milk, blending after each addition. Stir in vanilla and huckleberries. Pour batter into greased 9" square pan, sprinkle with crumb topping. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. Good warm or cold.

In Memory of Longtime Residents



Alan Childs



Mike Holmes



Jack Lewis

**USVHS Volunteers
Make It Happen**



E V E N T S C A L E N D A R

July 4 Celebration & Museum Opening

October 9-10 Tour of the Arts

August Storytelling Fundraising Event

October 22 Annual Meeting

August Huckleberry Festival

December Frostbite Festival

September October School Tours

*What is It?
Answer*

The hair clipper that
tortured Babe Clothier.

*Neil & Dixie Meyer
Collection*

Support the discovery, collection, interpretation and preservation of local historic and cultural resources.

We thank you, and future generations will thank you, too!!

The Upper Swan Valley Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit corporation. Federal Tax ID #77-0666044.

Contributions are tax deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Contributions will be acknowledged by letter.

Please make all checks payable to: Upper Swan Valley Historical Society, Inc., POB 1128, Condon, MT 59826

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: July 1—June 30

Undesignated contribution or pledge: _____

Individual: \$25 _____ Family \$35 _____ Business: \$100 _____

Contribution or pledge designated for: _____

CONTRIBUTIONS: Amount—\$ _____

Memorial: _____ In honor of: _____

SIGNATURE _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

How Can You Help? Keeping the Swan Valley Museum open requires a team of dedicated volunteers, inspired members and consistent financial support in order to have a viable operation and be able to pay the many expenses such as electricity, heat, insurance, taxes, maintenance and upgrades. To this end we are actively growing our membership and inviting new donors along on our exciting journey. As the saying goes “many hands make light work” and this endeavor is no different. We invite you to begin, or continue, your support of the USVHS through membership, volunteering or donations (one time, monthly, yearly or lifetime options). We are proud to call Swan Valley our home and look forward to preserving our rich history! Thank you for making a difference! Please contact Steve Lamar, President at (406) 754-2745 or info@SwanValleyHistoricalSociety.org.

We thank you for your generous support.

UPPER SWAN VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Salmon Prairie students, 1923. Edna Kesterson Collection

Pictured in the photo could be (according to the best guesses of Dixie Meyer and Leita Anderson), L. to R.: Annie Anderson, Lavina Hulett, Mark Anderson, Teacher (unknown), Arnold Johnson, Vern Anderson, Emma Johnson Strom, Raymond Anderson.

Inside:

Roll and Salmon Prairie Schools

Roads and Trails in the Swan

