



BIG ARM COMMEMORATING 100 YEARS



100 Years! Can we imagine the hopes, the excitement, the fears of those pioneers whose names were drawn to receive a homestead in 1910? Can we comprehend the emotions and the sense of betrayal that the Tribal families must have felt as their land was taken from them?

The Lake County's Commemoration Leadership Council, Lois Hart, Tim Ryan and Jackie Cripe have spent many months organizing many local groups who will hold special historic events. Please go to www.therezthenandnow.com for a list of events along with some great local photographs and information. Rob McDonald has done a great job in designing the web page which will be updated with event details as the year progresses.

The Big Arm Association will hold several events and will also include local history in the monthly newsletter throughout the year. We encourage you to forward stories and historical information to add to our growing collection. Please read the second page for our first glimpse into Big Arm history by Roberta Culp.

May 22 will be a Living History Day at the Historic Big Arm School. We will be forming a committee to organize this event. Please call Alison or Ross to help. We will need interested residents to act as teachers and lots of props from 1910 to 1950. Please help us research, games, books, and general life in a one room school house. Thanks.

Other upcoming monthly events:

January 29 Potluck will highlight the homesteading photographer Herman Schnitzmeyer. Dennis Kellogg, a Bigfork collector and local historian, will give a presentation of the photographer's life. Please arrive at 6pm for the potluck or arrive just before 7pm for the presentation.

February 19 Potluck we will have a presentation from the Flathead Lakers who are working for clean water, healthy ecosystems and lasting quality of life in the Flathead watershed in northwest Montana.

March 26 Potluck will highlight the Ecology and Recovery of Bald Eagles in Montana by Chris Hammond a wildlife biologist with Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The Historic School news: Unfortunately the County Commissioners rejected our application for the CTEP grant believing the addition for bathrooms etc. did not fit the grant criteria. We are still in the running for the Historic Preservation Competitive Grant which will fund the exterior work. The grant reviewers are promising a March announcement. Ron Roberts will be organizing work sessions for the interior of the school, please call him at 849-5133 if you would like to help.....yes we need lots of help on the inside!

BAA Annual Election of Officers was held January 6, 2010. Alison Meslin was reelected as President, Ross Hoyt was elected as Vice President, Doug Koch and Lester Johnson were reelected as Treasurers and Amy Edwards was reelected as Secretary. Presently there are 19 directors of the association who meet once a month to plan events and work on community projects. In December we welcomed Roger Rogers and Ross Hoyt as new directors. The other directors are Tom & Bonnie Eddy, Luella & Arnie Gomke, Lee & Sonya Engbretson, Deb Raunig, Jeff Meslin, David & Cynthia Waterman, Ron Roberts and Paul Maurer.

Residents are always welcome to attend the Association meetings to help organize events and special community projects. Please call for dates.

Yard Sale: please save unwanted treasures for the next sale !

Memorial Donation was given by the Schafer family in memory of Wanelda Schafer who was such a big part of the Association. We are considering using this money to improve the landscaping around the Fire hall as Wanelda spent many hours keeping the area looking beautiful.

Donations: Thank you Ethel Diettert for your continued support. Thank you to Darold Schaffer for your donation and subscription to the newsletter.

The Big Arm Fire Company reports they have just purchased a piercing nozzle from money donated by residents at last summer's Firefighter's Barbecue. This nozzle will be used to punch through a roof, a wall, or car hood which then introduces a spray of water into the enclosed space. When the spray hits the superheated space it is instantly converted into steam depriving the fire of oxygen, dramatically lowering the temperature making it safer and quicker to fight some types of fires.Big Arm FF Jeff Meslin.

Census Advice: Protect yourself from identity theft by making sure the Census worker has a badge, handheld device and a confidentiality notice. Do not give Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone. The US Census Bureau will not contact you via email..... >>>>page 2

BIG ARM ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

January 2010.....page 2



Settling of Big Arm by Roberta Culp from *In the Shadows of the Missions* compiled by Inez Siegreest and the Publication Committee.

When the homesteaders claimed their 40 to 160 acres farm units in Big Arm in 1910 and 1911, they were about six or seven families of Indians already settled. The surveyed townsite was 645 acres and the population was 640 people.

The U.S. Government had set aside one-half mile square for a townsite, giving it the name of Big Arm because it lay on the "big arm" of Flathead Lake.

Over this area with checkerboard precision could be seen the survey stakes; most were wood, some were iron with shiny brass caps.

The lots on the water front and those most suitable for business location sold like hotcakes as soon as the homesteaders began to move in. Residence lots went begging; some never sold.

Neatly tucked away in the same valley with Loon Lake is Big Arm district, Bounded on the north by Flathead Lake and on the east and west by hills that so separate it from the rest of the world as to make it seem almost like a world of its own.

Joining back yards with Loon Lake and Big Arm district, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Rits helped the schools in whatever way they could. Others active in the district included Mr. and Mrs. Claude Brownell, Mr. Mrs. Frank Ebel, Kyle Foster, Mr. and Mrs. John Baumert, Mr. and Mrs. Tazier, Miss Meta Steer, who later married Mr. King, John McGram, Pat Quigley, the proud possessor of claim number one in the Flathead Indian Reservations, Jenavieve Weil, Fred Bauchman, Mr. and Mrs. Saille, who sold to Dr. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Dad Harsh, Mr. and Mrs. Gardener, Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs and Mr. and Mrs. William Howe. Mr. Howe a veteran of the Spanish War was Big Arm's first school teacher, as well as freight agent for the boat companies and farmers. Mrs. Howe, also a veteran of the Spanish War, was a trained nurse and artist.

Billie Olds, majoring in white beans, was the first to attempt to defeat the droughts by irrigation from the waters of Flathead Lake.

Chester Howe served most of the homestead times as a mule skinner for the U.S. Reclamation Service & in World War 1. Benjamin H. Walker, also a veteran of World War 1, served a part of his homestead time in the front trenches in France while holding down the border line of district sixty-five. A tanner by trade, he supplemented his somewhat limited income from agriculture by doing costume tanning. After the war, with the assistance of his pretty and talented young wife, the old fiddle and piano, he entertained the folks of the Big Arm community.

Mr. Irish built an elaborate home in the east end of Big Arm. Mr. Davie, Harry Club, Rolla Abell, R.D. Watson, C.L. Sterling, Sweets, Neisings, Sullivan and some that have been forgotten, became proud owners in Big Arm when it reached

the peak of its prosperity.

Bill Sweet, Fred Bauchman and Dave Winchel were the number one carpenters of the valley. John Sullivan, a hard-rock minor, was a good man anywhere, prospecting for mineral when not otherwise employed. In those days, when a community was to be built, nothing was more important than a blacksmith shop. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Sterling operated the Blacksmith Shop. Bill Payne opened a barbershop. A weekly newspaper called *The Big Arm Graphic*, published by C.M. Copeland, appeared on the streets.

Catholic and Protestant churches were built. The Reverend McVey Fisher, Presbyterian Minister, a frequent visitor to Big Arm and Loon Lake vicinities in the homestead days, claimed to have preached the first protestant sermon ever delivered in what is now Lake County. The Reverend Guinn, a Methodist, was very active in the Big Arm community. The Reverend Elder served in the church and as a school teacher.

The widow Owens and her daughter, Margaret, started the first bakery. J.O. Rude and sons put in a full line of hardware. Neisings owned and operated a restaurant. Ebineezer Park opened a paint shop. Foltz also had a restaurant. John P. Swee was the local Attorney at Law. Dawson Bros. operated a furniture store and mortuary. Dr. Powell became the village doctor. Thorbans opened a barber shop. Mr. Bramer owned and operated a livery stable and stage line to Hot Springs. Bill Baumert owned a photo shop. Virgil Holman was a land locator, helping homesteaders to locate their claims. Bill Hennessey had a lumber yard. Jack Hennessey had a butcher shop. Verge McCoy owned a pool and dance hall. Mr. Brodrick was a butcher. Abbey Rude operated a barber shop. Retz and Goff opened a second grocery store. Copeland had a curio shop. Mr. Thorban opened a general merchandise store. Mr. and Mrs. Jack White built and operated the new two story Lake Hotel. The Rocky Mountain Elevator Co. built a grain elevator and loading chute to load grain onto barges.

The whole community turned out to build a dock and warehouse, which was to be operated by Bill Howell. O.A. Knox established a harness, hardware and implement business.

M.T. Burns moved in with his family to lend a hand to the business and social life of Big Arm. Mr Beneke was also on the list of business people. Miss Marion Lamb, with her aged father and younger sister Hazel, were the pioneers of the business world of Big Arm. Miss Lamb was Big Arm's first Postmistress and dealer in general merchandise. It was a man's job. All supplies came to Big Arm by boat from Somers. Packages of freight were well packed and heavy. Her customers were all sorts of people from all parts of the world, speaking many dialects, including the Flathead, Kootenai, Blackfoot, and Cree Indians. Bargaining was often difficult, but Marion, always patient and agreeable, managed to satisfy the customers.

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