

# BIG ARM ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

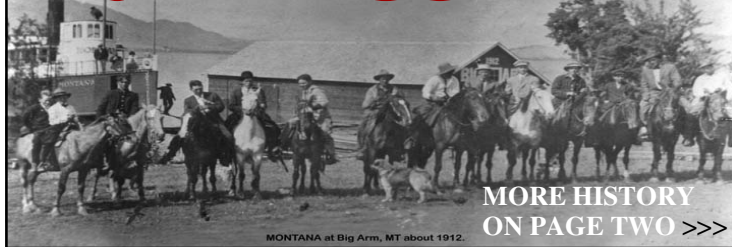
March 2010 [www.BigArmAssociation.org](http://www.BigArmAssociation.org)

PO Box 11, Big Arm, MT 59910. 849-6628 Alison, Ross 5568, Amy 5209.

**COFFEE HOUR**  
**Thurs Apr 8th, 10:30am**  
**At the Fire Hall, Join Us!**  
**Informal and Fun**



## BIG ARM COMMEMORATING 100 YEARS



The One Hundred Year Commemoration that we have been advertising has gone through some changes this past month. Many Lake County towns will still be holding special commemorative events but they will not be organized through the Lake County's Commemoration Leadership Council. Instead the main organization will be...Polson Centennial: Celebrating 100 Years in the Heart of the Flathead 1910-2010. The Polson Centennial will honor the memories of the opening of the Flathead Reservation to Homesteaders and the City of Polson's incorporation in 1910. The Polson Flathead Historical Museum is organizing Centennial Educational Programs, Special Events, Exhibits, and tours and will include special events around the County. We will post a link to their website next month. Big Arm will continue to commemorate the 100 years of Big Arm Town with our first event being a Living History at the Historic Big Arm School on May 22nd.

**March 26th Potluck** Chris Hammond, Wildlife Biologist with Fish, Wildlife and Parks presents "The Ecology and Recovery of Bald Eagles in Montana". The population of bald eagles has grown substantially since they were enlisted as an endangered species in 1978. Their recovery is an exciting conservation success story. Please join us for the potluck at 6pm or arrive just before 7pm for the presentation.

**Community Informal Coffee Hour** April 8th 10:30, fire hall  
**Highway 93 Spring Clean** April 17th, 9am, BA firehall. Please help to keep Big Arm Beautiful. Call 849-6628 Alison

**May 4th Election** will include candidates for 2 seats on the Polson Rural Fire District Board and 2 seats for School District #23. Please make sure you are registered to vote! Lake County Election Office telephone # 883-7268

**Historic Big Arm School update:** We have bad and good news this month. First the bad news is because of reduced revenues Governor Schweitzer has put a hold on the stimulus funds that were going to be awarded via grants to historic restoration projects. We had requested funds to completely restore the exterior of the school. The good news is the Montana Preservation Alliance has applied for 2 different grants which, if successful, will provide technical assistance in documenting and archiving the stories, photographs and memorabilia of Big Arm school and its residents. We will be applying for a Lowes Grant that will provide up to \$50,000

for restoration work on historic schools.

We continue to plan for a "Living History Day" at the school on Saturday May 22nd. We have formed a committee and invite you to join us to help organize this special event. We will need to borrow all kinds of historical props, furniture especially desks, books, framed photographs of past residents, charts, George Washington portrait, period clothes, toys, vintage cars etc. All will be treated with the utmost care. The time frame for the school is 1910 to 1952. Please call Alison Meslin at 849-6628.

We thank Paul and Shirley Laisy for donating 2 vintage desks and a wall cabinet of pull-down school maps. We thank Gil Mangels of the Miracle of America Museum for donating 2 vintage slate blackboards and offering to loan items from his museum. We also thank Lois Hart from the Polson Flathead Historic Museum for her cooperation.

We soon hope to have new doors on the building and some interior work will be completed. If you would like to help with renovations please call Ron Roberts at 849-5133.

**Big Arm's "Postmaster" Roseann Bloom Retires:** Many of you who read "postmaster" will chuckle as they remember Roseann frequently joking "I am master of my destiny and mistress of no one". She will be moving to Kalispell and will take some time off before finding another career. Roseann said "I will miss all of my customers tremendously, I love the Big Arm community and plan to come back to visit often". We are celebrating her big day on Thursday March 25th from 10 to 4pm., please come into Roseann's customer area and wish her a happy retirement and enjoy a piece of farewell cake. We welcome Thomasino Lawson from Hot Springs who will temporarily be in charge until a permanent replacement is found. We thank Roseann for her dedicated service to the Big Arm community we will miss her.

**Easter Baskets:** Nancy Hausermann is organizing her annual Easter Basket give away in Polson on on April 3rd. She is asking for donations of baskets. Call 883-2021.

**Donations** Thank you Lester Johnson and Ethel Diettert for your generous donations to help support the Big Arm Association.

**Helpful tips:** 1) Check the age of your car tires by reading the last group of numbers on the wall of the tire. If 414 = 41st week 1994; if 4202 = 42nd week 2002. There have been many reports of dealers selling old but unused tires in sales. 2) Earthquake readiness: Do not "duck and cover" instead curl up in a fetal position NEXT to a large piece of furniture preferably near the outside of the building. The Piece of furniture will likely create a void that you can survive in if the building collapses. For more info go to Doug Copp's article on 'Triangle of Life'.

Please forward useful tips to [jandameslin@centurytel.net](mailto:jandameslin@centurytel.net)



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

**Part Three.....Homesteading Problems**

Big Arm was in the midst of a vast free range territory with plenty of water and a fringe of juniper trees to furnish shade and protection from tormenting flies. The only thing that kept the thousands of horses and cattle off the townsite was the fact that the grass was better back in the hills. The horses were used to running wild and free in the hills of Big Arm; when the homesteaders came their freedom was reduced. Often when a wild herd was running in the night, they would run into fences of the homesteaders, cutting themselves up terribly and ruining the fences. The next morning the homesteader would go out and repair the damage done to his fence. Mangy and itchy outlaw horses, truculent bulls and long horn cows loafed on the front porch or in the shade of the cracker box mansions, or wedged themselves between the tall shaky piles in the lumber yard, but their bad manners were quite bearable compared to a good neighbor's herd of goats. Not only did they force local residents to a day and night vigil, but their sharp hoofs were tough on the tender tops of Model T cars. Often when a farmer tied up to a hitch rack, not a goat could be seen; as soon as he turned his back, goats would swarm over to the wagon to trample and devour all the produce, horse feed, lunch and anything edible or not. The climate compared favorably with any of their former homes. In the first years of homesteading the gardens and field crops produced an unbelievable yield of both quantity and quality. Young deer romped in their fields, wild geese and ducks covered the Big Arm bay, prairie chickens and snow shoe rabbits were in countless numbers.

In the summer of 1916, the snowfall in Black Gulch was measured at sixteen inches. That year the crops were bountiful, but the years after they refused to produce at all. As a result the grain elevator at Big Arm was torn down.

Insects and pests were very few in the homestead days in Big Arm valley, no weeds in the gardens, not even a mess of wild greens. There were no potato bugs or mosquitoes. They seldom saw a snake of any kind, although it was said that there were rattlers in the hills not far away. The worst enemy of the farmer was the gopher. They were very destructive and hard to control.

**Floods**

At the mouth of every canyon coming into the valley there is evidence of flash floods. These indications the settlers took little notice of until one spring when there was about two feet of snow on the level. A Chinook wind started to blow and in a few hours the snow all turned to water. All at once there were torrents of water everywhere. Down the slope toward the residence district of Big Arm came a wall of snow white water. Dogs, cats, chickens, cattle and people scurried for cover. Then for a few days the shore line dwellers found a

new occupation. They gathered their firewood and many other valuables from the icy deck of the Flathead Lake. Whatever was loose had been swept out on the ice. With the old fourteen inch sod buster, faithful old dobbin, shovels, bars, picks, brawn and willing hands, a diversion canal was built to conduct those troublesome waters to the big coulee which by-passed the city center, eliminating the flood danger.

**Logging**

O. A. Knox, in addition to his General Merchandise Store, Post Office, farming and Livery Stable, contracted to cut and deliver at Big Arm, for the Dewey Lumber Company, the saw timber on forest reserve owned by the Indians. Heavy wagons and sleds were purchased and fitted with chains, brinks, and boulders. Some of the homesteaders became lumberjacks.

Teamsters were called "skinners" because of their ability to remove a patch of hair from the horses' hide by the flip of a line so as to induce quick action in case of emergency. In memory of the old timers at Big Arm, some names will long be remembered as skinners—such as Bill McCartie, Charlie Boots, Leon Tabor, Bill Ingraham, and many more.

Bill Ingraham was a real skinner. He was a good judge of horses but couldn't tell one brand of chawin' tobacker from another.

Al Turner was the same way about whiskey. Any brand of pizen so it was in a bottle. Al was a swamper, and an artist with an axe.

Jack LeDioux was an all round man, a combination of a teamster, buckaroo, and a lumberjack. Jack was a good man anywhere as long as he could keep that little bulge in his lower lip. But if he ran out of snuff and there was none to borrow, the work would stop as far as Jack was concerned, no matter how important it may be. He would hit for Big Arm to get snooze.

Leon Tabor was good on the skid trails. He could hop and skip through the brush and over logs like a chipmunk.

Ed Tabor was a power plant on the crosscut saw. And so it was each one in his place was best.

In the winter of 1911 the first power saw was brought into Big Arm valley. Eli LeDioux bought the new saw and all hands of the Loon Lake district went together to cut and haul wood to the new schoolhouse. That saw was the marvel of the day and although it probably took more time to keep it in operation than it would have taken to cut the wood by hand, all hands enjoyed the fellowship as well as seeing the new saw cut the wood. That was the beginning of gasoline powered machinery in Big Arm valley.

..... To be continued next month.

**If you have stories you would like to share please contact Alison Meslin 849-6628 or send an email.**

**PLEASE SAVE A STAMP FORWARD YOUR EMAIL**