



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 8, No. 1

Kalispell, Montana

February 8, 2021

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

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 15, 2021

Topic: "Vignettes of Valor: African Americans in the Military in Montana"

Presenter: Ellen Baumler, Helena, Montana

Where: The Red Lion, 20 North Main, Kalispell, Montana. (east end of the Kalispell Center Mall)

Time: 5:15 pm Grab 'n' Greet
6:00 pm - Dinner (includes the presentation)
7:00 pm - Presentation

Dinner: \$19; "Comfort Food"
Beef stroganoff with egg noodles, fresh roasted vegetables, angel hair pasta with vegetables in tomato-basil sauce. Green salad with choice of dressing, rolls and butter. Regular or decaf coffee, or hot tea. Chef's choice of dessert.

Dinner Reservations: Call (406)752-9642 (leave message with names and phone number); or send email to kbrittonrn@gmail.com with the same information.

Reservation Deadline: Wednesday, Feb. 10, at 9:00 pm

Posse members may participate in the program livestream by emailing Tim at [<tim.chris@yahoo.com>](mailto:tim.chris@yahoo.com) for registration and instructions

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION



Fort Missoula's 25th Black Infantry Bicycle Corps on their historic trip to St. Louis, Missouri in 1897.

Photo Credit: Mansfield Library, University of Montana

After a winter hiatus, the Posse resumes its monthly program series February 15.

In keeping with Black History Month, the presentation is "Vignettes of Valor: African Americans in the Military in Montana."

However Zoom will take a major role in protecting both audience and speaker. While the Covid 19 pandemic shows signs of ebbing, it remains a real danger, especially to the Posse's core audience.

Not only will presenter Ellen Baumler be speaking by Zoom from Helena, but Posse members will have the opportunity to view the session on-line from the safety of their homes, or even out of state.

Blacks who served in the military in Montana, their struggles and contributions, and what it meant to be Black. Beginning with the Civil War, it traces many Blacks and their regiments and what they accomplished in Montana and

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elsewhere. They manned Montana's forts, fought with Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill during the Spanish American War and served as early rangers in our National Parks.

Blacks suffered harsh treatment during WWI and helped bring about the changes that made military service more equitable.

Two Black U.S. Army companies from Ft. Missoula played a key role in Flathead Valley history, when they were assigned to protect Demersville in 1890 during a time of tense relationships with the local Kootenai tribe.

In 1896 the experimental 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps was organized at Ft. Missoula. Starting with trips of increasing length, including 800 miles to Yellowstone National Park, the Corps made a 1,900-mile, 41-day journey to St. Louis, Missouri, across the rugged wagon tracks of the time.

In 1888-1890 the 25th infantry explored the unmapped area of Montana in present Glacier National Park under Lt. George Ahern. The expedition gave names to many park features.

About The Presenter

Ellen Baumler was interpretive historian at the Montana Historical Society in Helena until her retirement in 2018. She is also host of the show, "History on the Go" and has won numerous awards.

Baumler is the author of seven books on Montana history, including three of ghost tales and a biography of Mary Ronan, wife of the early Flathead Reservation Indian Agent.

Baumler is a veteran speaker at our Posse sessions. In 2019 she spoke on the role of Chinese immigrants on Montana's frontier, and in 2017 on camels on the Mullan Road.



Ellen Baumler

FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG



The first thing the Sheriff wishes to address starting out this year is offering kudo's to the Posse Editor, Rick Hull, for his patience with the Sheriff as we start out the New Year. Rick, being the great editor that he is, has prepared and assembled a January issue of the Pony Tracks newsletter but it was not issued due to the swirling events that were occurring in January. Several really great stories prepared in January will be issued in the next few months.

Needless to say, this year has presented the toughest decisions and platform changes in the Posse's history. The end result will be good for the long-range future of the Posse but will be the most difficult for those members that do not have computers or not have access to on-line communications; or, do not want to. The Posse will continue to service those members as in the past with snail-mail mailouts.

Also, the Sheriff wishes to offer kudo's to Posse members **Tim Christenson** and **Eddy Bryne** who have stepped forward to be the 'Zoom Guy' and 'Tech Guy,' respectively. They are making our programs into livestream events for our out-of-County members, our out-of-State members, and many of our local members who can not risk exposure to a hazardous health situations. Please see the notice pertaining to how to join a Posse Zoom program on the first page of this newsletter.

We would like to extend a very special shout out to the Red Lion and their staff for their flexibility and helpfulness in making so many of the meetings possible and safe. We have been very successful in bringing you some of our very best presentations in safe conditions.

Concurrent with annual January member dues billings, the Posse also conducts a Call to Membership reaching out the hundreds of non-members on our non-member mailing lists

asking for their consideration of membership in the Posse. We want non-members to understand that membership benefits include our comprehensive, educational, and entertaining monthly newsletters, quarterly publications (as we can), and associations with local 'historians' of all ages and interests. Posse members are encouraged to introduce us to your family members, friends, neighbors, work associates, and especially local students.

We will continue in our spirit of having fun, so historical or hysterical attire will be promoted at each meeting. Period attire is not mandatory and is entirely optional, of course, but greatly encouraged. Raffle items and history themed book signings will be available during the Grab 'n' Greet session including the speaker. Hope to see each of you at our February meeting on the 15th. **Please bring a Black friend/neighbor, a student, a soldier,or one of each.**

The following COVID-19 Virus protections will be in place for the Octob meeting:

- **Meeting Room: Moved from Ballroom B to Ballroom A.**
- **Meals: Meals will be provided by table service; there will be NO buffet line.**
- **Tables: Seating will be no more than 6 per table with social spacing as required. Families will be considered as one person.**
- **General Seating: Seating will be arranged to comply with State and County seating requirements. Families will be considered as one person.**
- **Face masks are required at the Registration Desk and elsewhere where social distancing is not occurring.**
- **Sanitizing stations are placed throughout the meeting room and the Red Lion.**
- **All attendees must have been in the State of Montana for not less than 14 days with no virus symptoms.**
- **Other requirements as deemed necessary by the Posse or the Red Lion.**

Any questions: Send email to info.nmpw@gmx.com or call 406/756-8791.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

March: Monday, March 13, 2021

Program: "Sophie, the Hard-Living, Hard - Bargaining Montana Frontier Woman"

Presenter: Posse member **Darris Flanagan**, Eureka, Montana

April: Monday, March 15, 2021

Program: "Hard to Get to, Harder to Leave: A Look at Libby's Early Development 1808-1900"

Presenter: Posse member **Jeff Gruber**, Libby, Montana

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



October 8 & 9: Westerners' International Third Annual Gather and 75th Los Angeles Corral in Los Angeles. Details coming.

Continuing: Northwest Montana History Museum lecture series is being held digitally on demand. Posse members **John Fraley** speak on "Heroes of the Bob Marshall Wilderness," and **Bob Brown** on "Half Century in Politics." Bridget Kevane covers "Latino History in Montana," and filmmaker Seth Bloom explains "Developing Kalispell for Television."

Call 406-756-8381 to purchase digital tickets.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have recently joined the Posse:

Brigade member **Jeff Gruber** of Libby, Montana (Reinstated)

Visit our website: northwestmontanaposseofwesterners.wordpress.com

FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull



Flathead County High School graduating class of 1902

Photo courtesy of NW Montana History Museum

Take a second look at the photo above of Flathead County High School's first graduating class, and you'll notice Nancy Ellen White. She is the Black girl in the second row.

Nancy, or Ella, as she liked to be called, was the daughter of John W. and Ellen White. Born in slavery, John White eventually ended up in Kalispell.

He worked as the janitor at Central School until just before he died at age 79.

John White became a local icon because he put his children through college. That, and his career at the school building that is now the Northwest Montana History Museum, resulted in his name now gracing the John White speaker series at the museum.

It is unclear how many children John White sent to college -- four of six, or even how many children he had. And it isn't known about any discrimination, especially after the Jim Crow era grew in the early 1900s.

But he and his family lived successfully in Kalispell for nearly 70 years. His sons married and lived near their parents on the west side of town.

John White was born about 1855, and a John

White of the right age and race is in the household of W.C. Dawson in Nixonton, N.C., in the 1870 census. He next appears as a First Sergeant in his discharge at Ft. Meade, Maryland in 1885.

Three of his children were born in Kalispell, and one, John W. White, Jr., took over his father's job at Central School. The other son, Joseph, ran a shoe-shine parlor in Kalispell.

Blacks were not unknown in the early days of the Flathead Valley, and show up in historical accounts. For example, early settler Leslie Foy recounted a posse that descended on the Kootenai settlement in Dayton in 1890. It was one of several back-and-forth shows of force between Demersville residents and the tribe.

"It is many years ago and as I can, one of the posse, remember it there were thirty to forty whites in the posse," Foy recounts, and begins listing them. Among the names is "Negro Sullivan".

The raid started badly when the horse ridden by the leader, William Ramsdell, was accidentally shot by a posse member. Once in Dayton, the group realized they were badly outnumbered. They spent a nervous night at a cabin, and had to negotiate their way out of the predicament. The talks went well enough that the Kootenai chief provided a replacement for Ramsdell's horse.

The Flathead Valley was ethnically and racially diverse in frontier days. Many settlers were European immigrants, and even many of the local Indians were mixed blood. Antonine was a common name, which has French Canadian origins. And the founder of the valley's first real town, Joe Ashley, was said to be Metis.

Chinese cooks and businessmen pop up in early accounts, and Kalispell and Whitefish had a large contingent of Japanese and Italian railroad workers. The Hmong army was resettled south of Missoula after the Vietnam War, and I remember the Cuban refugees in Whitefish after Castro took over.

Many of these groups have since drifted away. But we can point to a casual, and even welcoming attitude as part of Montanan's nature.

TRIVIA QUESTION

Barbara Boorman and **Tim Christenson** had the correct answer to last month's trivia question about about a local mining town that vanished overnight.

Sylvanite, on the Yaak road near Troy, was destroyed in a forest fire in 1910. Locals were only able to save the hotel, supposedly because it contained the town's liquor supply.

Mining continued sporadically, but nothing remains of the town today. A local ranger station now sits at the location.

The state line heads straight north in this corner of Montana, since the Bonners Ferry area wanted to remain connected to Idaho. The boundary was vaguely surveyed, and at one point, sheriffs from both states were in town arguing over who had taxing jurisdiction.

I don't have the answer to this month's trivia question. Instead I am asking for help from local members.

Woodland Park in Kalispell has a gravesite in a fenced area near the east entrance.



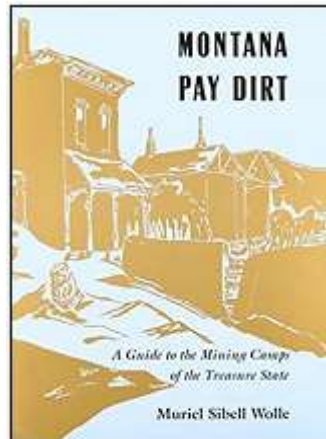
Previously the tombstone had a vague reference to a Chief Kalispell.

But the new tombstone says, "In memory of the last of the Kootenai Indians of Flathead Valley," and says Cecilia Rad Sky, and her daughter, were buried there in 1901. Boy Scout Troop 44 erected the monument.

What is the story behind the monument? I asked at the city Parks Department and they said they don't know.

Submit what you know about the mystery grave to Ye Editor at richardahull@charter.net

FROM THE BOOK SHELF



Dating from 1963, this book is still in print. Author Muriel Sibell Wolle (1898-1977) was a Colorado artist known for her painting and drawings of ghost towns.

Not only does the book cover the history of mining camps you may have never heard

of, each description starts with a personal visit by Wolle, with interesting historical anecdotes. The accounts are topped off by her drawings.

It is best browsed by location. Local mines include the Hog Heaven silver mines in the mountains west of Lake Mary Ronan, scattered claims around Eureka, the mining camps around Libby and the Troy area, including Sylvanite.


She also spends several pages on Altyn, located near Many Glacier in present Glacier National Park. Of course there is coverage of the more famous mining areas around Butte and in central Montana.

I found my copy at Barnes and Noble, but it is also available elsewhere. It is well worth the \$27-\$30 purchase price.

Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, 2019. \$19.95 in paperback. 436 Pages

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TROOPS FOR THE FLAHEAD

Missoulian - 1890

About the first of March Capt. Wilson and the Lieutenants Ord and McAlexander, accompanied by Dr. Coe will leave Ft. Missoula with a company of light infantry for the Flathead Lake country.

The troops will be stationed near Demersville and undoubtedly will make headquarters there for a few years. This will give the people of the Flathead Valley a feeling of greater security, as the slight trouble with the Indians which occurred the past year cause many to possess a fear that the red man might cause more trouble.

TROOPS ENROUTE

Inter Lake - April 18, 1890

The two companies of infantry en route to Demersville left the foot of the lake on Monday morning and arrived in Demersville on Thursday. We hear they have a good band, if true it will be a source of pleasure to our citizens.

Their presence in the valley will be beneficial in many ways not the least of which will be the fact that strangers will no longer be afraid to visit us, and ranchers living in isolated places will feel more secure.

A HARD MARCH

Inter Lake - April 25, 1890

Lieut. Ord says that their company did a thousand dollars worth of work on the west side road on their way to this place.

The fires last summer and fall causes so many trees to fall across the road as to obstruct their passage in places, this combined with a heavy fall of snow and spring rains which had washed portions of the road almost away in the mountainous sections, made their trip rather hard.

Part of the soldiers went before with axes and shovels, to clear the road, while others would steady the heavily loaded wagons over the bad places, or if the road was too bad, unload the wagons and pack the contents on their backs.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

NMPW's meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of the month, except the months of December and January, at the Red Lion, 20 North Main, Kalispell, Mt. (East end of the Kalispell Center Mall).

All meetings begin with a Grab 'n' Greet for a chance to get acquainted, followed by the evening meal, and a presentation pertaining to Western history.

Evening meals are open to both members and non-members. Dinners require advance reservations. Pay for the meals at the door upon arrival.

Walk-in seating will be available free to all Posse members and youths 16 and under and \$5 each for all non-members.

There will be our usual raffle for door prizes.

Posse Gold Stars

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

Parkland Books,
raffle donations

Blacktail Mountain Books,
raffle donations

The Red Lion, promotions
and audio equipment

Byte Savvy Computers,
Zoom operations

Todd Bernhardt,
Zoom Consultant

**Barbara Boorman and Tim
Christenson, Triva Question**

TIMELINE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN MONTANA

Abbreviated excerpts from a Montana Historical Society article of the same name

1805 African American slave York entered Montana as a part of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

1807 Manuel Lisa began Montana's fur trade era by constructing a fort at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Big Horn rivers.

1825 Jim Beckwourth first entered Montana as a member of William Ashley's third western expedition. Reputedly born in Virginia of a slave mother and white overseer. Beckwourth became legendary as a mountain man. He died near Ft. C.F. Smith in 1866, working as a mediator between the U.S. Army and a group of Crow Indians.

1832 Mary Fields was born in Tennessee. She moved to Montana in 1884, where she worked at St. Peter's Mission near Great Falls. She worked at the school until a falling out with the Catholic administration led to her ouster in 1895. She then moved to Cascade and found work as a mail coach driver for the U.S. Postal Service, leading to her nickname "Stagecoach Mary."

1858 Charles "Smoky" Wilson was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Wilson came to Montana in the late 1860s, traveling as far as the Bozeman area. He worked for Nelson Story as a horse wrangler until he found work as an interpreter for the U.S. Army, after having learned the Crow language. One of his claims to fame was that he helped bury the remains of the Seventh Cavalry soldiers killed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act. Along with whites, African Americans used this

and later legislation to obtain homesteads.

1863 The Emancipation Proclamation freed forever "...all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States."

1864 Montana Territory created.

1866 Samuel Lewis arrived in Montana. Born in Haiti, he became a well-respected carpenter in the Bozeman area, helping construct several buildings. He died a prosperous man in 1896; his Bozeman residence is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Congress authorized the creation of six all-African American regiments. Later dubbed "Buffalo Soldiers," elements of these units served in Montana, most notably at Forts Missoula, Assiniboine, Harrison, Shaw, Custer, and Keogh.

1867 "An Irish Democrat named Lynch" murdered black Helena resident Sammy Hays during a post-election riot.

1872 The Territorial Legislature voted to segregate African American children in schools. The law was overturned in 1883.

1873 E.T. Johnson elected mayor of the unincorporated city of Helena on May 22. He was listed in the 1870 census as a 32-year-old barber from Washington, D.C. with a personal estate worth \$1,000. The 1868 Helena City Directory listed him as born in D.C., working as a barber and residing on Main Street.

1876 African American Isaiah Dorman, an interpreter for the United States Army, died at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

1879 Mattie Bost, African American, married white John Castner. Together they built the first cabin in Belt, which eventually evolved into a

hotel, restaurant, and stage station that Mattie ran while John built up mining and real estate holdings. She later operated a cattle ranch in the Highwood Mountains, and was well thought of because of her generosity. Her body lied in state at the Belt Methodist Church.

1882 Anaconda Mine in Butte discovered to have richest vein of copper in the world. Silver Bow Club founded in Butte. Like the Montana Club in Helena, African Americans often made up a significant part of the staff. Grand Union Hotel opened in Fort Benton. Its 11 person staff included nine African Americans.

1883 A “golden spike” ceremony on Sept. 8. Railroad companies across the nation provided steady employment for many African American men, mainly as Pullman porters.

1884 Helena businessmen founded the Montana Club in Helena. Several African Americans have worked for this exclusive organization. The most famous was Julian Anderson who served drinks at the Club from 1893-1953.

1886 Helena’s African American community convened their annual Emancipation Day celebration on August 2, to commemorate the end of slavery in British colonies, which took effect on August 1, 1834.

1887 After making a mark as an abolitionist, daguerrotypist, and entrepreneur in Cincinnati and Minneapolis, James Presley (J.P.) Ball Sr. moved to Helena. He immediately became a noted leader among the city’s African Americans. Among other pursuits, he was active in the Republican Party (he was elected to serve on the Republican Party Central Committee for Lewis and Clark County in 1894), and served as president for Helena’s Afro-American Club. At his J.P. Ball & Son studio he took many images of white and black Helena residents and events, including the

laying of the cornerstone of the State Capitol building.

1888 The Helena black community founded the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. The center of social life for many African Americans, it continued as a congregation through the 1940s.

1889 Montana became the 41st state.

1891 Its congregation began construction of the first Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church building in Great Falls. A second church replaced the original in 1917. The church represents patterns of black community growth in the western U.S., and is closely tied to the historical development of the African American community in Great Falls.

1893 African American Emma Wall and her white husband John Orr married in Glendive. On their wedding night they were forcibly “alabastined” and “ebonized” by a mob, and given 24-hour notice to leave town.

U.S. District Judge Hiram Knowles appointed Libby resident and Montana’s first black attorney, John D. Posten, U.S. Commissioner to the District Court.

1894 Montana’s first black newspaper, The Colored Citizen, was published in Helena from September 3 to December 15, 1894, chiefly to advance the city’s case for designation as the state capital.

1896 Butte’s black residents established the Afro-American Club of Butte City as a social outlet to pursue interests in music, literature, and science. Anacondans founded the A.J. Campbell Afro American Club in their city two years later.

1897 Soldiers from the 25th Infantry stationed at Fort Missoula rode bicycles to St. Louis - approximately 1,900-miles - in 41-days.

1900 African American Sally Gammon (Brown) Bickford became owner of the Virginia City Water Company upon the death of her husband Stephen. She ran the utility until her death in 1931.

1902 The Afro-American Women's Club was founded in Butte, perhaps the first black women's organization in Montana. Though soon forced to disband, it re-emerged as the Pearl Club in 1918 to help support the American cause during World War I, and became instrumental in creating the Montana Federation of Negro Women's Clubs.

1909 The Montana legislature passed a law making marriage between whites and nonwhites illegal. The Montana Legislature repealed the law in 1953.

1913 Booker T. Washington lectured in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, and Helena on black and white relations in the United States. Washington called for accommodation between the races: "I believe there is room enough, justice enough, and good sense enough to enable the two races to live here side by side and work out their own destinies."

1916 Arthur C. Ford of Helena graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering from Montana State College (now Montana State University), making him one of the first black graduates of that school. Ford was later named president of New York City's Department of Water Supply, Gas, and Electricity, thus becoming the first African American to be appointed commissioner of a New York city agency.

1921 Henry Baker was named postmaster at the state Capitol; he was believed to be the first Montana state official of African American descent.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) organized in Montana.

Though it counted approximately 5,100 members at its height, evidence suggests that Montana's KKK held little influence over the lives of black Montanans, as the organization's anti-Catholic/ anti-immigrant stance outweighed whatever anti-black attitudes were found in the state.

1922 James Dorsey, son of 25th Infantry veteran Ephram Dorsey grew up in Missoula and graduated from the University of Montana in 1922. He was the first African American to matriculate from that institution. Five years later he earned a degree from the University of Montana Law School. Dorsey practiced law in Milwaukee for nearly 40 years and received a Distinguished Service Award from his alma mater in 1963.

1933 Nearly 1,000 African Americans came to Montana to work in the Kootenai National Forest as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Concerns at the local and national levels over integrated CCC camps led to their departure in 1934.

1935 African American Naseby Rhinehart accepted a position as athletic trainer for the University of Montana, a position he held for forty-seven years. A pioneer in developing coursework for athletic trainers, he passed away in 1991.

1942 Malmstrom Air Force Base was built near Great Falls. It became a conduit for African American migration to Montana.

1960 Charlie Pride comes to Montana to play baseball and launches his singing career. He had eight number-one singles on the County Hit Parade and became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1993.

1968 Daniel P. Brockman became the first African American admitted to the Montana Veterans' Home in Columbia Falls.

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NORTHWEST MONTANA POSSE OF WESTERNERS

c/o Clerk of the Posse, P. O. Box 10811, Kalispell, MT 59904.

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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.

For submissions to the Posse Dispatch, contact the Editor by e-mail first for submission requirements.

The next issue of Pony Tracks will be issued March 8, 2021 (or thereabouts).

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