



PONY TRACKS

Newsletter of the Northwest Montana Posse of Westerners

Vol. 8, No. 2

Kalispell, Montana

March 8, 2021

Richard Hull, Editor and Printer's Devil

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 15, 2021

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

Presenter: Darris Flanagan, of Fortine, Montana

Where: The Red Lion, 20 North Main, Kalispell, Montana

Time: 5:15 pm Grab 'n' Greet and book signings
6:00 pm - Dinner
7:00 pm - Presentation

Dinner: \$19; "St. Patrick's Day Special" Corned Beef Brisket with Irish mustard sauce, buttered baby red potatoes, cabbage and carrots. 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, March. 10, at 9:00 p.m.

Posse members may join the program through Zoom by contacting tim.chris@yahoo.com for registration and instructions.

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION

There are few women in Montana's frontier history that can match Sophie Morigeau of the Tobacco Valley. Her history of successful hauling operations, running a trade route to local gold miners, small log-and-mud cabin



trading outpost, land ownership, raising stock and other businesses resulted in hard-earned wealth and property.

But when you see her one eye, her self-amputated rib and long succession of "husbands" (she shot her 13th and drowned another), you start to see how hard she fought to live her wild life. She lost one eye when hit by a branch while riding a horse, so she wore an eyepatch and/of green spectacles the rest of her life. After an accident with a runaway horse and buggy, she amputated her own protruding rib -- and proceeded to hang it up in her cabin iwht a little pink bow.

Born in 1836 in Canada, she would claim multiple fathers throughout her life. Married off at 16 years old, Sophie apparently just up and left the marriage to start running a trade route to local gold miners. Splitting from her husband would prove just the start of a long

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lifetime of calling the shots, business-wise and romantically. Emboldened by her work with the miners, she bolstered her business empire by claiming land in her own name — making her one of the first women in Canada to do so.

Nowhere was she more wild than in matters of the heart. Over her life she had a long string of men, and one historian noted, “whatever husband she has on is not allowed to interfere with anything, only to do what she tells him.”

About the Presenter

Posse charter member **Darris Flanagan** is an award winning historian, a retired educator and author of many history books, pamphlets and articles.

He is an active community volunteer in the Eureka area, and well recognized as a walking repository of northwest Montana history. In 2018 he was recognized with the Heritage Keepers Award.

His most well known books are *Indian Trails of the Northwest Rockies* and *Adventures Along the Fort Steele Trail*. Other books include *Skid Trails: Glory Days of Montana Logging* and *The Montana Christmas Tree Story: An Historic Saga of Boom and Bust*. Signed copies of some of his books will be available for sale at the meeting.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

April: Monday, April 19, 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

Membership Dues are payable in January. If you haven't yet responded to the 2021 billing notice, please do so. Like the rest of us, the Posse finances have been affected by the virus.

FROM THE SHERIFF'S SADDLEBAG



Well, our maiden venture into the Zoom era was interesting. Based on in-coming reports we did well for those watching remotely but due to technical issues the presentation was not as desired.

Those issues are now known to us and have been corrected thanks to Zoom Guy **Tim Christenson** and Tech Guy **Eddy Bryne**.

For the record, all members should be aware that ALL Posse meetings will be held at the Red Lion and will also be livestreamed to those members attending remotely. Anyone needing assistance about using the Zoom program should email who has prepared assistance information and guidelines.

This month's presentation for Women's History Month is about a very special woman in Northwest Montana - far from the normal women we see in the history journals.

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 March meeting on the 15th.

Please bring a woman friend/neighbor, a Tobacco Valley pioneer, a student,or one of each.

We are continuing to research local Buffalo soldiers. Black Montana veterans were not rare, and two died at the Montana Veteran's Home: Corporal Prince Dedrick died in 1904, and William Vidette in 1918. Both served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

FROM YE EDITOR'S DESK

By Rick Hull
Photos by Rick Hull



The pioneer section of the Demersville Cemetery.

A macabre, but interesting afternoon outing is the historic Demersville Cemetery on the south end of Kalispell.

The cemetery is the final resting place for some of the county's pioneer families. But it is also the site of some of the area's poorest, since it is the county's pauper cemetery.

The cemetery is located on its namesake Cemetery Road, about two miles west of the now-vanished riverboat town. It is directly behind the Flathead County Animal Shelter, and you can park at the shelter when it is open.

Demersville Cemetery was laid out in 1889 by Dan Mumbrue, supplementing an earlier cemetery east of the Flathead River at Montford. The cemetery's original eight acres is on low, treed hill with moss-covered tombstones. The newer portion is on the flat to the east, and many of its graves are unmarked, or barely marked. The county didn't take over the cemetery until 1957.

A number of pioneer graves were relocated to Conrad Cemetery when it was established later, and there have been at three rounds by the County attempting to



Flora Coram, age 37, died in 1900.

sort out records of who is buried where at Demersville Cemetery.

The weathered tombstones speak to the rigors of life before modern medicine, since many are of children and babies. But there are also proud family plots with fences and tall monuments. A few later-day residents have chosen the historic cemetery for their resting spot, with modern tombstones.

Some things have changed since I first visited



Tombstone for the three Wolf Prairie prospectors.

the cemetery in the 1970s. Previously the grave of three prospectors, who were killed at Wolf Prairie near Libby by Kootenai Indians and their bodies burned, was marked by an engraved slab erected by a local Boy Scout troop. Now there is a remounted tombstone that appears to be the

original that was erected by Demersville mayor J.E. Clifford.

Prominent pioneers were laid to rest in the cemetery, including the John Foy and Eugene McCarthy.

In the northwest corner were a handful of graves of local American-Japanese, most of whom worked for the Great Northern Railway as track crews. This time I could find only one with the inscription in English, but there are a number of newer tombstones with kanji only.

The indigent portion of the cemetery is more somber. There are fenced plots, with only "Mom" or "Dad" written on weathered wood crosses. Many graves are marked by the free metal plaques for veterans provided by Congressional offices. So many sites are unmarked that burials have essentially stopped for fear of disturbing an existing grave.

TRIVA QUESTION OF THE MONTH

I didn't receive any answers about the new tombstone in Woodland Park, but did get some 1949 references from **Barbara Boorman** that I will need to look up when I get the chance.

This Month's Question

(Answer in next month's newsletter.)

In honor of Women's History Month, this newsletter contains the story of Flathead County's Emma Ingalls, who was elected to the Montana Legislature in 1916.

In that same year, who did Montana elect to Congress? Why is this person famous? And what were the two historic votes by this member of Congress?

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

NEW MEMBERS

The following new member recently joined the Posse:

Glenda Christenson of Whitefish, MT

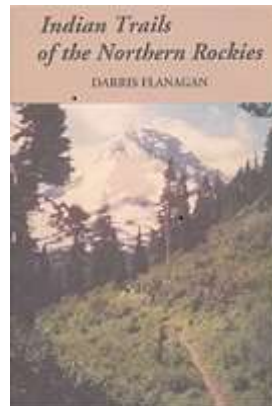
CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Members aware of events not listed here are encouraged to contact Ye Editor with the particulars. He may be contacted at richardahull@charter.net.

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

FROM THE BOOK SHELF



Indian Trails of the Northern Rockies by speaker Darris Flanagan starts with details about the Kootenai tribe, who traveled through Canada and Montana to reach the buffalo country on the Great Plains. Often this involved fierce encounters with the

Blackfeet. Then trappers, traders and prospectors used the same trails to explore the mountains and valleys of the Rockies.

Published 2001. Paperback, 192 pages

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

White Cliff Productions,
Paul Nuff,
Audio/Visual Consulting

Todd Bernhardt,
Zoom Consultant

Barbara Boorman,
Triva question

THE REPORTER AND THE JUDGE

Emma Ingalls and Judge Shepherd

By Rick Hull,
for Women's History Month



Later photo of Emma Ingalls
Montana Historical Society

Women in the United States received the right to vote with ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. However that was old hat in Montana. Women had the right to vote in local elections before Montana became a state, and gained all rights in 1914. Missoula native Jeannette Rankin is of course famous for being the first woman in Congress, after being elected in 1916. Flathead County had its own first with the election of Republican Emma Ingalls to the state Legislature in 1917 and 1919.

However that was only a later chapter in Emma's accomplishments.

Ingalls and her husband were founders of the *Inter Lake*, when it was a small weekly in the pioneer town of Demersville. Though Clayton Ingalls's name was on the masthead, it was generally agreed that Emma was the powerhouse behind the paper. And it was Emma who cut her political teeth on a battle with the local Justice of the Peace — a battle in which she came out on top.

Emma Backhus was born in 1860 in Racine, Wisconsin, the daughter of two English immigrants. There she met Clayton Ingalls, who had been born in New York state in 1856. Clayton grew up in Iowa, where he learned the newspaper trade. Emma had dropped out of school to help in her father's store, but continued to educate herself. She married Clayton at age 19, and they soon had two daughters.

Clayton struggled with asthma, and in 1886 they moved to Corvallis, Montana in hopes the climate would be better for his health. In 1889 they came to the fledgling town of Demersville, on the Flathead River south of present-day Kalispell, and started the *Inter Lake*. The paper was named after the lakes in the area, Emma said.

The job involved setting type by hand, and printing on a hand-fed press. Like weeklies today, much of the income came from job printing, and the newspaper was almost secondary.

Her nemesis was Judge Charles Shepherd. Emma described him this way:

"Judge Sheppard was a man of fine natural ability and a graduate of West Point, but he came out of the war a wreck and drifted out to the frontier and became the first schoolteacher in Demersville. He would dismiss school for a recess whenever he wanted to imbibe his favorite beverage."

"His court became famous as the Supreme Court of the Flathead, because of his arbitrary decisions, which were always in favor of the last drink of whiskey."

"One day a stranger who came in on the boat the previous night, was crossing the street and was shot in the back. He was taken into Langerman's saloon and the justice of the peace sent for. He was awakened and hurried to the saloon where he proceeded to go through the dead man's pockets. He first found a twenty dollar gold piece which he carefully placed

beside him, then came a six shooter. The judge became indignant and said, "What's this? What's this? I fine him \$20 for carrying concealed weapons." He then picked up the \$20 for carrying concealed weapons and the case was closed. "

"Another man who had quarreled with his neighbor over a line fence and struck him over the head with a crow-bar, the man dying, was brought before him and he rendered a verdict of heart failure."

G.M. Houtz, who ran the competing *Journal* in Demersville, admired Emma. He later wrote:

"She was clever and interesting writer, forceful, and on occasion wielding a caustic pen. An illustration will suffice:"

"Sometime in 1890, there'd been a case tried before justice Shephard in which that official rendered a decision especially obnoxious and unjust – something for which "old Shep" later became quite famous. Reporting this matter Mrs. Ingalls during the absence of her husband in Missoula, sharply criticized the justice, and claimed that his judgment in the case was not borne out by the evidence, hinting at corruption in of the court.

"Shephard was hired by this and was bound to fine the editor the paper for contempt of court. He wanted to have Mrs. Ingalls arrested and hauled before him. Being advised by lawyers that such an act would bring on physical violence against him from the whole community the justice desisted until the return of Ingalls from Missoula, when that gentleman was arrested for contempt. Before hearing the matter Shep said that a public apology was made in the newspaper he would drop the matter Mrs. Ingalls smilingly said, "Sure, I'll apologize."

"She did so in the next issue of the paper – in her own way. At the head of a column there appeared a formally correct apology, and that people might be fully informed, this was followed by reprint of the offending story, Mrs. Ingalls adding a few more for vitriolic sentences to it. Then followed another apology for the added matter.

"Continuing her aspirations on the "supreme court of the Flathead" she further discussed Shepherd special and general offenses in the conduct of his office.

"Again she apologized, then wound up with an all-around, all-embracing blast at the ill-starred justice of the peace, referring to in many unflattering terms to his life and lineage, and the general unfitness to occupy the important position he held, in fact, a thorough old-fashioned roast. Concluding, she apologized for this and all preceding matters, leaving a not a leg for the judge to stand on while he endured the hearty laughs of the *Inter Lake* readers."

In an *Inter Lake* column in February of 1891, the Ingalls wrote of a blowup with the judge. Shepherd had fined the attorney, McClelland Winniger for contempt, and then took offense with the *Inter Lake's* reporting of the incident.

"Last Tuesday morning shortly after we had partaken of a hearty meal and had made a trip down town we ran up against officer Clayton who tapped us gently on the shoulder and smilingly said "I have a warrant for your arrest." We neither fainted nor attempted to run away, for we have had it intimated by many of our friends that "Old Shep", as he is commonly called-who had taken offence at an article which appeared in our last week's issue was going to have us arrested for criminal libel.

"The warrant ordered us to appear before Judge Lane at Ashley forewith. So we hitched

our horse to the cutter and drove to Ashley, where we found. Robt Kane, J.P. awaiting our coming. The mournful complaint was read to us and when asked if we were guilty or not, we answered with a choking voice, "not guilty."

"We waived examination and, like the Lord High Executioner in the 'Mikado, we were liberated without bail on our own re-cog-ni-zances."

W. C. Whipps, a Demersville banker and later mayor of Kalispell, wrote that there was a serious effort to lynch the judge at the time: "There was a Justice of the Peace there who was very unique. A motion to adjourn his court at any time for drink was always in order. It was said that he always had his hand out and one might induce him to do most anything for a slight consideration."

Shepherd's tenure came to a head when a well-liked local man got in a dispute in a gambling den, and was killed. The judge turned the killer loose, and the assailant quickly left town. According to Whipps, a committee was quickly formed, with hanging the judge on its agenda.

"I was a member of that of the committee and I insisted that the old Judge be heard before we proceeded with the hanging," Whipps said.

Shepherd was called before the committee, and in the testimony soon revealed the shooting had been a matter of self-defense, and could have gone either way. "But that committee had had their mouth all fixed for blood and were determined to hang old Shep just on general principals," recalled Whipps.

Whipps talked the committee down, and ushered Shepherd out the door, expecting to be stopped at every step. "I told old Shep to go quick and hide and he wasn't long and following the advice. I then went back in and told that bunch of that old Shep probably deserved hanging for lots of things but they would all be glad tomorrow that they had let the old man go on that charge of letting a guilty man escape just punishment," he said of the incident.

Emma wrote that Judge Shepherd didn't heed his narrow escape from the noose.

"He went to Missoula and engaged the best legal talent available. Swore out 16 warrants for the rest of Demersville citizens but they were never served. Serving those warrants and the resulting trials would've cost the County not less than \$20,000. A costly revenge just because the people took a shortcut to read the community of what they deemed a very undesirable citizen. He was legally removed by the commissioners November 12, 1891."

By then Clayton had tired of the newspaper business, and in April of 1891 turned the paper over to P. N. Bernard. Clayton pursued his dreams of striking it rich, and filed a claim in the South Fork. It was named the Inter Lake lode. He died in 1898 at age 42.

Emma continued to farm on the family homestead in the Lower Valley, with the help of her daughter Bernice and son-in-law William Winston. They moved to Kalispell in 1914, where Emma started her political career. During her first term, she introduced the resolution urging Congress to pass a Constitutional amendment giving all women the right to vote.

In later years she worked for the Bureau of Child Welfare, and help found and led the county League of Women Clubs. She served as secretary of the State Horticultural Society, and was a long-time member of the Century Club and Flathead Republican Women's Club.

She died in 1940 at age 80.

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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 April 12, 2021 (or thereabouts)

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