

The Last Homestead



*Lack of conveniences was not important-
for Mac and I were together again. C
Little else mattered. (L.M.)*

WILDERNESS FEVER RAN HIGH



Linda McKinstry

With my New England heritage and background I was hardly prepared for homesteading in Jackson Hole, Wyoming in 1915. My home had been in Springfield, Mass. Until I attended college near Boston and then going to Washington D.C. to teach cooking and Home Economics...Needless to say, relatives and friends were skeptical about the venture, but refrained from saying too much to us. (L.M.)

Harold McKinstry

Being young and inexperienced in that kind of country precluded any feeling of futility as to my ability to select a good homestead site...at the time the distance from nowhere meant nothing. The wilderness fever ran high. (H.M.)





Alsie Preston

The furniture was crated, and all dishes, utensils, books, wedding gifts, and many much needed household articles packed in barrels or boxes. Mother was a wonderful packer, and hardly a dish was broken even though all were sent by freight, and endured a 70-mile wagon trip over the unbelievably rough roads of Teton Pass and Jackson Hole. (L.M.)



As Christmas approached the spirit of the season pervaded our little cabin. Linda's mother, Alsie, back in New Jersey was forgetting nothing. She had sent us a phonograph and records of some of the finest artists of the day. We loved them, and in that beautiful mountain setting those Christmas carols seemed to convey their meaning with a clarity found nowhere else. The box was packed with toys for Jeanne, useful articles for us, everything. (H.M.)

*Jeanne, holding picture
← of only, and beloved
grandma. Summer 1918*

IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF FRONTIER LIFE



Victor, Idaho 1915

Train service was not very good in those days, and although we left Tuesday evening we did not reach Victor, Idaho until late Saturday P.M. We stopped off in Hettinger for several hours but otherwise we were always traveling or waiting for trains. It was after 1 o'clock in the morning when we arrived in Idaho Falls on Friday night. Our train for Wyoming did not leave until 8:45 in the morning so Will and I took some rooms at a hotel. After traveling 3 days and 2 nights on dirty, dusty trains, with no sleeping accommodations, a batch and comfortable bed were most appreciated even at that time of night...All the groups stayed at the little frame motel in Victor that night. It bore no resemblance to the one in Idaho Falls, but we were reaching frontier country. (L.M.)



End of the rail line in Victor, Idaho

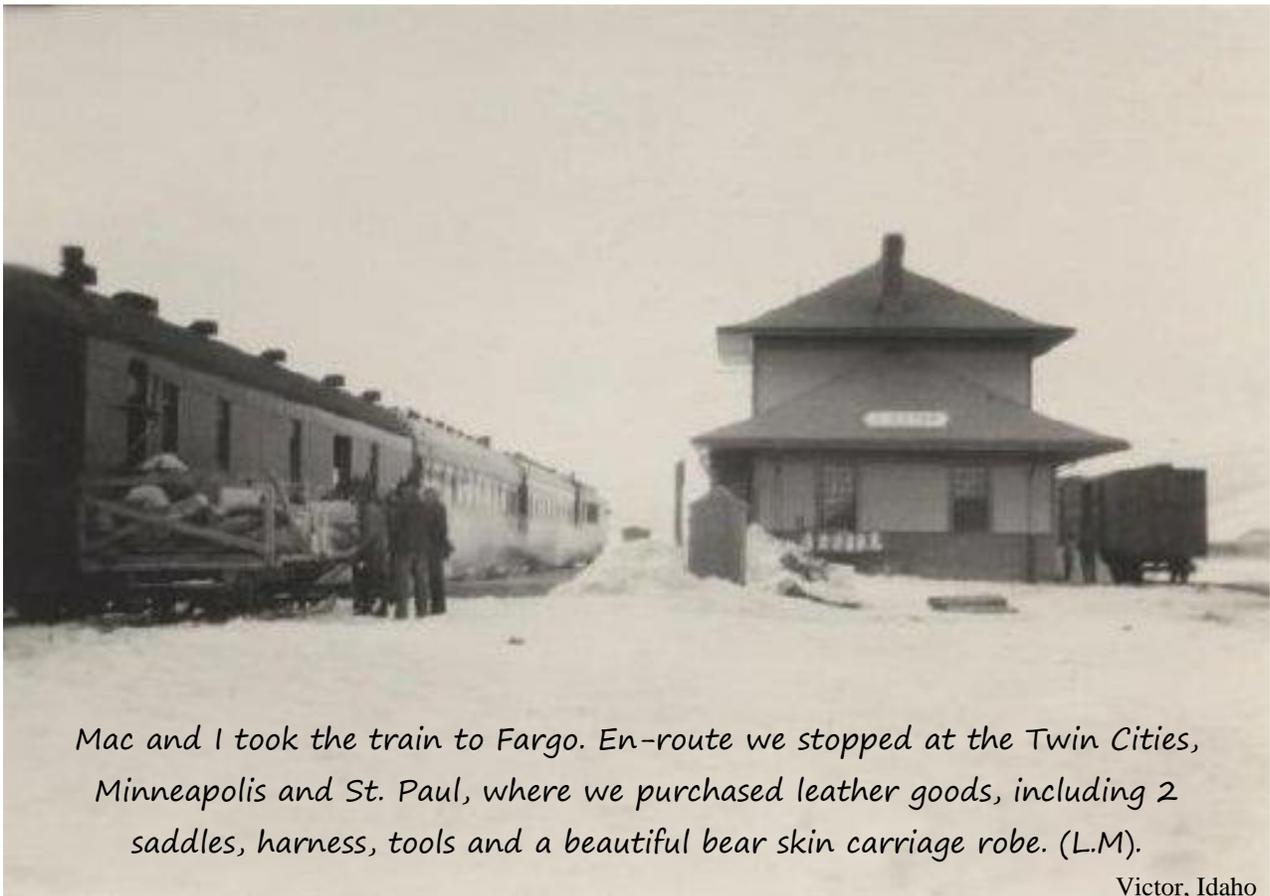
The route lead through Butte, Montana, then south through Idaho over the O.S.L. with its termination in Victor. It was not only the end of the rails; it was the beginning of frontier life. (H.M.)

I had accumulated a fine young team of horses, a little haying machinery and household goods. With the help of friends I loaded them into an immigrant car at Hettinger, and was on my way. The trip was long and slow. (H.M.)



Ginger & Jet

Into this car went the mares, hay, grain and a 50-gallon barrel of water for use on the trip. The equipment included a Studebaker wagon, sulky plow, mower, hay rake and the necessary tools for building and for getting out logs. Among these were a cross cut saw, axe, log chains, peavey and a draw knife for peeling logs. (L.M.)



Mac and I took the train to Fargo. En-route we stopped at the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, where we purchased leather goods, including 2 saddles, harness, tools and a beautiful bear skin carriage robe. (L.M.)

Victor, Idaho



Barthy Moulton & Majestic range

Also there was the Majestic range, which Mad had purchased at an auction. Probably this means only mountain scenery to the present generation, but to those of 55 years ago that meant a kitchen stove, probably the best ever made. A cook stove was an absolute necessity for both cooking and heating. (L.M.)



Mr. & Mrs. Rufus Eynon

“Where can I find a man with a team to help me over the pass,” I asked the station agent. “Ruf Eynon can do the job if he isn’t busy. That’s him plowing that garden over there.” (H.M.)

Today this road over the pass is a beautiful, blacktopped highway. In 1915 it followed the contour of the mountain, seemingly hung where it seemed there should be no road. Some of the pitches were unbelievably steep and with spring break-up the mud hub deep. Through the winter some places became so sliding that the stage passengers had to ride the upper runners to keep the sleigh from rolling into the canyon, thousands of feet below. (L.M.)



The going was pretty good for the first few miles, but that was all. As soon as the road really began to climb up the west side of Teton Pass, the mud and chuck holes became hub deep. Water from the melting snows above ran down the ruts, washing out holes on the lower side...the wagon dropped into the hole behind a plugged log culvert and we had to chop the whole culvert before we could move another inch. (H.M.)



The snow on the pass had been deep and the road was "breaking up," so called. This meant the packed snow was softening and would no longer hold the weight of the horse. Not only was this hard on the horse but also on the rider, and a novice would receive a terrific jolt. After this continued for a few miles, I was lame, sore and very tired. There was nothing to do but go on, remembering it was my bright idea to come over horseback. (L.M.)

We rough locked, wrapping a log chain underneath both runners. Then we took off the leaders, letting them follow behind, and down we went. In some miraculous way the horses kept their balance, we swinging hard on the upper runners to keep the load from rolling into the canyon. (H.M.)





Teton Pass

Mac said the road over the hill was much better than it had been, but I'm still wondering how it could have been worse. It was 3 o'clock before we had reached the road house on the west side and had dinner. The higher we got, the worse the road and the snow had been. And plenty tippy! Frequently I got out and walked as the men had to ride the upper runners of the sleigh to keep it from going over the canyon. Then, very occasionally, unexpectedly, and momentarily, the sleigh would tip toward the bank. One never knew what next. Then it happened, and we did tip over, fortunately on the upper side. Mac jumped from the sleigh to catch me if thrown. (L.M.)



General Store in Wilson

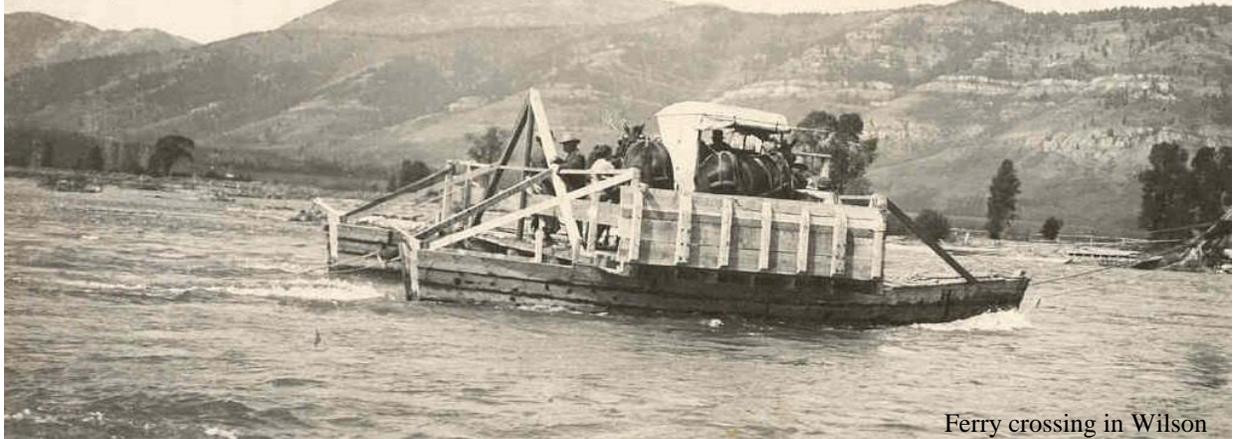
A little further on we reached Wilson...Mac asked if I could not rather stay there than ride the 8 miles more into Jackson. He said he was sure we could get a room in a house. Looking around I can't remember even seeing a house. Wilson seemed to be only a wide place in the road and hardly that. (L.M.)



Hotel in Wilson

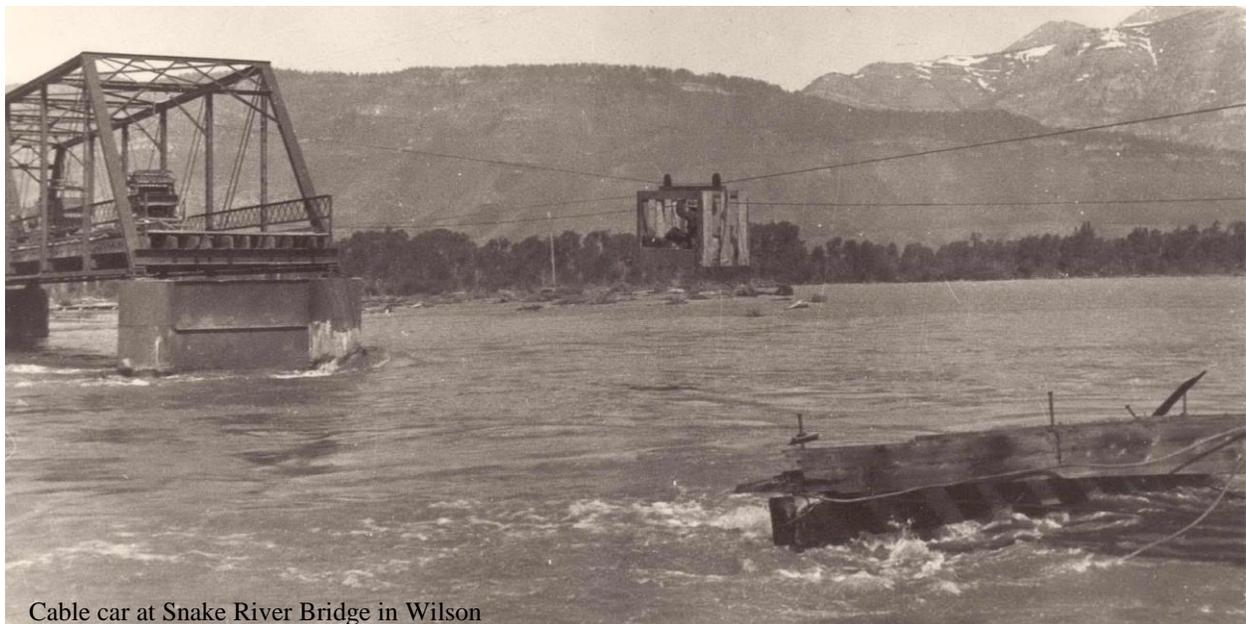
Finally we saw a light, some buildings and were ultimately a hotel, a bare unpainted wooden structure, most uninviting. (L.M.)

“Let’s watch that thing a while,” Ruf said, “I hit a deep hole the last time I crossed.” They went belly deep, the water lapping the bottom of the wagon box. At times we bounced over boulders: again we seemed to be settling into the gravel. “That’s the kind that scares me,” he said, “In another thirty minutes it can cut out deep enough to take this whole outfit downstream.” (H.M.)



Ferry crossing in Wilson

Then we reached the river. It was much wider than normal, filled with dirty rushing water and debris. The driver remarked “I hope the ford hasn’t changed since yesterday,” and the horses plunged in. How they could keep their footing over those wet, slippery stones and pull the wagon is still more than I can understand. We were surrounded by swirling water with lapped the bottom of the wagon box; but what a relief when the team began climbing the opposite bank. (L.M.)



Cable car at Snake River Bridge in Wilson

Town Square in Jackson c.1910



Perhaps it was well that we had arrived in Jackson after dark for I fear the drabness of the town would have been too much for me. Even in the morning it looked hopeless. There was an occasional log building, otherwise unpainted frame structures, rather few and far between. A typical, early frontier town. It was a flat, pebbly waste with hardly a weed growing on it. (L.M.)

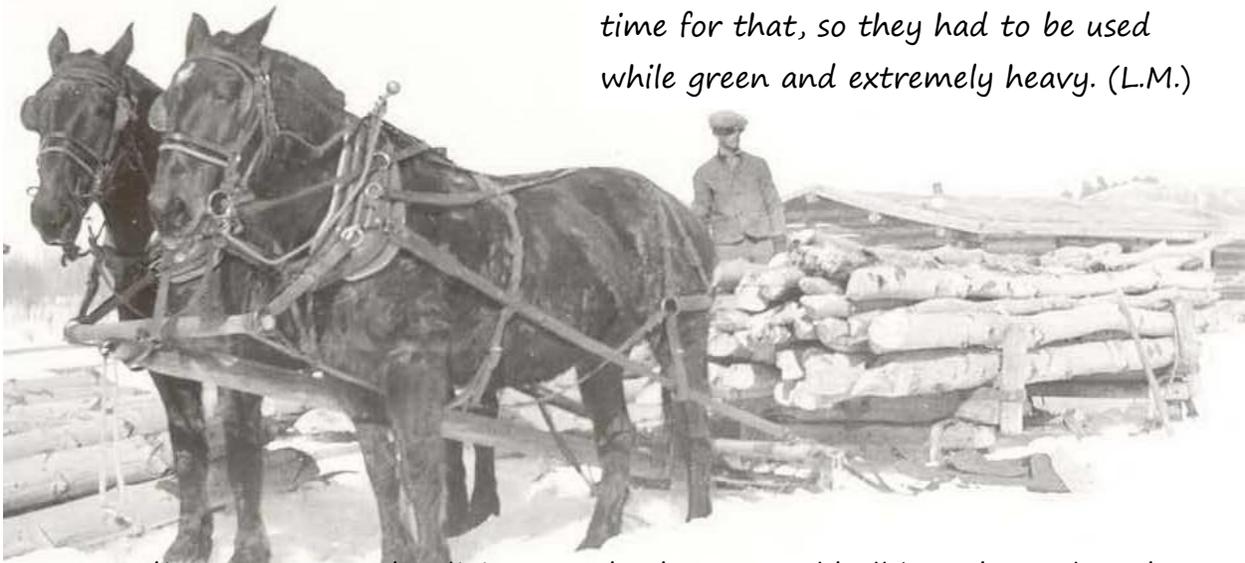


Looking east on Broadway, Jackson c.1910-1920

STARTING A HOME AND FAMILY



Mac and Mr. Thompson went up to our homestead to put up a tent and start work on a cabin. First, the lodgepole pines had to be found that were suitable for logs. They must be straight and of uniform size. Some trees that looked straight at a distance had to be rejected. Standing close and sighting up the trunk they were found to be bowed, too tapered or too knotty. But there were many nearly perfect trees and it took but a few days to find them. They were cut down, the branches lopped off, after which they were skidded to the campsite. Here they were peeled, a draw knife being used. Logs should be allowed time to dry for 2 or 3 months, at least, before going into a building, but there was no time for that, so they had to be used while green and extremely heavy. (L.M.)



According to present day living standards, we would all have been classed as sub-standard and poverty stricken. It was the usual thing for families of 4 or more to be living in a one-room cabin. But none of those pioneers felt abused, only lucky. (L.M.)

The Episcopal Church was in the process of building, and Dr. Huff laid the floor for that. The property around the church and hospital needed grading and that furnished work for Mac. The church board was most happy to have someone to do the work, as all the ranchers were much too busy on their own places to take the time. (L.M.)



St. John's Parish House



St. John's Hospital

We were assigned the guest room as our bedroom. The house was a log 2-story building. The logs were plastered and the rooms furnished with mission furniture. It was very luxurious after our little house at home. Our room was one of the three upstairs bedrooms. One bedroom was reserved for the young Episcopal rector. Everything was open to us and the modern kitchen was a joy to use. (L.M.)

Dr. & Mrs. Huff



Mrs. Huff, was expecting a new arrival herself in September, and I know I worried more about her overdoing than she did. Both she and Dr. Huff came often on friendly as well as professional visits.

Mrs. Huff, who was formerly a nurse at Johns Hopkins, had been with me and assisting Dr. Huff during the critical days. She cared for me afterward until a practical nurse could take over. (L.M.)

Parish House
 St. John's church
 Jeanne born in
 middle room upstairs
 above 3 windows
 1916



May 1916 ^{Ms. Huff}
BORN 1916
 YATES—In this city 6th, at Wesson maternity hospital, a son (Herbert Lancaster Yates, Jr.) to H. L. and Cora Stiles Yates, grandson of Mrs. A. M. Stiles of Edwards street.
 JUDD—At Upper Montclair, N. J., May 8, a daughter (Margaret Preston) to Mary Preston and Edwin F. Judd.
 MCKINSTRY—At Jackson, Wyo., 6th, a daughter (Jeanne Alice) to Linda Preston and Harold C. McKinstry,—both granddaughters of Mrs. A. R. Preston, formerly of Bay street, this city.



Jeanne Alsie, born June 6, '16,
 in Episcopal Parish house,
 temp. hospital, Jackson, WY, + Dad

One June 6 Jeanne was born. Had not Dr. Huff been a most wonderful doctor and Mrs. Huff equally wonderful nurse, neither Linda nor the baby would have pulled through. (H.M.)





In those days, of course, we had to make our own butter and made it whenever we had sufficient cream. Over the years we must have made hundreds of pounds. It kept cold, packed in ice during the summer and kept fresh for weeks. (L.M.)



We had hens setting and the baby chicks were arriving. Often they had to be brought in the house to dry off and keep warm so we would have newly hatched chicks in the little box, either at the back of the stove or up in the warming oven. Of course the children loved to have them. They really were not in the way and much preferable to a newborn calf having to be brought in and warmed by the range. (L.M.)

Our hens helped us out financially, too. They started laying generously in January when eggs were bringing 60c per dozen. Mrs. Lozier, living on the main highway, could sell all we took down. (L.M.)



Of course the drought had ruined our garden and we greatly missed the fresh vegetables; peas for only one meal, the occasional lonely tough radish or other vegetable and a little lettuce. Unfortunately, the cow found the lettuce too. (L.M.)





The howling started right by the house. Mac said, "That's not a coyote, but a wolf." Laddie was scared and with his tail between his legs ran for the porch. Evidently it was the same animal we thought was a coyote, but recognized the howl as that of a wolf. She had not howled so near before and Mac could hardly believe it could be a wolf as they were almost never seen in the country at that time. There were plenty in the early days. (L.M.)



After election, we were surprised to learn that Mac had been elected Justice of the Peace. His name was not on the ballot but had been written in. No salary was attached to the job and probably nothing to do, but when Mother wrote and inquired if he was supposed to perform marriages we were a little fazed. However, he never did have to nor do anything else either. (L.M.)



A few days later we had company. Mrs. Bill Lozier from ten miles down country came riding in, on horseback. Behind her saddle she carried a gunnysack full of watercress. She knew, from long years in the valley, the craving for green stuff after a hard winter. Of all the treats ever showered upon anyone, for Linda that was supreme. Not only was Mrs. Lozier the first woman Linda had seen in several months, but coming with such a gift made the event one never to be forgotten. (H.M.)



I must tell you about our tapioca pig, as we called him. The commissary at Moran was closing and selling the leftover foodstuff at the lowest prices imaginable. Their tapioca had come in 125 pound sacks and it was cheaper to give it away than to ship it out. Since tapioca is almost pure starch, Mac thought it might make good pig feed and it was cheaper than any grain available, we purchased a couple sacks and how that little pig thrived on tapioca and skim milk. He grew unbelievably fat, which would be almost undesirable on today's market but was just the type wanted in those days. (L.M.)



September was the time to order our winter supply of groceries, and we gave our order to the representative of a Denver outfit who had come in to contact the ranchers. The groceries were to be shipped by prepaid freight to Victor, and then sent by parcel post from there, that being the cheapest transportation and most dependable. We had our last year's list which helped out on the ordering. (L.M.)

500 # white flour @ \$3.50

10 # coffee

100 # cornmeal

3 # cocoa

30 # rice

2 # tea

75 # whole wheat flour

25 # navy beans

50 # brown sugar

10# macaroni

25 # each of prunes, dried pears, figs, and dried apples, peaches and apricots on hand.

1 case tomatoes, 24 cans

½ case each of corn, string beans and salmon

10 # each of lima, red kidney and chili beans.

From the Moran Gov't commissary we purchased 300 # sugar @ 8.50

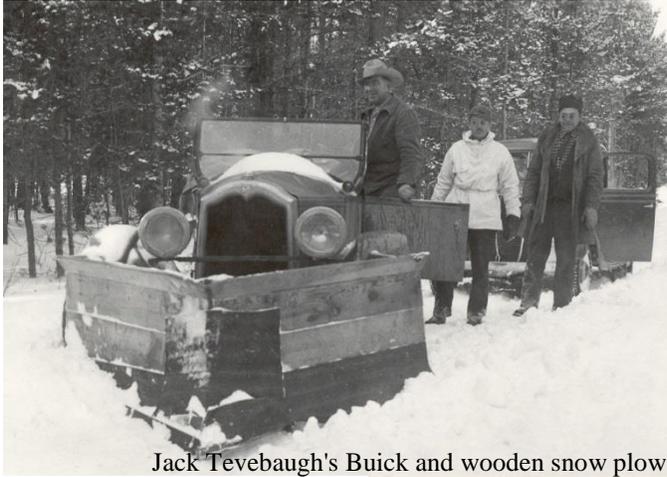
14 # noodles @ .50

1 case petroleum soap

Several hundred pounds potatoes procured rather locally.

These supplies; with beets, turnips, and rutabagas from the garden, onions and cabbage, with elk for meat, made us ready for the many months when freezing weather and bad roads prevented getting supplies. With the cow furnishing milk and cream, eggs from the chickens when they would lay, made well balanced meals quite possible. Fresh fruit and green vegetables were badly missed. (L.M.)

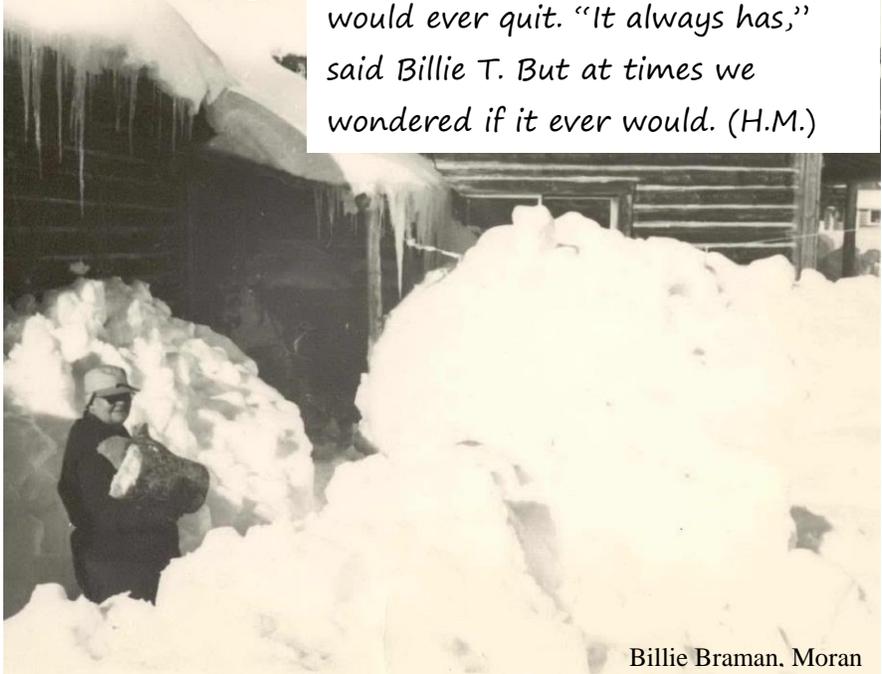
WINTER SETS IN



Jack Tevebaugh's Buick and wooden snow plow

The snow was getting deeper and deeper. In order to keep our road open at all Mac had to travel it almost daily. He could drive, standing on trees to help drag down the center of the road. He had to give up in early January. Trying to keep the road open proved too much for the horses. (L.M.)

The storm that started in November never seemed to quit. The snow grew steadily deeper. The storm moaned overhead, wind driving snow in relentless fury. The clouds were so heavy that often in the middle of the day the darkness seemed to indicate approaching night. Sometimes I wondered if it would ever quit. "It always has," said Billie T. But at times we wondered if it ever would. (H.M.)



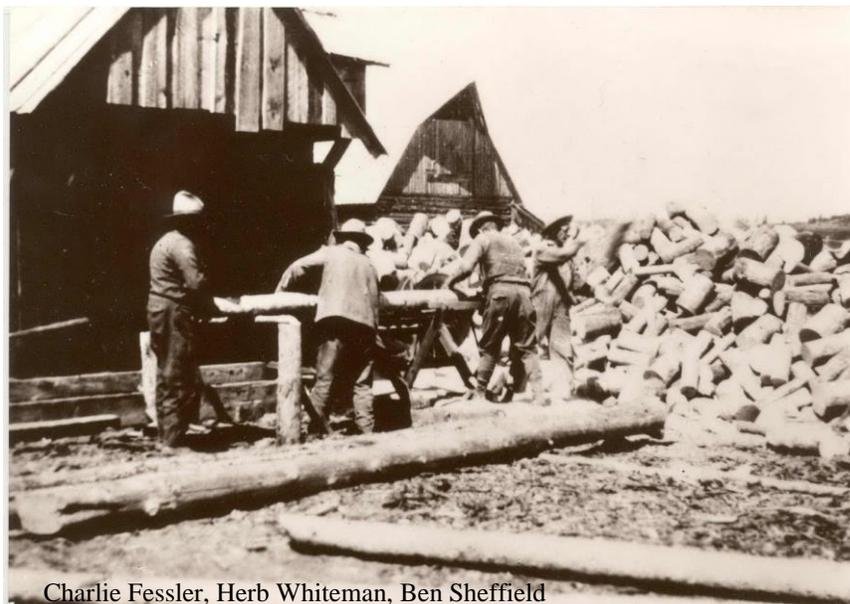
Billie Braman, Moran



Since our extra heavy storm on November 7, we continued to have snow every day for the next 60. (L.M.)



By exchanging help with the neighbors we all managed to somehow prepare for the winter. None of us had enough stove wood ahead. We expected to saw that off at times, but the time consumed in getting fuel ran into many days before the winter passed. The snow came so fast that work was slowed down to less than 50% efficiency. Trails had to be broken into the timber. Snow had to be dug away from trees in order to cut them. Wallowing waist deep in the snow was hard work. An axe or a chain carelessly dropped could not be found (H.M.)



Charlie Fessler, Herb Whiteman, Ben Sheffield

We settled down to the job of winter, cutting firewood and building a house. It seemed impossible to ever get enough wood ahead to last long. The -30 weather demanded lots of fuel. (H.M.)



As our ranch house was so protected we had very little wind, but as soon as we got out in the open we found the wind blowing constantly and the road drifted full. The horses could barely keep on it at all and after going about ¼ miles, still on our own ranch, neither horses nor Mac could see any road whatsoever and soon we were off. Mac got out and waded in the snow trying to feel for the road but could not find it. It was hopeless to try to continue. It was almost impossible for both men and beast to get the sleigh turned around and headed for home. If we had known how bad it was, and that it was beginning to snow, we never would have started out. We were truly thankful to reach the house again. Before morning a terrible blizzard was raging. (H.M.)



Still, the baby had her naps out of doors. She was warm as could be, snuggled down in the fur robe. This was put on top of a big box which was in a protected place near the kitchen door, and she was most unhappy if she had to sleep inside. (L.M.)

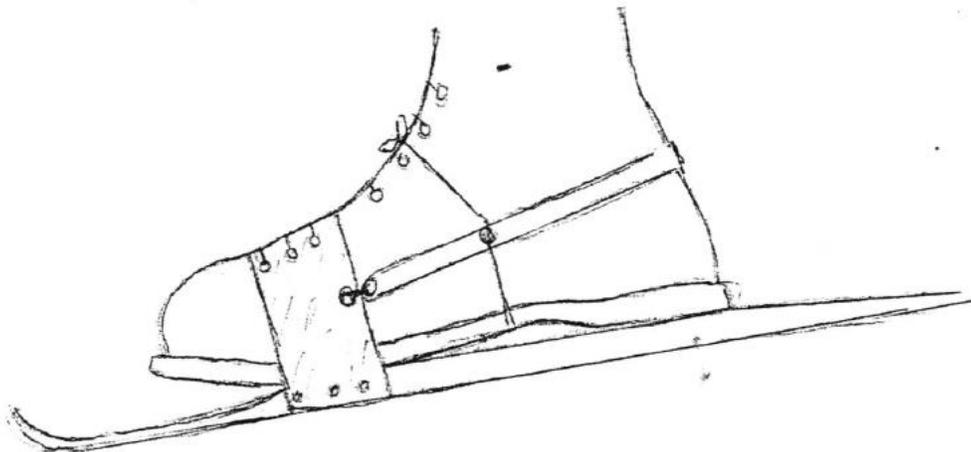
The only way one could get about was on skis or webs. I had my own snowshoes, or webs, and could enjoy short walks on them, but since they were not large enough for Mac, he was helpless. So Mac had to make his own, from what information he had gathered. Mac had brought the lumber, fir boards 8 feet long, 4 inches wide and 1½ inch thick on both ends. (L.M.)

Then one end had to be steamed in order to band the curve for the front. They were put over the wash boiler, and the water had to boil for hours and hours in order to soften the wood sufficiently. From here on Mac can describe the procedure:

“The actual bending was accomplished by inserting the points down between 2 parallel 8” logs, and weighting down the skis just behind the logs to force the right degree of curve as the wood dried. After 3 days they were removed and to our great satisfaction the job was a success.”

“Then came the sanding, polishing and waxing. It took a lot of Armstrong, the only power we had. With a good flat iron, heated on the stove, candles were then melted and the hot wax ironed into the wood. This produced a beautiful, slick finish to which no snow would stick.”

“For the binding I cut 3” wide strips from an old high top leather boot, looped them over the center of the ski, leaving room for the toe of the shoe to slide under, and fastened on the edge of the ski with small screws. Then I cut out the leather up the center and pushed eyelets for laces by which the size could be regulated.”





“A hole in each side of this toe piece permitted the use of thongs for attaching the heel straps, and a hole on each side of this provided the way to hold it in place with a thong around the instep.”

“To facilitate hill climbing, I chiseled out a furrow in the bottom, 1½ inch wide, 24 inches long and 1/8 inch deep. In this I laid a strip of dry elk hide taken from the shin, pointing the hair to the rear and then fastening it firmly in place with small tacks. This did not impede forward travel as the hair was slick as the polished ski, but when rubbed the wrong way by a backward slide, the bristles dug into the snow. Shiny tin tacked on the ski where the foot rested prevented snow from balling up under the foot.”

We used a single ski pole, 6 feet long, usually lodgepole, peeled and straight. In thickly timbered hills or mountain sides we needed lots of breaking power, and the only way we could get it was by holding the pole in both hands, extending it back between the legs and sitting on it hard enough to gouge the end into the snow with whatever force necessary. (L.M.)





Frank Van Leuween driving kids

The going was hard as there were so many deep holes, and so many snags, and several times he had to tramp a path through the snow on the bank to get the horses around.

It took 5 hours to reach the highway, and there he found the road had "gone to pieces" so that the horse broke through the snow with every step. (L.M.)



Jackson Lake

One of Mac's winter activities was cutting ice, and putting it up for summer use. He got a trail open to Pacific Creek and was getting ice from a deep hole there. This had to be sawed by hand, using a crosscut saw. He removed the handle from one and so the saw could get below the ice and into the water. Thus he was able to cut the ice. The big chunks then had to be hauled out, loaded on the sleigh, take to the little shed he had built on the back of the cabin packed in sawdust. It had to be at least a foot thick on the bottom and around the sides. Chipped ice was packed between the blocks unless they fitted snugly and then overall another foot of sawdust. (L.M.)

Walt Germann feeding colt, Buffalo Valley

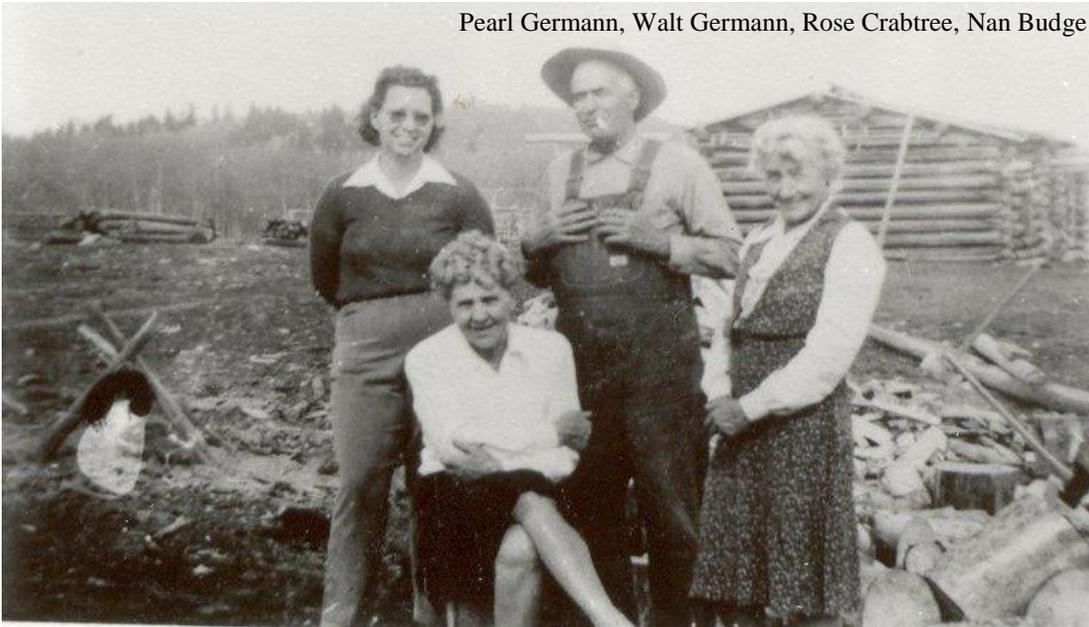


Carefully I doled out the hay to the livestock. To each horse I gave a ration of oats twice a day. But the intense cold and constant storm required lots of fuel to keep their bodies warm, and the hay supply was dwindling faster than spring was coming. I made a deal with Walt Germann to finish wintering the horses—if I could get them there. (H.M.)

I left home early in the morning on December 4, headed for the creek ¼ mile away.

The water was crystal clear and seldom more than knee deep, but between these high walls, deep in shallow, I did not see the abrupt drop-off. The surface of the water was smooth. The horse walked right off into swimming water. Down we went with ice water up to my arm pits. I took off my clothes, wrung them out, emptied the water out of my boots and was again on my way. By the time I reached Buffalo Flat the sun had set. Walt was looking for me... (H.M.)

Pearl Germann, Walt Germann, Rose Crabtree, Nan Budge

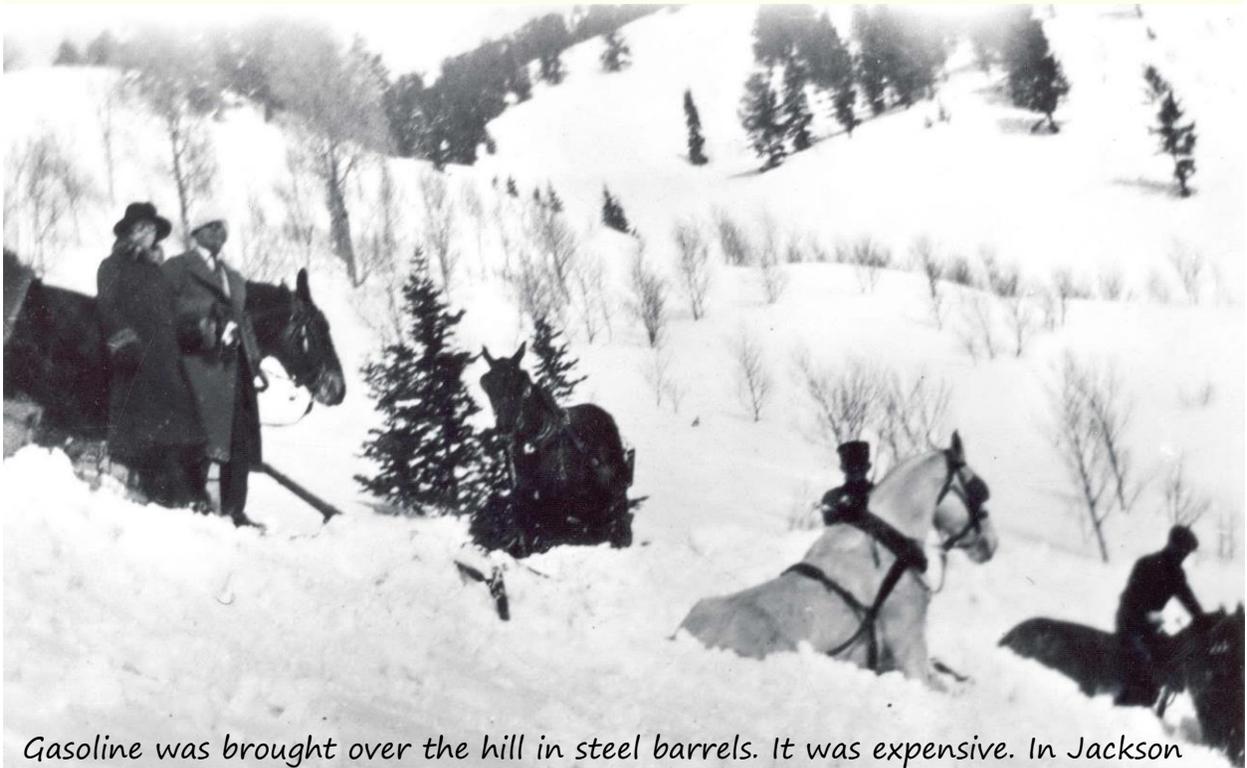




Two Moose rearing

Down the flat, not 100 yards away, came a young moose at a fast trot. His bristles were up. There was blood in his eye, I jumped for the reins, stopping the team almost before they had got started to run. He made a sashay as though to attack from the side...He seemed to have decided the horses were not his enemy, but he had his eye on me. The moose stood there, shaking his great antlers, pawing the ground. I lifted a 7 foot buck and tried to drop it over his head but he was too fast... (H.M.)

By the second week in April, the warm sunshine was at last having its effect and the breaking-up began. Even though the frequent snows continued throughout the month they could only temporarily delay the thawing process. The main highways went to pieces. Horses would fall through the snow and go down so deep they could not travel. (L.M.)



Gasoline was brought over the hill in steel barrels. It was expensive. In Jackson \$.50 per gallon, \$.60 at Moran. Few people had automobiles. There was little use for them as some of the creeks had no bridges and the water usually too deep for autos to cross. In the summer temporary bridges were put across some of the creeks, if needed. (L.M.)

Hauling gasoline over Teton Pass

The one and only funeral we ever attended in Jackson Hole occurred in the middle of winter. The Budge family, long residents of Jackson Hole, was relatively new in the Buffalo Creek community. One of the teenage boys was stricken with pneumonia, a very fatal disease in those days. Dr. Huff had responded to their call though probably had to travel several miles on skis. I shall always have memories even though I never knew the boy who died.

By then travel was absolutely impossible across the bleak miles of the Antelope Flat country. Neither a coffin, nor preacher could come from Jackson. The men made a plain box from lumber available. The ladies found material with which they made a really attractive lining. Flowers were there, some with very pretty ones, but all made with paper.

The morning of the funeral the ranchers who could get there brought their teams and tried to break out a road up the hill to the cemetery. It was impossible with the deep snow, the horses simply could not do it. An opening at the top of the cemetery was dynamited out so the casket could be lowered into it. The casket was lashed to a sled made with skis. Men skied up the hill to the cemetery dragging the sled. The love and concern of the whole community was expressed in never forgotten ways. (L.M.)



Budge funeral procession. Willi Wolff, Joe Markham, Charlie Hedrick, Mr. and Mrs. James Budge.

THE FIRE: IT WAS TIME TO START OVER



On January 15th, Mac had gotten up before 5:30 as usual. He had started the fire in the kitchen range, and gone out to milk. I got up soon after 6:30, stopped in the kitchen to put more wood in the stove, then went on to the living room to dress as it was warmer there. Soon I noticed a crackling sound over my head. That was the one room we were using of the double story part of the house, and wondered if it could be fire. Looking out the window I saw a bright yellow reflection on the snow. Then I knew it was. (L.M.)

Rushing out I ran toward the barn screaming at the top of my lungs. Mac was just finishing milking, heard the screams, and came hurrying around the barn with a pail of milk. Immediately he saw the blazing high roof of the house. Even then we did not realize how fast the fire was traveling. (L.M.)

I grabbed Jeanne, rolled her mattress and blankets from the crib where Linda had dragged it near the door, and set her down out in the snow, swathed in all the bedding we could get around her. We got out the dining table and some chairs. By that time the men from Moran were there helping. Knowing how important it was to save our kitchen range most of the men started dragging and shoving it to the kitchen door, hot though it was. Water slopped from the reservoir and instantly froze to a glare of ice on the floor. In the doorway it jammed. Behind them came a big fellow carrying a mattress, blankets and the fur robe. Just then the fire broke through the ceiling and he had to drop his load and jump over the stove to save himself. From somewhere Herb had grabbed an ax and was chopping out the door casing; that done, the stove was pulled to safety. (H.M.)



Fire practice in Wilson, Ward Hotel

By that time the whole house was in flames and there was nothing to do but watch it burn. The logs fell together in embers like the fuel in a seething fireplace. The heat was terrific. In an hour there was nothing left but a pile of hot ashes. (L.M.)

In a hazy sort of way we reckoned out loss, but looking around we could not help but be thankful that we had got out, and no one in the crowd had been hurt or seriously burned. (L.M.)

It was time to start over.

ISOLATION & COMMUNITY



Moran Post Office

Mr. Sheffield, dude rancher and postmaster at Moran, said this was the safest place in the world for a woman, but it was often lonesome riding alone. Mac could seldom go with me because there was so much to do at home. Mr. Sheffield also said I probably followed trails where no white woman had ever been before. (L.M.)

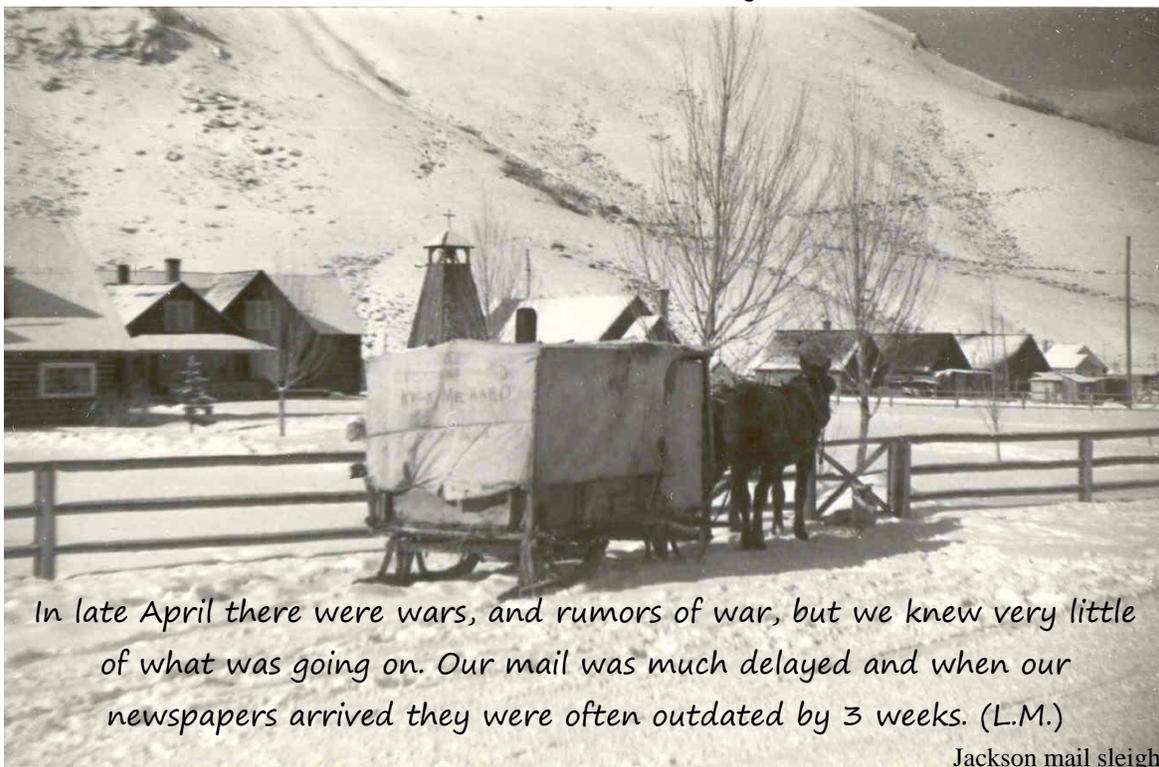


Town of Moran



Jackson Post Office

*Our mail was the only contact with the outside world, but the snows and storms caused much delay. The train did not get into Victor for 16 days, and the road over the pass was impassable. Mail was brought from Jackson only, and that at most irregular times. Once, the weekly *Jackson Courier* was printed on brown wrapping paper, that being the only kind available in town. Our outside mail was two or three weeks in arriving. (L.M.)*



In late April there were wars, and rumors of war, but we knew very little of what was going on. Our mail was much delayed and when our newspapers arrived they were often outdated by 3 weeks. (L.M.)

Jackson mail sleigh

Victor, Idaho



With the horses the 70-mile trip to Victor would take at least 2 days each way. With loading and business to attend to, a minimum of 5 days would be required for the trip. On reaching Jackson, he (Mac) learned the pass was almost impassible and it would be impossible to take over a wagon. Leaving the wagon in Jackson he decided to ride over on Ginger and bring back a pack load on Jet. He was not at all sure Jet would cooperate, for she still was not too well broken, but she did alright. With a mattress, blankets, sicker, my .22 rifle and our tent wrapped over the top she started out with the ungainly load. Wagons and buggies were stuck in the mud all along the way. (L.M.)



Freight at top of Teton Pass



Elk School. Top row: Stippy Wolff, Mary Wolff, Lucy Jump, Eunice Adams, Bessie Wolff, Mildred Stilson, Ann Feuz. Bottom row: Keith Stilson, Beryl Adams Wolff, Louise Jump, Martha Feuz, Estelle Stilson, Gertrude Feuz.

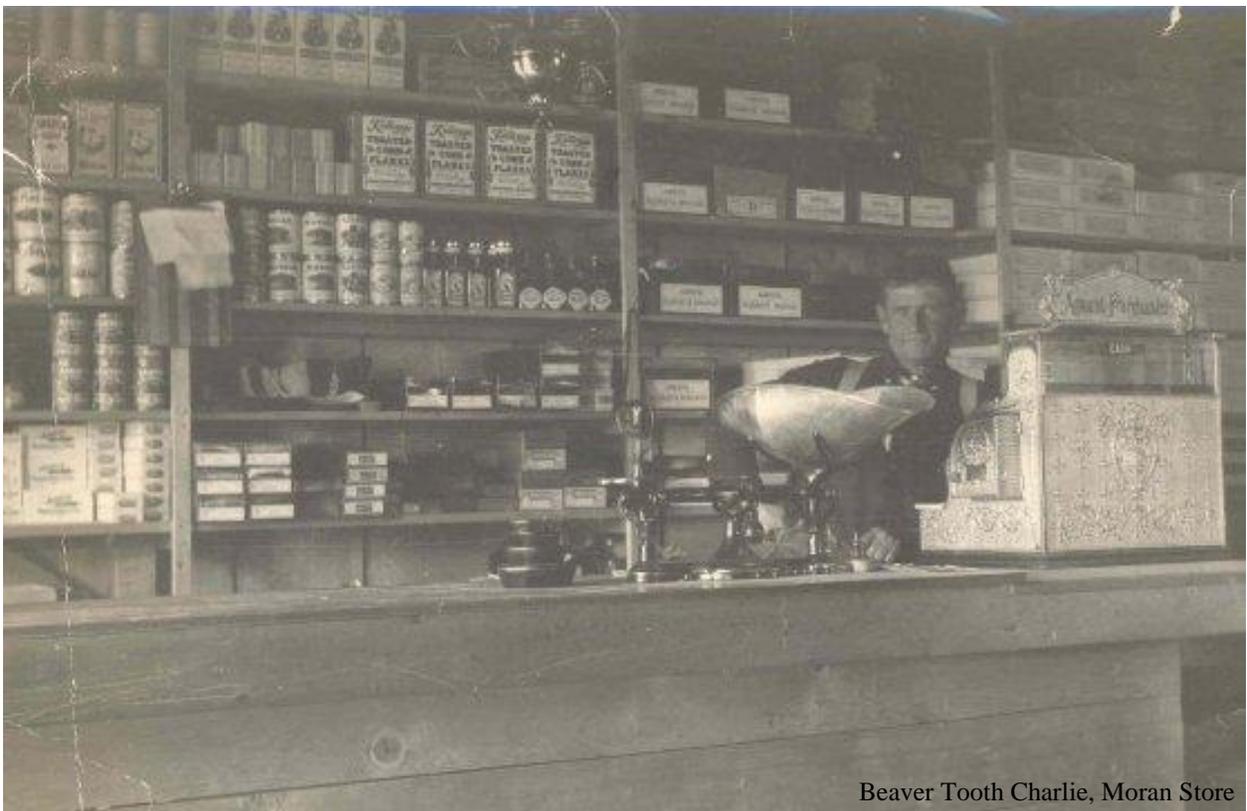
In August, we attended our first schoolhouse dance. It was quite typical of the one described by Owen Wister in The Virginian. Most of the time, Bob Coolidge, the man who brought our freight from Wilson, played the fiddle. Later in the evening Ben Taylor played the harmonica for dances, and he could play and dance at the same time. (L.M.)



Horse-drawn school bus, Elk School

There were several square dances at which Ben or Beaver Tooth Charlie would call the numbers. Both were efficient. There were round dances, or the waltz, or the two-step, and I was surprised to find how well the ranches and cowboys could dance. (L.M.)

Everyone was there. Babies were stacked on the table and under the table. Beaver Tooth Charlie was there in all his glory, some might have a name for it, and called some of the dances. It was midnight before we stopped to eat. The coffee in the big camp pot on the box was boiling. The babies asleep on the table were moved to the floor and in their place came covered dishes brought from the wagons. There was fried chicken, elk steak, potato salad, sandwiches, cake, pie, 2 big freezers full of homemade ice cream and no end of coffee...We reached home just in time to get the morning chores done on time, eat breakfast and get into the timber for a full day's work. (H.M.)



Beaver Tooth Charlie, Moran Store

Back: Amy Dallis, Christobel Kent, Mrs. T. Lloyd, Lucy Miner, Georgia Crail, Etta Leek, Grandma Deloney.
Front: Grace Lloyd, Phoebe Beagle, Frances Deloney, Mrs. Charles Beagle, Mrs. Ely, Mrs. Hoaglund



We timed a trip to Jackson so I could attend the meeting of the Pure Food Club there. A University of Wyoming nutritionist had told me of the club, and when I made inquiries I was warmly welcomed. It seemed so good to be back with people with whom I had so many interests in common. (L.M.)



Front: Eva Boyle, Ella McCain Mercill, Mrs. A.C. McCain, Clara Murie, Gretchen Huff.
Middle: Margaret Steed, Mrs. Harry Weston, Mrs. Billy Owens.
Back: Mable Eynon, Jennie Kelly, Mrs. Charles Huff, Mardy Murie, Mrs. Roy Van Vleck, Grace Miller

CHANGING LOCATIONS



Wonderful as our location was, we began to realize the serious disadvantages. During the preceding winter there had been very little snow, yet there were times when Pacific Creek could not be crossed. Under normal winter conditions the spring runoff could last 2 or 3 weeks, and during which time we would have no possible means of crossing, so we would be completely isolated. So when rangers told us of land some 3 miles down the creek, and on the opposite side, which might be available, we decided to consider a possible change. After looking over the land it seemed advisable to apply for it. (L.M.)

Ever since early September, having been unable to get a telephone, we had been considering the advisability of getting out on the main highway for winter. After being completely snowed in for months of the preceding winter, with no way of getting help no matter how much it might be needed, we felt it was unwise to stay there through another winter. There was a possibility we might be able to live at the Allen ranch, about a mile east of Moran and on the highway. (L.M.)



Allen Ranch

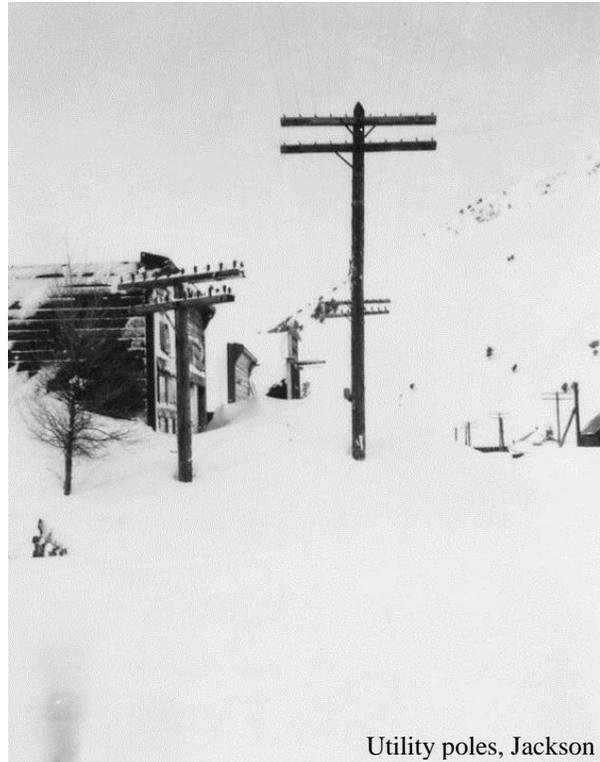
Allen said we could move in for winter, asking only that Mac try to repair the barn enough to keep it from falling down. I was almost superstitious about the place, as many years before a son of Mr. Allen's had drowned in the Snake River while attempting to ride a horse across. And we understood another son had been killed by being thrown from a horse. But we were glad to be so near Moran and to have a telephone available as there was one in the house. (L.M.)



Allen Ranch, Elk Horn Hotel

The house had two stories and 10 rooms, sitting back about 200ft from the highway. The main part had been added onto the original homestead cabin, a one-story 3-room structure. In this was the kitchen, a small bedroom and a storeroom. We were living in this part, and one adjoining room. But we had an impossible task keeping even that much warm. (L.M.)

*With no phone, or near neighbors,
bad roads and the doctor 40
miles distant, I felt helpless. The
nearest phone was at Moran 7
miles away, but I thought if we
could even phone the doctor he
might tell us something more we
could do. (L.M.)*



Utility poles, Jackson

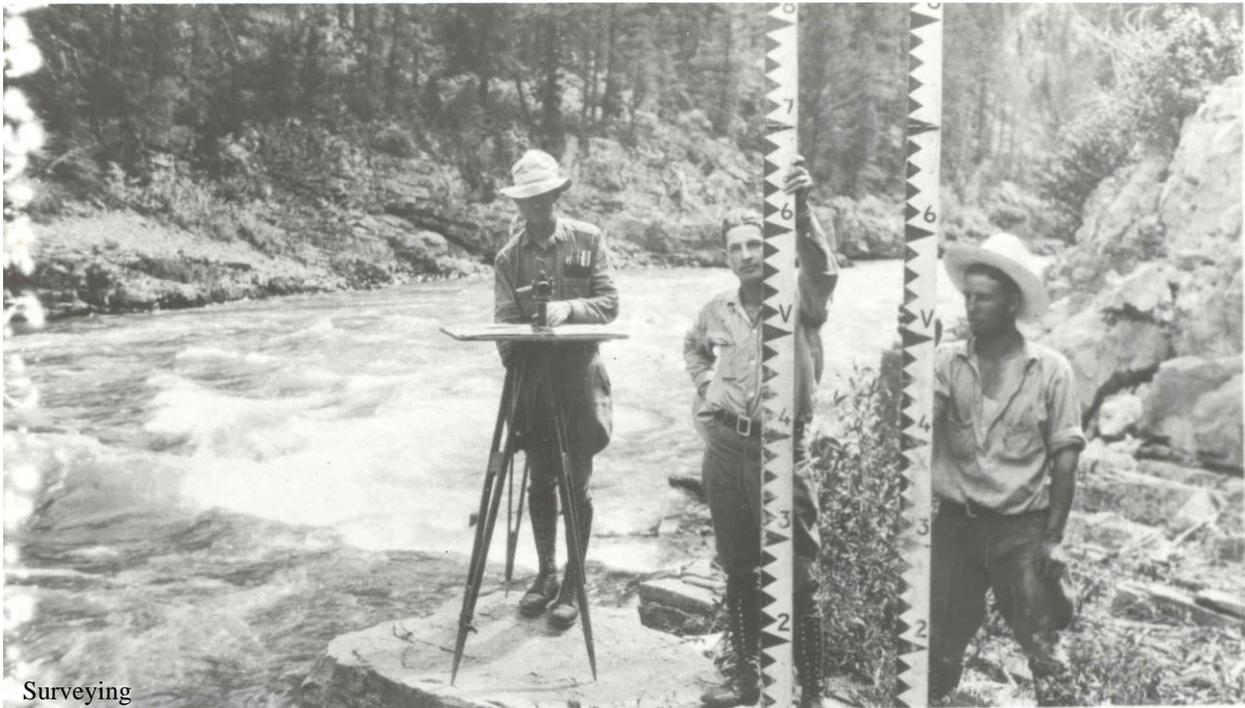
There was another mid-night phone call and Mac got up to listen and see who was in trouble. As I may have said, it was probably fortunate that people along the line did listen because often one could not ring through to Jackson. Then the people along the way could help by ringing from their phone so the call would ultimately reach through. (L.M.)



Ben Sheffield and Ben Gardner in Moran

SUPPLEMENTING OUR INCOME

Mac was also taking a refresher correspondence course in land surveying, having had only the minimum required in the Agricultural course in college. In addition to that, he also took irrigation surveying, as that was something almost unheard of when he was in school in N.D. The county surveyor was the only licensed in the valley, and he lived in Jackson. He was so busy down there that he had no time for work in other parts of the country. Many ranchers, as well as ourselves, needed lines and ditches surveyed. Mac knew he would have all he could do in any spare time doing that type of work if he had a license. Since the surveyor received \$5 per day and expenses that would be a big help financially. (L.M.)



Surveying



Buffalo School. Front Row: Lana Gregory, Lora Germann. Pearl Germann, Helen Baily, Ruth Baily. Behind Ruth: Alfred Germann. Next Row: Garl Germann. Behind Garl: Myrl Gregory, Cecilia Smybel, Elizabeth Smybel, Ted Lozier, Glenn Smith. Back Row: Nobe Gregory OR Fred Smybel, Faye Gregory, Bill Gardner.

The people at Buffalo Creek were delighted when Mac took the school. I know he was good for the children. Some of his methods may not have been very authentic but all seemed satisfied. I know onion lunch day made him unhappy. The children of one family brought big onions to school to go with their bread and butter sandwiches. They ate the onions like apples and by the time lunch was over there was no mistaking what lunch had been that day. (L.M.)

On Christmas Eve a program, tree and social evening was planned at Buffalo School and we planned to attend. We were just ready to start for the affair when Will arrived, and as this caused some delay in starting, the program was about over when we reached the school. The gifts were then distributed and there was a little bag of candy for each youngster. A social time followed and though over 70 were present in that one little room, no one felt overcrowded and all had a good time. (L.M.)



Early in 1922 we often talked of what we could do with our ranch to produce more income. We hesitated about getting too deeply into cattle raising because we felt uncertain about our range if Yellowstone Park was expanded. We knew we could be included if it were. (L.M.)

Then I suggested the possibility of opening a tea room. I think I had a long deep down desire to have one, though I never had any training or knew anything about them. We knew the tourist traffic now would justify such a venture but felt more and more tourists would be coming every year. It would be nice to have contact with people from the "outside" world, for I knew I was beginning to miss them. (L.M.)

Also a tea room would also be an outlet for our surplus milk, cream and butter. My idea was to serve only light lunches, or sandwiches, ice cream, desserts, cake, cookies and coffee, tea, milk and lemonade.

Wild Goose
Tea room -
named for pet
geese.

At the end of the tea room season we had a grand chicken dinner, inviting all the Jackson friends who had been so nice to me when I was in town. (L.M.)



LAST CHALLENGES



St. John's Hospital

That was the winter of the terrible Spanish influenza epidemic. Some of the huskiest Jackson Hole boys who had enlisted for service had already died in camp. Jackson was in quarantine and no meetings were allowed. Many people were sick. And Mac, having had a cold for several days was especially susceptible. (L.M.)



Haying at Elk Ranch

After the long dry summer the weather did not cooperate for haying. Then, too, Jack was ill for several days, a flare-up from Spanish typhoid, and Mac sprained an ankle; after that was taped by a government doctor at Moran that caused no delay. (L.M.)



Dr. Charles Huff

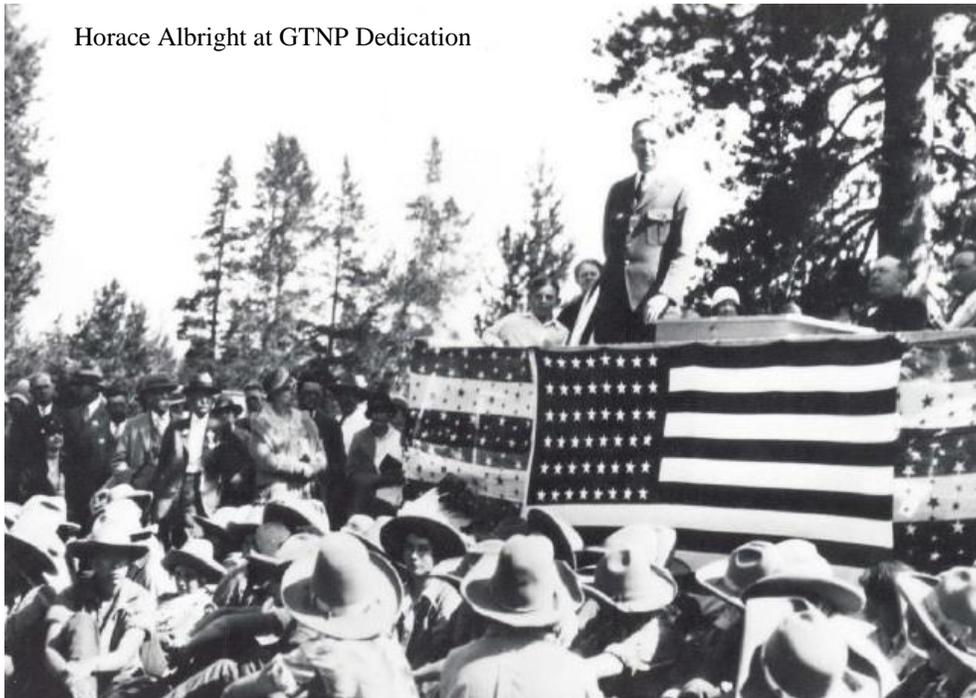
Were so thankful to have the phone so we could keep in touch with Dr. Huff. Although he had the flu himself he insisted on getting up and helping other people, and when unable to get out of bed would answer phone calls. (L.M.)

In February, Dr. Huff was called to the Nelson ranch about 27 miles from Jackson. The Nelsons were Emily's parents, and she reported that Dr. Huff had to ski the last 7 miles to reach the house. That was nothing unusual for him to do and he never thought about himself if called. An interesting sidelight is that Dr. Huff had left a wonderfully promising career at Johns Hopkins University and come to this little frontier town because of a lung or throat condition, which had been discovered. Not only was he an outstanding physician but also an outstanding leader in all community affairs and improvements.

Jackson was a most fortunate town because of him. (L.M.)

January came and it was at this time that the whole Jackson Hole community had begun to be upset about the proposed Yellowstone Park extension. We did not know how the ranchers would be affected, whether or not we would lose our range rights, or even our ranches. We did know that our part of Jackson Hole was definitely not a winter range for elk, with now several feet deep on the level for months. However, several Washington people were advocating the extension for use as a winter feed ground. (L.M.)

Horace Albright at GTNP Dedication



How glad we were to have our cabin finished when one evening, a few days later, a big car drove up to the door. The occupants proved to be Mr. Horace Albright, Mr. Howard Hays, Mr. Goodwin, another young man who was the official map taker, and Joe Markham. The party had come to Moran on an inspection trip concerning the proposed Yellowstone Park extension. They came to see Mac because of his correspondence with Mr. Mather, then Head of the National Park Service. They were going on to Jackson but wanted to give us more information about extension plans. We found them to be very friendly, most complimentary about our house, and we enjoyed meeting people from Washington. We were glad to learn that grazing rights would not be withdrawn by the proposed extension and they convinced us that it might be to our advantage. So our opposition was eliminated and we now favored the bill. (L.M.)



I can look back on as being a happy summer for all concerned and our last one in Jackson Hole. Mac says we did not sell our ranch until a year or so after returning to Denver. The deal was handled by Robert Miller of Jackson, former Forest Supervisor. Of course the Rockefeller interests bought it. We understand they were buying all the deeded land in the reserve, returning it to the government, getting the land back in its primitive state as quickly as possible. They did their work well. Within only a few years, tourists driving over the old road of lower Yellowstone would never dream that that land was formerly dotted with many little flourishing homesteads. (L.M.)

1977: Looking back from my very advanced age of 91, I am still amazed that a city-bred, New England girl and Red River Valley man from North Dakota plains could adjust so quickly to mountain living and the totally new demands of homesteading. But they could and we did.

Linda & Harold McKinstry

On October 12, 1923, we had a fine new baby girl. We named her Stella.



*Thank you Stella for sharing your Memories!
Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum
September 11, 2014*