

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH -

MEET BELFRY, MONTANA

This is the first in a series by the English IV class of 1953-54.

Edited by Patty Bunch, John Marchello, Lelon Spurgin, Leona Sticka and Shirley Denney.

"Go West, young man go West! This saying may have led many to travel to the land where the wind blows free and the buffalo roam. These rugged pioneers trailed off into many directions, some into the territory that was later to become the state of Montana.

In the year 1884, Red Lodge and vicinity was opened to settlement. Many people realized that the land in the Clarks Fork Valley was good for farming so many homesteaded here. Before 1892, the townsite of Belfry was part of the stomping grounds of the Crow Indian Tribe.

Belfry---land situate, lying and being in the county of Carbon and State of Montana and known and described as The Northeast quarter of the Northeast quarter of Section Fifteen in Township Eight South, of Range Twenty-Two East of M.P.M. in Carbon County, Montana, according to the Government Survey thereof, and containing forty acres of land, more or less, as the case may be, together with all the singular the tenements, hereditaments and appertinances thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

John M. Woodcock received his patent for this land on January 17, 1902. Signed by the President--Theodore Roosevelt; F. M. McKean--Secretary; and C. H. Brush--Recorder of the General Land Office.

J.M. Woodcock's warranty deed to Frank A. Hall, President of the Belfry Townsite Corporation. Consideration--\$1,600.00 for 40 acres of land.

Frank A. Hall started the railroad. He went East and succeeded in getting men interested in a new line. The tracks were laid in 1905. On

July 4, 1906, the first train came puffing up the tracks. It was an excursion train from Billings. Charlie Burns was the first fireman and George Garver, first engineer.

Dr. Belfry, of Mancheste, Pennsylvania, was a stockholder in the railroad. No information has been found as to why the town was named after him.

At the death of Mr. Hall, interest ceased and the line surveyed through the Clarks Fork Valley to Cooke City was canceled. A box canyon at the mouth of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River stopped the survey originally intended to go through to serve the mines of Cooke City.

When the railroad came in, Belfry was a field of waving grain. Many people cleaned shocks of grain from Woodcock's fields, in the fall of 1906 to set up buildings and homes. Charlie Burns built the first house where Mr. and Mrs. Harry Royce now reside. The railroad Company built three houses here. Today they are owned by Mrs. Dave Simpson, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Jones, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gruel.

Frank Stern dug the first well on the property that is now owned by Mrs. Carter. It supplied the southside of town with water and another pump on main-street kept the north-side of the town with water. (There is a low-spot in front of the Belfry Bar today where this pump once stood.

Charlie Burt had a wooden tank on a wagon which he hauled water in from the river. On washdays the housewives would put a card in their window and he would fill their water barrels.

The townsite of Belfry was surveyed July 17, 1905

and the sidewalks were completed July 1, 1906, probably for the 4th of July celebration when the first train would come in. Mr. Hall, owner of a grocery store, laid out the townsite. At that time Belfry had the reputation of having the most feet of sidewalk per person than any town in Montana.

Coal was discovered in Bearcreek and Washoe so the railroad was built West to provide a means of shipping the coal out. Yellowstone Park Railroad Company brought the first load of coal through on December 5, 1907. It took one week to get a load of coal out because of a car shortage.

In 1906, John O. Highm organized the Bank of Belfry in conjunction with the Meyer and Chapman Bank of Red Lodge. This establishment was located in a brown-stone building constructed in the same year.

Mrs. Bolivar built the Belfry Hotel on the Corner facing the Bank.

Frank Stern built a hall on the north side of main street for a tavern. The upstairs was used for a dance hall and the downstairs a saloon. Today this is the Legion Hall.

Mr. George Wentz lives where Mr. Smith had a butcher shop. This place was a later Sinnock's Saddlery. When the railroad started, Mrs. Lester built the Yellow Hotel so the workmen would have a place to stay. This was where Paul Travis now has the Husky Service Station. In later years this hotel was destroyed by fire; Mrs. Charlie Duen was cleaning clothes in a back room with gasoline and the friction caused the fire.

(To be continued)

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In the same year, Mr. Jack Holland built the hardware store between the railroad and across the street from the Yellow Hotel, named the Holland Lumber and Hardware Company.

Mr. McCormick purchased two lots on Main Street in 1906 for the consideration of \$400. A carpenter, he built a rooming house directly east of Hall's Garage. In the year 1912, Mr. and Mrs. McCormick sold their property to Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Meyer for \$1,600, the same amount Frank A. Hall paid for the forty acres of land for the townsite just seven years before. Mr. and Mrs. John Freebury purchased this property but sold to Mrs. Annie E. Dayton in 1920. This rooming house was destroyed by fire when Hall's Garage burned in.

During the winter of 1906, dances were held in the top of Davis's Blacksmith Shop. At times when the wind would blow, the smoke would come back down the chimney and fill the room so everyone would have to go home.

Frank and Henry Goldsmith later owned the Blacksmith Shop. Henry married Mrs. Welch's mother and Jack Welch took it over. It was closed in September of 1953 at the death of Mr. Welch.

Dick Hall built Sinnock's house. The top of it was Doctor Chillcot's office and the basement was the Belfry News Office. The name of the only paper ever printed here was The Belfry News. The following items were taken from Volume 1, Number 2, issue dated December 5, 1907. Published every Thursday by The Clark Fork Publishing Company. Jerre C. Murphy, President and Editor.

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The Belfry Whist Club hold a weekly meeting. It was held to bring two new members into the club. They were Mrs. W. L. Hiller and Mrs. Wm. Nelson.

Advertisements: Montana's Purest and Best Beer. Brewed by the Carbon Brewing Company; Solesia, Montana. Try our Bavarian Process Brau Bottled Beer.

For Sale: Stale Beer and Bum Cigars at the Silver Dollar. Ike Brown Proprietor--Fomburg, Montana.

Miner Moore got up a petition for our first school in Belfry. School was being held at Silvertip and Golden but with enough signers the petition went through in spite of much disapproval from those districts. In 1907, "the little red school house", just two rooms, was the center of learning. Mrs. Charlie Burns and Miss Mannie Clark, now Mrs. Ray Walker, were the teachers.

Charlie Burt, owner of the Belfry Livery and Transfer Company, where Roy Hall now keeps the school buses, was the first man in this boom town to own a car. He drove it to Clark, Wyoming to deliver the mail. This was okay in good weather but when the road was muddy, he used a horse and buggy.

Another news item: On December 21, 1907, the Clark Fork Canyon Water Users held a meeting at Kose Hall (over Toogood's Store) at 10:30 A. M. The president was E. S. Hall and vice president, J. J. Holland.

In the year 1910, the Presbyterian Church was built.

Mr. and Mrs. Dick Hall of Riverside moved to Belfry and built a store and post-office. Mrs.

Dick Hall was the first post-mistress, Roy Hall's mother.

From Hall's store, the post-office was moved into the Hardware Store, then later into the back where it had a separate door. Mrs. Jack Holland was post-mistress with Lovy Suk Teasdale as assistant. Later Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had it for 14 years in the same location. From the Hardware it was moved into the building adjoining Toogood's Store and Mr. Oscar Henry was in charge. Later Mrs. Vivian Fenlon became post-mistress and the post-office was moved because of the high rent. It is located in a building by itself located in the center of town on the corner south of the old Hall Garage. At one time this was a filling station run by Leo Althoff.

Telephones were early. Mr. John Tolman put in the line to his ranch in 1903. The first office was in the back of the Bank. Mrs. Bill Lasater was the operator. From there it was moved into Coe's building, the Clarks Fork Store. Also Jim Rich had a real estate office here. Mrs. Ethel Wink was operator. When this building was destroyed by fire, the equipment was moved into the building where Grant Allen now lives. In later years it was moved back to the bank building. The bank was closed in 1933.

In Belfry's best days, there was a population of about 500 people.

Mr. Melvin Violet, "Little Butch," had his barber shop where the drugstore is now but later moved it to its present location.

There was a Hardware Store built where Mrs. Milligan's house is now standing. It was moved where the library is now located. It was later destroyed by fire.