

JUDITH BASIN *Heritage Edition*

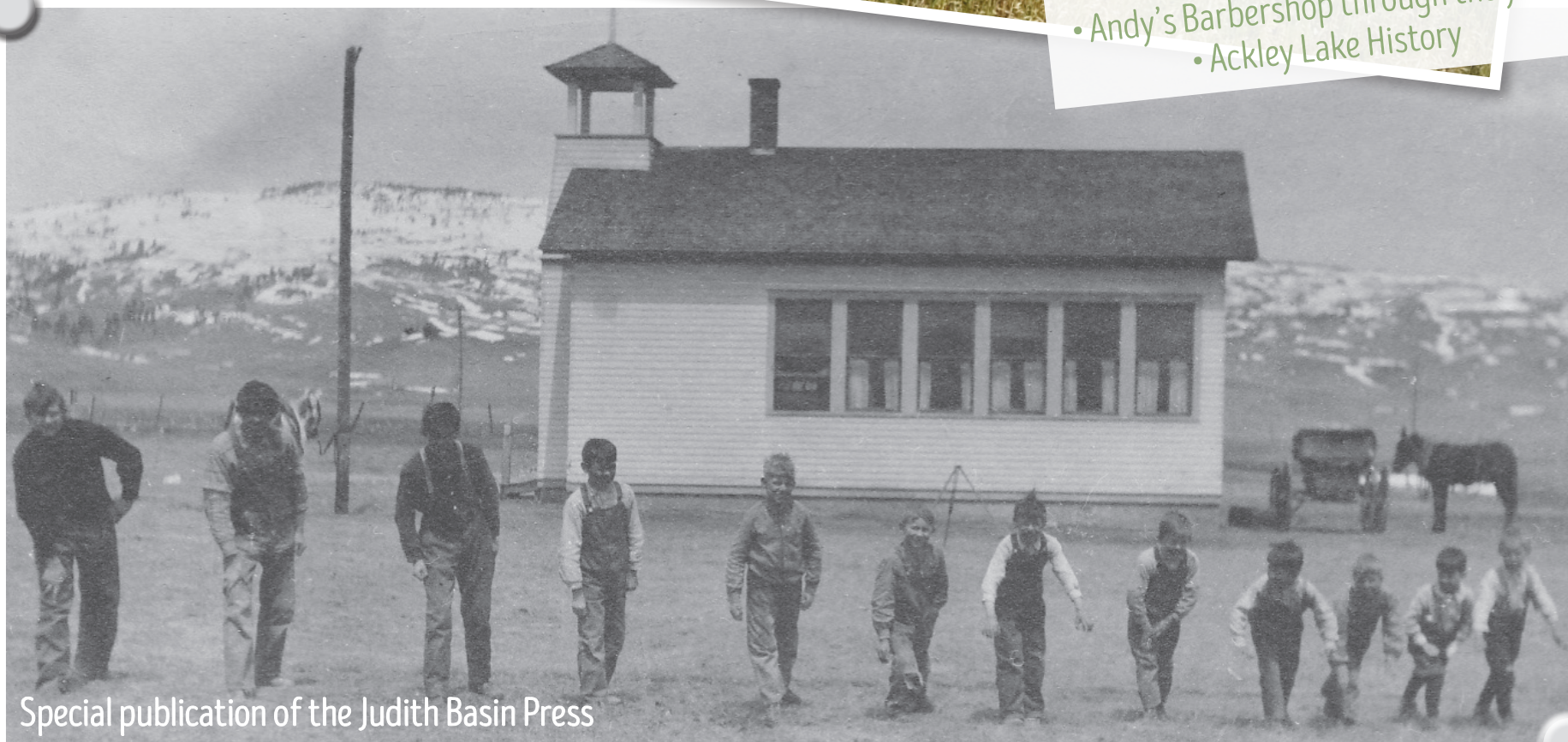


Celebrating
the History of
the Judith Basin



Featuring

- Schoolhouses of yesteryear
- Andy's Barbershop through the years
- Ackley Lake History



Special publication of the Judith Basin Press



This panoramic of Stanford hangs in Andy's Barber Shop in Stanford. He estimates that it was taken in the 1920s, noting that on one block, a horse tied to a hitching post is opposite a Model T, showing the beginnings of a changing time.

Celebrating the history of the Judith Basin

Welcome to the first-ever Judith Basin Heritage Edition.

As Judith Basin County prepares to celebrate its centennial in 2020, we decided this was also a great time to celebrate the rich history of this region.

And what a history it is ... from Charlie Russell to the White Wolf and from horse drawn carriages to railroads, the history of the Judith Basin is packed full of colorful characters and memorable events.

In this first Heritage Edition, you will find stories about the early days of Ackley Lake, the Judith Basin County Free Library and Andy's Barbershop. The main feature is a photographic essay of some of the many school houses that once played such a prominent role in the early years of the county. Many of those school buildings are still standing and extensive work is being done to chronicle them and keep the past alive.

There are also some great photographs and some wonderful old newspaper advertisements, including the one on the facing page.

Our hope is to make the Heritage Edition an annual publication - one that continues to grow and evolve, just as the county has done for the past 100 years. We hope you enjoy.

*-Jacques Rutten
Judith Basin Press Publisher*

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The town of Merino was located along the Great Northern Railroad between Stanford and Geyser. The area around

Merino was either owned or controlled by the Bower Brothers' sheep ranch until 1905, and was named for the fine-wooled Spanish Merino sheep. Area ranchers trailed their sheep to Merino to be loaded on the train. This picture, taken in front of the Merino school in 1943, shows teacher Mary Bailey with students Darlene Mikeson, Helen Mikeson, Lyle Mikeson, Tom Evans and Jerry Evans. The Mikeson children rode the train the few miles from their home at Dover to Merino every day. The school and Post Office at Merino were both discontinued by 1955. Nothing remains of the town today.

Photo courtesy
Montana Memory Project



HEART of the JUDITH BASIN STANFORD IS THE PLACE TO LIVE!

A YEAR'S PROGRESS In Stanford, A Progressive Community



New Stanford Meat Market

The demise and decline of small towns has long been a favorite subject in the era of bigger urban areas, larger farm corporations, and faster transportation. The prophecy of impending doom hangs low over many rural dependent small towns.

Not so in Stanford, located 68 miles east of Great Falls. Continuing faith by local businessmen in the support of the area's residents, has brought remodeling, improvements and building anew in Stanford during the past year.

Aero Sampsom airport commission chairman looks on as Tom Judge flicks the switch on new airstrip lighting.



Texaco Station, Highway 87, to open this spring



Mayer Bill Tidwell, Paul Harvey and Boy Skelton, local rancher.

Paul Harvey was invited to Stanford in July to talk and visit. His arrival the night of July 11 was spent in the mountains out of Stanford in C. M. Russell country, at a steak fry. Mr. Harvey, an avid fan of C. M. Russell, also had the chance to talk with Stanford Boy Skelton, a Stanford rancher who personally knew Charlie Russell. Skelton and his son also helped collaborate with film personnel filming the story of C. M. Russell, shown nationally on television January 7, 1970.



New Laundromat

natural summer and winter

Vacation WONDERLAND

C. M. RUSSELL STAMPEDE

The C. M. Russell Stampede was conceived as a Centennial year project and has been a successful JayCee, R.C.A. sponsored performance since it was first held in 1964.

It is one of the few active mementos to C. M. Russell in Judith Basin, where he lived and was inspired to record the beauty of Montana in his art.

The Stampede is held the last of July and is one of the finest one-day rodeos held in Montana.



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FOR THE EXPLORER: Just imagine covering eleven miles from 2,000 feet in the stark Missouri breakers, or "badlands" as they are known, to the high mountain peaks and the elevation where the world lies at your feet.

FOR THE HIKER: There are mountains to climb, valleys to discover. Here is the forested Rabbit Square Basin, just to the north, where grizzlies were once hunted.

HORSEBACK AND BIKE RIDING:

There are many scenic trails and their location and routes can be obtained in the Little Belt Mountains brochure, prepared by the Montana Fish & Game and the Forest Service. Also, horses are available at dude ranches for trail rides.



There were exciting things happening in Stanford in June of 1970 when this advertisement appeared in the Progress Edition of the Great Falls Tribune. It ran as a full-page at the time, but only half is shown here, along with the tax information (at right) that appeared at the bottom of the ad. With a new laundromat, Texaco station, meat market, Sundown Inn supper club, Catholic church, ambulance, and lighted airport, community boosters had good reason to claim "Stanford is the place to live!"

New St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church Fertilizer Blenders, L.P. Gas and Fertilizer Company New Green Giant Feedlot, expanding to 1,000 head.

LOW TAXES

Judith Basin County Ranks 10th From Lowest

The county is the tenth lowest in the state on tax rate. The following is an example of levies from the various counties of Montana. The taxes are computed on a house of \$15,000 value with a taxable value of \$1,000.

County	Levies	Tax
Judith Basin	165.13	297.24
Cascade	239.81	431.65
Silver Bow	244.54	440.18
Lewis & Clark	256.01	460.82

A Glance Back



The original town of Geyser was established in 1887. It was named for the nearby bubbling mud springs. Shown here is the U.S. Cavalry as it rides through the original town of Geyser on its way from Fort Logan to Fort Benton. The area around old Geyser was dominated by sheep ranches. The town was moved to its present site when the Great Northern built the line from Great Falls to Billings and a station was established there.



The town of Hobson was named for S.S. Hobson who was an early day rancher and cowboy. The post office of Philbrook was moved to Hobson when the Great Northern Railroad came through in 1907-08. At right, a group of men standing by the Great Northern Railroad train at Hobson.



This picture is rodeo day, 1920, and shows the cars lined up along the main street of Windham. A young boy is walking across the street. Windham was in the middle of ranch country in the early 20th century. Cattle and sheep were both trailed to Windham to be loaded on the train for sale. This practice was carried on as late as 1971.



The town of Geyser, Montana, after 1908. Some of the buildings are Murray & Murray, Dealers in General Merchandise, the Dental Parlor, and T. J. Vehawn Tobacco. An unnamed gentleman is riding a carriage pulled by four horses through the center of town. Note the windmill behind the Murray store.

Photos courtesy of Montana Memory Project



The Importance of the Railway to Stanford

By GEOFF CASEY | Judith Basin Museum Curator

Prior to the coming of the railway, there was some settlement of the Judith Basin. Old Stanford, which was also known as Old Town, was situated below Antelope Butte. As we have seen, the Skeltons were here, as were also the Perry Westfall family. Yet, there were still thousands of acres of land that would not be put into production until the railway brought the homesteaders, of which there would be many.

The Great Northern Railroad Company started building a rail line from Great Falls to Billings in 1906. This north-south line, which would be called the Billings Northern Line, would connect with trains coming from Chicago and going through Billings to the West Coast.

The residents of Old Town knew the importance of the railway, and though some grudged making the move, buildings were moved the two or two-and-one-half miles to the main street of Stanford. One of those was a large old building with the faded words "Bijou Theatre" written over the door. During the move it got bogged down in the middle of the prairie for one or two weeks and loomed high on the landscape looking rather like "a huge ship on the wide sea." Eventually it took its place on the main street alongside the other building that had been moved.

The railway arrived officially in Stanford in the spring of 1908, when the new station agent, Hugh Wilkins, stepped off the train and unlocked the doors of the new railway station. Stanford would have Western Union service as well as freight and express. A mixed train, passenger, and freight trains would make the run from Great Falls to Judith Gap three times a week.

Though business at the station was slow at first, it was soon to pick up. In the next few years, Stanford was to grow by leaps and bounds, making the station and its agent very busy. Business became so very brisk there were times when the station almost disappeared behind all the piled up freight. Cargo was often offloaded onto the ground. This cargo included lumber and building equipment, furniture and other household goods, machinery and farm implements, and vehicles. So much freight had to be offloaded that the long unloading tracks were congested most of the summer. The warehouse inside the station was also full.

The station agent was kept so busy he sometimes missed meals and rarely got a full night's sleep.

The freight trains brought emigrant cars almost daily. These were boxcars with those things a farmer would need to start a new life, such as farm tools, cows and horses, and sometimes pigs and chickens, along with their provender.

For a time, Stanford had a tent city down by the stockyards where the newcomers stayed temporarily until they could be taken to their claim.

The town was very busy with new buildings going up and the arrival of old buildings from Old Town. The air was filled with the sounds of the hammer and the saw.

Stanford's first train station agent, Hugh Wilkins, is shown in his station agent's uniform in the early 1900s. The railroad came to Stanford in 1908.

For a number of years people still relied upon the horse and buggy to get around. The street was teeming with horse-drawn traffic, so much so that main street was sometimes too congested. When not being used, the rigs were parked in the middle of the street.

Even after the coming of the railway, the Great Falls and Lewistown stagecoaches still made its stop at the Stanford Mercantile store, located on the north side of the main street opposite the train depot. There, the stagecoach delivered and picked up mail. On that same block was the new two-story hotel, which was known for its warm hospitality and hearty western meals.

The people of Stanford were glad when Dr. Igel, the town's first doctor came and opened his drug store.

Near the drug store was the telephone exchange and Stanford's first newspaper, the Stanford World. The first issue of the Stanford World came out on February 19, 1909. It later became the Judith Basin Press in 1920.



Pictured here is the Pete Metrovich family, who arrived in Stanford with their three little girls around 1920.

Photo courtesy of the Judith Basin County Museum

One of the things early Stanford was in great need was a bathing facility. In turn, Station Agent Hugh Wilkins and Dr. Igel went shopping and bought a large tin washtub, which they installed in the station's warehouse. The tub was filled with buckets of water hauled from the water tower. The water was first left outside until the sun sufficiently warmed it. This service was of course unavailable in the winter.

When I consider the early days of Stanford, I think how so very different it was from how Stanford is today. In fact it may be difficult for any of us to imagine quite what the old town in its early days was like.

If you see a picture of Stanford dated 1911, which are common enough around town (the Judith Basin County Museum has one), I think you get something of an idea of what Stanford looked like in those early days.

*Let's preserve
the memories*



Doreen Heintz is interested in writing a history of the Moccasin School. Contact Doreen at 366-6467 or dheintz@midrivers.com with your memories.

Central Agricultural Research Center has long history in Judith Basin County

Published with permission from the Central Agricultural Research Center

The Judith Basin area was a summer resort and favorite hunting ground for the Blackfoot, Nez Perce, Gros Ventre and Crow tribes about 100 years before the Lewis and Clark expedition. Mining camps were the first settlements in the area when silver and lead were discovered in the Little Belt Mountains in the 1870's and 1880's.

Livestock was also important during this era, and cattlemen moved large herds from western Montana valleys to graze on the abundant grassland. Large ranch holdings were subdivided into 160 and 320 acres tracts, which brought in homesteaders who established dryland farming and ranching practices.

The Central Agricultural Research Center was established in 1907 when Governor J.K. Toole signed House Bill No. 450 authorizing the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station to establish its first branch station in the Judith Basin. From 1907 - 1926 it was called the Judith Basin Substation; 1927 - 1944, the Judith Basin Branch Station; and 1945 - 1970, the Central Montana Branch Station. In 1971 the name changed to the present Central Agricultural Research Center.

CARC's location on the plains of central Montana was considered ideal for testing grains, trees and cultural practices because it was commonly believed that "if it will survive in Moccasin, it will survive anywhere in the Northern Plains." Today, CARC tests grains, forages and oil-seed crops and conducts research on cropping systems, weed control and soil fertility.

Our forage production projects include "clipping studies" that simulate the amount of forage growth that would occur under various grazing frequencies under dryland conditions. Currently, 480 acres at CARC are farmed. The remaining land consists of range, roadways, shelter belts, railroad, creek bottom and headquarters area.

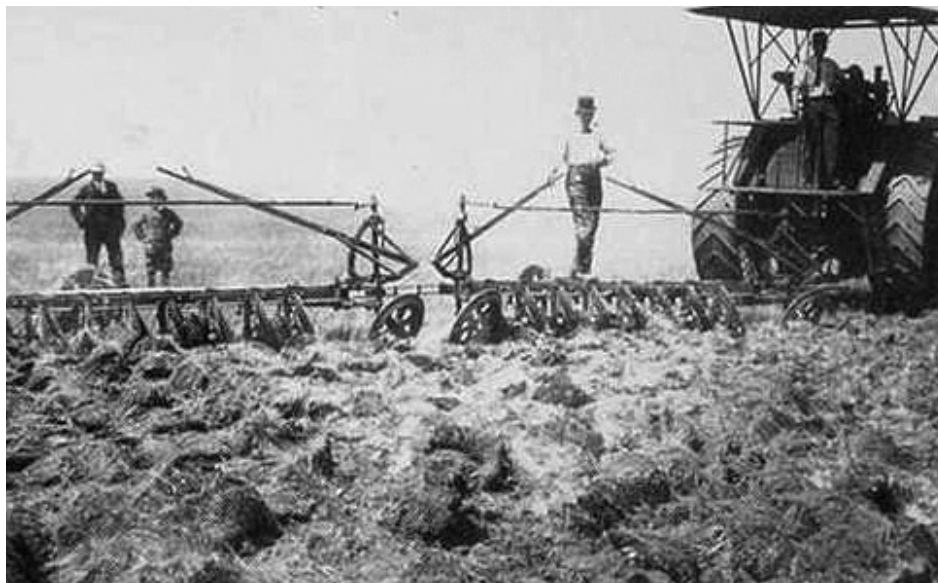
Over the years thousands of plots have been seeded and harvested to test varieties, study diseases, insects, weeds, cropping and tillage systems, fertilizers and forages. These trials have helped mold agricultural practices in central Montana.



Pictured here are all the superintendents at the time in 1957. At one time, they were all military veterans.

Shown here are bundles of wheat before they were moved to the thresher. Wheat was bundled 5 bundles to the shock, where it would dry, then they would pitch it on a wagon and take it to the thresher.

Photo courtesy of Allen Zimmer.



A one-way cylinder plow breaks sod at the Central Ag Research Center. It is pulled by a steam engine

From the Stanford World to the Judith Basin Press

110 years of newspapering in the Judith Basin

Feb. 19, 1909 – First issue of Stanford's paper "The Stanford World." Dudley Axtell, editor and manager.

Feb. 19, 1909-March 19, 1910 – Dudley Axtell editor and manager

March 26, 1910-1912 – Leon Thurston, editor, later became city editor of "Great Falls Tribune."

1912 – March 12, 1914 – Leon Thurston, editor, W.R. Henderson business manager (Leon was Stanford's first mayor).

March 19, 1914 – May 30, 1918 – W.R. Henderson, editor, was former Superintendent of Stanford Schools

June 6, 1918-May 27, 1920 – C.C. Alexander, editor

Dec. 2, 1920-Aug. 29, 1940 – Paper changed to "Judith Basin County Press," Stanley Thurston, editor. Stanley served as Stanford's mayor and was responsible for the work done on the streets and sidewalks.

1926 – Stanley Thurston became President of the Montana Press Association, resigning in 1928.

Sept. 5, 1940 – Mach 26, 1942 – William Rader, editor.

April 2, 1942 – June 14, 1945 – J.C. Schleppegrell, editor.

June 21, 1945-Aug. 7 1952 – Larry Morrison, editor.

Aug. 14, 1952-1954 – Robert S. Larson, publisher; Loretta M. Larson, Assistant Publisher.

1953-1954 – Fred Stewart, printer.

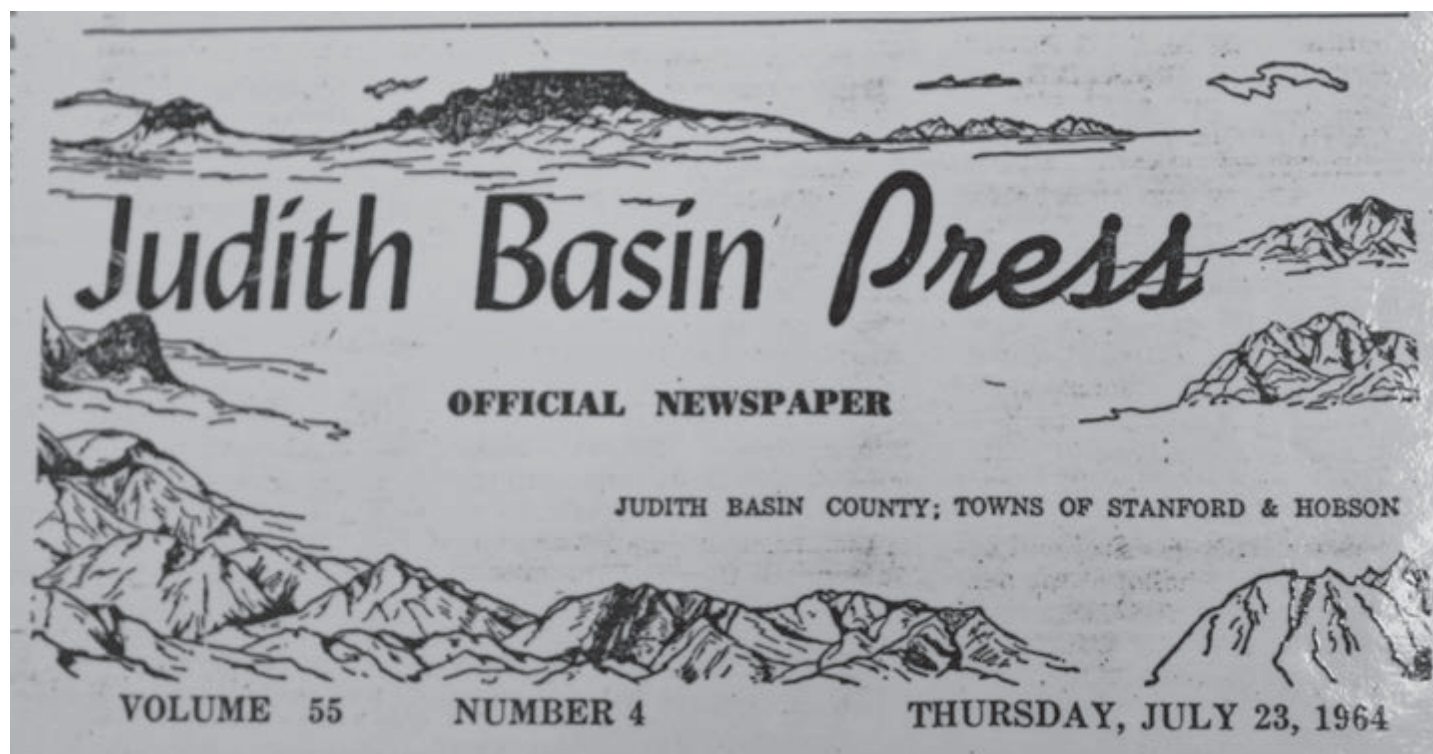
1955 – Unavailable.

1956 – Oct. 31, 1957 – Walter R. Larson publisher; became "Judith Basin Press" Feb. 1, 1957.

Nov. 7, 1957 – July 2, 1959 – Aubrey D. Larson, publisher.

July 9, 1959 – Sept. 14, 1961 – Larson Printing Company owned the "Judith Basin Press."

Sept. 21, 1961 – July 27, 1966 – Lee D. Larson, editor and publisher



1965 – July 27, 1966 – Lee D. Larson, publisher, Stanley E. Tichenor, managing editor.

Aug. 3, 1966 – Dec. 27, 1967 – Stanley E. Tichenor, publisher.

1968 – Aug. 27, 1975 – Lee D. Larson, editor and publisher.

Sept. 10, 1975-1977 – Sam L. Butler, editor and publisher.

1978 – Sam L. Butler editor/publisher and Barbara Weaver, general manager for "Belt Valley Times" - paper became Press-Times.

1979-Nov. 26, 1981 – Dean B. and Janell A. Brown, co-publishers; Dean Brown editor – returned name to "Judith Basin Press."

Dec. 3, 1981 – Oct. 30, 1997 – Lance D. and Susan T. Davis, co-publishers; Lance, editor.

Nov. 6, 1997 – Feb. 27, 2003 – Wes and Linda Gibbs; Wes, editor.

March 6, 2003 – May 6, 2004 – Jamie Spainhower, publisher – name changed to "Central Montana Press," combining "Judith Basin Press" and "Belt Eagle."

May 13, 2004 – July 19, 2008 – Oron Jacobs, publisher; Jacques Rutten, managing editor; Doreen Heintz, news editor until Dec. 15, 2005. Paper changed again to "Judith Basin Press," July 22, 2004.

Jan. 1, 2009 – Jacques Rutten, Publisher

Dec. 22, 2005- 2017 – Vicky McCray, editor.

Jan. 15, 2018 to present – Melody Montgomery, editor

(Most of the information above was submitted by Vicky McCray for the Stanford Centennial Celebration in 2008, and is compliments of the Judith Basin Historical Society).



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History of the Judith Basin County Free Library

Roeseler and Coriell lay foundation 74 years ago

BY MELODY MONTGOMERY
EDITOR

On April 28, 2018, the Judith Basin County Free Library hosted a grand opening of its new addition and remodel. This was made possible by generous donations and a concerted effort among community members as well as Librarian Jeanne Lillegard; however, the history of the library dates back to 1945. According to a historical essay by former Librarian Debbie Kramer, the library itself is a result of the efforts of two Stanford women 74 years ago.

In 1945, Vera Roeseler, acting superintendent of schools, and Sylvia Coriell, clerk to Miss Roeseler, looked into the possibility of a countywide library. At this time, free county libraries were gaining traction and were present in over one-third of the counties in Montana in 1945, according to Kramer's history.

A library was already established in the county building. The efforts of Roeseler and Coriell were to supplement these services. The



One of Montana's most prominent bankers, NB Mathews, had the original 1960s library built and furnished to honor his wife Loretta. NB came to Stanford from North Dakota in 1911 to work at the Basin State Bank. Within two years, he became bank president, which he held until his death in 1963 at age 83.



The newly built Judith Basin County Free Library in the early 1960s. The faintly visible sign in front of the library is now in the 2019 interior. The sign was chosen by NB Mathews, who built the library in honor of his wife Loretta after her passing.

Photos courtesy of the Judith Basin County Free Library

exchange of books would occur periodically throughout the county to provide additional reading material. Notably, in 1945, the Woman's Clubs of Stanford and Hobson both ran community libraries. Reading material was primarily for adults; reading material for children was scarce.

"It was the hope of the organizers that more children's books would be available to rural students," wrote Kramer.

To make a free county library a reality, the two ladies set out to gather signatures to present to the county commission. They needed signatures from at least 10 percent of taxpayers in the county, of which half must reside outside of the county seat of Stanford. A hearing before the commission could then be held.

Roeseler and Coriell did not know how their idea would be received. There were 1,200 taxpayers in Judith Basin County in

1945, and they would need 130 signatures to meet the required 10%, and at least 65 of these signatures would need to come from outside of Stanford. By the end of June, Roeseler and Coriell had received 297 signatures, of which 85 were from residents of Stanford, thus meeting the criteria that at least half were from outside the county seat.

The names and signatures were provided to county commissioners on July 5, 1945 and a petition was filed requesting the establishment of the free county library, according to Kramer. A hearing was advertised for four weeks and took place on August 7, 1945. The commissioners at the time were Harley Neal, Utica, B.M. McAllister, Geyser, and Percy Goyins, Stanford. There were no objections, and by August 11, the commissioners unanimously resolved the establishment of what is now the Judith Basin County Free Library.

The Library (continued)

"The county library was to be supported on by a levy on the taxable property of the county," wrote Kramer. This levy provided \$500 annually for library support and maintenance in the coming year, which was the maximum that could be set. Roeseler, as County Superintendent of Schools, was appointed librarian, until Bob McGuire returned from Navy duty in World War II. McGuire purchased the first books, and the Stanford Woman's Club sold their collection to the library. After sorting, "1,500 books became the core collection of books for the newly established library," wrote Kramer. Elva Wineman was then appointed full-time librarian in 1946.

The library remained at the county courthouse until 1960, when then a generous donation by prominent banker N.B. Matthews provided for the brick building at the library's current location. An addition took place in 1979, which is now the Children's Room.

The 2018 addition added a large wing to the library. It is amazing to think that all of the books now present in the library could even fit in the previous space. The new approximately \$850,000 addition and remodel features study carrels, sitting areas, an acoustical ceiling, a kitchenette, bathroom upgrades, modern lighting, new technology, a large-screen TV, handmade oak bookshelves, and more.

The dedicated efforts of Roeseler and Coriell 74 years ago, along with the generosity of N.B. Matthews and his son, laid the foundation for the new addition, not forgetting the countless others who together and raised funds enhance learning and reading in Judith Basin.



On Saturday, April 28, 2018, the Judith Basin County Free Library hosted a grand opening of its new addition. Photo courtesy of Julia Lillegard



In 1945, Sylvia Coriell, clerk to Miss Roeseler, acting superintendent of schools, helped gather 297 signatures to petition for the creation of what is now the Judith Basin County Free Library.

Photo courtesy of
Judith Basin County Free Library



The old Library sign from 1960 now hangs in the new library.

Photo by Melody Montgomery

In 1945, Vera Roeseler, acting superintendent of schools looked into the possibility of a countywide library.

Photo courtesy of
Judith Basin County Free Library



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Andy's Barbershop: Decades of History still in the making

By MELODY MONTGOMERY
Editor

Andy Andersen has been cutting hair for over 60 years, starting barbering in 1957. If walls could speak, one wonders what stories the walls of his barbershop would tell.

The start of Andy's life was in Two Dot. He lived there for his first two years while his father worked on a ranch and his mother cooked. The family then moved to Harlowton after his father got a job with the railroad.

Andy's mother raised five kids on her own after Andy's father was killed in 1944 during World War II. Andy was five years old. Andy recalls that back then there were no government programs to help single parents, and his mother worked hard. She took in laundry as one of her jobs to support the family.

In Harlowton, Andy met his wife of now 59 years. It is obvious when you see these two together that their love for one another and respect runs deep. They truly enjoy one another's company and they both have a great sense of humor.



Andy's Barbershop is currently the longest-running business in Stanford under the same ownership. Almost 50 years after opening his new shop, Andersen puts the finishing touches on one of Gram Montgomery's first haircuts.

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Andy's (continued)



Andy Andersen puts the finishing touches on Aaro Samson's haircut in his new barbershop on January 6, 1970.

Andy had a running joke with a customer who would come in for a haircut and to regularly have his mustache shaved off. If anyone else was present, they would play out a little role where the man would tell Andy that he could trim his mustache but not like the last time, when he thought he did a bad job.

Andy would act offended and say "You didn't like how I trimmed it?!" and then he would shave the gentleman's mustache plum off in response. The gentleman would pretend to be furious.

Andy and Alverta moved to Stanford in May 1961. Andy worked at a barbershop across the street from his present

location on Main Street. Then, in October of 1969, the couple had the present barbershop built. Andy opened the shop on Alverta's birthday in January of 1970.

Andy has another barbershop in Denton. Andy has been operating his Denton shop for 46 years and Stanford shop for 48.

Before moving to Stanford, Andy ran a barbershop in Lewistown. He opened The City Barber Shop in 1958 across from the First National Bank. He was also on the State Barber Board in the 1970s.

Many children in the area have received their first haircut from Andy. He does this for free.

Children can be very wiggly, and keeping them still for a haircut would be a challenge. Andy says that they are also sometimes afraid that it will hurt. So what is Andy's trick to coax them into the barber seat? He says he always takes off his barber jacket, because with it, he looks more like a doctor or dentist. He then takes their minds off getting a haircut and to plays to their imagination.

Andy has a client, Don Carver, who had his hair cut by Andy only while growing up. Don moved to Colorado in 1964 to start college who got one haircut from someone other than Andy. From that point on, Don decided only Andy would cut his hair. Don even planned his trips home from Colorado to time with Andy's haircuts. Gene Todd never had a haircut anywhere else, says Andy.

Andy has also had some competition from his employees, especially Max the

Handsome Barber. Max, "a kid from Denton," was giving Andy a bit of a run for his money because all the ladies wanted Max to do their hair. Andy said Max was so handsome that someone at the shop asked once to take his picture. Max is now successfully cutting hair in Big Timber, taking in \$600 a day for his craft.

Andy looks forward to going to work every day because it is always different.

"I am a people person. You never know what you are going to find each day," says Andy. He might get to visit with somebody who came to town for her weekly hairdo. Andy reflects on the report he develops with people. They are more than customers, they are friends and like family and he knows them like family.



Andy Andersen opened his current barbershop in 1970. He started barbering in Stanford 61 years ago, and has been barbering in Stanford for 58 years.

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Rural Schoolhouses in the Judith Basin

Judith Basin Residents Dan Deegan and Joe Vavrovsky have taken a keen interest in rural schoolhouses in Judith Basin County. They even put together a detailed map and list of around 50 historical schoolhouses in the County alone.

This information was provided to a Helena couple, Jim Greene and his wife Martha Vogt, who spent five summers volunteering for the Montana Preservation Alliance.

The Big Sky Schoolhouse Survey, launched in 2015 by the Montana Preservation Alliance, is comprehensive statewide survey of Montana's one- and two-room schoolhouses. Its organizers seek to locate and document the remaining schoolhouses in every county Montana.

The long-term goal of Big Sky Schoolhouse Survey is to provide technical assistance to endangered schoolhouses with notable historic integrity. Additionally, their research is being collected into a database for use in future studies and preservation work.

Greene and Vogt have retired from their volunteer position with Montana Preservation Alliance. New potential volunteers are encouraged to contact Madie Westrom with the Montana Preservation Alliance at 406-457-2822.

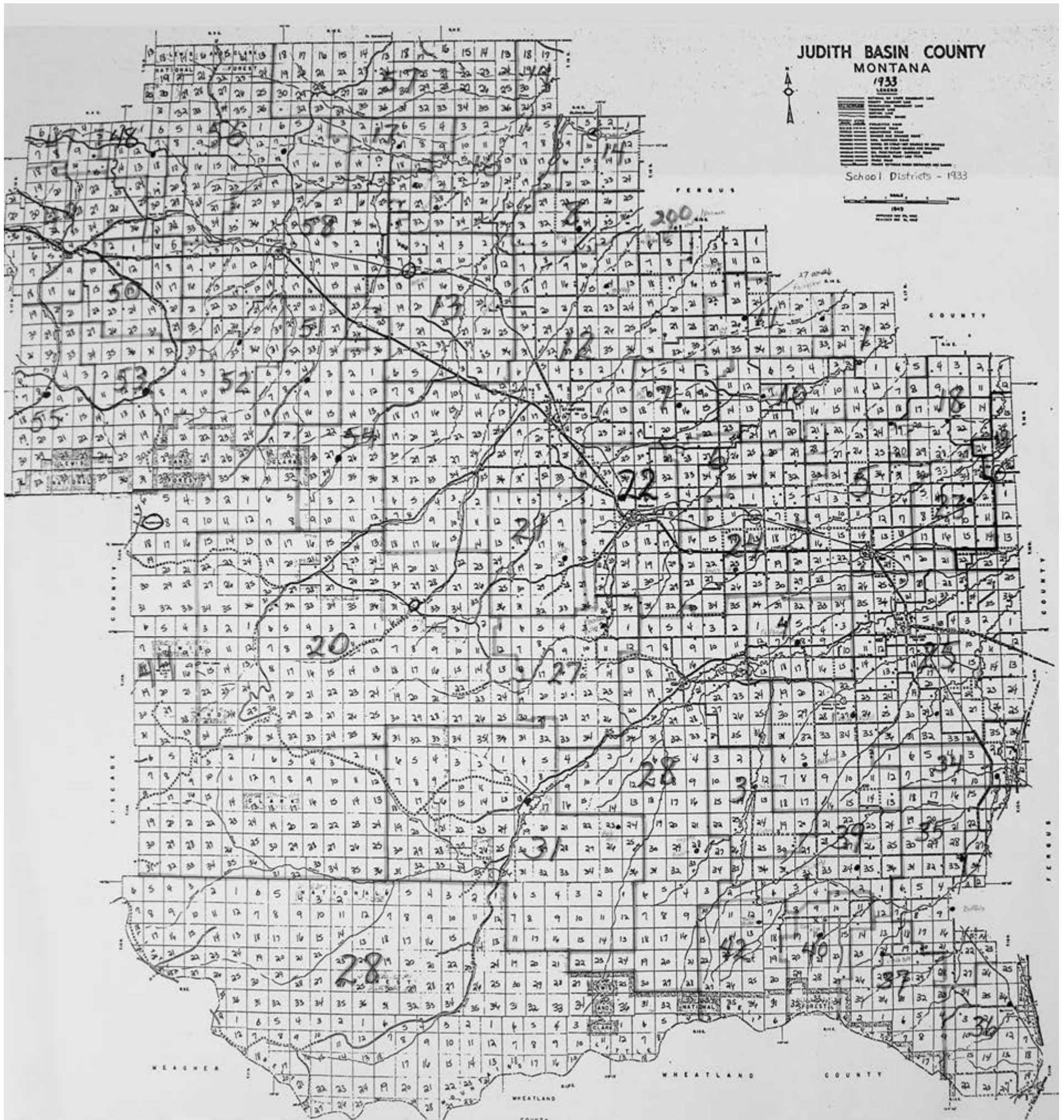
Finally, with the help of Dan Deegan and Joe Vovrovsky, moving forward, the Judith Basin Press plans to intermittently publish detailed histories of individual school houses, based on these two's extensive research and notes.

Dist. No. 1	Community Center School, or <i>Deegan School</i> (Moccasin, 1922-1931)	Dist. No. 34	Sipple School, or Menden School? (Straw, 1925-1932)
Dist. No. 2	Bellview School (Hobson, 1922-1929)	Dist. No. 35-70	Buffalo School (Buffalo, 1924-1937)
Dist. No. 3	Victory School (Buffalo, 1922-1930)	Dist. No. 36	Palmer School (Judith Gap, 1932-1931)
Dist. No. 4	Phibbrook School (Hobson, 1922-1939)	Dist. No. 37	Little Belt School (Buffalo, 1922-1932)
Dist. No. 5	Moccasin School (Moccasin, 1924-1954)	Dist. No. 38	Plainview School (Buffalo, 1922-1925)
Dist. No. 6	Last Chance School (Windham, 1922-1940)	Dist. No. 39	New Liberty School (Buffalo, 1924-1954)
Dist. No. 7	White City School (Stanford, 1922-1947)	Dist. No. 40	Coal Mine School (Buffalo, 1922-1932)
Dist. No. 8	Bell School (Stanford, 1927-1930)	Dist. No. 42	Twin Butte School (Buffalo, 1922-1929)
Dist. No. 9	Letz School (Moccasin, 1920-1927)	Dist. No. 43	Cayuse Basin School (Utica, 1922-1925)
Dist. No. 10	Willow Creek School (Stanford, 1923-1946)	Dist. No. 44	Hughesville School (Hughesville, 1922-1952)
Dist. No. 11	Fairview School, or Metcalf School (Stanford, 1922-1923)	Dist. No. 47	Cora Creek School, or Pemperton? (Armington, 1922-1923)
Dist. No. 12	Kensiger School (Stanford, 1922-1923)	Dist. No. 48	Chatterton School (Geyser, 1924-1930)
Dist. No. 13	Merino School (Merino, 1924-1947)	Dist. No. 49	Raynesford (Raynesford, 1922-2006)
Dist. No. 14-108	Arrow Creek (Coffee Creek, 1922-1954)	Dist. No. 50	Hay School (Raynesford, 1922-1938)
Dist. No. 15	Lilleberg School (Dover, 1920-1930)	Dist. No. 51	Lone Tree School (Geyser, 1922-1942)
Dist. No. 16	Sour Dough School (Merino, 1922-1933)	Dist. No. 52	McAllister School, or Rose Lawn School? (Geyser 1922-1934)
Dist. No. 17	Lower Braun Creek School (Geyser, 1922-1935)	Dist. No. 53	White School, or Otter Creek
Dist. No. 18	Indian Creek School (Kolin, 1922-1940)	Dist. No. 54	Wolf Butte School (Stanford, 1922-1934)
Dist. No. 19	Kolin School (Kolin, 1922-1971)	Dist. No. 55	Kibby School (Raynesford, 1922-1946)
Dist. No. 20	Running Wolf School, or Sunset Ridge (Stanford, 1922-1933)	Dist. No. 56	Spion Kop School (Geyser, 1939-1941)
Dist. No. 20	Sunset Ridge School (Stanford, 1933-1944)	Dist. No. 56	Braun School (Geyser, 1922-1942)
Dist. No. 21	Lehigh School (Stanford, 1922-1945)	Dist. No. 56	Mountain View School (Geyser, 1922-1930)
Dist. No. 22	Windham School (Windham, 1922-1955)	Dist. No. 56	McAllister School (Geyser, 1922-1942)
Dist. No. 23	Basin Center School (Moccasin, 1925-1942)	Dist. No. 56	Upper Arrow Creek School (Arrow Creek, 1924-1962)
Dist. No. 24	Benchland School (Benchland, 1922-1954)	Dist. No. 56	Meyer School (Geyser, 1935-1936)
Dist. No. 25	Lindsay School (Hobson, 1927-1933)	Dist. No. 56	Upper Arrow Creek, changed to Lillegard (Geyser, 1944-1954)
Dist. No. 26	Hobson School (Hobson, 1908-present)	Dist. No. 57	Mansfield School (Geyser, 1923-1948)
Dist. No. 27	Pleasant Valley (Windham, 1922-1941)	Dist. No. 58	Geyser School (Geyser, 1925 - present)
Dist. No. 28	Utica School (Utica, 1925-1979)	Dist. No. 200	Dorman School (Coffee Cree, 1927-1928)
Dist. No. 31	Pig Eye School (Utica/Sapphire Village, 1922-1932)		
Dist. No. 31	Sapphire Village School (Utica/Sapphire Village, 1932-1945)		

**Many of these schools are much older, but Judith Basin did not become a county until 1920. Before that it was divided between Fergus County and Meagher County.*



Arrow Creek School was located District 14-108, but consolidated into District 14, 1922-1954. District 108 started in January 1913. It is located on the Bench north of Stanford, a few miles before the turnoff to Denton.



See schools listed by Districts on page 12, which serves as a legend for this map. Each district is outlined, and its number is written out on the map. For example, 1 on the map, which is the section below the scale, corresponds to District 1, which is Deegan School.

School Buildings



The Lindsay School was previously on the land of the Lindsay Family by Ackley Lake. After being used as a school, it was moved to Utica. It was first a saloon, then a church and a pottery shop, having quite a life for a one-room building.

Photo courtesy of Joe Vavrovsky



The Old Willow Creak School house rests adjacent to Benchland Road. This country school was in operation until 1946. The teacher lived on the school grounds as well, and there was even a dancehall. After it was no longer a school, it was used to store grain.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance

Basin Center was established in 1910 west of Kolin on the Arganbright Place. The school was abandoned and attached to the Kolin District in 1945. The building was moved to the Emry Kynett Farmstead and used for a granary until it was torn down.

Photo courtesy of Joe Vavrovsky



The Lillegard School (1924 – 1962), which was formerly Upper Arrow Creek, is located straight north of Geyser. It was named after all the little Lillegards who attended it.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance



New Liberty School operated from 1924-1954 in Buffalo, just inside the Judith Basin County line.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance





The Pig Eye School (left) is now the Blue Nugget Bar and Grill (below) in Sapphire Village. The original school was established in 1912. In 1932, the Pig Eye School became the Sapphire School. The Sapphire School was abandoned and attached to the Utica District in 1952.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance
Photo below by Melody Montgomery



The Willow Creek School operated until 1946. It is off Sage Creek on property belonging to the Hughes family, who now use the building for storage.

Photo courtesy of Dan Deegan



The Smart School was between Stanford and Denton, just on the other side of the Judith Basin County Line. It was moved into Denton and is now alongside the existing school in Denton.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance

This is an oil painting by Diana Roen of the Running Wolf School house on Running Wolf Road, which no longer stands. This district was first established in the late 1800s. The school was torn down in the 1990s to repurpose the logs. It is on the Fiedler property south of Stanford. This school had several names over the years. In 1933, the Running Wolf School became known as the Sunset Ridge School and was in existence until 1947.

Photo by Melody Montgomery



The two-story school in Utica was torn down in the 1930s. A lot of the lumber was used to build the school that presently stands.

Photo courtesy of Joe Vavrovsky



The White City School is located at the present Judith Basin County Fairgrounds. It was operated until 1947.

Photo courtesy of Montana Preservation Alliance



The Community Center School, also known as the Deegan school, closed sometime in 1931. It is located straight north of Moccasin. Ray and Marion Deegan turned the school into their family's home in the early 1940s. It was Dan Deegan's first home. In the late 1940s, the family used it for a grain bin.

Photo courtesy of Dan Deegan



The Original Philbrook School was a Judith Basin school from 1922-1939, but the actual starting date goes back to the 1800s before Judith Basin was a county; this school was instead part of Meagher County when it began.

Photo courtesy of Joe Vavrovsky



Philbrook was located straight west of Hobson. Philbrook moved with the railroad to create the town of Hobson. The school was later moved in the 1940s, and the present Post Office in Moccasin was built on the end of it.

Photo courtesy of Joe Vavrovsky

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Early days of Ackley Lake

Ackley Lake has been in the news a lot in recent years, just as it was 82 years ago when the reservoir got its beginnings.

The articles below are taken from the Judith Basin Farmer and the Judith Basin County Press. They are printed exactly as they appeared in 1937.

Work on Ackley Lake project near Hobson due to start next Monday; be finished in a year

When complete, project – sponsored by State Water Conservation Board and financed by PWA Grant of approximately \$98,000 – will serve much needed irrigation needs of over 5,000 fertile Judith Basin acres

(Headline and story text are reprinted as they appeared in the Jan. 11, 1937 edition of the Judith Basin Farmer)

The contract for the Ackley Lake irrigation project near Hobson, which was let Dec. 19 to the Tomlinson-Arkwright Co. of Great Falls for \$651,969.60, is sponsored by the state water board and the grant was obtained by the public works administration. The contract states that work on the project must begin by Jan. 11 and be finished by Jan. 11, 1938.

The division canal and the main canals of the project are on the south side of the Judith River, which drains the famous Judith basin. It is one of the most unique projects in the state in that it is built without any storage dam in the river and is not designed to use the regular flow of water in the river, but only flood waters in the spring that are wasted because they are allowed to drain to the Missouri. The water is stored in the lake and then taken out through a canal that returns it to the river, from which it is distributed to the various water purchasers.

The project will serve between 5,000 and 6,000 acres and will be built at an appropriate cost of \$98,000. Water will be taken out of the river on the SW 1/4, section 18, township 13, range 14, on the Mintle McQuaid estate nine miles west of Hobson, and is carried to Ackley Lake southwest of Hobson through a diversion canal about five and three-eighths miles long. Ackley Lake lies in sections 22 and 27, township 14, range 14 on land owned by Kisselheim, Inc., of Billings. At full capacity, it will cover 241 acres and the total acre-feet of storage will be 5,617. The supply canal will have a capacity of 100 second-feet. To avoid building a large dam in the river, the bottom of the supply canal will be two feet lower than the bed of the river and the intake will be controlled by a large headgate and spillway, thus making it possible to have



Work is underway at Ackley Lake Dam in this photo from the late the 1930s. According to an article in the Judith Basin Farmer from 1937, the contract for the project was let to Tomlinson-Arkwright Co. of Great Falls for \$65,969.60 and was sponsored by the state water board. The grant was obtained by the public works administration.

Photo courtesy of Montana DNRC

control of the water at all times. The right of way on this supply canal will be 100 feet wide and at all road crossings, bridges will be built.

Spillway is provided

Water enters Ackley Lake at the high point on the west side and is taken out on the north side at the middle point of the dam. In case the supply canal is flooded there is a spillway on the north side of the lake where the water can be turned into the return canal. The return canal enters the river two miles east of where the water is taken out on land owned by Mrs. C.M. Goodell.

The dam proper is 700 feet long, the south dike to the dam is 1,100 feet and the north dike is 1,600 feet. The crest length of the dam is 2,000 feet and its greatest height will be 40 feet. In constructing this dam a trench eight feet deep will be dug its full length. This will be filled with clay or hardpan, which will be puddled by being sprinkled and rolled in six-inch layers. All dirt used in making the dam will be subjected to this process, as puddling prevents leaks. The more impervious materials will be used on

the upstream half of the embankment and the lakeside face of the dam will be ripped with rock.

Water will be taken out midway of the length of the dam and this is where the wellhouse for the headgate control will be built. Wellhouses built in dams do not freeze. Often wellhouses are built in a storage lake but when ice forms and winds begin driving it about, the wellhouse is sheared off, causing damage and inconvenience. Water will be measured at the dam and there will be a measuring wire where the return canal has a capacity of 63 second-feet and is three and one-half miles long.

River disappears

All along the course of Judith River are stretches where the water sinks away and leaves the stream dry in midsummer. Further down the course of the river the water reappears in the form of springs in the riverbed or in hillsides along the edge of the river bench and the stream flow starts again. Due to this condition, the river in summer after irrigation begins consists of alternate dry spots and flowing stream. The edge of the bench along the

valley is filled with springs throughout the entire course of the river from its source far back in the Little Belt mountains to the Missouri. This is because the river's course is really a fault line and the impervious layer on each side is higher than the river itself.

According to the recorded runoff gauged at the old C.C. David homestead, now known as the Noel ranch, near the sapphire mines above Utica, in 1924, enough water came down the river to fill this lake three times. This did not gauge nearly all the water that enters the river above the intake as it is joined below this ranch by Waite creek, Antelope creek and Heiserman and a number of smaller coulees.

Forty years ago there was much more irrigation in the Hobson region than now. When the bench was taken up by homesteaders and everybody started raising wheat, ditches were neglected and gradually abandoned, until now there are few ditches and the water supply is uncertain as to quantity and time.

Continued on next page

Ackley Lake Continued

Many ditches on the benches have entirely disappeared or are only faint lines. A number of the new ditches will follow the courses of the old ones.

Land in this region was unusually productive and many pictures used in promoting development of the Judith basin were made in fields and gardens irrigated by the Judith river near Hobson. After repeated grain and forage failures in late years, farmers began to realize they must either get irrigation or abandon their holdings. The water conservation program throughout the state and nation gave them the idea of flood control for the purpose of bringing water to their land when it is needed.

The idea of this particular project is not entirely a new one. Mike Rooney and his son, Frank, in the early nineties, before any amount of the land east of this lake was homesteaded, undertook to promote such an irrigation system and filed on the water of Judith river.

They had in mind to construct such a dam and irrigate land east of the lake, figuring that if it had water on it, it could be filed on as desert claims. The man they had associated with them to finance the project died suddenly and the idea was never developed. Many times there was talk of inducing private capital to finance the project but nobody ever succeeded in doing it.

Couldn't finance it

In 1920 D.F. Giboney, a construction engineer, made a report on the proposed dam and the talk was revived by no action taken. By method of financing through the government reclamation system, it was impossible to get the necessary money for the scheme as it was proposed.

Nothing more was done until recently. Interested parties kept the plan in mind and the idea grew. After the present plan of government finance for water projects was worked out, those interested began to see some hope of bettering farming conditions in the Hobson community and original plans for the present project were presented to the state planning board in 1933.

Much work is necessary to present a project in such a manner that it will receive favorable consideration. It must have merit, cost of construction must be low, there must be accessibility, compactness and productivity. Although the project is being financed by PWA funds and the government is furnishing the money, 55 percent of it must be repaid. The government buys bonds to finance construction but to induce the government to approve the project and buy the bonds an immense amount of data and information must be furnished.

Under the present system of financing, which has been worked out by the state water conservation board, it first became necessary to organize and incorporate a water users' association. In forming the Ackley Lake Water Users association, the purchaser signed a subscription and pledge agreement, and water purchase contracts to the amount of 5,266 acres was procured. The project is based on this area. Under this system of finance, water



purchase contracts do not become a lien on the lands and no titles will be clouded on account of them.

Is oversubscribed

The project is now oversubscribed. At a recent meeting, temporary officers were elected, Thomas Nicholson being chosen as president; D.N. Hitch, secretary, and George Reed, Frank Haack and Thomas Watson, other members of the board.

More than one survey has been made and some changes made from the original plan but the greatest change was shortening the diversion canal, which cut down the expense considerably.

Land where the lake is located was homesteaded by the late Gene Ackley in the eighties. There was high grass all around the lake and in the early days antelope and all other game animals and wild fowl made it a place of beauty. Livestock in range days trailed in for miles from the west and south to water there, as there were few places where water could be found in abundance in this part of the Judith basin.

The farm around the lake which is now occupied by Walter Weber will be submerged when the lake is filled. Buildings will have to be moved to high ground, as the coulee running southwest will be filled for a considerable distance.

The lake has long been a rendezvous for duck hunters but of late has not furnished much sport for fishermen as the water for part of the year was dead. Gulls and other water birds are plentiful. Several years ago, G.W. Cowan of Hobson, and Arthur Close, now of Sheridan, Wyo., were duck hunting there when their boat capsized and they were barely able to rescue themselves and then only by leaving two shotguns in the bottom of the lake.

The lake is not without its tragedy. In 1928 Frank Weber, a young man of the Hobson community, was drowned

one Sunday afternoon when he became exhausted as he swam while clinging to a rope behind a motorboat. For several years the water has been so low, due to evaporation, that there has been little swimming.

Prosperity assured

When the dam is completed and the project is in operation, there will be good swimming, duck hunting and probably good fishing in time. But far better is the assurance that farmers under the ditch will be able to raise enough forage to

supply most of the Judith basin with stock feed. Should they wish to grow beets, a test of beets grown in the soil of this region several years ago showed a greater than normal sugar content. Garden stuff, potatoes, alfalfa, sweet clover and bees all will be paying enterprises. A number of the bench farms south of Hobson have been abandoned, are back to grass, and are used only for grazing. With these areas for range and irrigated portion for growing forage, prosperity will return to what was once one of the most beautiful spots east of the continental divide.

This photo is was taken during a rehab project in 1959. The dam had developed some seepage issues and a slide developed just left of the canal. To remedy the problem, the outlet conduit was extended, drains were added and a small berm was constructed.

Photo courtesy of Montana DNRC

Dynamite Cache Uncovered by Workmen on Ackly Lake Project

This headline and article are reprinted as they appeared in the April 29, 1937 edition of the Judith Basin County Press. Early newspaper accounts used a variety of spellings for the name "Ackley."

Hobson—J.C. Williams had a rather close call to getting a one way ticket to the pearly gates or beyond shortly after midnight last Tuesday night while operating one of the power turneaux used by the Tomilson & Arkwright company at the Ackly lake project.

While operating his machine he felt the jolt when the steel blade hit an obstruction that was buried. He stopped his machine and upon investigation being made by Williams and other workmen, it was found that the obstruction was a handmade hardwood box beginning to show signs of decay. Upon being dug up and opened the box was found to contain a smaller box holding eleven sticks of dynamite and a box of caps wrapped in a copy of the Helena Independent and a page of the Lewistown Democrat. The date showing on the Helena paper was June 26, 1909. The newspapers are coated with glycerine and are still in a fair state of preservation after being in the ground almost 28 years.

It is a very fortunate thing that Williams and his fellow workers took the precaution to stop and do a little investigating. Otherwise there would have been a blowout that would have cost lives and machinery.

The supposition held by a few is that the cache might have been buried by Gene Ackly who filed on a homestead in that vicinity in the early days and for whom the lake is named.



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