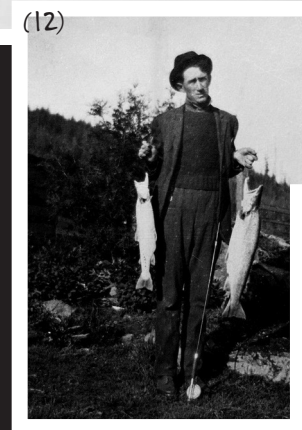
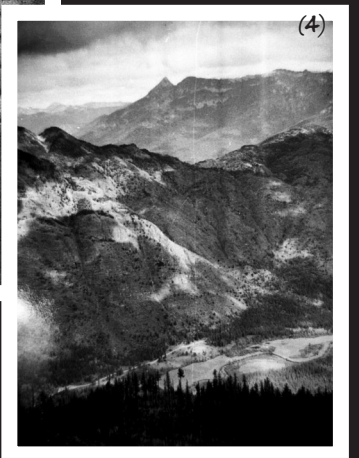
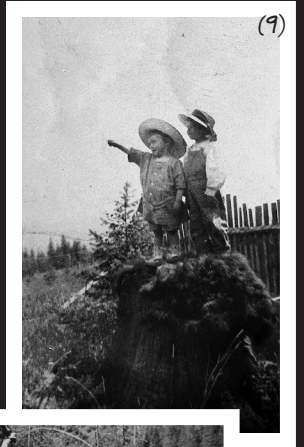
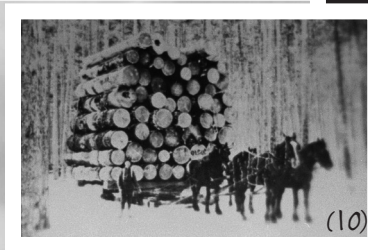


Settling the Bull River

Early life in a wild country

2017



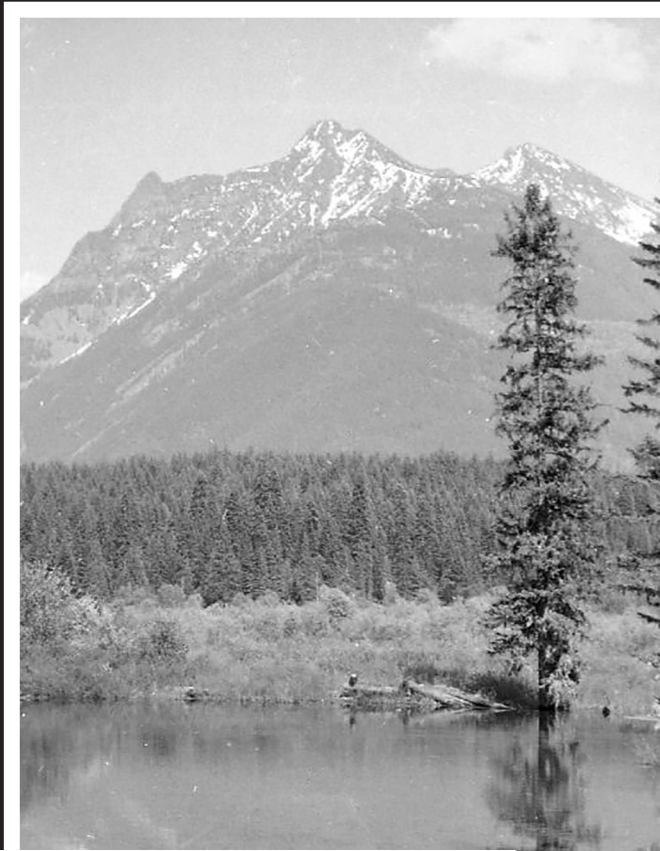
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A Rugged Backdrop

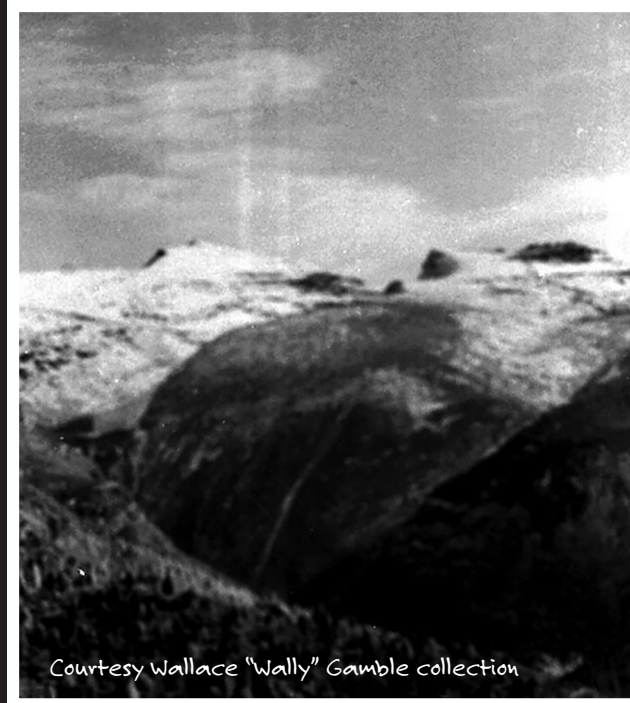
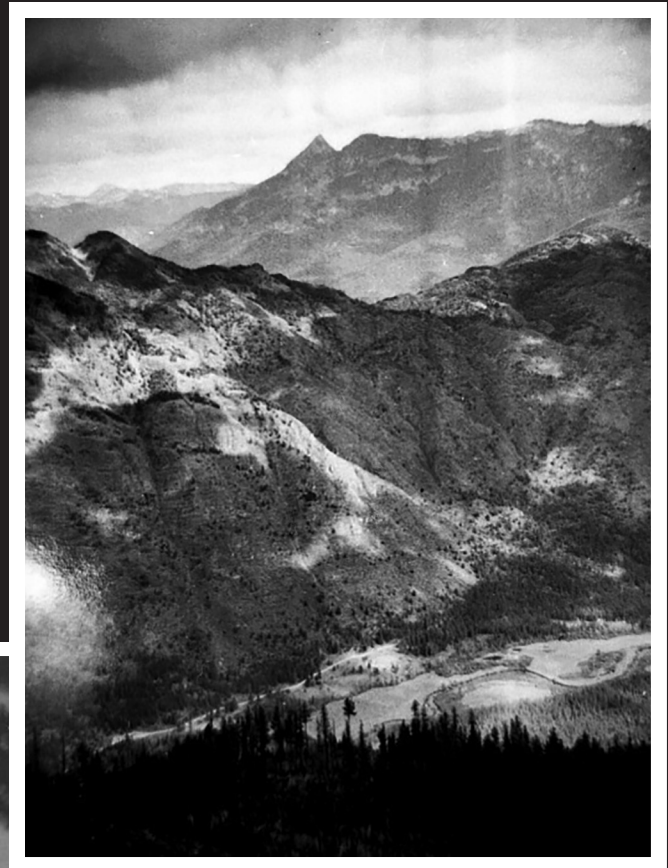
“Bull River flows into the Clark’s Fork from the north about twenty-five miles east of Pend Oreille Lake. It twists like a tortured snake, flowing south out of a half-mile wide defile which interlaces the rugged mountains between the Kootenai River thirty miles north and the Clark’s Fork River.”¹

This is rugged country—newspaper columnist Mel Boyd wrote of the lower Clark Fork and Cabinet Mountains: “...the valleys were so narrow that the dogs wagged their tails up and down. The farm fields were so steep that men kept falling out of their corn fields. And the mountains were so high that the southbound geese had to hike part of the way!”¹

Courtesy Art and Mona Vanek collection



Courtesy Wallace “Wally” Gamble collection



Courtesy Wallace “Wally” Gamble collection



Courtesy C.A. and Dorothy Weave collection

JANUARY 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Martin Luther King Day	17	18	19	20	21
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NOTES

DECEMBER

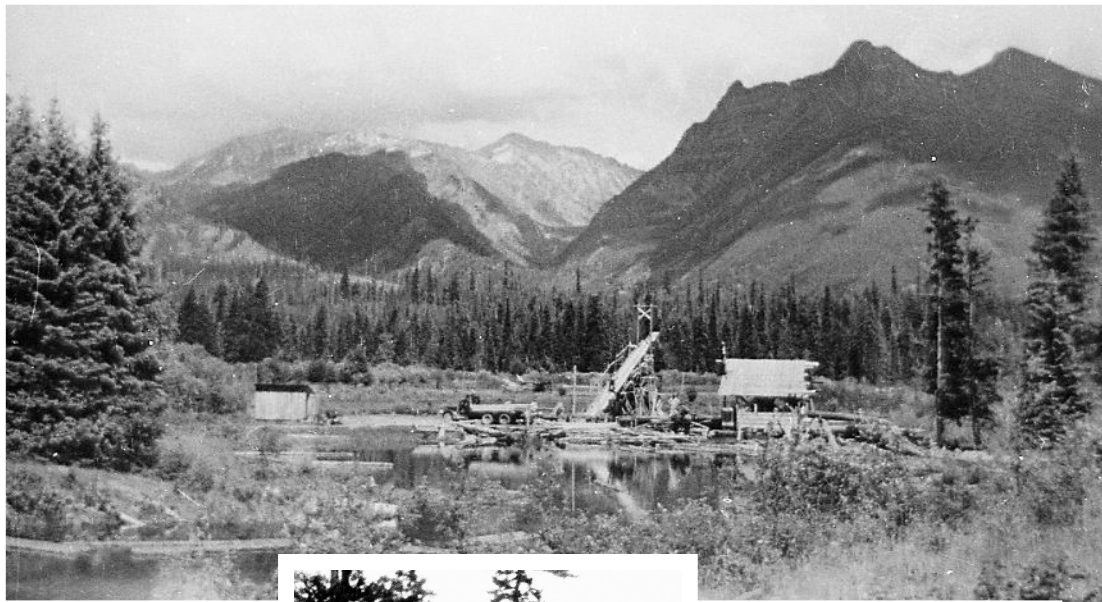
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FEBRUARY

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A Forest Economy

Courtesy Clifford A. and Dorothy Weave collection



"The economy was escalating [in the late 1800s] and all kinds of work in the forests was available"—local lumberjacks adept with the tools of the trade (crosscut saw, double-bitted axe, adz, cant hook, peavey, etc.) found ample work.¹

"Cedar poles, cedar shakes and shingle blocks, whitepine logs and railroad ties were the most desired. The choicest timber with the easiest access succumbed the soonest to the woodsman axe."¹

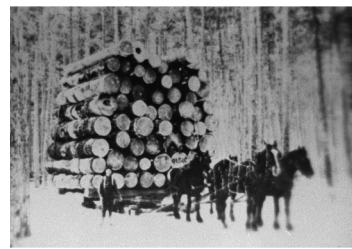
"Primeval cedar trees such as the stands in Rock Creek and Bull River that greeted early arrivals in the northwest were bell-bottomed. The girth of their enormous trunks broadened into massive tentacle-like roots, sprawling far beyond the tree's center, making use of a 'springboard' a necessity...Notched into the tree, anywhere from four to ten feet up from the ground, the wide plank [springboard]...created a narrow, moveable platform above the swell of the roots."²

"All winter men spent back breaking months in the exhilarating occupation of felling enormous prime logs with crosscut saws; cutting them with teams of massive horses and sleighs with steel clad runners to big skidways on the river banks...Freezing temperatures made it possible to haul large loads of logs on logging sleighs with 10ft.-12ft. bunks."¹

Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection



Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection



Courtesy Loren "Lanky" Jamison collection



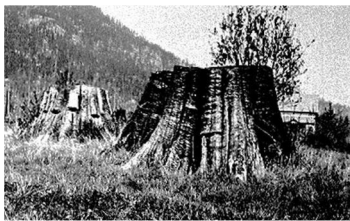
Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection



Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection



Courtesy Earl Engle collection



Courtesy Frank Berray collection



FEBRUARY 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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	Presidents' Day					
26	27	28				

NOTES

JANUARY

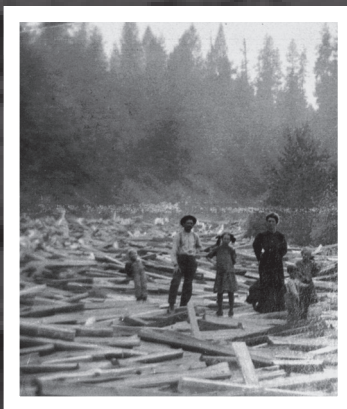
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MARCH

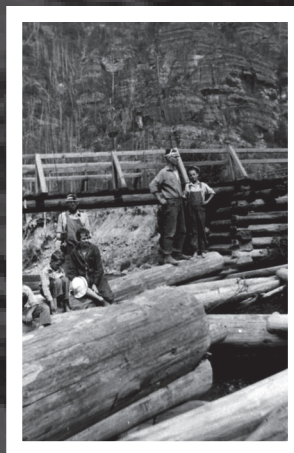
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River of Timber

"Spring brought high water of melting snows and thawed the forest floor to morasses of mud that ended all felling and skidding for as long as three months. As the sun rose crimson over the mountain ridges, the log decks amassed on the river's banks were rolled into the water. The dams were dynamited. 'Herds' of logs sped down the miles of rushing waters until their momentum was spent. With three dams, located to float the timber by stages down the narrow Bull River canyon, millions of feet of cedar and white pine raced to meet the Clark's Fork. The mouth of the Bull River became gorged with them solid enough to easily walk across the river on them."¹



Courtesy Stewart and Agnes
Hampton collection



Courtesy Clayton "Clate"
Bauer collection



Courtesy Ruth Mercer
McBee collection



Courtesy Clayton "Clate"
Bauer collection



Courtesy Clayton "Clate"
Bauer collection

MARCH

2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
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NOTES

FEBRUARY

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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

APRIL

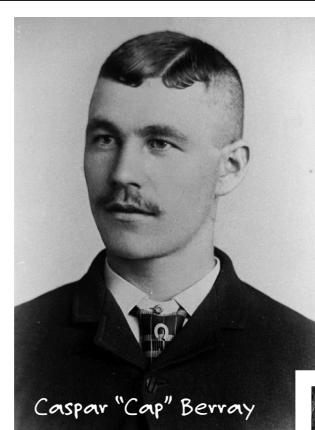
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The First Homesteaders

In 1889, "Montana had become a state. With statehood came homesteading rights...Cap and Jim Berray took up land in the Bull River valley where fire had cleaned out the upper part of the valley. They first located their homesteads by meets and bounds descriptions, Cap's original homestead having thirteen corners. It lay nine miles south of Bull Lake. He selected land at the base of the mountains primarily, following the contours of some of the choicest natural meadow lands through which Bull River flowed. His acreage stretched along the river for nearly the maximum length of one mile, taking in some portions of the steep mountain slopes to either side. Adjoining him downstream, Jim measured out his homestead of one hundred and sixty acres."¹

Cap, his wife Julia, and their two sons, Frank and Algie, became the first family to settle in the Bull River valley in the 1890's.¹

Courtesy Maxine Higgins
McLaughlin collection



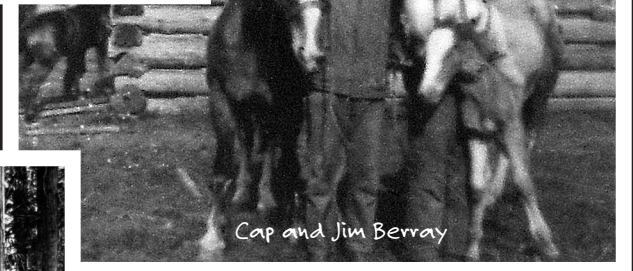
Caspar "Cap" Berray



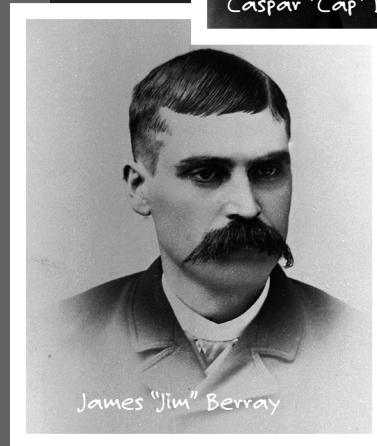
Frank and Algie Berray

Courtesy Caspar
Berray collection

Courtesy Caspar
Berray collection



Cap and Jim Berray



James "Jim" Berray

Courtesy Maxine Higgins
McLaughlin collection

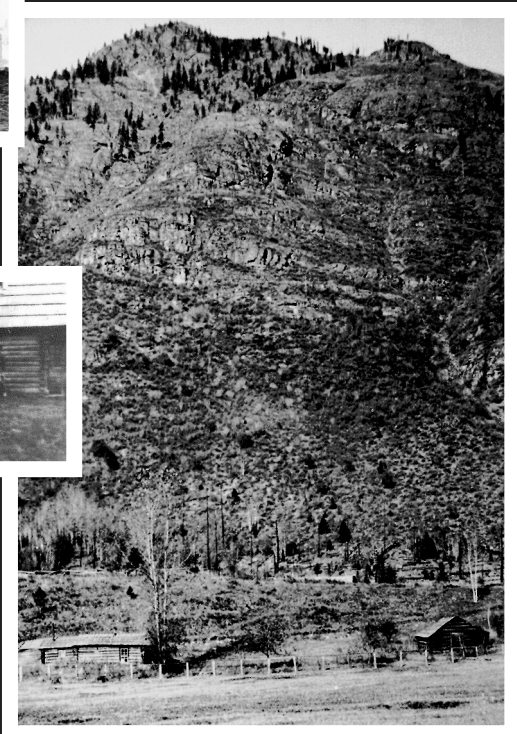


Julia Berray

Courtesy Caspar
Berray collection



Courtesy Frank
Berray collection



Courtesy Caspar Berray collection

APRIL

2017

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NOTES

MARCH

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MAY

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28	29	30	31			



Courtesy Blanche Gordon Claxton collection.



Courtesy William "Bill" Finnigan collection



Courtesy William "Bill" Finnigan collection

Building a Road

New settlers to the valley worked together at the difficult task of building roads. "To carve a route through the Bull River valley meant traversing rough terrain at the base of numerous mountains that edged the twisting river and natural meadows of the narrow valley. Along the river's edge great swamps of boggy land were covered with a mean plant called 'Devil's Club' that grew as high or higher than a man's head, and almost as thick as a hedgerow. Its prickly thorns left scratches that burned and festered. Mosquitos were a constant nuisance, though not of the infectious kind that carried malaria. Enormous cedar trees grew in the bottom lands, their roots, like tentacles, swelling the ground around them making it impossible to pioneer a road through without great difficulty. The mountains rose rocky and steep. Dynamite was used to fracture impassable crossings."¹

Helen Berray Kirschbaum recalled the early years of the 19th century: "There were no real roads of any kind through the Bull River valley...just the old Tote road, a trail carved out to freight supplies by teams and wagons from Smeads Spur [near the mouth of the Bull River] over about forty miles of mountainous terrain to Troy. Even when I was first going to school [in 1910] if you met another vehicle coming your way, the only way you could pass each other was one vehicle or the other had to unhitch the team for the wagon, put the wagon over the edge of the grade and let the other rig pass and go on. Then you'd have to hitch up again and go on your way."¹

MAY

2017

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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
	Memorial Day					

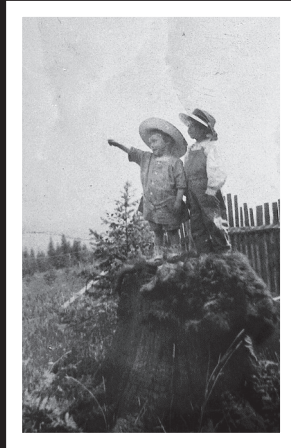
NOTES

APRIL							JUNE						
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More Settle



Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection.



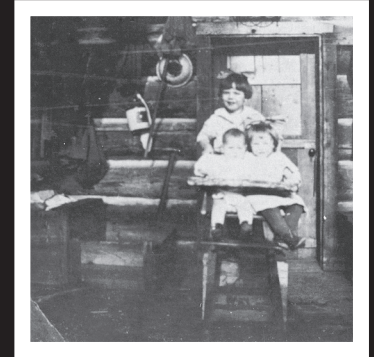
Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection.



Courtesy Agnes Hampton Jenkins collection.



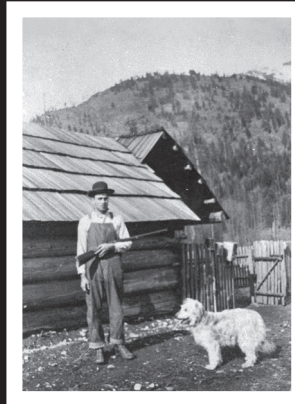
Courtesy Clayton "Clate" Bauer collection.



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection.



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection.



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection.



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection.



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection.

"Under the Homestead Act, settlers could become owners of 160 acres of western states land. Free, except for a small filing fee...and the staggering fact that a homesteader must occupy the piece of land for five consecutive years and show evidence of having made improvements." In 1889, the Berrays were the first to permanently move to the Bull River valley, but soon after "twelve more homesteaders took parcels of land along the narrow river bottom."¹

Settlers harvested timber, cleared fields, built homes and bridges, and conducted all manner of improvements to their land in order to create a life for themselves in the valley.

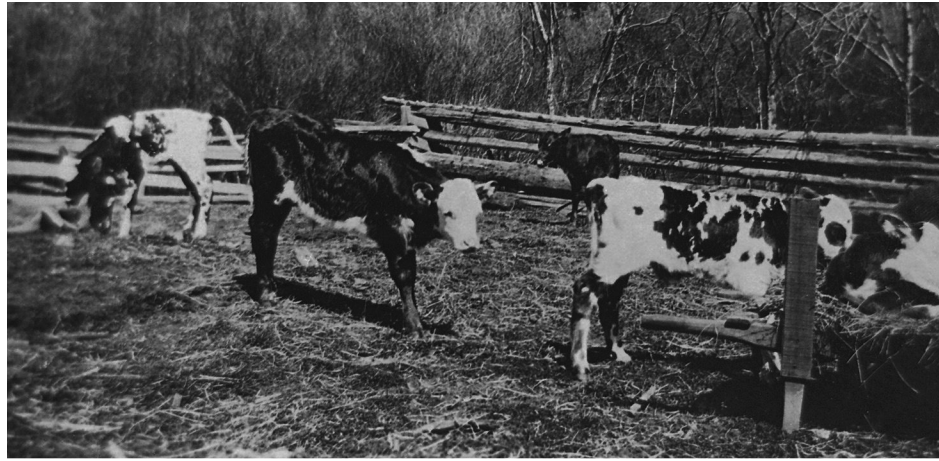
JUNE

2017

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NOTES

MAY							JULY						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30	31				23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					



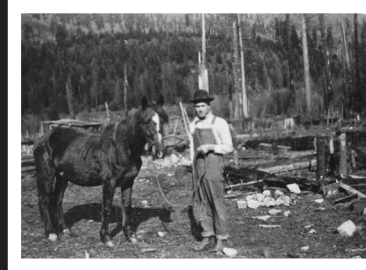
Courtesy Ruth Mercer McBee collection



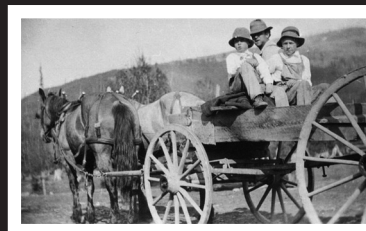
Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection

Growing a Life

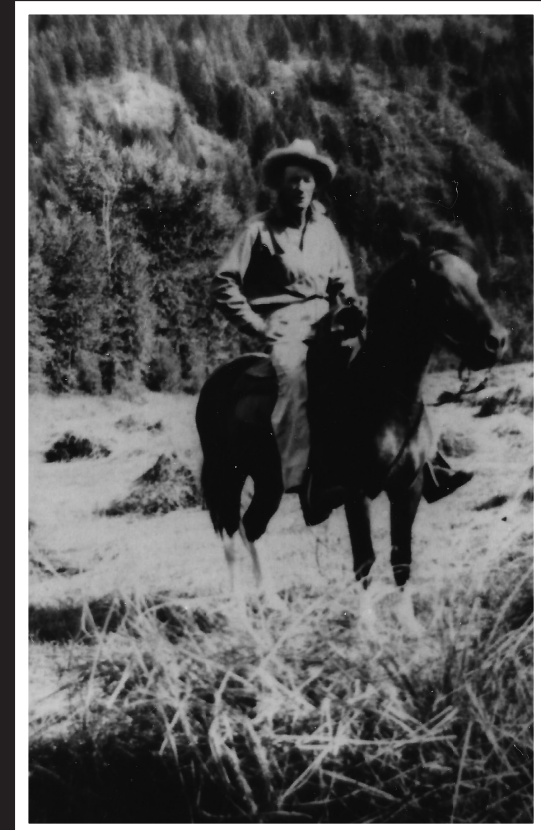
“Diversified farming began to take hold as mining and prospecting ebbed slightly. Homesteaders returned to the old way of farming—so much land for hay, so much for grain, so much for pasture, wood supply, garden, orchard, bunch of cattle, flock of sheep, hogs, chickens, geese, and ducks making a dollar or two in everything.”¹



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection



Courtesy Clayton “Clate” Bauer collection



Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection

JULY

2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Independence Day				
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NOTES

JUNE							AUGUST						
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	30		27	28	29	30	31		



Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection



Courtesy Caspar Berray collection

Hay Days

Hay was an important crop to sustain the settlers of the Bull River valley: "Those were the years when landowners on Bull River made their living from the land! The amount of hay a rancher put up determined the size of his cattle herd. Cattle constituted their 'cash crop.'"² Homesteaders capitalized off of natural meadows and clearings formed by fire, but it still took a great deal of effort to transform marginal lands into productive hay ground.

"'Slough grass' or 'swamp grass' grew abundantly in natural clearings as much as half a mile wide. Some of these meadows were a mile or more long." Still, "nourishing hay was a scarce commodity in the Bull River Valley...The wild grasses were referred to as belly scratch and provided poor feed at best."¹

With the goal of creating better hay land, men had "to dig drainage ditches across the natural marshy meadow land," while other "deep drainage ditches were dynamited out to channel the water to the river."¹

Over time, people continued working to improve the productivity of these lands. Al Leeson purchased a ranch in the Bull River in 1945.⁴ In the following years, he and his neighbors heard that reed canarygrass could provide fodder for cattle and also thrived in sodden ground.⁵ Reed canarygrass, one of the grasses seen prominently along the river today, was introduced to the valley. While Leeson began ranching with a team of horses, he soon brought mechanization with the purchase of a tractor and baler.⁴

Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection



Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection



Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection



Courtesy Hazel and Howard Ellinwood collection

AUGUST 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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Courtesy Wallace "Wally"
Gamble collection

Landscape of Fire

Whether caused by lightning strikes or a "careless traveler's campfire", fire is a part of the Bull River valley's landscape. In 1886, "the roaring red tongue of fire consumed several hundred acres of timber in the middle portions of the Bull River valley. By the time it subsided, the great green stands had been reduced to whole mountainsides of standing dead poles amid charred dead brush."¹

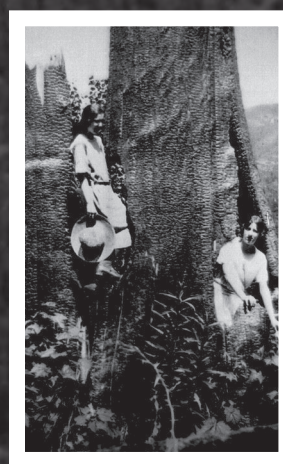
This would not be the only fire that burned in the valley. "Forest fires were becoming an increasing problem as timbering expanded. Slash lay drying into inflammable cover on the openings hewed by the sawyers and axemen."¹

"Summer without periodic rainfall was unheard of in northwestern Montana and thus 1910 worried homesteaders and timbermen alike, and while it didn't deter a few unscrupulous men from torching logging slash to destroy evidence of timber theft, everyone feared the dry storm that brought only lightning strikes in the drought stricken forests." That August, "a leaping, scorching tongue of the [1910] fire flashed through the forests of the Bull River valley burning much of the lower Bull River, Dry Creek and Copper Gulch, but not Napoleon."² Fires have continued to touch the landscape in the years since.

Today, one can still find old fire scarred snags and stumps in the valley—some of which are artifacts of this time period and others that are part of our recent history.



Courtesy Maxine Higgins Laughlin collection



Courtesy Mary Easter Yonker collection



Courtesy Wallace "Wally" Gamble collection

SEPTEMBER 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Labor Day	5	6	7	8	9
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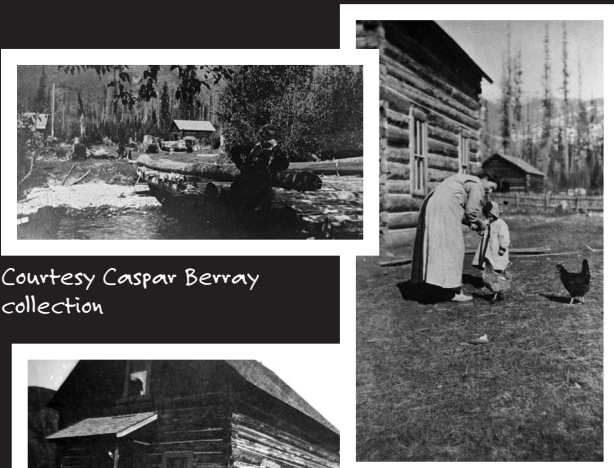
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AUGUST							OCTOBER						
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27	28	29	30	31			29	30	31				

Ranger at Work

After the formation of the Forest Service in 1905, Granville Gordon became the first ranger in the Bull River valley. He built the now historic Bull River Guard Station where he and his family lived, led the construction of trails and lookouts in the Cabinet Mountains, and fought wildfire.

A long history of public land ownership has shaped the Bull River valley and surrounding lands. Early in the 20th century, the Sanders County Ledger expressed its support, "Setting aside forest reserves is as wise a thing as was ever done. This was necessitated because of the greed of lumbermen, who indiscreetly, to call it by as mild a term as possible, indiscriminately ravished the forests and spared nothing from a sapling to a hoary age."¹



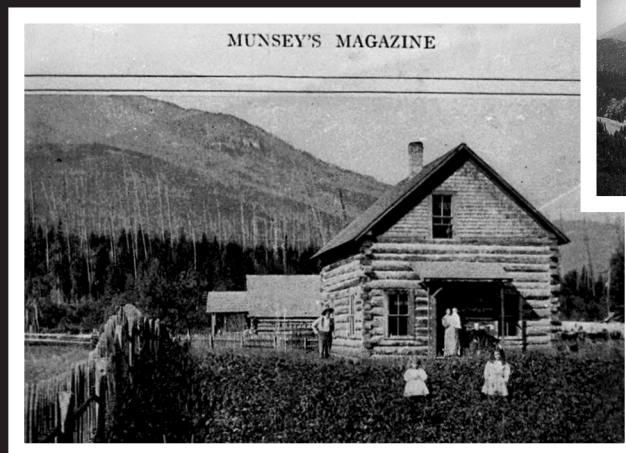
Courtesy Caspar Berray collection



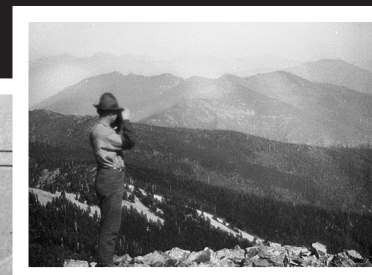
Courtesy Blanche Gordon Claxton collection



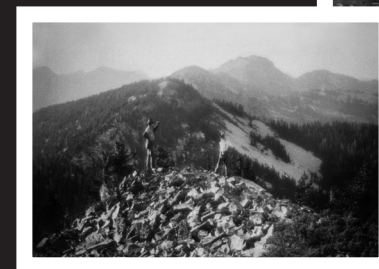
Courtesy Blanche Gordon Claxton collection



Courtesy Blanche Gordon Claxton and Clayton "Clate" Bauer collections



Courtesy Pauline and Granville Gordon collection



Courtesy Pauline and Granville Gordon collection



Courtesy Blanche Gordon Claxton collection

OCTOBER 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 Columbus Day	10	11	12	13	14
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SEPTEMBER

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NOVEMBER

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River of Fish

"Fishing was a necessity of survival and in addition, because it provided a diversion from daily chores, the activity rapidly became entertainment; sport that females enjoyed as much as males did. Their successes were often recorded in pictures to be shared with friends and relations far way."³



Courtesy Wallace "Wally" Gamble collection



Courtesy Ruth Mercer McBee collection



Courtesy Ruth Mercer McBee collection



Courtesy Ruth Mercer McBee collection

NOVEMBER 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
					Veterans Day	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			Thanksgiving Day			
26	27	28	29	30		

NOTES

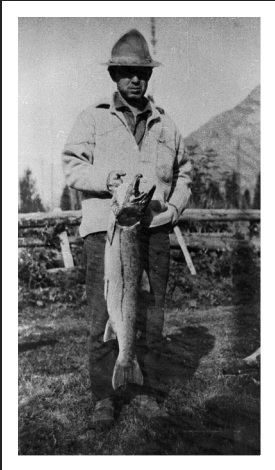
OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

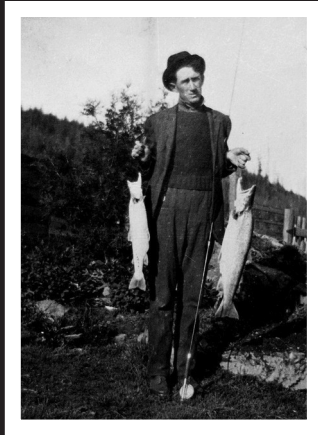
DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

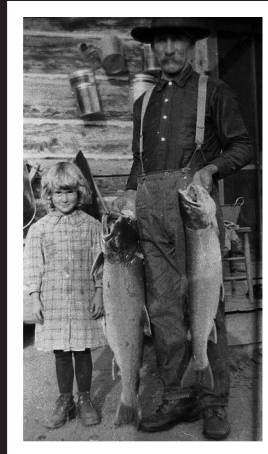
A Historical Catch



Courtesy Blanche Gordon
Claxton collection.



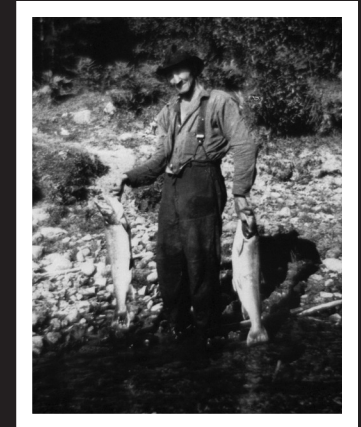
Courtesy Blanche Gordon
Claxton collection.



Courtesy Blanche Gordon
Claxton collection.



Courtesy Loren "Lanky"
Jamison collection.



Courtesy Loren "Lanky" Jami-
son collection.

Now most commonly referred to as Bull Trout or sometimes Dolly Varden, “‘char’...is the name early settlers in the Clark’s Fork River valley commonly applied to the fish they relied on as an important food.”³ They also relished Westslope Cutthroat trout, Mountain Whitefish, suckers, and non-native Brook Trout.⁵

Bull Trout have light (cream to salmon colored) spots on their body, no black marks on their dorsal fin, white leading edges on fins, and a slightly forked tail. They were once bountiful in the Bull River and other tributaries to the lower Clark Fork River. At one point, they were seen as an undesirable species. The state allowed liberal harvest, while also stocking the river with non-natives like Brook Trout, which locals found more desirable.⁵ When hydroelectric dams were built on the river in the 1950’s, this prevented the fish migration to spawning grounds from Lake Pend Oreille. Changes to the landscape, decades of liberal fish harvest, introduction of non-native trout, and the construction dams on the Clark Fork River resulted in greatly reduced runs of Bull Trout, now listed as “threatened” under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

DECEMBER 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Christmas Day						

NOTES

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Art and Mona Vanek collection



LOWER CLARK FORK WATERSHED GROUP

lowerclarkforkwatershedgroup.org



This calendar is brought to you by the Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group and the Green Mountain Conservation District, with funding from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Nonpoint Source Program and Avista Corporation. These entities have been engaged in stream restoration and enhancement work in tributaries of the lower Clark Fork River, including the Bull River. One of the largest projects in the Bull River has been an extensive and ongoing re-vegetation effort, working to increase native vegetation in riparian (stream-side) areas.

As we work to "restore" our streams, and improve their ability to provide clean water and habitat for native fish and wildlife, we look to the past. This enhances our understanding of what once was and what could be. People came and settled in the Bull River valley, and worked hard to build a life there. It is a wild country and settling this country was no small feat, but humans have altered the landscape in ways that have not always been beneficial to

water quality and native fish and wildlife. We now have an increased understanding and appreciation for the importance of stream-side trees and native vegetation that provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife while also improving water quality and habitat for native fish like Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

Today, while there are still folks living in the valley, few live off the land in the same way as earlier residents. Hay fields have, and continue to be, converted back to the "natural meadows"¹ and wetlands that were common in the valley bottom over a hundred years ago. We are actively planting thousands of native trees and shrubs to replace reed canarygrass along the banks of the Bull River. We are able to work together with landowners to balance the needs of humans with the interests of native fish and wildlife.

The vintage photos that make up this year's calendar are available due to the relentless research of Mona Leeson Vanek, a sixty-year resident of

Noxon, Montana, and the region's most noted historian. Our photographs were selected from close to 1,000 photographs published in Vanek's award-winning history trilogy, *Behind These Mountains, Volumes I, II, and III*, plus a few of her parent's photos. A picture is worth a thousand words. The stories behind the incredible images in the calendar can be read in Kindle editions of the trilogy, available on Amazon, and in printable .pdf editions on DVD, available via mtscribbler@air-pipe.com or ooslegman@hotmail.com.

Much of the writing is verbatim dialogue from oral tape-recorded stories related to Mona by homesteaders, timbermen, lumberjacks, fathers and mothers and their children, with very little of her own prose. The technique gives readers the rare opportunity to know history as it was lived, and makes *Behind These Mountains, Volumes I, II, and III* a unique and honest reflection of a hopeful and energetic time in American History. In addition, the trilogy is a genealogical goldmine.

Photo credits, front cover:

- 1: Courtesy Caspar Berray collection
- 2: Courtesy Al and Tillie Leeson collection
- 3: courtesy Caspar Berray collection
- 4: Courtesy Wallace "Wally" Gamble collection

- 5: Courtesy Blanch Gordon Claxton collection
- 6: Courtesy Wallace "Wally" Gamble collection
- 7: Courtesy Stewart and Agnes Hampton collection
- 8: Courtesy Pauline and Granville Gordon collection

- 9: Courtesy Clayton Bauer collection
- 10: Courtesy Loren "Lanky" Jamison collection
- 11: Courtesy Wallace "Wally" Gamble collection
- 12: Courtesy Mary Easter Yonker collection

Source text:

1. Vanek, Mona Leeson. 1986. *Behind These Mountains, Vol. I: People of the Shining Mountains Where the Clark's Fork River Churns*. Colville, Washington: Statesman Examiner, Inc.
2. Vanek, Mona Leeson. 1991. *Behind These Mountains, Vol. II: God's Country in the United States of America*. Colville, Washington: Statesman Examiner, Inc.
3. Vanek, Mona Leeson. 1991. *Behind These Mountain, Vol. III: The Fabulous Valley in the Foothills of the Rockies*. Colville, Washington: Statesman Examiner, Inc.
4. Vanek, Mona Leeson. Personal communication, 24 October 2016.
5. Vanek, Mona Leeson. Personal communication, 22 November 2016.