EARLY MADISON COUNTY MINES

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Source: Interview
In the late 1800 hundreds mines at the Revenue, Red Bluff, and Sterling began to operate. These were opened with the discovery of gold ore. The first equipment was crude, picks and shovels. Later in the 1900 hundreds machinery was used and the sounds of motors with the vibrations of mine's jack hammers could be heard on the entire Revenue Flats. Shafts were sunk and looming galis frames erected. These frames still dot the surface. The gold ore was brought to the surface to be shipped to the mills. The Revenue Flats were crossed by the early stagecoaches.

Red Bluff was another mining area near Norris which was on the stagecoach route. While it did not increase greatly in size, it became the shopping center for the people at the Revenue Mines. Part of Red Bluff still stands where Montana State College has its Agricultural Farm. Some of the houses, including the old hotel, are being used by college families.

Some of the stone buildings at Sterling, a small mining town a few miles from the Revenue, may be seen today. Locations of mines are still visible. The stagecoach went close to these.
James Alexander McAllister was the first one to bring White Face cattle into the Madison Valley. He was also the first person to have a post office at McAllister, Montana.

As early as 1864 he decided that he wanted to settle on Meadow Creek where he bought out Don O. Spaulding. Mr. McAllister purchased from him 160 acres with several log buildings. He and his father immediately went into the dairy and cheese business. They took their dairy products to Virginia City.

McAllister's first White Face cattle were bought for fifty dollars a head in the Upper Ruby Valley. Aside from his dairy cattle he raised Shorthorn and Herefords, raising his herd to 150.

At first his cattle sold for two and one-half cents to three and four cents a pound out of state. Then he sold for five cents a pound on his own place. This was in 1912. His peak operations in the stock industry came in 1916 and 1917 when he had 350 head of cattle. Reverses appeared with the dry summer of 1919 and the severe winter which followed. That winter hay sold for $35 to $50 a ton. In 1918 Mr. McAllister branded 105 calves, but in 1919 he branded 13 calves. At this time, too, he lost fifty per cent of his horses. He had shown his horses all over Montana placing with the best racers. "McAllister's Black" which was his best racer was later struck by lightning. Horse thieves would drive off a band of his horses at time.

The first post office was opened by McAllister in 1897. This was enlarged two years later, and again in 1902. The first postmaster was
David Lindsay. Today McAllister's son, Jim, is the postmaster.

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