EARLY MADISON COUNTY MINES

Author: Steven Nelsen
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Source: Interview

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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 vi-
brations of miner'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 stage-
coaches.

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 McALLISTER

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 immed-
iately 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 rais-
ed 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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