

The Odd Stuff

One never knows the odd facts that turn up while doing research for these articles. Below are a few of the little puzzles and odd facts I have turned up so far;

A small tidbit in the November 28, 1912 issue of the Three Forks Herald states that Persia Chupich of Butte died at that place from tuberculosis contracted on the Titanic. This is a bit of odd news because the various extensive and informational web-sites regarding the passengers of the Titanic do not list Mr. Chupich as a passenger or survivor!

In another article, someone who was not a survivor of the Titanic disaster was much admired by the editor of the Herald, P. S. Dorsey. In December of 1912, Mr. Dorsey endorsed "Elusive Isabel," a novel by Jaques Futrelle, of Atlanta. Mr. Futrelle and his wife had traveled to Europe to promote his books and short stories there. They cut their holiday and work short to travel back to America on the RMS Titanic. Futrelle's works include several stories that featured the popular detective Professor Xavier Van Dusen, nicknamed "The Thinking Machine." Mr. Futrelle perished in the wreck but his wife, May, survived. Some of Mr. Futrelle's works can be found at the Project Gutenberg web-site.



Jaques Futrelle

Disappearances

In July of 1918, Fred Chandler, who had gone out on horseback to find a missing cow on Dr. Mason's ranch fifteen miles northwest of Three Forks, returned on the Butte train two weeks later and could give no account of his movements in-between times. He said he had traveled about the back country in his search and laid down somewhere to sleep and when he woke up, he was in Butte. The horse was never found. This was back before the alien abduction theories came to account for many amnesiacs.

"Uncle Tom" Gribbon, was reported missing in October 1923. He built a small grain elevator near Willow Creek and was renting a cottage from Mrs. James Hankinson. One day he came to Mrs. Hankinson to say he was unable to pay the rent and she was welcome to have some his household goods instead. He has not been seen since. An investigation of his home revealed his gun standing near the door and his automobile out front. Messages sent to various relatives and friends were to no avail.

Here is one with the headline of "A Modern Miracle." In March 1924, the four year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Berghone, who lived about twelve miles northwest of Three Forks, disappeared one afternoon. He was last been seen playing with his dog in front of the house. He was not missed for about two hours. Neighbors were notified and nearly 150 people began a search. It started snowing about 10 o'clock that evening. At four

o'clock in the morning the searchers returned to their homes for a break.

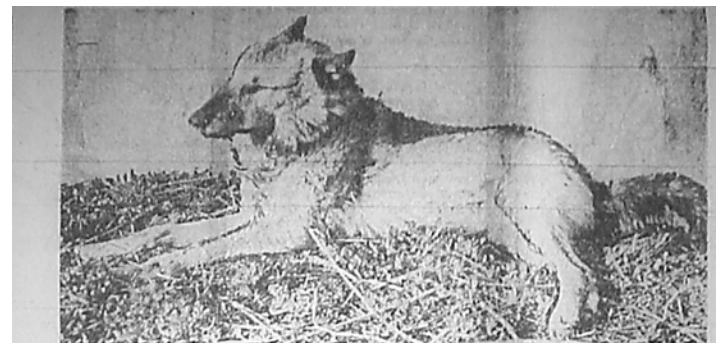
Frank Martin, who was one of the searchers, noticed a strange dog in the yard upon his return home, but thought it a stray. A little after 5 o'clock, he was ready to resume the search and his wife was headed to the telephone when she spotted a child on the front porch. It was the Berghone child, found nearly twelve miles from his home, his shoes worn through at the toes from the journey, and being faithfully watched over by his shepherd dog.

In August 1924, Joe Hadley was doing some work in his pasture near the Madison River and spotted a skull. Authorities were notified and all but a few small bones of the hand and feet were found. It seemed to be a Christian military burial of a man of about 5 foot eight inches tall (Christian because of the remains of a coffin and nails, military because the coffin was buried laying east-west). At that time, there was speculation that it was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition who had died near the headwaters. One wonders at the true story behind these skeletal remains.

Animal Oddities

A December 1912 issue of the Herald reports that "an Albino game duck was recently killed about two miles from Pony." The duck was pure white, with pink eyes, feet and bill and a little larger than a teal duck. The bird's "likeness has never before been seen by some of the state's best taxidermists and sportsmen."

"Because there are so many bears in Yellowstone Park, especially grizzlies, authorities intend to kill off not less than



"Big Wolf," killed near Three Forks, Is Now Mounted in Washington Museum

The largest wolf ever to be killed in Montana, "Big Wolf" (above) is now exhibited in the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D. C. The large animal was shot last spring near Three Forks, by a WPA hunter on the Predatory Animal Control project. Below is the hunter and friend pictured with the wolf.

Butte, Jan. 14—(Special)—"Big Wolf," the largest known wolf ever to be captured in Montana, killed last spring by a hunter on the WPA Predatory Animal project, is now displayed in the Museum of Natural History, Washington, D. C., according to information received at WPA headquarters. The animal, which was shot near Three Forks, measured 33 inches high at the shoulders and six feet, two inches from tip to tip, although half starved, weighed 106 pounds. The head was 14 inches long and six inches wide.



50 of the animals this fall.” This was in 1912, back before the Endangered Species Act.

In May 1941 a headline read “Old, Grizzled, Stock-Killer Finally Taken.” Two men, under the direction of the US Fish & Wildlife Service tracked and killed a prairie wolf on the bench about 12 miles south of TF Sunday afternoon. Only one toe remained on his left front paw (probably taken off by a trap). The right leg had a 4” piece of stovepipe wire imbedded in the flesh, probably from a coyote trap. Standing 33 inches high at the shoulder, six foot two from tip to tip and 106 pounds, the animal was the first wolf killed in this part of the country for many years. Four pups were found in a nearby den. Al Johnston, one of the hunters, had had no reports of wolf-killings of livestock in a long time. It was later announced that the “largest wolf ever to be killed in Montana” was mounted in the Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.

The killing was authorized through the WPA Predatory Control Project, which started in 1936 and by 1942 had taken 19,100 coyotes, 250 bobcats, and 125 lions.

And the most surprising...

After the June 1925 earthquake, the editor of the Herald estimated that the damage to the Three Forks Methodist Church was so extensive that it would have to be taken down to the foundation and rebuilt. Fortunately, it was not necessary and by December of that year dedication services were held to reopen the church. Generous donations by the congregation and friends made the feat possible.

But the church continued to receive additional aid and sympathy after the building was reconstructed. Perhaps the strangest donation story was told on the cover of the January 21, 1926 edition of the Three Forks Herald. Rev. W. P. Jinnett was just beginning his farewell sermon when the door silently opened and fifty members of the Bozeman Ku Klux Klan marched in singing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” After all had arranged themselves in the church, one handed the Reverend a purse and a letter, which he was urged to read aloud.

The heart of the letter read thus; “We wish to express our sympathy for you in the severe trial which has resulted to your church by reason of the earthquake last summer; and we commend you for your heroic efforts to reconstruct your building, keeping together your congregation and carry the banner of the Protestant Church ever onward.” Once the letter was read, one of the hooded men recited J. G. Holland’s soul-stirring “God Give Us Men.” Despite being invited by Rev. Jinnett to join the congregation for the remainder of the service, the Klan members marched silently out of the Church. The headline for the event read “Bozeman Ku Klux Klan Pays Visit to Our City - Their Mission Was a Peaceful One However and Their Visit Will be Gratefully Remembered.” It was noted that purse contained \$53.75.

The Boxcar Battalion

In late January 1931, the Milwaukee No. 264 pulled into the Three Forks Depot and Mr. Pat Stoker and a number of other men were on hand to greet it. On board a single unheated

boxcar was the self-named “Boxcar Battalion,” a group of disabled World War I veterans on their way to Washington, D.C. to endorse the passage of a World War veterans compensation measure pending in Congress at that time.

132 men had left the bread lines in Seattle, Washington to make the journey to the nation’s capital in a boxcar provided free by the CM&SP railroad, but only 25 arrived in Three Forks. The rest were too ill or impaired to deal with the cold and were turned back or dispatched to hospitals along the way. Under the command of D. Thomas of Spokane, the remaining 25 men were determined to make the rest of the rigorous trip.

In the early 30s, America was awash in the unemployed. Men would travel hundreds of miles on just a rumor of work. Because of the two rail lines coming through, Three Forks saw a lot of these kinds of men, even though Montana had enough of its own. Not hobos, but men in desperate need of a job. It was this desperation that drove veterans to Washington, D.C. to seek relief.

When Pat Stoker, an active member of the Lewis and Clark Post of World War Veterans, heard that the group was coming through Three Forks, he immediately organized a petition drive in support of the compensation measure and enlisted the help of the community to provide lunch and supplies for the Battalion. Other members of the local post included; William Ennis, Dick Griffith, Ed Ruppercht, Bob Burns, Hans Sater, Francis Lane, and J. T. Murphy.

The Battalion reached Chicago on February 9th, “shivering from cold and hunger.” They were put up at the Salvation Army for the day and expected to continue the pilgrimage the next day.

A month later only 23 veterans returned through Three Forks. The remaining two men could have been among the first recruits of the “Bonus Army.” The Bonus Army, which grew to over 17,000 people by the summer of 1932, gathered at a “Hooverville” on Anacostia Flats across the river from the D.C. core. Veterans and their families were desperate to receive their Adjusted Service Certificate monies. Congress had authorized the Certificates in 1924 with a pay out date in 1945. The ravages of the depression urged the “Bonus Army” to campaign for an earlier date to redeem the Certificates.

On June 17, 1932, the House approved the Patman Bonus Bill that would have moved forward the redemption date, but it was blocked by the Senate. President Hoover lost control of the situation when General Douglas MacArthur, fearing the gathering was a communist plot to overthrow the government, had the 12th Infantry Regiment and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment under the command of Major George S. Patton move in on the shanty town that summer.

The Army forces cleared the camp and burned the shacks. The action taken exacted a horrible price from the vets and their families as at least two veterans were shot and killed, and two infants died of tear gas asphyxiation, and other men, women and children were injured or exposed to tear gas.

It was another four years before the bonus was paid, but the Bonus Army’s gathering and the action at Anacostia Flats proved to be the impetus for the passage of the G.I. Bill of Rights in 1944 and formation of the Veterans Administration.