

## A Sketch of Historic Old Roundup And Some of the Pioneers of the Musselshell Valley

**F**OR over a quarter of a century, quaint, historic, romantic old Roundup has nestled in its picturesque location on Half Breed creek, a short distance above its confluence with the Musselshell river, with rim rocks—veritable Palisades—rising majestically on either side, content to follow in the even tenor of its way. No prettier location for a little hamlet can be found than this spot chosen by the founder of Roundup, on the banks of two winding streams, protected from the blasts of the north wind by the massive formations of rock, which in turn are colored in manifold splendor by the setting sun of a summer's evening. Ideal, indeed, is the site of this historic town.

the farmer. Thus, Roundup got its name from the industry which once held undisputed sway over the Musselshell valley, but which is fast giving way to the settler from the East. McMillan did not remain in Roundup very long, selling out to S. H. Erwin after he had been there two years. McMillan left the country and was lost track of, while his successor conducted the postoffice and trading point until 1902 when M. M. Klein, who now owns practically all of old Roundup, appeared on the scene. The changes were few and far between in this easy-going hamlet and it practically stands today as it did almost when it was first founded. In 1893 several of the log buildings burned down, a sheepman from Flat-

out, this pioneer is a man anyone may feel proud to know. The subject of this sketch is a deputy sheriff of Yellowstone county, having been appointed to that position by Sheriff Web, who was shot and killed by a horsethief, Bickford, last spring. The desperado afterwards being shot in a sheep wagon by a posse. Fisco, who knows this section of the state like a book, was the first one to take the trail of the outlaw. Mr. Fisco is still a comparatively young man and may yet live to see many changes brought about in dear old Montana.

W. F. STRAIT.

W. F. Strait, who conducts a general

West, thence by the old bull teams to Helena.

Montana just suited him and he has stuck to her ever since, through thick and thin. He was first employed by J. T. Murphy, a large stockman and now president of the Montana Cattle Co., and spent his first winter grubbing prickly pears. He spent eighteen years on the range for this outfit, leaving in 1890 to engage in the hotel business at Lavina. Here he spent two years, going from there to old Roundup, where he bought out S. H. Erwin, and has conducted the old cabin saloon there ever since, also acting as postmaster until the removal of the office to the new town, when he resigned his official position.

Mr. Klein's investments in old Roundup were opportune. With the coming of the new railroad and the discovery of coal in the vicinity, a large tract of which he owned, the value of his property jumped to fabulous figures. He controls about 2500 acres of land in the vicinity of old Roundup, 640 acres of which he recently sold to the Republic Coal Co. for \$50,000.00. He owns most of old Roundup and is also interested in considerable property in the new town. He is a director of the First National Bank of Roundup.

Notwithstanding the wealth which has come his way, he is content to live in his pretty log house in the old town with his amiable wife and little daughter, there to enjoy the fruits of a pioneer life in the Treasure State.

### OTHER PIONEERS

O. E. Gale, who now conducts a little road house several miles above old Roundup, has in turn been gold miner, freighter, cow puncher and stockman, and in his forty years of life in the West has gone through many experiences. In 1867 he was a gold and silver miner in California Gulch, where Leadville, Wyo., now is, and in one week cleaned up \$15,000.00. But the life of a miner in those days was care-free and the money went as easy as it came. In the same year he hauled the first load of lumber freighted into Cheyenne, from Boulder City, Colorado, then the terminus of the Union Pacific, which was building to the coast. In 1864 he came to the Musselshell country and became a cow puncher with the New York Cattle company, who had their headquarters a few miles up the river from the old town. In 1893 he rented the ranch and for several years engaged in the cattle business.

John Neiderman, the Elko rancher, came to the Musselshell country in 1883, being a native of Germany. He recently sold his holdings, which had increased in value by reason of the advent of the new railroad, receiving a tidy sum for the place which had been his home for so long, and will retire from active work.

Jim Heart, who also lives near Elso, is another of the old-timers of this section, having been a buffalo hunter in the 70's. He is a typical Westerner and displays the big-hearted, noble traits of a man who has spent the greater part of his life on the plains of the western states.

J. W. Newton, who is now numbered among the business men of the new town, came here in 1884 and located on the ranch where he still resides. He now owns an elegant ranch which borders on the town and which is a valuable piece of property.

The pioneers of the West have, without exception, gone through many hardships and are due all honor and respect by the rising generation and the newcomers from the East, as their coming has, in a measure, been made possible by the labors of these men—the vanguard of civilization and development.

### SOME OF THE OLD COW OUTFITS.

The Three V ranch was located near Lavina and was owned by John T. Murphy of Helena. This is the 79 ranch now.

Horseshoe Bar, owned by Suddith, Montgomery & Fratt, was located near the present town of Broadview. W. X. Suddith still runs this brand.

Seven ranch, owned by Hank Freizer, who now lives in Helena.

Mule Track brand run by old man Cooper.

NF ranch, owned and operated by the Northfield Ranch Co., an English concern. In the early 80's this ranch was sold to Lowher & Clifton, also Englishmen, who still own it. Both of these gentlemen have prominent connections in England, H. C. Lowher being a brother of the chairman of the present House of Lords. This ranch is located a few miles east of the new town of Roundup.

The Block ranch near the present station of Delphi, owned by Balch &

Bacon of Cheyenne, Wyo. James Spendiff, sheriff of Yellowstone county in 1886 and 1887, was foreman of this ranch, being succeeded on his death by his brother George, who now owns the place.

The RL ranch at the big bend of the Musselshell river, conducted by Ryan Bros. of Leavenworth, Kansas. This outfit had a blooded racing strain of horses and produced "Montana," a world winner in his class.

HX outfit owned by Samuel Coffman. This brand is still in existence, being used by John Chandler.

Nulin Cattle company, J. L. Nulin, manager. Their brand was JM connected.

The Merridan Cattle Co., consisting of a number of college students from the East, had their ranch on Fating creek. The members of the company were E. B. Carter, who owns the ranch now, Fred Allen and Al Squires. This outfit went broke in 1886 as a result of the severe winter together with a good many other outfits, but was reorganized the next spring, finally going out of business in the 90's. Messrs. Allen and Squires married prominent New York society ladies, and are now prominent business men of that city.

The Dude E ranch located near Elso, was owned and operated by a company of eastern capitalists and the Remington Fire Arms company, the foreman being J. B. Hereford, the present sheriff of Yellowstone county. This company was known as the New York Cattle company and went out of business in 1893. The ranch got its nickname from the fact that its brand was an "E" that looked somewhat like a Greek character, and was called the Dude E by the cow-punchers.



Old Roundup, Showing Half Breed Creek in Foreground. Taken June, 1908.

During the twenty-six years of its existence, Roundup may not have witnessed splendid spectacles or gorgeous fetes in honor of prominent personages, or engaged in big social events such as the elite East would delight in, yet in its day, it has entertained many a weary cow puncher looking for strays, or the jolly roundup gangs and the dances, which were the principal social events of the time, participated in by the pretty, athletic girl of the Golden West and the brawny cow boy, equalled in loyalty and genuine happiness, if not in splendor, the most elaborate affairs in the drawing rooms of any smart set.

Never did the inhabitants of this little burg dream that at some time in the future a great transcontinental railroad would pass its very doorsteps, breaking the isolation which it had grown to become accustomed to and awakening the country to its true possibilities; never did they imagine that in the bowels of the earth below them was a vast coal field, the wealth of which is almost incalculable. These things, however, have come to pass, and today new and greater Roundup is in evidence while Old Roundup stands as a tribute to the pioneers of the West.

Roundup was first settled in the year 1882, by and old trapper and buffalo hunter by the name of James McMillan, and it is thought that his wife was the first white woman to make her home in this part of the Musselshell valley. They lived in several log cabins and conducted a little store and saloon as a means of livelihood. The same year application was made to have a postoffice established, but it was not until a year later that the order for the establishing of the office and the stamp of official approval put on the name of Roundup.

James McMillan, the first postmaster was the first one to suggest the name of Roundup, and it does not take a great deal of imagination to figure out why this name was suggested. The cattle industry as it was conducted in those days with the vast stretch of open range, was at its height, and numerous big cattle outfits were located along the Musselshell river. The "roundup" is inseparably connected with the cattle industry and bears the same relation to it that the harvest does to

willow by the name of McFarland losing his life in the fire. McFarland in a drunken stupor overturned a lamp thereby causing the fire which cost him his life.

In 1886 the first bridge over the Musselshell was built at this place, but was washed out in the spring of 1887, after one of the most severe winters Montana has ever known, during which many thousands of heads of cattle were frozen to death. This bridge was an old-fashioned wooden affair and was not replaced until 1893, when the iron bridge which now spans the river was put in.

The lives of some of the old pioneers of this section of the Musselshell valley are so closely interwoven with the history of the old town that a description is incomplete without some reference to these staunch men of the plains.

### JOHN L. FISCO

John L. Fisco, or Lew Fisco, as he is familiarly known, is perhaps the oldest resident of this section. He came to Montana in the seventies from Davenport, Iowa, and was within thirty miles of Custer's battlefield at the time of the massacre, although he knew nothing of it until afterwards. At this time he was a buffalo hunter confining his hunting ground to southeastern Montana. With the disappearance of the buffalo, which the oldtimers never could explain satisfactorily, as it seemed as if the earth opened up and swallowed them; Fisco came to the Musselshell country and hired out as cow puncher with the Block outfit owned by Balch & Bacon. This was in the year 1882. Three years later he became connected with the NF ranch, a short distance below the new town of Roundup, with whom he stayed until 1893 when he purchased the Star ranch on Half Breed. He now resides with his wife and family on a homestead on the same stream about four miles above old Roundup.

Lew Fisco has led the life of a true westerner and his character is that of one who has roughed it most of his life. True as a die, straight as a string, with a nature that sympathizes with the one that is down and

store at old Roundup, is also one of the oldtimers of the Musselshell valley. He first came to Montana in 1883 and engaged in the stock business, having his ranch on Half Breed above old Roundup. In 1898 he closed out his stock business and returned East to his former home in Shakopee, Minn., but being locost, returned to Montana in 1900, to venture this time in the sheep business. He run sheep for four years when he dispersed of his interests to engage in the store business at old Roundup where he has remained until the present day.

"Uncle Bill," as he is familiarly known by his intimate friends, has been closely associated with the history of the Musselshell valley and old Roundup, and has seen all the phases of Western life. He has ridden in many a "roundup" and his experiences on the range would fill a book of many pages and would make a most intensely interesting story.

Mr. Strait has played an active part in the gaining of the West, and must be given due honor with the rest of Montana's pioneers.

### M. M. KLEIN

A pioneer of not only the Musselshell valley but of Montana is M. M. Klein. His career is a chequered one, and many have been the ups and downs he experienced in trying to gain a foothold. Leaving his home in Bohemia in the old country at the age of nine, he became a cabin boy on a German-Lloyd steamer running between Bremen and New York. Hearing so much of the opportunities in this great country during his periodical visits here, he decided after two years of sea life to cast his lot with the home of the free, and in 1874 we find him a boot black and newsboy on the streets of New York city. The call of the West, however, was too strong to resist and he gradually drifted toward the setting sun. In 1876 he plies his trade in St. Louis and three years later comes to Montana, taking a boat to Omaha and the Union Pacific from there to Corinne, Idaho, then the largest freighting point in the

## ON THE ROUNDUP

### A Trip With The Roundup Gang

So many of the Readers of The Record, having come West only in the last year or so, are not familiar with their new surroundings to know what a "roundup," from which the city derives its name, really is. Let us, therefore, turn back the wheel of Time and accompany the cowpuncher on an oldtime "roundup."

"Well, boys, cinch on the leather, them fat ones must be on the road to Billings. We are going to top the early market for Montana rangers. Thus spoke Masger Hightower to Lew Fisco, James Gyle, Ed. Creekbum and others of the NF outfit. "We will get a good start in the morning and on Friday we will throw in our outfit with the 'Pumpkin Rollers' at Martinsdale. And mind you, 'Forty Thieves,' don't get taken in by the gals so you can't get off with the bunch."

The "Pumpkin Rollers" was an appellation given the cattlemen of the upper Musselshell, while those in the

vicinity of Roundup were nicknamed "Forty Thieves."

"We will begin at Martinsdale," continued Hightower, "and drive down to the Brockway Crossing. Throw in everything that looks like beef, boys."

"Don't expect to worry 'em that far do you, Bill?" says smoky Pete, "they'll look like greyhounds by the time they get to Chicago."

"Cut them out whenever you get what you want for a shipment and drive into Billings with 'em," replies the foreman.

"No cutting out until you get by that spring at Roundup and we've had that dance," pipes in a chorus of voices.

The next morning dawned beautifully and the NF roundup outfit, consisting of about forty cowpunchers, is on the trail for the upper Musselshell to join the "Pumpkin Rollers" accompanied by mess and bunk wagons and a bunch

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A Scene on Half Breed Creek a Short Distance Above Old Roundup. In 1886 a colony of half breeds wintered on this stream at a point about six miles above where this picture was taken. Ever since that time the creek has been known as Half Breed. Some of the remains of the half breed's habitations are still in evidence.