



North Fork Landowners' Association Spring 2022 Newsletter

75th ANNIVERSARY

North Fork Improvement Association and North Fork Landowners' Association
1947 - 2022

Polebridge, Montana
June 2, 1947

A meeting of the residents of the North Fork vicinity was held on Monday night, June 2, 1947, at the home of Mr and Mrs Walter Block. The meeting was called to order by Dr J.S. McFarland who explained that it had been called to discuss the possibility of starting an organization for the purpose of joining together to improve conditions in the North Fork for the entire community and stated briefly several things that needed improving in the area, such as the conditions of the roads and bridges, fire prevention and control, wild life conservation, and the mail service for the residents. He suggested that an opinion of a group would have more force than that as expressed as individuals...

SEE MORE ABOUT OUR 1st ELECTED OFFICERS from 1947 on the pages inside >>

NORTH FORK FIRE MITIGATION COMMITTEE

by Allen Chrisman

Join us on **June 15** at 9:30 a.m. at Heaphy's to visit properties affected by the 1988 Red Bench and the 2003 Wedge Canyon fires, and subsequent fuel reduction efforts. Learn about the Wedge Canyon TIP project and how to apply for funding!

Be sure to put **July 13** on your Calendars! Our **Annual Firewise Day** will be held at 9:30 a.m. at the Hall preceding the Summer Interlocal. The North Fork has been recognized as a Firewise Community since 2006!! This year we'll view the video "Living with Wildfire" featuring Dr. Paul Hessburg. This presentation is a follow-up to his "Era of Mega Fires" video we viewed in 2019. We'll discuss the Wedge Canyon TIP Project and how to apply for funding; the North Fork Community Wildfire Protection Plan; the upcoming Fire Season and more!

Join your neighbors and don't miss this annual event!!



2022 North Fork Firewise Day

North Fork Landowners Association

Fire Mitigation Committee

Wednesday, July 13, 2022 0930 - 1200

Sondreson Community Hall, Whale Creek

Time	Presenter	Topic
0930	Allen Chrisman	Welcome & Introductions
0935	Allen Chrisman	Living with Wildfire Video, Dr. Paul Hessburg
1045	Break	
1100	Sean Johnson	NRCS Wedge Canyon TIP Project
1120	Allen Chrisman/ Molly Shepherd/ Lincoln Chute	North Fork Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan Update
1130	Deb Starling/ Carol Daly	FEPC Hazardous Fuels Grant Status and Opportunities
1135	Andy Huntsberger	2021 Fire Season Projections
1155	Molly Shepherd	Wrap-up and Adjourn

LOOK Inside for our

CALENDAR of SUMMER PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Volunteers needed: SONDRESON HALL SPRING CLEAN-UP, Saturday, May 14 at 10:00 a.m.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Snow season is begrudgingly giving way to mud season which means summer is just around the corner. I think we're all looking forward to a more "normal" summer where we can enjoy each other's company, greet old friends, and make new ones. Special thanks to Lorna Rittenburg for putting together a GREAT social committee, and the summer activities calendar. I'm sure there are many things that will be of interest to you. Also, a shout out to Chris Heitz for all her hard work in getting this newsletter out. In addition, Lois Walker's presentation on the 75-year history of the NFIA and NFLA on June 12 before the Membership Meeting is not to be missed. Be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities. We'll try to get them posted on the website (nflandowners.org) as they become known. Don't forget the Hall cleanup, May 14, the Fuels Reduction Field Trip on June 15, and the annual Interlocal and Firewise presentation on July 13. Only a few of the highlights this summer has to offer you!

Richard Hildner, President



Monica with three cubs, June 3, 2020 – W.K. Walker

NEW Polebridge Bear Smart Program: Spring Report, 2022

by Suzanne Hildner

The North Fork Preservation Association (www.gravel.org) has initiated the **Polebridge Bear Smart Program** in response to the tragic loss of four female grizzly bears (Monica and her triplet cubs) last summer. These bears ultimately became habituated to unsecured garbage and food rewards. The NFLA Board is supporting Bear Smart by appointing Suzanne Hildner as a NFLA liaison to the program. The goal of this program is to prevent human-bear conflict in the North Fork by implementing several programs this spring and summer:



- Bear resistant garbage containers (90 gal. Kodiak cans) for purchase at a reduced price of \$300, or for loan to property owners;
- free Bear Smart Training for Polebridge businesses & their seasonal employees; and
- an educational **Bear Fair**, scheduled for **Saturday, July 30**, at Home Ranch Bottoms with presentations, educational booths, and fun for the whole family.

Polebridge Bear Smart has been funded by a grant, and generous donations from North Forkers. If you have questions, are interested in purchasing or renting a bear resistant garbage container, or would like to volunteer to help at the Bear Fair, please contact Suzanne Hildner (sdhildner@icloud.com). **HELP KEEP OUR VALLEY WILD, AND BEARS SAFE AND HEALTHY!**



HAPPY 75th ANNIVERSARY



Please join us as we celebrate those first residents of the North Fork who came together in June and July, 1947, to form an organization that would be named the North Fork Improvement Association, subsequently changed to the North Fork Landowners' Association in 2005. This Spring Newsletter will feature the 7 individuals who were nominated as Officers and Directors by the 24 people who attended those first meetings in June, 1947.

Dr. Jack S. McFarland
Mrs. Walter (Ethyle) Block
Ralph Thayer
Walter Hammer

Walter Block
Myrel (M.J.) Greenshields
Mrs. L.E. (Madge) Cooper

Their concerns were itemized in the initial meeting on June 2, 1947, by Dr. J.S. McFarland:

“...several things that needed improving in the area, such as

- the conditions of the roads and bridges,*
- fire prevention and control,*
- wild life conservation, and*
- the mail service for residents.”*

There was consensus of all in attendance that

“...not as much could hope to be accomplished by individuals acting alone as by a united group of residents of the area.”

The organization's stated purpose was outlined in a PREAMBLE dated June 9, 1947:

“We who are real estate owners in the Upper Valley of the North Fork of the Flathead River feel, after many years of non-organized effort on the part of many individuals to promote the general welfare of the community, that the time has come for the individual real estate owners in the community to join themselves into an organization so that united effort can be put forth to promote the general welfare of the community.”

We hope you enjoy the stories and photographs on the following pages. If you would like to know more about life on the North Fork, go to the NFLA website www.nflandowners.org. Select North Fork History Project on the left, and then click on Oral History Interviews. You can listen to the storytellers, or read or print their interviews. Feel free to contact Lois Walker, NFLA Historian, with any questions, or for specific searches, at lewalker@nvdi.com.



Special Thanks and Appreciation!

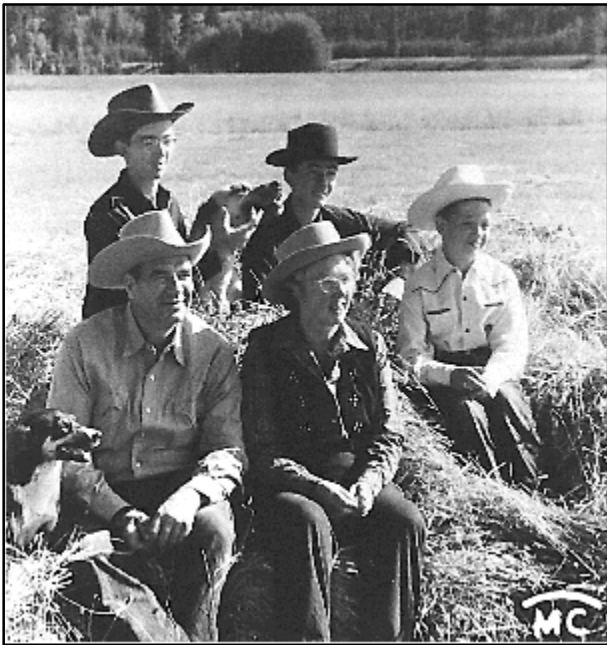
to Lois Walker, Historian

This 75th Anniversary Newsletter could not have been possible without the input, aid, and contributions from our Historian, Lois Walker! Thank you so much, Lois, for all the hours, meticulous research, and help that you give to the North Fork Landowners' Association.

Dr. JOHN (Jack) SLOVER McFARLAND

By Jim Rittenburg

June, 1947 Founder & 1st President



Christmas card sent to all MC guests with Jack & Mary in front, sons George, Gordon & David in back. Photo courtesy of Jack McFarland.

Jack McFarland was born in Detroit on August 15, 1907 and moved at an early age to Republic, WA. He was mostly raised in Washington and Alaska. He obtained his veterinary degree from the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State College in Pullman. Dr. McFarland married Mary Donworth of Seattle in 1933 in Kalispell, and in 1934 he and his wife moved to Whitefish where he established his veterinary practice. Mary had received training in veterinary medicine as well. During the war years in the early 40s Jack served as the State Game Warden heading up Montana Fish and Game. Jack and Mary lived in Whitefish until around 1943 when they moved to the Polebridge area and established the Quarter Circle MC Ranch.

Jack first heard about Polebridge when he was living in Alaska. His mining partner in Alaska, Gordon Branch, asked him to visit the homestead that he had inherited, the Ike Chance homestead on Big Prairie. Jack fell in love with the North Fork and said the valley reminded him of Alaska. He and Mary spent their honeymoon at the Chance homestead, and eventually purchased it from Gordon Branch. They subsequently named one of their sons

“Gordon” after their good friend. Later, Gordon McFarland named his son “John” (Jack), today known to many of us as Jack McFarland who remains one of the few in-holders in GNP.

Jack was big into the outdoors and backcountry. While living in Alaska he was a bush pilot, which turned out to serve him well in the North Fork. He built an airstrip on the ranch and bought a small plane, which he used to bring in guests and supplies. Sometimes in the 40s and 50s mail service to the NF was unreliable, with occasional month-long gaps between deliveries. This was a serious problem for the ranch, which needed to correspond with prospective guests during winter and spring for the upcoming summer. After filing complaints with the post office Jack started using his plane to fly to West Glacier to pick up the mail. Jack and Mary were good friends with the Sondresons who were right across the river. Loyd Sondreson was also a pilot and had an airstrip on the west side of the river. Jack was very involved with the American Wilderness Society and establishment of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, which was one of his favorite places to go backcountry horse packing, riding and fishing.

Jack and Mary purchased the Fenton homestead around 1942 and came to the North Fork for summers several years before becoming year-round residents, with their three sons, in 1947. The old Fenton homestead became the center of Quarter Circle MC Ranch operations, and eventually Jack and Mary purchased other nearby homesteads, including the Miller and Doverspike homesteads, bringing the ranch up to a total of about 540 acres.

The ranch became the social hub of the community in the days before there was a community hall. Historically through the late 20s and 30s there were people in the NF who did not get along with each other. In the winter of 1929, there were three people shot and killed within a few months of each other. The sheriff at the time said he was not going to snowshoe up in the middle of the winter, so the county coroner just logged the deaths as justifiable homicides. By the 1940s, Jack and a number of others thought that people needed to get together more and in 1947 they organized the North Fork Improvement Association (NFIA). Jack became the first President from June-September 1947, after which time Walt Hammer became president. Apparently, one thing the NFIA was trying to “improve” was the relationships between neighbors, and according to Mary the best way



Dr. Jack McFarland (left) with his airplane and Ben Heriem, Quarter Circle MC wrangler, February 1950. Photo credit – Mel Ruder

to promote better relations on the NF was through more social activities. For many years during the summer months there were monthly NFIA meetings held alternately at the Quarter Circle MC ranch and Kintla Ranch to the north, followed by a square dance. These dances would last until the early morning hours with a food break at midnight, and became the main social event of the NF. In 1952-53 the Community Hall was built on the other side of the river on land donated by Madge and Ollie Terrian and with logs donated by Ruth and Loyd Sondreson. Once the community hall was built, NFIA square dances were held there, but Quarter Circle and Kintla Ranch would also still hold dances. Each 4th of July the Hall hosted a fish fry, turkey shoot, fireworks, potluck, and of course a square dance!

Dr. Jack McFarland passed away at the ranch on July 4, 1957. He was 49 years old. Mary, who was born in Seattle in 1901, lived to be 97 years old and passed away in 1998. The Quarter Circle MC Ranch operated until 1966. In 1967 GNP filed a

“declaration of taking” for many of the homesteads within the Park, including the Quarter Circle MC Ranch, owned at the time by Mary. This was a controversial process by which the National Parks essentially confiscated land from in-holders by offering them a take-it-or-leave-it sum of money with no option to refuse to sell. The Park’s intention was to return the land to its wild state, and so shortly after they took the ranch they sold, or took down, all the buildings except for the historic homestead house and the historic barn. Those buildings remained for about 10 more years and then the Park showed up one day and burned them down. According to grandson Jack, Mary said a group had started the process to list the two buildings on the National Register, and the Park acted quickly to burn them down so that this did not happen. For those who drive out to Big Prairie along the inside NF road toward Kinta Lake you can see the McCarthy homestead cabin which did get preserved. That is just slightly south of the southern border of what used to be the 540-acre Quarter Circle MC Ranch. Grandson Jack and his wife Sue still own property in the Park, bordering the southern end of the old ranch.

Many thanks to Jack McFarland for providing background information & personal insights used in this article

Original members in 1965: Milton Huck, Ella & Frank



Wurtz, Harry & Lena Holcomb, Ralph Thayer

Mail Delivery to Polebridge Ranger Station



Photos courtesy of Larry Wilson

WALTER BLOCK

June, 1947

Vice President

ETHYLE BLOCK

By Larry Wilson

June, 1947
September, 1947

Secretary/Treasurer
Secretary/Treasurer



Ethyle and Walter Block
Photo courtesy Larry Wilson

Walter and Ethyle Block were among the first retirees to come to the North Fork. After Walt's retirement as a firefighter in Milwaukee, they purchased the Price Homestead on Trail Creek and moved in with their sons: Dan and his wife Gerane, and Clyde who was always called "Bud."

The entire family quickly became an important part of the community. The boys worked for various ageing homesteaders, and started a mink ranch at Trail Creek. Bud married Zelda Clapper, daughter of a North Fork homesteader. Bud's children and grandchildren still own and recreate at their cabins on Trail Creek.

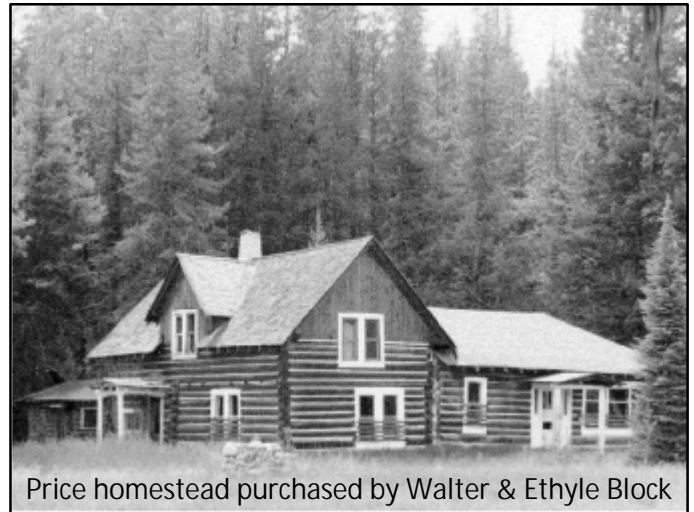
Walter and Ethyle both were involved in the organization of the North Fork Improvement Association; in fact, they hosted the first organizational meeting on June 2, 1947. Walt was the first Vice President and later served as a Director and President of the group. Ethyle was the first Secretary/Treasurer and served several terms over the next few years.

The Price Homestead that they purchased included a two-story log house, a garage, walk-in root cellar, and a large barn. Walter also kept up the large garden, and was known for his strawberries that he shared every summer.

Both were known for their hospitality and often hosted dinner parties, and even dances in their comfortable home. You were always expected to eat when you visited, as Ethyle was a wonderful cook and an outstanding baker. I can still smell her bread as it baked!

When they moved to Arizona due to Walter's failing health, the buildings were never really used again. The house was dismantled and moved to Big Prairie, and the last buildings, including the barn, were destroyed by the 2003 Wedge Canyon Fire.

Today the Bud Block descendants still own three cabins on the Price Homestead, with three other owners who purchased portions of the Homestead.



Price homestead purchased by Walter & Ethyle Block

Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson



Border Crossing, 1945
Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson

MYREL (M.J.) GREENSHIELDS

By Lois Walker

**June, 1947
September, 1947**

**Dist 1 (South) Director
Vice President**

Myrel James “Mickey” Greenshields was born in 1904 in Oklahoma, one of eight children. In 1926 he graduated from the Montana State Normal College in Dillon, where he got his teaching degree and excelled in athletics. He began his long career as a Montana educator in Butte, where he taught for five years, and then in Deer Lodge for another five years.

He first learned about the North Fork from his wife, whom he married in 1931. Gwendolyn Bowman Greenshields was the daughter of Murray C. Bowman. She and her dad taught at the Polebridge School off and on from 1919 to 1925. They subsequently taught in Bigfork and in Belt, where Murray was superintendent of schools. While Murray and his wife Gerelda were living in the North Fork, they filed on a homestead about two miles north of Polebridge and built a cabin there.

In 1935, Myrel (known by most folks as M.J.) took a job as principal, and later superintendent, of the grade schools in Big Timber, where Gwendolyn also taught. They were there for ten years, where he was also active in the Montana Education Association, Boy Scouting, the Lions Club, and the Montana Chess Association. Gwen volunteered many hours to the Girl Scouts and the Big Timber Woman’s Club.

It was during this period that they began coming to the North Fork again. In the early 1940s, they built and rented a small group of guest cabins known as the Glacier Wilderness Cabins on the road between the Mercantile and the Polebridge entrance to Glacier Park. In 1940, they were late getting back to open the schools because a forest fire destroyed the Bowman’s cabin, and the Greenshields were busy fitting up one of their cabins to accommodate Gwen’s parents.

For whatever reason, the Greenshields stayed full-time in Polebridge during the 1947-1948 school year. Perhaps M.J. was on sabbatical. But they enjoyed their time immensely and made many friends. Most weekends there were dinner parties and three tables of progressive bridge underway. When the North Fork Improvement Association formed in June 1947, they were active members, and they enjoyed the square dances hosted by the McFarland family at their Quarter Circle MC Ranch and the Ross Wilson family at Kintla Ranch up north. M.J. served as a South Director for the NFIA from June 1947 to September 1948, and as Vice President of the organization from September 1947 to August 1948.

In June 1948, the Greenshields sold the Glacier Wilderness Cabins to Vern and May Mauritsen of Sunburst, Montana. The Mauritsens added a lovely big cabin to the complex and operated the guest cabins for a number of years. M.J. accepted a job as registrar at Clark College in Washington, and they became residents of Vancouver. They still returned to the North Fork occasionally, staying with the Mauritsens. By 1953, the Greenshields were living back in Big Timber and he was again superintendent of schools there. The Glacier Wilderness Cabins had a succession of owners through the late 1970s. What was left of the complex was destroyed by the 1988 Red Bench Fire.



The Glacier Wilderness Cabins just as the 1988 Red Bench Fire was approaching.

Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson

RALPH THAYER

By Lois Walker

June, 1947

Dist 1 (South) Director

September, 1947 Dist 1 (South) Director

Ralph Lucas Thayer was born April 5, 1890 and grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. When he was 16, he set out to see the West. He landed a job in central Washington with a surveying firm out of Seattle, charting property boundaries and routes for railroads and irrigation projects. He then worked laying tracks for construction of the Oregon Washington Railroad and Navigation Co.

In 1909 he came to the Flathead Valley. He took a job for I.N. Dally, mapping the country as far north as Sage Creek in Canada. He had his eye on 160 acres in the North Fork that he wanted to homestead, but he had to take “squatter’s rights” for the first two years, because he was not yet old enough to file. The cabin that he built there still stands today.

In addition to his surveying work, he worked driving the stage from Belton to Lake McDonald and helped clear ground for the first chalet in Belton. He also worked hauling freight for Bill Adair to Polebridge and to the oil camps in the North Fork and Canada.

He took his first job with the Forest Service in 1911 and worked for them almost 40 years until 1950. His only break in service was during World War I, when at age 27 he enlisted in the Army and served in France with the 20th Engineers for 21 months. The Forest Service made good use of all his skills. He helped build several ranger stations, cruised timber in advance of timber sales, worked as a log scaler, fought forest fires, cleared trails, and hung telephone lines. He also kept his hand in as a surveyor.

During his career, he was credited with laying out 700-800 miles of new trails in the Whitefish Range and the Tally Lake District. As he once said, “I located all these trails from the main river. Up pretty near every crick. Alone.” It was only fitting that in July 1984 the Forest Service dedicated Trail 26 in the Whitefish Range as the Ralph L. Thayer National Recreational Trail. It extends from Werner Park, 18 miles along the Whitefish Divide, to Red Meadow Road. It is a wonderful tribute to the man who did so much to establish trails in the North Fork.

Ralph retired in 1950 as Glacier View District assistant ranger. He remained an active member of the North Fork community for many years. When the North Fork Improvement Association formed in 1947, he served as a North Director from June 1947 to August 1948 and again from 1962 to 1963. In 1965, he and several other homesteaders were made life members of the organization.

Ralph’s tales of his experiences over the years are true-life legends of the North Fork: surviving a grizzly bear attack, getting caught in a blizzard on Fool Hen Hill for 2½ days in -20 temperatures, sliding backward in his car over a 100-foot cliff near Canyon Creek, losing a horse trying to cross Dutch Creek in high water, etc. Even in his final years at the Veterans Home in Columbia Falls, he was still active hunting and bringing meat back for his friends.

Ralph was married twice and outlived both of his wives. He first married Dorothy “Dora” Burgette in January 1938, and they were together until her death in 1959 at age 97. He married Jessie G. Lang in 1962, but she died six years later in 1968 at age 78.

Ralph passed away at the Veterans Home on March 26, 1983, just shy of his 94th birthday. He was a proud member of the American Legion and the Odd Fellows Lodge, and he liked to note that he had voted in 17 Presidential elections.



Ralph Thayer
Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson

Mrs L.E. (Madge) Cooper Terrian

By Larry Wilson

June, 1947

September, 1947

Dist 2 (North) Director

Dist 2 (North) Director

Madge Cooper, who later married Oliver (Ollie) Terrian, was a real North Fork character. Only 4'11" tall, with short hair, Madge dressed like a man and had a real gravelly voice – many people took her for a man when they first saw her. To match her appearance, she could swear like a muleskinner; in fact, I remember my grandfather meeting her one day when she came by on her horse. They stood outside for quite a while, visiting, and occasionally loud laughter could be heard. When he came back into the cabin, he commented what a funny “man” that was. But when he found out that the person he had been swapping dirty jokes with was actually a woman, he was flabbergasted and very embarrassed – I don’t think he ever spoke to her again.

Another humorous recollection comes from Richard Hildner in his Oral History Interview found on the North Fork Landowners website www.nflandowners.org. Richard recalls that “Madge was...certainly under 5 feet, and when you saw Madge coming down the road in one of those Pontiac automobiles you weren’t sure if there was anybody driving, because she couldn’t see over the steering wheel; she looked through the steering wheel.”

Madge was convinced that oil would be found on the North Fork, and accordingly held oil leases on over 4,000 acres in British Columbia, and owned nearly 1,000 acres on the North Fork. Although she admitted that she was land poor, she always felt that it would pay off when, inevitably, oil was found. Among her holdings was the 160 acres at the Border that she named Moose City, 160 acres on Trail Creek, and 320 acres at the mouth of Whale Creek.

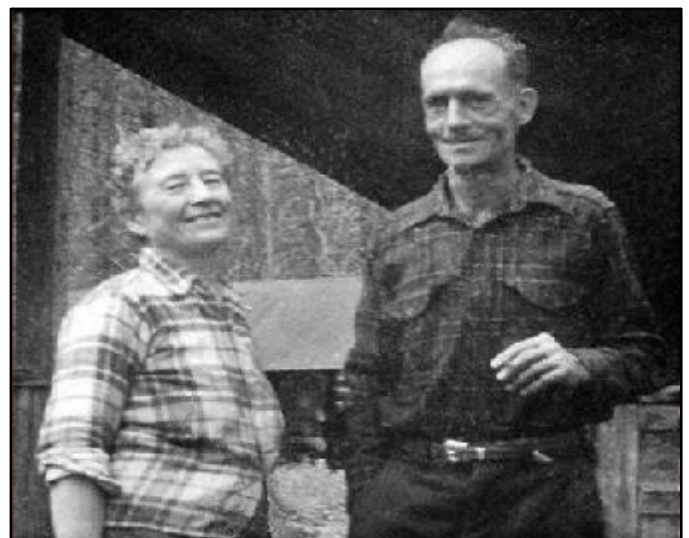
A retired railroad telegrapher who had served at Belton for twenty years (known as Madge Sutherland in those years), she became familiar with the North Fork. Perhaps because of all the property that she owned, Madge was a big fan of the new North Fork Improvement Association as a way to improve the North Fork Road, and the phone service. After all, she had already laid out her townsite at the Border, Moose City.

Although I only knew her last husband, Ollie Terrian, North Fork rumor was that she had been married seven or eight times – not for love, but to avoid paying for help to run her ranch which included rental cabins, horses, cattle, chickens, and a big garden.

Madge Cooper Terrian was a force on the North Fork, and an appropriate charter member of the North Fork Improvement Association Board. She and Ollie later donated the land for construction of Sondreson Hall.



Madge Terrian with a lamp in her home.
Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson



Madge & Ollie Terrian on their wedding day.
Photo courtesy of Larry Wilson

WALTER HAMMER

By Chris Heitz

**June, 1947
September, 1947**

**Dist 2 (North) Director
President**

The *Hungry Horse News* first mentions Walter Hammer in October, 1946, saying “Walter Hammer returned from his trip to Denver and Texas and plans to spend the winter on his place near Trail Creek.” Unfortunately, there is no mention of his age, or where he came from, or why he moved to the North Fork of the Flathead River.

However, Richard Hildner recalls that “Walt came from Kansas City where he worked as an engraver. He told me that he liked the work, but the work environment was making him sick, so he moved to Montana.” Richard also says that in “the early years Walt and his brother tried to make a living by raising mink” just south of Colts Creek. “The plan was to trap beaver and use the beaver carcasses to feed the mink that they kept in cages. The winter was long and hard and Walt’s brother had a mental breakdown... The big problem was what to do with the mink? I was told the solution was to open the cages and release them into the wild. I remember seeing the remains of the cages when I fished in front of the Johnson place in 1958.”

Larry Wilson remembers Walt’s sharp wit, and his popularity with his North Fork neighbors. In June, 1947, he was part of the group of concerned citizens that gathered together and formed what was to become the North Fork Improvement Association, and Walt was elected as a Director of District 2 Trail Creek. Three months later, at the first formal meeting, he was elected President. That same summer, the *Hungry Horse News* reports that the “Ranchers of the Flathead’s North Fork will hold their August meeting Monday at 8 pm... Reports of the following committees will be heard: fur, fish and game, Chairman Walter Hammer.”

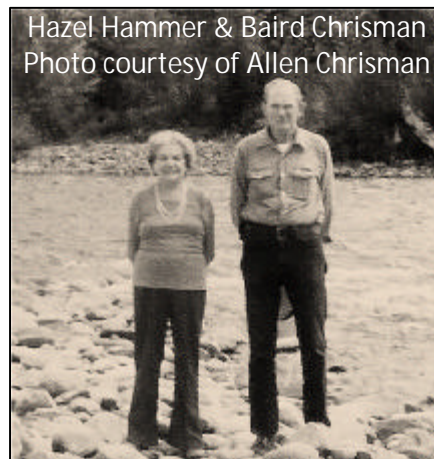
In addition to being well-thought of by his neighbors, it appears that Walt enjoyed dancing. In fact, the *Hungry Horse News* reports in July 1948, “Saturday evening the North Fork neighbors of Walter Hammer surprised him and his new bride, the former Hazel Monson, Phoenix, AZ, with an old-fashioned charivari. Hazel...spent last summer at the Quarter Circle MC Ranch...and walked off with...[one of]our most eligible bachelors.” Walt and Hazel built their home and guest cabins at Placer Point along the river, and across from Kintla Creek. Allen Chrisman remembers going with Walt and Hazel to McFarland’s at Big Prairie inside Glacier Park for Saturday night dances.

Walt was a craftsman of many talents from masonry to log home construction and restoration. Cabins that he built or restored are still in use today. Lois Walker says that he was especially known for his elaborate stone fireplaces. In the early 1960s, Richard Hildner worked with Walt as he built the Foreman fireplace. “Almost one entire summer...we hauled rock for that fireplace, and I would just mix mortar. Walt would say, “More mortar!” and I would start mixing mortar, and then he would say, “I need more rock,” and I would keep a pile of rock in front of him as he worked... He didn’t say ten words in a working day, other than “More mortar”...He was just very laconic and quiet. But he was an artisan, as well.”

In the late 1970s, the Hammers sold their 87-acre property, and it was eventually acquired by the Forest Service as part of the Wild & Scenic River corridor in 1978. Walt and Hazel moved to Green Valley, AZ, according to Allen Chrisman, where they frequently entertained their friends from the North Fork.



Walter Hammer
Photo courtesy of Allen Chrisman



You can hear more about the Hammers in Richard Hildner’s oral interview posted on the North Fork Landowners website under History Committee.



Pat Cole on Hammer’s fireplace
Photo courtesy of Jon Cole

NFIA-NFLA MEMORIES *by Larry Wilson*

It is hard for me to imagine that this is the 75th birthday of the North Fork Landowners' Association, formerly known as the North Fork Improvement Association. What makes it hard to imagine is that the fact that I have been involved for that entire time.

Of course, when the organization began in 1947, I was more of an observer than an active member since I was only 10 years old. The organization was different in 1947 than it is today, but also similar.

When the NFIA was first organized its main purpose was to provide community voice to promote road improvement, communication improvement, and to bring electricity to the North Fork. But the founders also realized that by socializing they could promote getting along. To encourage attendance at meetings it was decided to hold a monthly dance right after each business meeting. The dances featured live music, plenty of food, and they danced until dawn.

Over the years the organization has evolved. There have been times when the road, endangered species, and land use planning overshadowed everything else. The meetings sometimes ranged from unpleasant to almost dangerous. There were times when it became a social club to avoid argument.

Today, the group tries to maintain a balance. We gather information and try to educate the community. We try to avoid confrontation, and only take stands when the folks are pretty united. Mostly it works.

It shouldn't be that hard to disagree without being disagreeable. What do you think?

FIRE SEASON *by Lynn Ogle, North Fork Fire Chief*

Here we are another year in the North Fork. Soon to come are the tourists, builders and neighbors from far and near. Safety on the road and at home should be our first concern.

I have reminded everyone about Propane, Diesel and Gas safety. It's time again to remind everyone that summer is FIRE season. As you all know Forest Fires have no friends. We often speak about saving our forests for future generations. That is a good dream. But our forests and your trees are a renewable resource and must be managed as such.

We all must do our part to keep our North Fork pristine, safe and beautiful. If we landowners don't do our part to thin and take care of our forests, how can we expect the Forest Service to manage the rest of our surrounding forests?

We have had fires in most of the drainages in the North Fork except Trail creek. The upper Trail creek was logged in the 50s and according to forest managers it is about 80 years old. Lodgepole Pine has a life span of about 80 to 100 years. That is if it doesn't get bugs and die earlier. Fire is our worst enemy.

Think about what you can do to help.

NFLUAC Progress Report *by Randy Keyon, North Fork Land Use Advisory Committee Chairman*

Subsequent to last June's public hearing with the Flathead County Planning Board, the text amendment subcommittee has been working to revise the text amendment document to meet the needs of the community, while at the same recognizing the guidance set forth by the Planning Board.

These efforts have included a meeting with the Planning Board Chair, a work session with the entire Planning Board, and a recent meeting with the new Planning Department Director.

The next steps include completing the update of the draft document, and then providing a formal update to the community through the next several public LUAC meetings which will be scheduled in the near future.

North Fork Landowners' Association
P.O. Box 1603
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

BREAK THE CYCLE !

BEAR SMART PROGRAM
Kodiak Garbage Cans
Available – Page 2

BEAR FAIR
SAVE THE DATE

Saturday

July 30, 2022

Home Ranch Bottoms



Emergency Services on the North Fork

Fire, Sheriff, SAR or Medical Emergency	Call 911
Border Patrol	406-862-2561
Flathead County Sheriff Dispatch	406-758-5610; 758-5585 report a crime
Flathead Nat'l Forest Law Enforcement	406-758-5297
Game Warden	406-249-6231
GNP Polebridge Ranger Station	406-888-7842
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks	406-752-5501
To report a Forest Fire	406-758-5260 Kalispell; 387-3800 H Horse
To report a Poacher	1-800-TIP-MONT (847-6668)
BEAR problems	406-250-0062