

THE MILLEGAN FAMILY by ROY MILLEGAN

One of the earliest and best known pioneer families to settle the Prickly Pear Valley was that of Wallace L. Millegan, who was born in New York on February 4, 1837, to James Millegan, who had come from Scotland in 1805. Wallace, the youngest of nine, was educated in the frontier territory of Wisconsin, receiving his education in a primitive log schoolhouse. He remained with his father until 1859, coming across the plains to Pike's Peak, Colorado, and working at Gregory Diggings with William A. Clark, who later became one of Montana's notorious "Copper Kings."

On April 14, 1863, Wallace Millegan set out for Bannack, Montana, and later to Alder Gulch, which became Virginia City. His claim on Grasshopper Creek, site of Bannack, was Number 29, above Stapleton's discovery. Alder Gulch did not keep him long, and back to Bannack he went. In the Fall, he returned to Iowa, and on April 9, 1864, he married Martha A. Rockefeller, born at Newark on November 14, 1840. They arrived in Bannack on July 29, 1864. Along the way, he had offered her in trade, jokingly, to an Indian, but was rescued by an Indian with whom they were traveling.

At Bannack, Wallace began putting up hay on Horse Prairie and sold the hay that winter in town. He also put the roof on the first building used as a Territorial legislative hall. He always said he never got paid for that job. Although not an expert, Wallace could boast that he beat Governor Sidney Edgerton, Montana's first Territorial Governor, at billiards.

In the Spring of 1865 on their way to Blackfoot City, the Millegans had to stop and milk a cow every time their newborn daughter cried. Once there, they obtained a license for hotel-keeping, which actually was a boarding house. The meals cost \$2, but since eggs cost \$2 a dozen, they realized very little profit. W. A. Clark and a Mr. Fraser operated a store then and boarded with them. When asked what their daughter's name was, Mrs. Millegan stated she had been too busy to name her, so these two men named her Carrie Mitilene. Carrie later became Mrs. Warren Evans, mother of two well known Helena men: Earl, the blacksmith, and Noble P., a merchant, County Commissioner, and Justice of the Peace.

During a stampede to Basin Gulch, Wallace Millegan contacted Mountain Fever, so after he recovered, they left for Helena by ox team, arriving in October of 1865. There was no Main Street at that time, as it was being mined by those looking for the "yellow." During the last part of October, they went into the Prickly Pear Valley, looking at a ranch for their home. It was a piece of ground P. T. Stribling had a quit claim on along the Prickly Pear. Having only one horse, Wallace rode and carried the baby, while his wife walked and carried the gun.

They settled into a 16 x 20 log cabin on the banks of the Prickly Pear. This 160 acres was soon to become theirs with Homestead Certificate Number 13, said certificate being signed by President Grant. In 1872, they bought another



THE MILLEGAN RANCH HOUSE, c.1900

This is the house that raised the Millegan family on the ranch in the Helena Valley. This was the thirteenth homestead in Montana. This home replaced a log one, built in a different location. The ranch was later sold to James Roy Millegan who raised his family of four there. In the picture are Martha A., Nina, and Wallace L. Millegan.

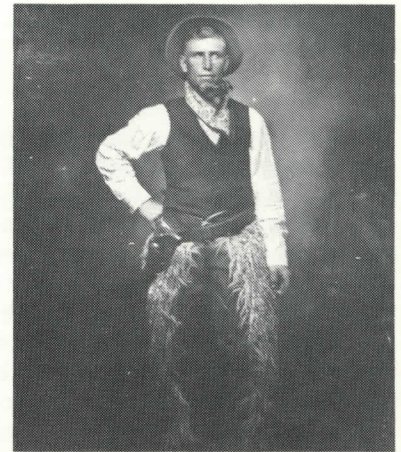
160 acres from P. T. Stribling, which carried with it a water right dated December 27, 1865. Today, this land is owned by Don and Nancy Burnham and Virginia Bompert.

The horse with which the Millegans moved to the Valley was not theirs for long. Several Indians were hanging around the place one day, and they noticed how gentle the horse was and seemed to take a great deal of interest in him. In fact, they took all the interest Mr. Millegan had, for that night they stole the horse. They must have traded him for food, since that Fall Mr. Millegan found a fellow packing a deer into Helena, on his horse, so he got him back.

In the Spring of 1866, the ground in the clearing was plowed with oxen and a hand-made plow, containing a home-made shear. Garden crops were grown and sold to the miners along Last Chance Gulch. After more clearing, peas, wheat, and barley were planted. It is said that in 1871 Wallace sowed the first alfalfa in Montana.

Practically all farm implements he first used were hand-made. Later, he acquired grain drills, a grain cradle, a wood binder without a tie control, and a Russell horsepower threshing machine. Potatoes were always planted by hand and plowed out with a walking plow. In the 1870s it cost twenty-five cents a bushel to thresh peas, twelve and a half cents to harvest oats, and fifteen cents for wheat and barley. Six small horses or four large ones were used on the gang plows. For cultivating potatoes, usually a one-row cultivator was pulled by a mule with a kid astraddle and guided down each row, which got the job done. Hogs were raised by the Millegans, and they acquired over 300 by 1890. Most of them were cross-bred Poland-Chinas. Grains were wheat and barley, with oats for horses. It is noted that here in 1868 wheat averaged 58 bushels to the acre. Some grains were sold to the Kessler Brewery. Morgan horses were purchased in 1882, some of them purebreds, being used mostly as saddle horses. A black Pilot Stallion was purchased as a purebred. These little unheard-of-horses were also used for saddlers. By the late 1880s, 200 to 300 horses were running on the range. Many were sold for saddle horses, some to fire departments, and a few to circuses. The "WM" brand was well known on the ranges. The year 1908 was the last of the round-ups on the local ranges, extending from Winston to Clancy and across the Prickly Pear Valley. Millegan participated in that drive which garnered only 55 horses.

COLORFUL
JOHN SANDIGE
WHO RODEOED
WITH ROY MILLEGAN



At one time, Wallace L. Millegan was the largest cattle raiser in the Valley, running 200 head, most of which were Shorthorns. There were always some milk cows, since cheese and butter were in constant demand in town and could be exchanged for groceries. The Millegans often were visited by other relations, coming from the town of Millegan, north of White Sulphur Springs. They were also taking butter and cheese to Helena. The stage route from the east ran right by the Millegan ranch.

Another log house was built, further away from the creek to avoid the flood waters. From 1873 to 1886, the family moved into Helena for the winter months so the children could attend school. The house that still stands and is pictured here was built in 1898.

In 1878 Wallace was elected to a six-year term as a County Commissioner. At that time, there was a meeting only once every three months, unless something special arose. The first mill levy in which he was involved was for only 22 mills total. Other items the Commission often considered included approving the hangman's pay, taking care of the poor, and appointing road supervisors—a political job in those days. Toll rates for the many toll houses were also established by them.

Wallace and Martha were the parents of 13 children, all of whom were born on the farm. Nine of these children attained adulthood and went on to make their mark. Four, however, succumbed to diphtheria: Eleanor at one year,



MILLEGAN FAMILY, 1907
Nine surviving children of Wallace and Martha Millegan posed with their parents for this picture. Seated left to right are Willard Lewis "Will" Millegan, Carrie "Aunt Mittie" Millegan Evans, Wallace and Martha Millegan, and Hattie Millegan McCollum. In the back row, left to right, are Martha Eleanor "Tot" Millegan Little, James Roy and Robert Leroy Millegan, Nina May Millegan Morrison, George W. Millegan, and Cora Belle Millegan Smith.

George at nine, Charles at eight, and Edwin E. at five. The surviving children were: Carrie Mitilene (Evans), Willard Louis, Hattie Ann (McCollum), Martha Eleanor (Little), Robert Leroy, James Roy, George W., Cora Belle (Smith), and Nina May (Morrison).

In 1897 only 50 acres were retained, the remainder having been sold to the American Smelting and Refining Company to be used to run tailings. In 1906 the Smelter's operations at this site failed, so the land went to William C. T. Lichtwardt, who in turn sold some to James Bompert.

Mr. and Mrs. Millegan belonged to the Society of Pioneers, often taking in the meetings wherever they were held. There, they would be able to visit with W. A. Clark and others about their early experiences in this new state. Wallace and Martha spent their last years living in Helena. He died in 1923 and she in 1926, each at the age of 86. They are buried in Forestvale Cemetery.

James Roy Millegan, better known as Roy, was born in the Prickly Pear Valley on the Millegan farm, as were his 12 brothers and sisters. He was the tenth child of W. L. and Martha Millegan. He received his education at the Warren School, which was originally built in 1866 or 1867. He was later a trustee and clerk for the school district. The early part of his life was spent with his other brothers and sisters, taking care of the 320 acres along Prickly Pear Creek, and a hay ranch near Lake Helena, for their parents. Much of his duties were taking care of the large horse herds, running on the range under the "WM" brand and marketed from Helena to Canada. On one of these drives, he was picked up by the Indian police and taken to see the Sergeant-Major, but was soon released to continue the drive. He was captain of these roundups for two of the three years.

Roy fenced for the Anchor Fence Company, and many of the early day fences in the Valley were built by him. For some time he was employed by the City of Helena, running the first street sprinkling wagon, and once boasted about having been the first to sprinkle the grounds at the State Fair.

Roy did some rodeoing at one time along with an early day rodeo personality, John Sandige, who was well known throughout this area. A rare photo of John is included with this story.

On January 6, 1909, Roy Millegan married Effie Lidolph, daughter of Frances and Herman Lidolph, pioneer gardeners

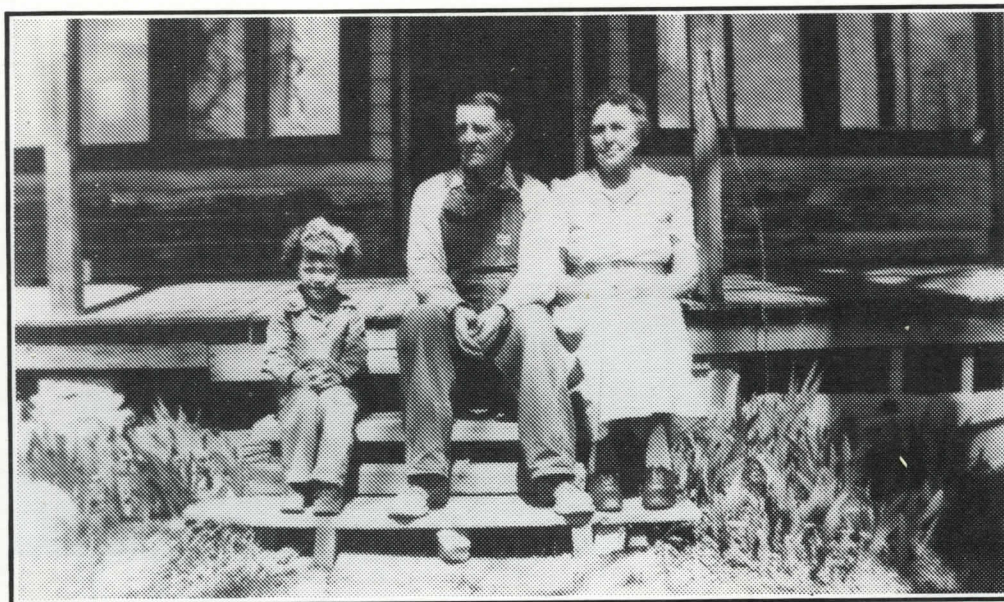
of the area. In March of 1909, Roy and Effie moved to the W. L. Millegan ranch and leased the 50 acre place. In 1921 they bought the ranch, and during the ensuing years ran 30 to 40 beef cows, milked 10 to 12 cows, raised hogs, chickens, seed peas, potatoes, and sold some hay. It was a struggle to keep their heads above water during the Depression years and raise their family of four. Farming was always done with horses, since no tractors were ever owned, although on occasion the plowing was hired out. Electricity was not available until 1948, so this luxury was not enjoyed until late in life.

Irrigation and having the first water right upon Prickly Pear Creek was what made this small unit work. Having only a 40-inch right, the three ranches, which once encompassed the W. L. Millegan spread, traded water, thus assuring a full head with which to irrigate. The Millegan ranch would have it for two days, the Bompert place for two, and the Lichtwardt for six. Thus, every eight days, irrigating was the scheduled chore during the summer months. Spring cleaning of the ditches was also a neighborhood affair, with the water for the three ranches coming down the single ditch.

The telephone came in 1909, and for many years Roy was the caretaker of the line. This was a rural line, called the Rancher's Telephone Company handling about 12 families at first, then later only five, until the late 1940s, when it was taken over by Mountain Bell. This work consisted of replacing poles, broken insulators, broken wires, or any other item that might go wrong with a telephone line. Thus, in this work, Roy became an excellent pole climber as well.

Effie Lidolph Millegan attended schools in East Helena and Canyon Creek before her marriage. As a young lady, she helped in Sunday School at the Methodist Church in East Helena. She was a charter member of the Prickly Pear Home Demonstration Club, to which she belonged for over 50 years. Her work was always on the farm, milking the cows, taking care of the chickens, and working in the large garden, as well as in the fields. When Roy died on September 2, 1953, Effie carried on until ill health forced her from her home of some 65 years. She died on January 13, 1980. The farm had carried the Millegan name from 1865 until 1979.

The children of Roy and Effie are Gladys Lucille Millegan, Frank, Wallace H., Virgie Mae Millegan Baird, all of Helena, and Roy Eugene of Whitehall. Like their father, they all attended grade school at Warren School.



James Roy and Effie Lidolph Millegan were seated on the front step on the Millegan farm in the Valley when this picture was taken in about 1951. The little girl is their granddaughter, Margene, daughter of their son, Roy E. Millegan. Tragically, Margene drowned in 1964.