

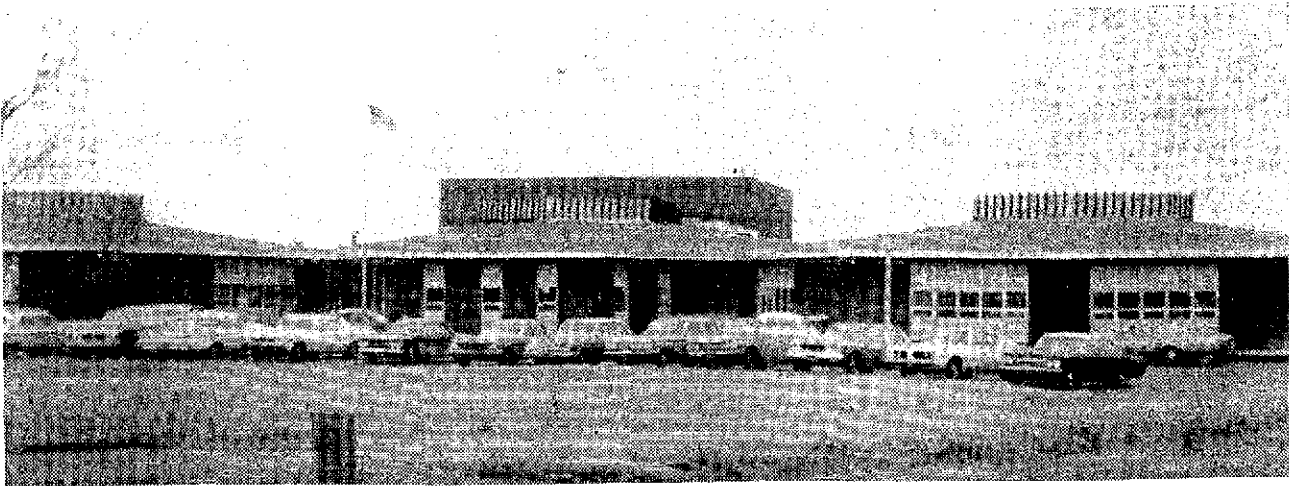
Little Red Schoolhouse—How Times Have Changed

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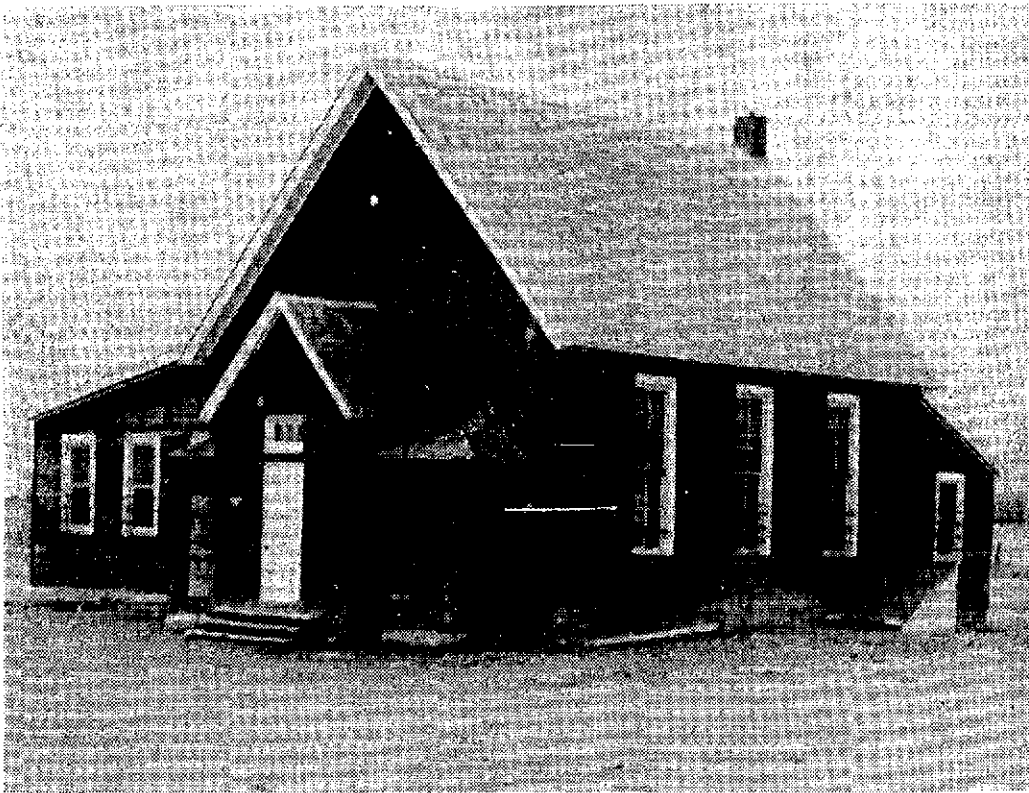
Helena, Montana, Sunday, November 5, 1967

Second Section of Two



WHAT A DIFFERENCE—The Rossiter School in the Helena Valley is quite a contrast to the "Little Red Schoolhouse" which was built

in about 1888. The Rossiter School has 290 pupils. The Little Red Schoolhouse accommodated 9 to 20.



NOT FORGOTTEN — The Little Red Schoolhouse, never formally given this name but always called that, it is a Helena landmark that stands neglected but not

forgotten. Oldtimers remember it with affection. Newcomers delight in it and use it as a meeting place. (Photos by Ann Conger)



"DEAR OLD GOLDEN RULE DAYS"—A picture taken in 1908 at "The Little Red Schoolhouse" typifies the variety in ages of pupils of all grades with one teacher. In the front row, left to right: Thomas Evans, Carl Johnson, Lawrence Josephson, Clara Johnson (Mun-

ger), Annie Josephson and Henry Evans. In the second row are Bertha Goodwin, Jennie Evans, Pat McGowan and Louis Wagner, and in the third row, Percy Kennedy, Olga Landt, the teacher, and Sam Goodwin.

By Ann Conger

Forlorn in the fall dusk in the Helena Valley stands "The Little Red Schoolhouse," neglected, perhaps, but not forgotten.

Oldtimers remember it with affection. Newcomers delight in it and use it for a meeting place.

A Helena landmark, it is a monument to the last century, standing boldly with its privy at the side, in stark contrast to the thoroughly-modern Rossiter Elementary School up the road away.

Rossiter has 290 pupils. "The Little Red Schoolhouse accommodated 9 to 20.

"The Little Red Schoolhouse," never formally named that, but almost always called that, knew a pull-your-ears kind of learning.

Two Who Remember

Mrs. Clara Johnson Munger, deputy county assessor, and John Brass, Helena Valley rancher, remember it in the old school days.

Brass recalls that the teacher, who had a long beard, pulled pupils' ears if they were late for school.

Mrs. Munger remembers that a bell housed a large bell which could be heard for miles on a still day. "It peeled forth at 20 minutes to nine so if we were still quite away away we knew it was time to hurry," she said.

Brass, who attended the school from 1895 to 1900 said sometimes he rode horseback the three and a half miles and stabled his horse in a barn that sheltered four horses. Sometimes he walked and when he was late he ran over the fields.

Things Have Changed

One teacher taught all the grades, but there were only two homes in the valley, he recalls, both of them log houses. There were no trees, Montana Avenue was a wagon trail and the main road to Great Falls was next to the Scratch Gravel mountains.

"Most of us came through open fields where cattle pastured and more than once got us 'on the run,'" remembers Mrs. Munger who attended the school from 1908 to 1916.

"A shed," she continued, "at the back of the school building stored the wood and coal to feed the large round stove which

stood in the middle of the school room. In cold weather the seats were grouped as closely as possible to the stove which was more closely surrounded with wet overshoes and mittens.

"On Saturday nights, the seats were pushed back and the polka dancers had a perfect circle around the stove. Basket socials were also popular and card parties, too," Mrs. Munger said.

She remembers that the well was a source of water and that an iron pump was housed in a pump house.

"One corner of the school had a small table graced by the water bucket, with the tin dipper, wash basin and soap," she said.

Mrs. Munger remembers a tall flag pole and that older boys had the duty of raising and lowering the flag each day.

The pupils didn't have physical education. They probably didn't need it.

Most Walked

Most of them walked about a mile or more to school and spent noon hours and recesses playing baseball, kick-the-can and fox and geese.

The teacher, who taught all grades, was responsible for the fire and janitorial duties and usually took board and room at a ranch house.

The building was called the Silver Creek School at first, then College Place because it was near the Old Montana Wesleyan College then on the site of Martin's IGA store. Later that became the Deaconess School location.

Gone now is the barn and the stiles on both the front and back fences that "made wonderful places to play," according to Mrs. Munger.

The land for the school was deeded by Wendelin and Caroline Miehle to School District No. 6 in April of 1888 and the building was built shortly afterward. It was closed as a school in 1920 and has since been used by a variety of organizations, including new churches, as a meeting place.

One-room school houses still exist in the county. They are Canyon Creek School with grades one through six; Marysville with grades one through eight, South Fork and Craig with grades one through six, and York, with grades two, four and five.



John Brass



Clara Johnson Munger

Saga of a Pioneer Cattleman

(Editor's Note: Material for the following account of the career of Montana cattleman Alfred Myers was furnished by Minnie Paugh, curator of the historical manuscript collection at Montana State University, Bozeman.)

BOZEMAN — The diary entry for Feb. 26, 1890 reads: "Several head of cattle froze to death in feed yard — looked quite natural, they lay just as though they were sleeping."

Between 1868 and 1891, pioneer Montana cattleman Alfred Myers filled 13 volumes with day-to-day accounts of his life. These dairies offer a fascinating and detailed picture of the lives of territorial stockmen.

The records were recently acquired for copying by the historical manuscript collection of the Montana State University library at Bozeman. They were loaned to the library by Myers' daughter, Alfreda, now Mrs. Fred Potter of Hardin and Phoenix, Ariz.

Came Long Way

The dairies trace Myers' economic development from a mule team freighter to an influential cattleman who came to own 40,000 acres of fenced land and at least 10,000 head of cattle.

Myers is revealed as a clear-headed businessman who enjoyed the travel involved in keeping track of widespread land and cattle interests.

At the age of 26, Myers came to Montana territory in 1866. His freighter team made three trips between St. Joseph, Mo. and Virginia City. Myers called his team a "fast freight" because he used mules instead of oxen.

His start in the cattle business came when he traded his mules to Mormons for several head of cattle.

Myers expanded his herd, at first concentrating on supplying beef to the mining camps, then shipping cattle to St. Paul and points east.

Serious Business

Acquiring cattle was an often informal, but always serious business. From an 1869 trip to the Gallatin Valley Myers writes: "Went over to the East. . . . went to see the Widow Brown and out on range to see her cattle. Bought her-

cattle for \$3,300 in gold dust." In 1877 Myers established the first big cattle outfit in the Shields River country. As the buffalo herds disappeared from the Yellowstone Valley in the 1880's, Myers began to graze his cattle there. His animals were the first to go out from Treasure County — in a shipment that filled a train with cattle driven down from the Shields River about 1882.

Myers traveled frequently. Here is his description of an

They had four daughters. Mrs. Potter — Alfreda — was the youngest and is the only one of the four living today.

Myers was often accompanied by his family on his more permanent moves. Alfreda recalls "home" as being Seattle, Livingston, several of the ranches, Minneapolis, and finally Hardin. He moved to Billings with his family in 1882. "The town is improving rapidly," he noted, "but, of course, the population for the present is of the rougher element."

Active Stockman

Myers became an active leader in stockmen organizations, often traveling to Helena when legislation affecting livestock interests was being considered in the territorial capital. He was an important figure in the setting up of the Billings stockards, and became a delegate to the Constitutional Convention from Yellowstone County.

Mrs. Potter's memories of her father help fill in details of his life after the diary entries end in 1891.

She recalled that her father was always active in politics. Before coming to Montana, he was a delegate from Missouri to the Democratic National Convention when he was not yet 25 years old.

Myers' political affiliations caused some family strife during the 1890s when his mother-in-law, a widow, often spent time at their home. Mrs. Russell was a staunch Republican whose close relatives included some senators and a governor of Maine. Both mother and daughter blamed the panic of 1894 on President Cleveland and the Democratic party.

That same picnic marked a reversal in Myers' cattle fortunes. He had weathered the severe winter of 1886-87 without loss, but dropping cattle prices caught him in a squeeze.

He began selling off his land, and, by 1904, most of the Myers' interests in the Shields River area had been sold.

Although he considered himself retired, Myers remained active. When the Crow reservation was opened in 1907, he filed on a homestead in Big Horn County. He spent his remaining years in and near Hardin until his death in 1920, at the age of 78.



Alfred Myers