

THE GATEWAY TO MISSOULA VALLEY HISTORY



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT
&
ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT**

INTRODUCTION:

The LaLonde Ranch Historic Park

The LaLonde Ranch, with its imposing brick nineteenth century Colonial Revival style house and compatible outbuildings, is one of the last remaining historic ranches in the Missoula Valley that is visible from Interstate 90. The millions of travelers who drive by and view the ranch are reminded of an era when the valley first experienced extensive white settlement for the purpose of agricultural development.

The general physical layout of the ranch is consistent with early ranches of western Montana and the buildings retain significant architectural integrity, making a strong statement as to its authenticity as an historic ranch. Commercial development surrounding the ranch only serves to make the visual historical importance of the ranch that much more obvious.

While the history of the ranch buildings and grounds are interesting, they pale in comparison to the importance of their *locality* in relation to many of the most fascinating historical events of the Missoula Valley and beyond. The LaLonde Ranch literally sits at what can be called, *The Gateway To Missoula Valley's History*.

Located within two miles of a major north-south Native American trail, and within perhaps three miles of Meriwether Lewis' 1806 campsite, the LaLonde Ranch welcomes us to an area rich with the ghosts of this valley's history. As such, it is perfectly suited to serve as a welcoming center for travelers to be introduced to that history -- to orient themselves as to the sites that remain open for exploration and education throughout this valley and down the road -- and perhaps most important overall -- to gain that "*sense of place*," that creates a unique experience during our life travels.

GRAND EVENTS

Glacial Lake Missoula

Standing in the shadow of the LaLonde house, one can look eastward and view the horizontal lines along Mount Sentinel and Mount Jumbo that mark the many shorelines of Glacial Lake Missoula. When one learns the incredible story of that geologic wonder, one can almost feel the waters engulf the valley at a depth of almost 1,000 feet, leaving just the very summits of the surrounding hills visible. The soils, on which the LaLonde Ranch rests, reflect the makeup of that massive lake which tumultuously drained and refilled over centuries as gigantic glaciers melted.

With an ice cork plugging its narrows at the entrance to Lake Pend d' Oreille, the waters of Lake Missoula covered at times up to 2,900 square miles, with a volume approximating half of that of Lake Michigan. Its boundaries stretched from about 60 miles east of Missoula, 150 some miles west to Lake Pend d' Oreille, south up the Bitterroot for about 70 miles and north for some 60 miles, almost to Flathead Lake.

When the ice jam at Pend d' Oreille gave way after a long period of warming, Glacial Lake Missoula quickly drained. The resulting flood ripped through Montana and into Idaho and Washington, a cataclysmic event that forever changed the landscapes of everything in its wake. Dramatic evidence of the power of the floods, which happened over and over (there are dozens of lakeshore lines) is as close as the 70 foot deep crevices carved into the rock at the Alberton Gorge of the Clark Fork some 35 miles to the west of the LaLonde Ranch, and as far as the moonscape-like terrain of the "scablands," of eastern Washington state.

When Adam LaLonde arrived in this valley in the 1870s, he could stand at this ranch site and much as today, view the horizontal lake lines carved by nature into Mount Jumbo and Mount Sentinel – stunning evidence of the incredible geologic events known as the Glacial Lake Missoula Floods.



Glacial Lake Missoula Shorelines on Mount Jumbo

Native American Trails

The geographic features of the Missoula Valley made it the hub of five valleys: the Flathead-Jocko to the north, the Bitterroot to the south, the Blackfoot to the northeast, and the Frenchtown Valley to the west. The long flat expanse of the Missoula Valley runs into the Frenchtown Valley not far to the west of the LaLonde Ranch. Native Americans accessing the valleys of western Montana, most notably the Flathead, the Kootenai and

the Nez Perce, followed wild game paths until they became well worn trails, especially with the introduction of the horse in the 1700s. One of the most well known of the trails came to be called the Jocko Trail. Located a short distance to the west of what would become the LaLonde Ranch, the Jocko Trail served as a path for Salish, Pend d' Oreille, Kootenai, Nez Perce and other Native American peoples to traverse three of the major valleys of western Montana in a north-south direction. The Missoula Valley, with its abundance of bitterroot plants, became a popular gathering site for harvesting that staple of the Salish diet. The plant was used medicinally and as seasoning for buffalo meat.

Meriwether Lewis in the Missoula Valley (1806)

The LaLonde Ranch is located approximately 3 miles from where it is thought that Meriwether Lewis camped in 1806. On July 3rd of that year Lewis and his party, guided by Nez Perce and Flathead horsemen, left Travelers' Rest, near present-day Lolo, Montana, crossed the Bitterroot and Clark Fork rivers and set up a campsite near Grant Creek. The following day, July 4th, Lewis bid farewell to his Native American guides and proceeded to follow the "Road to the Buffalo," east through Hell Gate Canyon and into the Blackfoot Valley. With the Blackfoot River as a landmark, Lewis headed for his rendezvous with William Clark, eventually meeting him near the mouth of the Yellowstone River.

The decision by Lewis and Clark to divide their forces at Traveler's Rest and explore separate areas was, according to historian, Stephen Ambrose, an extremely dangerous one. The crossing of the Clark Fork on July 3rd proved to be almost fatal for Lewis and could have changed the entire outcome of the expedition. Swift currents overturned Lewis's raft and threw him into the raging river. Fortunately, he was able to swim to shore. This event occurred about 5 miles from the LaLonde Ranch. No doubt shaken by the near disaster, Lewis & his party camped just a few miles from the LaLonde Ranch near Grant Creek.

The following day, on July 4, 1806, Lewis said goodbye to his Native American guides, who refused to accompany the party through the narrow canyon at the east end of the valley. Lewis and his men rode through what would officially become the city of Missoula some seven decades later. Once through the canyon, the expedition followed the clearly marked "Road to the Buffalo," along the Choochiti (Big Blackfoot River).

The Traveler's Rest site, located about ten miles south of Missoula, is now a state park. Lewis's camp site in the Missoula Valley has not been verified through archeology, but future investigations will attempt to do so. The saga of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is truly of national significance, and the fact that they spent the first night of separation in such close proximity to the LaLonde Ranch is exciting in its concept.

David Thompson Maps the Valley (Feb 1812)

Less than a decade after Lewis rode through the Missoula Valley, David Thompson, trapper and explorer for the Hudson Bay Company and later the Northwest Company, followed the main north-south trail (Jocko to Fort Owen Road), entered the Missoula

Valley and climbed Mount Jumbo. Looking down at the Missoula Valley, he sketched a map on which he labeled the wide expanse as NEMISSOOLATAKOO, a name incorporating Salish references to "cold or chilly waters or waters of surprise." Thompson's visit coincided with the growing fur trade industry, which was already dramatically impacting the region's natural resources and the native cultures.

Later, French traders and trappers traveled through the Missoula Valley and seeing human bones scattered along the banks of the Clark Fork within a tight canyon on the valley's eastern end, began to refer to that place as "Porte d' Enfer," translated in English as Hell's Gate. The bones were reminders of the Blackfeet bloody ambushes of Salish and Nez Perce hunters heavily laden with buffalo meat from expeditions east of the Continental Divide in what the Blackfeet considered their territory. The name Hell Gate Ronde began to be applied to the area in the Missoula Valley near the LaLonde Ranch, where Native Americans and French traders would exchange goods at rendezvous. The French influence would continue to be felt in this area with the place names such as Frenchtown and DeSmet, among others, reflecting that heritage. Those most likely comforted Adam LaLonde, with his French ancestry, when he looked to venture to the western frontier.

The Black Robes

In 1841, Catholic missionaries, led by Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, brought the first wheeled cart through Hell Gate Canyon, across the valley, and south following the Native American trail some thirty miles to a spot along the Bitterroot River where they established St. Mary's Mission. Two years later, Father Anthony Ravalli arrived to carry on Desert's work through the years that followed. Father Ravalli became such a beloved figure that the county in which he resided was named in his honor. Hundreds of places throughout the country were named after DeSmet, including the school where Adam and Lucy LaLonde would send their children some 46 years after Father Ravalli entered the Missoula Valley.

Land Surveys and Peace Treaties

The American west was viewed by the government and more specifically the railroads as a vast area that needed to be first opened up and then settled. In 1854 Isaac Stevens was dispatched to map the Missoula and Bitterroot valleys to determine a possible route for a transcontinental railroad. Following Native American trails, Stevens and his military assistant, Lieutenant John Mullan, prepared maps of the Bitterroot and Missoula valleys during the winter of 1854 and into 1855. Much of the survey was based out of Fort Owen at Stevensville. In conjunction with the survey was the even greater challenge of negotiating a series of treaties with the Native Americans and between tribes, many of who were bitter enemies. Stevens had two goals: clearing the way for the building of the railroad, and encouraging white settlement by ending conflict both with and between Native Americans by treaty, or war if necessary.

Following his directive from Congress, Stevens called for a council with the Salish, Kootenai and Pend d' Oreille tribes at a place later called Council Grove, which was

located near a popular river crossing west of present day Missoula and about five miles south west from the LaLonde Ranch. The site is now known as Council Grove State Park.

On July 15, 1855 the Hell Gate Treaty was signed. It contained provisions for cessions, created the Flathead Reservation, called for annuity payments, equipment for agricultural development and education. Some of the chiefs were offended by the terms, especially Chief Charlo. There was dissatisfaction about the location of the reservation to the north rather than in the Bitterroot, the traditional Salish homeland. Stevens included a "conditional reservation" in the Bitterroot, but it was little more than vague words. Charlo would attempt to remain in his southern valley, but would finally be forced to the Flathead in 1891.

The Mullan Military Road and the Establishment of Hell Gate Village

As Governor Stevens conducted treaty negotiations at Council Grove, Captain C.P. Higgins, and John Mullan stood beside him. Little did each know how much their futures would be intertwined during the next five years. Congress directed Mullan to construct a military road from Fort Walla Walla, Washington, located near the Columbia River, to Fort Benton, Montana, the last point on the Missouri River where steamboats could navigate. As Mullan carved his road through some of the West's most rugged terrain, Higgins, who had partnered with Francis L. (Frank) Worden in a general merchandise store at Walla Walla, obtained a traders license and prepared to head back to the Missoula Valley.

Higgins, Worden and John Mullan all reached the Missoula Valley in the summer of 1860. The Mullan route influenced the location of Higgins and Worden's trading post, which ended up being built just yards from what came to be known as the Mullan Trail. Almost called Wordensville, the familiar name of Hell Gate stuck, and other buildings began to be built near the trading post. These included a store where Josephine (Peltier) Dukes sold pieces of pie to prospectors passing through the valley. The area was generally known as Hell Gate Ronde. John Mullan had a storehouse and corral built there in April of 1860, before Higgins and Worden arrived. He called the place "Camp Humphreys." Mullan's work was completed by October, The Worden and Company store had been built by that time.

The tiny village of Hell Gate soon became the county seat of the new county named Missoula. There were four townships: Stevens, Hell Gate, Frenchtown and Jocko. The French influence in all of those townships was well noted at the time. A.H. Wilcox's manuscript "Up the Missouri River to Montana in the spring of 1862," talked about the French living there.... "There were ten or fifteen French Canadians employed about the agency (Jocko Indian Agency) and the most conspicuous character among them was the tinner who made tin cups and other tin ware for Indians. His correct name was Adolph Dubreuil but he went by the name of Tin Cup Joe..." Tin Cup would later be the defendant in the first trial to take place at Hell Gate. His attorney was a young man by the name of Frank Woody, who clerked at the Worden store and practiced law on the side. Woody would become Missoula's first mayor twenty-one years later.

Vigilante Hangings and Other Violence

Hell Gate Village was a rough and tumble place. During its first five years, there were ten deaths -- all violent and none from natural causes. In 1863, a stranger named Cyrus Skinner arrived in Hell Gate and purchased Bolte's Saloon. Skinner had come from Bannack and had been associated with the notorious Sheriff Henry Plumber and his gang of outlaws. In January of 1864, twenty-one members of the infamous Vigilante Committee from Virginia City and Bannack rode hundreds of miles through deep snows to track down Skinner at Hell Gate. Before they left the little settlement, they had hanged five men whom they had quickly tried and found to be guilty. Hell Gate was living up to its name and its reputation as a dangerous place spread throughout the West.

Adam LaLonde – From Canada to Montana

At the time that Skinner and an associate in crime, Carter Aleck, were swaying in the wind as they hung from a pole crossing the top of the entrance to C.P. Higgins's corral, Adam LaLonde, born near Montreal, Canada 24 years before (May 21, 1839), was piloting a steamboat up and down the Mississippi and its tributaries during the height of the Civil War. Having crossed the Canadian border in 1861, he gained employment as a watchman on a riverboat and worked his way up to captain, a position he had held while piloting steamboats on the St. Lawrence River in Canada at the age of 18. Adam's Civil War years environment was no less dangerous than Hell Gate's, and at one point on the White River in Arkansas, he and his boat narrowly escaped being captured by General Sterling Price of the Confederate Army.

With the close of the Civil War, Adam continued his river boating until 1868 when he traveled north and west to Montana Territory and began hauling freight overland from Fort Benton to the mining camp of Virginia City. As such, he would have been familiar with the accounts of the hangings and other violence at Hell Gate. That winter of 1868, Adam moved on to "Last Chance," which later became Helena. There he gained employment with the 1XL Quartz Mill, where he labored for 18 months before opening a bakery and lodging house in Helena. Business was good in the bustling mining town and Adam prospered until fate, in the form of fire, destroyed his uninsured business. Broke and without credit, Adam did what most single men at that time were doing --- he went prospecting for gold.

The news of a strike at Cedar Creek some fifty miles west of Hell Gate Village, brought Adam to western Montana and Missoula County. Two Frenchmen, Louis Barrette and B. Lanthier had discovered gold in Cedar Creek on October 9, 1869. In three weeks, they hauled out almost \$400 worth of gold, a tidy sum in those days. Their attempts to keep the strike a secret failed miserably and during the ensuing mild winter, thousands of hopeful prospectors poured into the Cedar Creek area. This rush at Cedar Creek followed those at Alder Gulch, Last Chance, German Gulch, French Gulch, Confederate Gulch, Bear Gulch, Silver Bow, Little Blackfoot, Nevada Creek, Elk Creek, Lincoln, Gold Creek and others, and was just as wild as any of those.

When Adam LaLonde arrived at Cedar Creek the town of Louisville sprang up over night. Within a year it claimed 3,000 residents. Most of these were transient men who came and went during the summer months. Claims covered almost all of the ground by that time so most newly arrived prospectors left for other mining sites or settled into agricultural or other pursuits nearby, including in the Frenchtown and Missoula valleys. By this time, Higgins and Worden had moved their store from Hell Gate to a location near the Mullan Trail and Hell Gate River some four miles east, and had built a lumber and grist mill at that site. Known as Missoula Mills, the new settlement drew most of the residents away from Hell Gate Village and soon became the county seat.

According to "Progressive Men of Montana," a book published in 1903, Adam LaLonde filed claim Number 75 at Cedar Creek, but also hedged his bets and began farming and raising cattle for the following three years. This was not unusual, in that most gold seekers had to make ends meet by diversifying and getting a "real job." Almost everyone involved with the founding of Missoula continued to file mining claims in the hope of striking it rich. This included Frank Woody, Francis Worden and C.P. Higgins. Once gold fever hit, it burned deeply and with great longevity. Adam LaLonde was not about to give up on such a dream and he associated himself with Louis Barrett, Daniel Stewart, Frank Houseman, H. Nightingale and others in prospecting in the Nine Mile area about 20 miles west of Missoula Mills. According to "Progressive Men," the group was successful in locating a precious metal lead, and as a result, patented a claim "two and one-fourth miles in length," and worked that claim for three years with "varying success."

While continuing his mining endeavors, Adam realistically looked more toward a future in agriculture. In 1873, he filed for water rights from the West Fork of Rattlesnake Creek on land in the Missoula Valley. The preemption laws that had been passed fifty years prior allowed for a person to have the prior right to purchase land upon which he had settled and made improvements. The purchase price was set at \$1.25 per acre provided that he had lived on the land for six weeks. All of the land settled in the Missoula Valley before 1862 was done so under these provisions. With the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862, any head of family could claim 160 acres if he cultivated it for five years. Two years later, in an attempt to encourage the building of transcontinental railroads, Congress granted the railroad alternate sections of land for forty miles on each side of the right-of-way.

Ranching in the Missoula Valley

While Adam LaLonde was exploring the possibilities of obtaining land, he rented a ranch that would later be owned by J.R. Latimer, a threshing operator who had homesteaded in Grass Valley (an area east of Deep Creek and west of Hell Gate). Latimer worked throughout the Missoula and Bitterroot valleys and also ran a sawmill where he cut some of the lumber used to build Fort Missoula in 1877. He would later become a very successful rancher and introduced both Norman-Percheron horses and Shorthorn Cattle to western Montana. Elected county commissioner in 1886, Latimer was appointed by

Governor Smith to the building committee for the new State University in 1896, and served a chairman of that body.

As Adam LaLonde was renting from Latimer in 1876, news swept through the nation that General George Custer had been overwhelmingly defeated at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Calls from the press for revenge inflamed tensions between whites and Indians. The following summer, word spread that Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce was headed toward the Missoula Valley. Frightened citizens sought refuge in the Worden and Company Store on Main Street in Missoula and in the unfinished basement of the Missoula Mercantile Company building, which was under construction at the corner of Front Street and Higgins Avenue. Many of Missoula's men joined forty-five soldiers under the command of Captain Charles C. Rawn, who had arrived a few weeks earlier to establish Fort Missoula. Rawn's troops and the citizen soldier volunteers prepared to confront Chief Joseph at the mouth of a canyon west of present-day Lolo. Joseph's scouts heard of the plan and reported back to the chief, who changed his route to by-pass, the encampment by riding over the cliffs bordering the canyon, thus avoiding a battle with the soldiers. Chief Joseph's maneuver led him south into the Bitterroot Valley and away from Missoula. The encampment near Lolo became known as Fort Fizzle.

LaLonde family oral history indicates that in 1878, Adam purchased land from the Northern Pacific Railway, a fact that has not been able to be documented, but which is consistent with pattern of land sales in the Missoula Valley at that time. In 1883 that railroad ran its tracks less than two miles to the south of where the LaLonde house would eventually be built.

The story that has been handed down through the generations of LaLondes that followed Adam is that he built a log cabin on the ranch and lived in it until construction finished on his brick house. The log building that still exists to the west of the main house appears to have been erected in an early era and examination of that structure by Bernie Weisgerber, one of the nation's foremost authority on log buildings, concurs that the structure could very well have been built in the 1870s while Adam LaLonde was "proving up" his land. Mr. Weisgerber speculated that such a small building with a dirt floor would provide the basic shelter for a bachelor who was foremost concerned with his cattle and not the amenities that might have been demanded had he been married. The building construction methods, style and materials, including square forged nails, are representative of some of the earliest dwellings in the Missoula Valley.

The exact date of construction of the main house remains a mystery. The bricks are almost assuredly locally manufactured and display the characteristic pouress nature of this valley's early bricks. Family oral history ties those bricks to the brickyard that was located approximately 1 and 1/2 miles to the southeast of the house. Available information on that brickyard indicates that Riddell & Watts established it in 1888 near the Northern Pacific line. It later became the Hollenbeck Brickyard. If the 1888 date were accurate, that would put the construction date of the house at a later date than previously estimated. The proximity of the brickyard to the LaLonde Ranch would make it seem logical that it would be the source of materials for the house.

There is a possibility that another earlier house was built for Adam before the brick house. Blanche Biniek, grand-daughter of Adam and Lucy, stated in an interview of June 7, 2005, that there was a three room frame building referred to as the "bunkhouse," located just to the north of the main residence. It is probable that Adam and Lucy LaLonde used the bunkhouse as a residence after their marriage in 1886 until the brick house was constructed shortly thereafter. That scenario would make it fit in with the establishment of the brickyard nearby. Another possibility is that the bricks came from some other brickyard, which would allow for the earlier construction date.

There is no evidence of this three room "bunkhouse," on the grounds today. However, the land in that area has been severely disturbed over the years. Woody Goodan, who lived on the ranch during the 1950s, stated in a phone interview of June 8, 2005, that his grandfather had "cleaned up the area, by getting rid of several old buildings." That could explain the absence of evidence of the "bunkhouse."

An argument can be made for an earlier date of construction that follows family oral history that Adam lived in a log house for a year after he arrived at the home site (1878) and that the brick house was constructed during that time. In looking around the valley one comes across a brick house built by the Michael Flynn family in 1883. It is remarkably similar to the LaLonde brick house. Flynn had homesteaded in 1872 and lived in a log cabin until the brick house was constructed.

There were a number of brickyards in the Missoula Valley between the 1880s and 1920. The Riddell & Watts brickyard near the LaLonde ranch manufactured two to four million bricks per year during the building boom of the late 1880s and early 1890s. Due to low firing temperatures and the porous glacial soils, the bricks were somewhat soft. Yet, many have withstood over a century of wind and rain.

The Coming of the Railroad

In the early 1880s, Adam LaLonde and most everybody with a stake in the Missoula Valley waited impatiently for the arrival of the railroad. The economic impact of a transportation system to enable the delivery of cattle and other products to and from Missoula was anticipated for years before it became a reality. Representatives for the Northern Pacific, which had stalled in the 1870s because of Indian resistance and finally, bankruptcy brought about by a nation-wide economic crises, began to visit the Missoula Valley in the early 1880s to broker land deals.

Missoula businessmen C.P. Higgins, Washington McCormick, Francis Worden and A.J. Urlin offered the Northern Pacific choice lots throughout Missoula in an effort to entice the railroad into setting up shops in their city. Their strategy worked and by June of 1883, Missoula had rail service and the promise of railroad shops to employ hundreds. The arrival of the Northern Pacific set off a frenzy of economic activity. Within a few years, Missoula transformed itself from a sleepy little village of some 400 residents to the largest city in western Montana. Capturing the contract for ties and other related railroad supplies, A.B. Hammond and the Missoula Mercantile became one of the largest mercantile enterprises between the Twin Cities and Seattle.

Hammond was from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and had been a clerk in the Missoula Mercantile store at Frenchtown before moving into a managerial position at the Missoula

store. Before long he was a business partner and later the majority holder in the company. Through the years Hammond convinced others from New Brunswick to immigrate to Missoula including the McLeods, the Hathaways and the Keiths, all of whom would become powerful business leaders associated with the Missoula Mercantile.

Adam LaLonde lived in an area settled by people with mostly French and Irish surnames. Many of those with French ancestry were born in New Brunswick, such as the Cyrs, the Deschamps and the Beesons. Other French surnames in the immediate area included, among others, Bouchard, LaCasse, Lavoie, Richile and Violette. The Irish were represented by such surnames as Flynn, O'Keefe, McGovern, Finley, Hogan, Morrow Prescott and Boyle.

The 1880 Census for the Two Creeks area (Butler & Grant) reported that 39 year old Adam LaLonde was living at his ranch with a laborer, Thomas Williams, originally from Wales. On November 17 1881 Adam became a U.S. citizen with his naturalization in Missoula District Court. The arrival of the Northern Pacific two years later must have given Adam considerable hope for a prosperous future.

Marriage & Family

In 1886 Adam LaLonde, age 47, married Lucy Wells Bisson, age 32. Lucy had been previously married and brought two children, Tom and Julia to live with her new husband. Julia died on August 10, 1888 at the age of eleven. Lucy Wells, born in Erie Pennsylvania on September 30, 1853, came from a prosperous family. Her father died when she was a young girl and as was the custom of the times, her oldest brother became head of the household. He converted to Mormonism, sold the farm and in 1864, took the family west by covered wagon to Utah with Brigham Young's group. Years later, Lucy would tell her children with great pride that she had shaken the hand of the Mormon leader. According to Lucy, the journey by wagon train was arduous, surviving Indian attacks and scarcity of food and water. Many of the travelers were buried along the trail. During the trip Lucy contracted Rocky Mountain Fever and nearly died. The illness left her blind in one eye and with a hole in her gum and cheek.

As a young woman, Lucy left Utah and accompanied by her sister, came to the western Montana frontier. She married a man named Bisson and had four children with him. According to Lucy, he was a poor provider and she divorced him. She found employment as a ranch cook and soon met Adam LaLonde. They married and had eight children, a son and seven daughters. The son, John A., died in 1889. The daughters were named in birth order, Elizabeth, Ada, Eva Louise, Reba, Sara, Emily, and Ruth. All attended DeSmet School located about two miles from the LaLonde Ranch. That little brick school house is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Adam & Lucy LaLonde Family



Top- L-R Sara (Caplis), Reba (Madison), Eva Louise (Bond), Ada (Richlie), Lucy (Bailey)
Adam LaLonde, Emily (Dowd), Lucy (Wells) LaLonde
Ruth (Hullinger)

Politics & Community Service

Adam LaLonde was active in politics and community activities, serving as trustee for the DeSmet School District from 1897 to 1907. In 1891 he was elected treasurer of the Missoula County Farmers Alliance, a progressive farm organization, associated with the National Farmers Alliance, which counted millions of members. The organization advocated anti-monopoly laws, marketing cooperatives and what was known as "cheap money," translated as support for silver over the gold standard. The same year that Adam was elected treasurer, the Populist crusade entered the national political scene. Their spokesperson became William Jennings Bryan and the view of agriculture as his famous "Cross of Gold Speech," delivered at the 1896 Democratic convention, stated having moral primacy eloquently. That speech was memorized by school children throughout the Midwest and West. Over the years, Adam LaLonde became a zealous advocate of Populist principles.

Adam LaLonde probably closely followed the career of Joseph M. Dixon, who had come west from North Carolina and settled in Missoula in 1891. After a stint as county attorney, Dixon set his political sights higher. In 1903 he was elected to Congress and spent two terms there until he became a Senator in 1907. Dixon advocated a graduated income tax, railroad regulatory legislation and direct election of U.S. Senators. At that time, state legislatures elected them. In 1911, two years before the federal constitutional amendment, the Montana legislature passed a law requiring the direct election of Senators.

The agrarian revolt in states to the east of Montana had little support in this state during the 1880s and 1890s, with the exception of organizations such as the Farmers Alliance, of which Adam LaLonde was local secretary. The Alliance protested the high cost of almost everything the farmer had to buy and condemned corporate control of Montana politics by the Anaconda Company.

In 1911, Dixon brought his friend and former president, Theodore Roosevelt, to Missoula to dedicate the Western Montana Bank Building located on the corner of Higgins and Broadway. It is highly likely that Adam LaLonde was in the crowd of thousands who gathered to hear the wildly popular "Teddy," who espoused many of the same causes that Adam LaLonde so passionately supported. The following year, Roosevelt again visited Missoula with Dixon at his side, this time as a candidate of the progressive wing of the Republican Party, more popularly known as the "Bull Moose Party." Huge crowds gathered at the Northern Pacific Depot to greet Teddy.

LaLonde Final Years

Through the years, the LaLonde Ranch grew to what "Progressive Men of Montana," deemed as 200 acres of "well improved land," and Adam specialized in the raising of cattle and hogs. In 1904 the LaLondes acquired another 160 acres of land, increasing their total holdings to 360 acres. They also planted an orchard, joining the movement popularized by Teddy Roosevelt and his healthy living "back to the land" campaign. Western Montana and especially the Bitterroot Valley became well known for fruit production in the early 1900s.

As Adam LaLonde aged he developed diabetes. On the evening of March 2, 1918, Adam died at his ranch house after a prolonged struggle with that disease. He was 78 years old. Three days later, requiem high mass was held for Adam at St. Francis Xavier Church in Missoula. His pall bearers included D.T. Curran, A.J. Violette, John LaCasse, John Richile, John Flynn and Joseph Deschamps. Adam was buried at Saint Mary's Cemetery.

Lucy LaLonde and her daughters Eva Louise, Sara, Emily and Ruth continued to reside at the family ranch after Adam's death. Lucy lived another eight years, passing away on October 14, 1926 in a Missoula hospital after a brief illness. Lucy and her daughter, Ruth had moved from the ranch into Missoula in 1922. She was 71 years of age at the time of her death. Arrangements were made by Forkenbock funeral home and she was taken to the LaLonde Ranch where friends and family paid their respects. Lucy Wells LaLonde's funeral took place three days later at St. Francis Xavier Church and she was buried at St. Mary's Cemetery beside Adam.

Lucy LaLonde's daughter, of the same name, had married Cliff Bailey and the couple lived out at the ranch at the time of Mrs. LaLonde's death. Their daughter, Blanche, born May 21, 1919 was four years old when they moved out to the ranch. (Interview with Blanche Biniek - 06-07-05). She remembers such details as the little "stream," (2' wide, 12" deep irrigation ditch) that ran down from the hill, across the yard east to west, just a few feet from the back door, and west into the orchard. She also recalls a spring on the hillside to the north from which the family hauled water. The Baileys continued to operate the ranch until the early 1940s, when they moved into Missoula and rented the ranch to Roy Marcheau. In March of 1944 Henry Keil of Conrad, Montana purchased the

ranch from the LaLonde daughters. Thus came to an end, the LaLonde ownership of one of the Missoula Valley's pioneering ranch operations.

Post LaLonde Years, the Goodans and the Historic Park (1944-present)

Henry Keil soon realized that the ranch was too much for him physically, and in 1948 he convinced his daughter, Leviene Goodan and her husband, Alvin to move from Lewistown, Montana to take over the ranch. The Goodans purchased the ranch that same year. While Alvin Goodan had little experience in operating a ranch – he ran an auto body repair shop in Lewistown – Leviene knew ranching, having grown up on one. Together, the Goodans increased the ranch size to over 1,200 acres during the next half century, making it one of the largest ranching operations in the Missoula Valley.

During the time when Henry Keil resided at the ranch, he constructed one building – the hay barn, a rectangular post and pole structure with a gable roof, sheet metal siding, and sliding doors at the north and south ends. Most of the building was open-sided for easy access of hay storage. This hay barn was quite large, measuring 66' North to South and 42' East to West. It sat north and east of the house with the eastern end located near where a power pole stands today. The hay barn is no longer at the property.

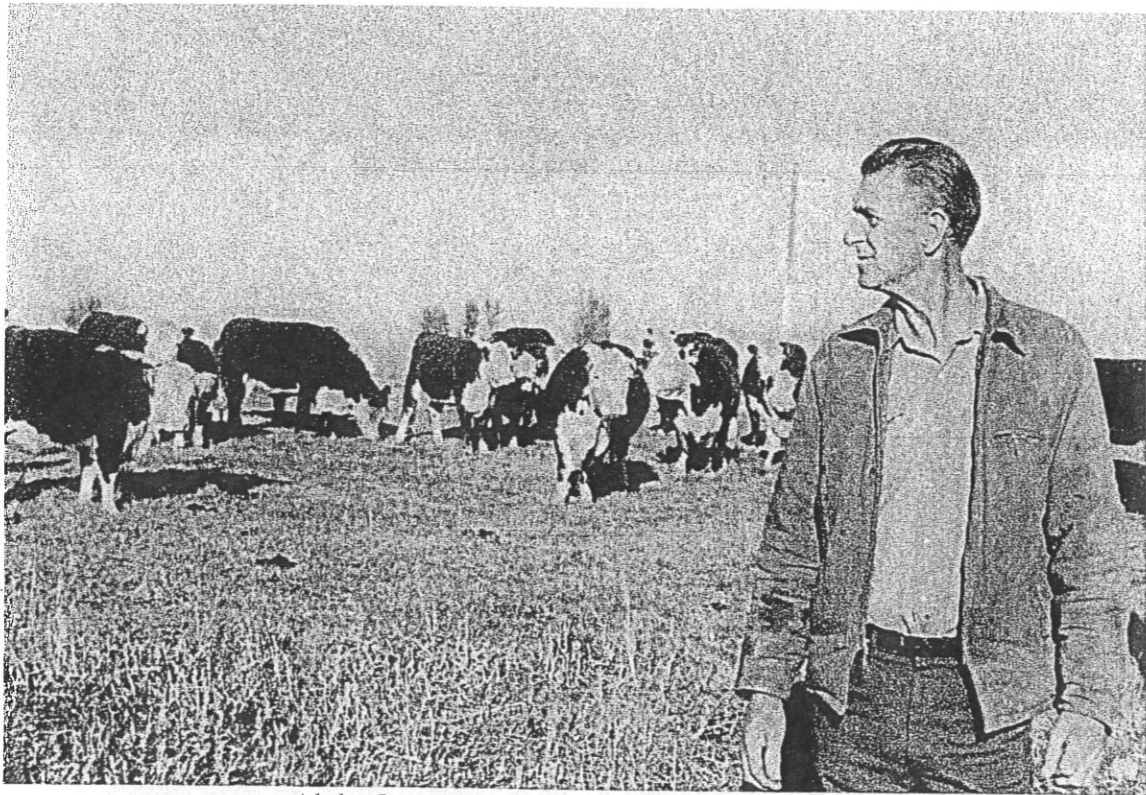
The Goodans raised hay, wheat, barley, cattle, and chickens on their large ranch. They also continued to nurture the orchard and a garden. While Alvin worked in the fields harvesting, Leviene drove the trucks full of grain to the elevators at Third Street West along the Bitterroot spur line of the Northern Pacific tracks. Roy Marceau, who had rented the ranch briefly in the 1940s, butchered the Goodan's cattle for them. He also brought his automatic chicken plucker to the ranch and processed an amazing 200 birds in one day.

The Goodans raised two children while living at the ranch -- a daughter, Delores and a son, Woodrow (Woody). Woody recalls being snowed in during the winter of 1948 - 1949 and how the county snow plow eventually "rescued" them, an event captured on film with the family's 8mm movie camera. Another event documented on film from afar on the hillside above the ranch, was President Dwight D. Eisenhower dedicating the Aerial Fire Depot and Smokejumper Base on September 22, 1954.

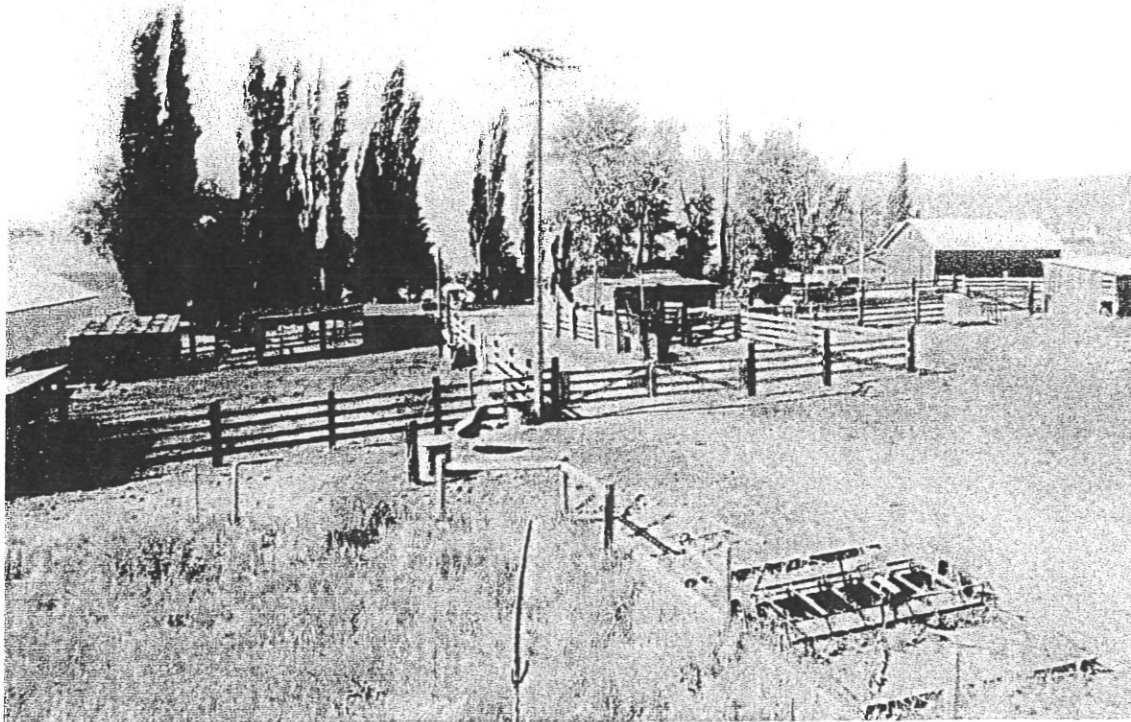
President Eisenhower is sometimes called "the father of the Interstate highway system," because of his leadership in passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1956, which committed the government to subsidizing the construction of a superhighway system to connect America's major cities. By the mid-1960s that system was cutting a swath through the Goodan's property with the construction of I-90. From that point on, the ranch became visible to millions of travelers as they passed through the Missoula Valley.

Leviene Goodan began to raise peacocks on the ranch. The beautiful birds fanned their incredible plumage as they strutted around the grassy back yard, offering a stunning spectacle for the traveling public passing by on the interstate.

The Goodans retired in 1991, sold the ranch to Missoula County and moved to Seeley Lake. Recognizing the obvious historical importance of one of the most visible remaining ranches of early Missoula Valley settlement, the County government designated the main ranch area as The LaLonde Ranch Historic Park. As such, it stands protected as an oasis of history, amidst an intense concentration of commercial development. Its potential to serve as a gateway and information center to all of Missoula County history, is both strong and exciting.



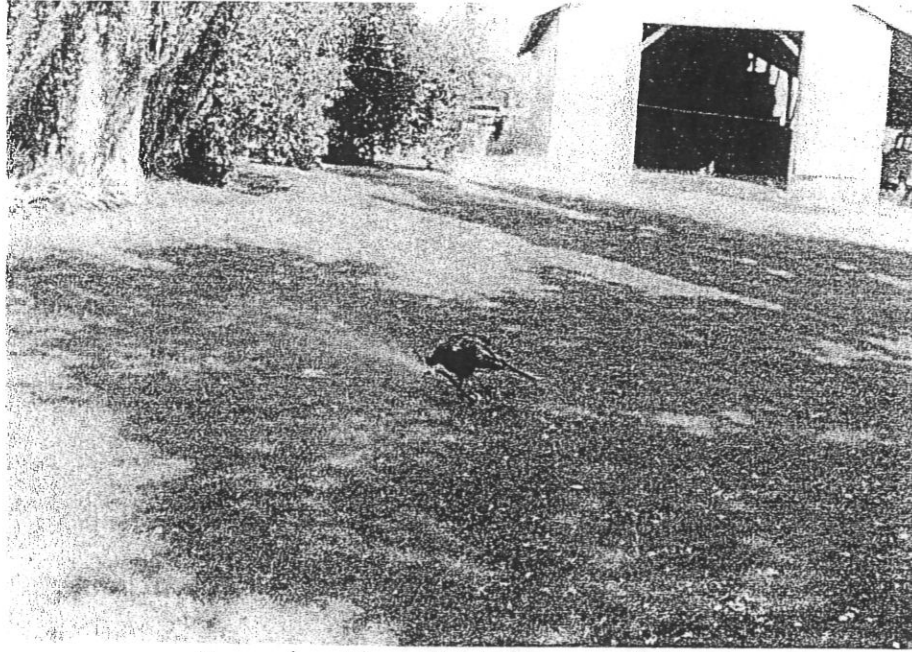
Alvin Goodan at LaLonde Ranch – ca. 1955



Corrals at LaLonde Ranch – 1950s



Leviene Goodan's Peacocks



Peacock getting a drink from a sprinkler.

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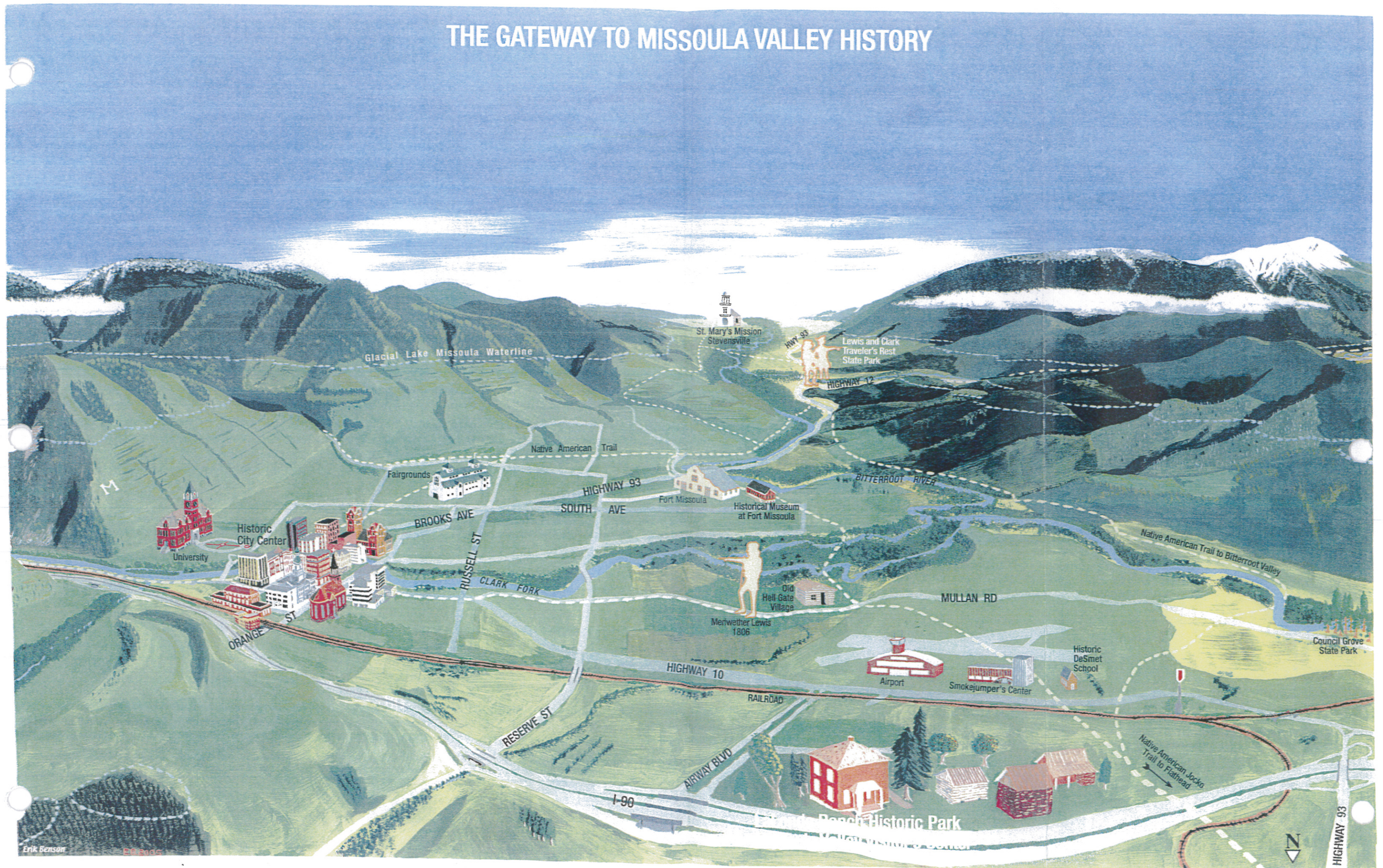
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Kathryn Bond Lobdell – May 31, 2005
Cecil Bond – June 7, 2005
Frank E. Bond – June 7, 2005
Eva Bond – June 7, 2005
Blanche Bailey Biniek – June 7, 2005

Relatives of Alvin & Leviene Goodan
Woody Goodan – April 12, 2005 – Seeley Lake
(numerous phone conversations)

THE GATEWAY TO MISSOULA VALLEY HISTORY



The LaLonde Ranch Historic Park