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The Pick and Shovel

Official Newsletter of the Sons and Daughters of Montana Pioneers

Spring 2018 "Chartered by the State Their Parents Founded"

In an effort to let us know who we are as current members, Officers, and Director's we are going to do stories of those people taken from our book, *Dreams across the Divide*, edited by Linda Wostrel.

This story is of the Ancestors of Duane Thexton, our 1st Vice President —

Thomas Thexton - Submitted by Donald Thexton - Son of Thomas and Father of Duane ...

Thomas Thexton, son of George and Nancy (Redhead) Thexton, was born March 23, 1862, at Twelve-Mile House, Grant County, Wisconsin where his father was a blacksmith.

In 1867 at the age of five, Thomas accompanied his parents, sister and brothers to the Montana Territory. They traveled by steamboat up the Missouri River to Fort Benton. There his father purchased an ox team and wagon, and the family traveled overland to Alder Gulch via Helena and Three Forks, and up the Jefferson and Stinking Waters Rivers.

The children sometimes rode, and sometimes walked and played along the way. They gathered buffalo chips for the fires. The family camped for a while near the present site of Whitehall, where his mother gave birth to a baby boy. They then resumed their journey, arriving in Virginia City in August of 1867, where his father set up a blacksmith shop and livery barn.

Young Thomas attended the Virginia City schools and grew to manhood. He enjoyed the exciting life of being raised around an early mining camp. As a boy he did anything he could to earn spending money. He was a carrier boy for the *Madisonian*. He carried the first issue in 1873. He delivered the daily *Madisonian* to the Legislature when it was in session in Virginia City. He peddled milk and herded the city's dairy cows in the hills. On one occasion in 1874, he was thrown from his horse and suffered a broken leg from the accident.

At the time of the Nez Perce War in 1877, when the Indians were moving through the area, families from the surrounding territory and Beaverhead County came to Virginia City for protection. Tom was issued a musket and put on guard in the city.

(Page 1 Story continued on Thomas Thexton.)

His father was also on duty in the campaign that served under the leadership of Callaway.

As a young man, Tom helped his father in the blacksmith shop and livery barn, and worked in the Alameda mine that his father discovered. As well as working, he joined other young people in the activities of the day. He told of dances, church picnics, and revival meetings. He also talked of Fourth of July celebrations and horse racing. In the winter there were parties, coasting, skating, basket socials, home talent minstrel shows, and New Years Day callings.

Mr. Thexton operated a freight line from Virginia City to Dillon, and from Dillon to Butte, before arrival of the Oregon Short Line. He hauled ore from the mines in the area to the mills at Georgia Gulch and Glendale. He also freighted brick from Bozeman, and lumber from Meadow Creek. He hauled hay for the livery barn from Sheridan, paying \$20.00 per ton, and lumber for the large stone house his father built in 1884.

After his father purchased the ranch in the Madison Valley in 1872, the boys stayed at the ranch occasionally to care for the horses and cattle. However, at the time, the livestock required little care. They grazed on the open range where the hills were covered with tall luxuriant grasses.

In 1888 Thomas, his father, and sister, moved to the ranch in the Madison Valley where they guilt a fine livestock business and raised Shorthorn cattle, draft and saddle horses, hay and grain. He shipped horses to New York, New Jersey, Kansas City, and Natchez, Mississippi. The cattle were driven to the railroad at Manhattan and shipped to Chicago. For a number of years he raised horses for the United States Cavalry.

In 1890 Mr. Thexton enlisted in the National Guard of Montana for three years. He was chosen in 1893, to be Marshall of the Day at the Fourth of July celebration in Virginia City. Thomas was selected as a Republican Delegate from Madison County to the Montana State Convention in Helena, Montana in 1896.

On December 20, 1899, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Virginia City, he was married to Mary Ann Foreman, daughter of the County Assessor and Mrs. William Foreman. The young couple went to the Madison Valley where they made their home on the ranch called "Thextondale," and carried on the business started by his father. Six children were born to them: Thomas Leroy, William, Gladys, Annie, Albert, and Donald (father of Duane).

In 1912 the family moved to the large stone house on Thextondale Ranch that Thomas had built for them. Thomas took his family in 1915 to the World's Fair at San Francisco making the journey by train.

Mr. Thomas Thexton joined the Society of Montana Pioneers on August 5, 1917, and was an active member for many years, rarely missing an annual reunion. He was a long time member of the Virginia City Elks Lodge No. 390.

Polson, Montana
site of the 2018 SDMP Convention Aug 11- 12
Kwa Tag Nuk Resort Hotel



Polson is located at the southern end of Flathead Lake in northwestern Montana. Prior to non-Indian settlement in the early 19th century, the Flathead Lake region in northwest Montana was, for thousands of years, part of the region occupied by two major Salish-speaking Tribes - the Salish and the Pend d'Oreilles, and one band of the Kootenai Tribe.

The first non-Indian visitors to the Flathead Lake region were fur-traders who visited the area in the 1820's. Increasing commerce in the region required better transportation, and both Flathead River and Flathead Lake offered a convenient way to ship goods. The first ferry across the lower Flathead River at present-day Polson was operated by Abraham Finley. Finley, a French-Canadian, came to northwestern Montana in 1840 with Father DeSmet. Finley sold his ferry business to Baptiste Aeneas in 1869 and the log cabin that Aeneas built was Polson's first permanent (non-Indian) residence. In addition to the ferry, he operated a freight line from Missoula (called Hellgate at the time) to the foot of the lake.

In 1854, a government expedition under the leadership of Lt. John Mullan, en route to the Kootenai country to the west, followed the course of the Flathead River through the area. A year later, the Flathead Indian Reservation was created as a result of the 1855 Hellgate Treaty. The new Reservation included the lands that would later become the town site of Polson, Montana. Settlers gradually spread throughout the area and in 1883 the Northern Pacific railroad was built through the southern end of what is now Lake County. In the early 1880's, Harry Lambert established a trading post on the south shore of Flathead Lake and the area became known as "Lambert's Landing." In 1899, a post office was established at Lambert's Landing and was named for David Polson, one of the first non-Indian settlers who had been ranching in the area since 1884.

This is just a little brief on the how, when, and where Polson got its start. Find out more at the 2018 Annual Conference in August.

A message from Keith Ball, 2nd Vice President - SDMP

In the late 1970's, my father asked me if I would mind if he put me in as a member of the SDMP. I said sure, it was not a big deal for me. I found out he not only put me in as a member, he gave me a life membership.

As the years went by I thought very little about this membership. When I retired and moved back to the Missoula, Montana area, Lewis, my brother asked me if I would be interested in coming to a few board meetings and I agreed. He then asked if I would consider a position on the board and going to the yearly conventions. The first one I attended was in Hardin where he sponsored me as a candidate for the board and I was accepted.

In the last year my family lost both Lewis and our sister Rayna. Now I fully understand what the original Montana Pioneers felt when they formed the SDMP and the importance of continuing their goal of preserving Montana History.

At a convention in Bozeman our speaker made a statement that has stayed with me. People can talk about things in the past but without documentation, it is just that... talk.

***Sons and daughters of Montana Pioneers
Is a big deal to me!***



History Books

We received a donation from Janis Hand on two History Books that were written by members of her family. The first book is "Recipes and Trivia" by Louise Shafer... a book of Early Montana Pioneer Recipes...

The second book is "Maggie" by Myrna Shafer Carpita a book about the early coming to Montana from Indiana... Myrna is the great grand daughter of Maggie (Halbert) Hand... Although she never knew her great grandmother she compiled this book from her writings.

This is an addition to our Library and we encourage other members to send us stories and donate books that will add and aid in the reading and history of our Pioneer ancestors.

Don't forget you can view this on our website also at:

<http://www.sonsanddaughtersmontanapioneers.com>

History Books and an Online Library

Submitted by Duane Thexton 1st VP

The SDMP is developing a plan to provide access to out-of-print Montana History books to SDMP members, and others, using [Google Books](#). Books would be scanned into Google and would be freely accessible, a much better scenario than currently where books reside on a shelf and only a few people even know of the book. The opportunity to expand access to old books with amazing stories is mind-boggling! Imagine the pioneer stories that reside in the pages of many of these books!

A few select books will be used to begin the project so if anyone can provide book and publisher information, that would be greatly appreciated. If books were published by a local author or group that contact information is essential. The key to success is obtaining publisher permission for Google Books. Ideally the select books would appeal to a large number of SDMP members and have interesting stories not otherwise readily available.

So if you know of a book that fits in this category please let us know about it, when was it published and who published it and the author. We can take it from there. Thanks to our members in advance for helping us with this idea and plan.

*Please remember if you would like to save us some postage and would like us to send you this Newsletter via email, please let us know. You can also always read the Newsletters on our website, at: <http://www.sonsanddaughtersmontanapioneers.com> then scroll down to the **Newsletter link** and your there.*

Thanks Michael Russell Editor

Also just drop an email line to sdmpsecretary@sonsanddaughtersmontanapioneers.com

From the President

Thank you for electing me as your President for the next 2 years. I look forward to the opportunity to serve this great Organization. The Officers and Board of Directors are a great group of people. They are dedicated to the history of their ancestors and to the history of Montana. I look forward to helping the Officers and Board members working to these goals. The convention this year in Polson should be a good one. I am looking forward to seeing you there. Hopefully the snow will be melted by Aug.

Tim Sowa

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