

[Superior's Wild and Woolly Days]

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Superior, Montana

Interview with Mrs. Lizzie (Sarah E.) Miles, Superior, Montana

TOPIC: Superior's Wild and Woolly Days

I came to Superior from Kansas in 1891. My husband, Ade (Adrian) Miles, had gone on ahead a month earlier. That was the year Superior was moved to its present site. There were just three or four homes. But seven saloons. A. P. Johnston's store was in the old Shamrock building, where the Corner Service Station now stands. Across the street was a drug store built and run by Ernest Heggerman. He sold out to A. P. Johnston. It was run as a general merchandise store in turn by Johnston, Charles Stillinger, William McBride (Heggerman's brother-in-law) and, at the present time, by E. B. Hord.

Before 1891, Superior was situated at the mouth of Johnston Creek, across the river and a little west of what is now the Leib ranch. Richard Marsh ran a dairy on that ranch. A ferry was run from Superior across the Missoula River, for the traffic from Cedar Creek. Johnston ran a combination of store saloon, and dance hall in a stone building where the garage of the Johnston ranch now stands. It catered to the miners going through on the road, which then ran just north of the Johnston ranch, following the river bank.

In the early days, Indians passing through used to camp in the hollow where the Johnston ranch lies. They would get drunk, whoop and yell, scaring people nearly to death.

The first day we came here, Old Man (Alfred)Lozeau got Miles and me to work for him at his ranch (now known as the 2 the Milwaukee Ranch, about seven miles east of

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Superior.) He was a Frenchman, but his wife was a quarter-breed Indian, though she looked black enough for a full-blood. She was fat and jolly, and I liked to hear her talk and watch her shake when she laughed. She used to smoke a corncob pipe, the kind they make themselves. I'd often hear her call, "Lozeau." He'd answer, "Huh?" "Come build fire, Lozeau; that all you good for."

She liked her drink pretty well, and used to make raspberry wine. She'd say, "Um, good. Just pour down throat from bottle."

They had a whole brood of young ones: Louis, Joe, 'dolphé, Puss, Phonzine, and Mary. Mary married Charley Ures, one of the quartette that used to sing at the Thomas (now Ordean) Hotel. 'dolphé used to fiddle for the dances. He'd get liquored up, and play with his eyes shut, all night the same tune. Most of the miners at the dance drank up pretty freely, and before the night was over, they'd all be singing and having a gay time. "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-Night," was the most popular tune, and usually it was a hot time.

The stub of the Northern Pacific was just completed in 1891. There were no passenger cars, just a common box-car, with homemade seats of the sort they used in the old school house. It was rough, like riding on a lumber wagon.

I came through on the road, from Kansas, about the next week after the stub was laid. The Missoula agent didn't want to sell me a ticket at first; he didn't know if the road was put through here yet. He finally said, "I can sell you a ticket, and you can go as far as the train will take you; and if you can't get where you want to go, you can get your money back." I said, "Nothin' doing; you don't catch me walking to Iron Mountain." When he found out that was where I was headed for, he said he was sure the track had been laid that far.

And I was the first woman to walk across the first bridge across the Missoula River at Superior, the one the Iron Mountain Tunnel and Missoula County built. There was just the thickness of two boards to walk on, with a space between planks, and I was afraid to look

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down, for it seemed that any minute I must go through, into the river. Jimmy Harmon went ahead of me, packing my girl Laura, who was a baby then.

Before the bridge was built, there was the ferry boat, owned by Johnston and rowed by Joe Charette. Charley Harmon use to have a boat. I've crossed the river with him when there were sheets of ice floating down, hindering the boat and making a chilly business of it.

The Harmon's were some of the early settlers of Superior, coming in the late 1890's. There were five brothers of them, Charley, Jimmy, Ernest, Bill, and Pete. When I came here the flat on the South side of the river (now Harmon's, Eidell's, and Kelly's additions) was heavily timbered. They cleared off the Harmon's ranch and built the ranch-house, which was 4 meant for me to live in. It's one of the old landmarks of Superior, what's left of it. Then Jimmy Harmon built a log house, across the river, north of it.

I remember when they charivaried Charley Harmon, after he married Veronica Krupp. Everyone turned out for a charivari, with bells, whistles, and even saws. On this particular night, they had a big circle-saw, hauled in on their shoulders. Billy Bonnett was one of those who carried it. We pounded it with a pipe with a knot on one end of it, and made so much racket we couldn't hear ourselves think.

It was on an Easter Sunday. Charley Harmon was too close even in those days to dig up a treat, but Jimmy Harmon had some apples and I had a cake.

Mrs. Harmon was wearing a long, trailing dress. She had just come out here, was very religious, and not used to such carryings-on. So she was nearly fainting.

Bonnett was the sort to carry off things with a high hand. He went up to her, and said, "Usually we got to kiss the bride."

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Mrs. Harmon stood with hands crossed, and turned white and red by turns. Charley spoke up timidly: "No, I don't think you'd better kiss my bride." Bonnett didn't but he was the kind who would, if he had felt like it.

Mrs. Harmon afterwards said, "Well, some may like this sort of think, but not me."

There used to be two stages between the Iron Mountain Tunnel and Superior, run by Vern (DeVern G.) Wilkinson and 5 Joe Charette. They carried the mail, and often passengers going to dances held in the boarding-house, which was run by Mr. and Mrs. William Brabazon.

When the Brabazon's sold out, the furniture was bought by Johnston, and most of it is now in the Johnston farmhouse, about a mile east of Superior.

For a long time, a saloon wasn't allowed at the Tunnel. But they finally got one. And after celebrating there on pay days, the miners would get together a sleigh-load, and go ripping, tearing about the country, having a high old time.

Charley Jamieson built the Thomas Hotel. He sold it to Johnston, who rented it to Thee (Theodore H.) Thomas. Thomas ran it in high style.

I remember a Christmas tree we had there once on the third floor. Johnston had fixed up as Santa Claus, rigged out with a black suit and cotton beard. He came in by a ladder, through a front window on the third floor. In those days we didn't have electric lights, only coal oil lamps and the colored candles on the tree. Johnston got too close to the candles, and his whiskers caught fire. Grandma (Mrs. Maria) Riefflin grabbed her plaid shawl, one she had brought from Berlin, Germany, and with it smothered the blaze. By that time, there was a regular stampede, everybody hitting for the stairs. A bunch of big men held them back, or some would have been trampled to death.

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Those were pretty rough times. The worst deed I ever knew of in Superior happened in the old Shamrock, in the 6 saloon in the front part. A blank stranger came up to Curly, the bartender ("Curly" Coleman), and stabbed him through the heart. Tom Meininger, the crippled constable with one wooden leg, held him for a few days, then let him go. There was no sheriff here, and Missoula officials weren't bothered much about Superior law-breaking.

Alec Berg was running a pack train up Cedar Creek in the early days. He was hurt a bit once when he sat out for the hills during a drunk. He had the pack train tailed up, so when the lead cayuse got his rope caught to a tree, the animals stood there, packs and all, till Alec sobered up in the morning.

I saw Bill Beach soon after we came here. He wanted to hire Miles to work in the mine, and me to do the cooking, but he'd only pay next to nothing, so I wouldn't hear it. He was a big-bodied man with short legs. He wore his straight, black hair short around the neck and long every place else, with big whiskers tucked into his bib overall. I told him: "I'd like to take you by the whiskers and lead you around the country." He laughed, and answered, "You're the first woman I ever heard complain about a man's whiskers."

Trout Creek those days was worked by a big, tall Norwegian named Tom Silverson, and "Russian Bill" (Michael Forrest). I never heard Bill called anything else; he was a Russian, sure enough. He used to get drunk, and Johnston would herd him, acting as his guardian. They had no scissors nor razors in the hills, and they'd come to town looking like 7 a bunch of billy goats.

Murray, "the Roller", was more like a shaggy dog than a man, what with his whiskers and long hair hanging down his shoulders. He asked if he could camp on our place, when we were in the Jimmy Harmon cabin west of town; he didn't do us any harm, so we let him. He rolled two big logs under a big tree, and slept between them. He was followed around by a ring-necked dog he called Bob. When he couldn't bum a quarter off anybody, he'd live on lambsquarter greens, eating them like spare grass.

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He never bothered us at the ranch, and used to buy a quart of milk, whenever he could steal a dime to pay for it. Mrs. John Connally, who ran the Northern Pacific lunchroom, kept cows; Murray used to sneak up to them and milk into an old pail he kept. When he'd drunk his fill of the warm, unstrained milk, he'd call Bob to finish the pail. He carried a cane, with a spike at the tip, that he made pretty useful. Folks used to say, "There goes old Murray, "the Roller," sniping cigar stubs."

We called him "the Roller," because he'd watch for the miners to come from the hills, then "roll" them. They finally got tired of him, and ran him out of town. I heard he got caught by a train on a railway bridge somewhere near Butte, and was killed.

(Names and dates I verified through the following records in the County Clerk and Recorder's office in 8 Mineral County court house: "Grantor" and "Grantee" books; "Mining Locations" index. Where I could find no record of the name, Mr. John McMillan supplied the information I needed. He has been county clerk and recorder over a long period of time, and is also an old settler.

I could not take notes fast enough to reproduce Mrs. Miles, pungent speech. She uses a fund of sayings that are not, I think, local. I have copied a few, in case they may be of interest).

TOPIC: Mrs. Lizzie Miles' sayings

Imageous of unconcerned unconcerned make a concerned conscerned fool robusteous the commonalty of people larruping good

He baked himself a cooky; let him eat it.

tripping the cockawhoop gable end out (seat worn out of pants) rumbustious high kafluters (proud people) a whole passel whomperjawed (awry) cantywampus (catacorner) fum-

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diddles (fripperies) het up 9 scarce as hen's teeth butters no parsnips lallygagging
mojering along mooching along go at a snail's gallop slonchwise

I ain't lost nothing thar that I need to look for. (Used as a refusal to an invitation.)

broncho slippers, broncho brogans (horse shoes) ?/ ?/