

## Smokey Comes to Town

*Ann Boucher, MSO*

You have to get up pretty early in the morning to find yourself in the middle of a bunch of hot air balloons, and that's what several BLM employees did during the seventh annual Big Skyfest held in Billings July 19-22.

This was Smokey's first appearance at the Billings festival. The BLM financed its trip and rounded up volunteers to help get the balloon in the air, chase it to its landing site, then pack it up again when the flights were over.

The Smokey balloon is owned and maintained by "Friends of Smokey", a non-profit organization made up of volunteers who are dedicated to conveying messages about prevention of unwanted human-caused fires and the management of the nation's natural resources. Based in Albuquerque, the group was organized in 1991 and welcomes additional volunteers for its many endeavors.

*continued on next page*



Miles City fire crew members help inflate the Smokey balloon.

Smokey appeared at 140 events between 1994-99 in nearly every state, Canada and the Netherlands. More than 17 million have seen Smokey in person, and more than 205 million through the media.

Dena Sprandel, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist in Miles City, organized the BLM volunteers. Although only a few actually got a ride, they were all thrilled with the entire balloon experience. Even the ones who lugged the 584-pound basket from its landing spot back to the pickup are already looking forward to next year.  
*(photos by Ann Boucher)*



It takes a team effort to pack 4,670 square yards of fabric into a manageable package.



Volunteers lug the 584-pound basket back to the pickup.

*For more information about the Friends of Smokey, please call 505-839-7153.*

# From Ghost Town to Boom Town - But only for a Day

*Valerie Schafer, GPA Seasonal Student Curator*

To thank all the visitors and Garnet Preservation Association (GPA) members for their support, the BLM and GPA hosted the annual Garnet Ghost Town Day celebration July 28, and it was a smashing success!

The turnout for the free festival was much higher than expected thanks in part to the advertising efforts of GPA lead visitor contact specialist Jessica Weinert and GPA board members, Kevin and Diana McCann. While about 450 were expected, more than 1,000 people crowded the town. Butte Field Office law enforcement ranger Terry Sauer and Garnet park ranger Larry Busby kept the traffic running smoothly, despite the fact that there was overflow parking up to two miles away.

This year's festival had a variety of activities, refreshments, and plenty of prizes. Up on the hill, in a cloud of fierce gun smoke, the Old West Gunslingers impressed and entertained everyone with their sharpshooting and reenactments of famous Old West stand-offs. Downtown, visitors could play games, pan for gold, bid in the pie auction, or eat homemade ice cream. Everyone also had the opportunity to get an in-depth history lesson on Garnet during several guided tours and at a hands-on booth with Garnet artifacts.

Visitors, GPA members, and BLM staff alike all enjoyed the day, and Garnet renewed its presence in the community as a source of education, enjoyment, and a valuable part of our Montana heritage.



Garnet Park Ranger Dwight Gappert auctions off homemade pies.

# Historic Goldmine Found at Ney Ranch

*Ann Boucher, MSO*

There's nothing quite like an unexpected bonus.

That's what the BLM got with the Beaverhead Acquisition, a 2,300-acre tract that straddles the Beaverhead River 12 miles south of Dillon. Adjacent to Interstate-15, the property is easily accessible and contains terrific riparian areas and wildlife habitat, as well as some significant cultural properties such as an 1805 campsite of William Clark. It also has the remnants of an old homestead known as the Ney Ranch -- and that's the bonus.

Although he was aware of the structures on the property, archeologist Mark Sant has been pleasantly surprised to find a substantial amount of written documentation, oral history and artifacts tied to the log house and outbuildings. The original buildings are still standing, and are in remarkably good condition; homestead records, diaries and photographs document the ranch's history; descendants of the original homesteaders still live in the area and can recount, either from having been there or from having listened to their grandparents, the stories that make history come alive; and family members have kept a large collection of well maintained artifacts from the homestead, including furniture, china, tools and horse gear, much of which the homesteaders brought with them from Ireland.

As a record of the homestead era, this property is a historic goldmine. The fact that so many homesteads eventually went into private ownership or just eroded away makes the Ney Ranch an extremely valuable addition to the public lands system.

The BLM has signed an agreement with the Butte-Silverbow Public Archives and the family of the original homesteaders to inventory, catalog and duplicate on CD-ROM the written documents and photographs associated with the Ney Ranch. Although the details aren't yet worked out, this information will probably eventually be available at the Beaverhead County Museum.

The BLM has also taken steps to clean up the property and preserve the structures. Through the Montana Youth Challenge Program, a group of volunteers helped clear debris and replace the deteriorating roof of the log house this summer.

The main house is in remarkably good condition considering it was built more than 100 years ago, but, as Mark says, if the roof goes, it all goes.

The Dillon Field Office is now undertaking a planning process to decide how to best manage the Beaverhead Acquisition. It held two public meetings and a field tour this spring, and plans to issue a draft management plan in December. Although the planning process also deals with the other significant aspects of the property such as habitat and recreation, the historical perspective holds a world of possibilities for showing a true-to-life picture of homestead days.



Volunteers rebuilt the roof on the log house at the Ney Ranch this summer.



A fence constructed last fall during National Public Lands Day keeps cattle away from the buildings.

# Historic Post Office Protected During Coal Mining Operations

*Marilyn Krause, Public Affairs Specialist, Miles City Field Office*

What do you do with an old post office that is considered eligible for the National Historic Register but is positioned on top of tons of mineable coal? That was the dilemma faced by BLM and Western Energy seeking to expand the Rosebud Mine near Colstrip. An agreement called for carefully moving the historic Castle Rock Post Office a short distance away, mining the coal, then moving the post office close to its original position.

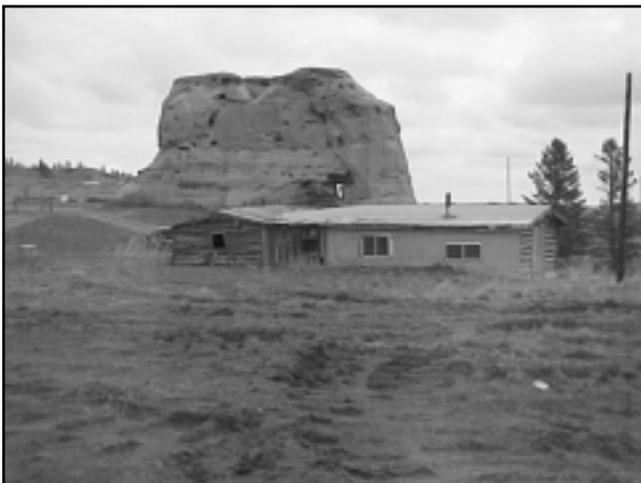
The Castle Rock Post Office has a short but colorful history that parallels the homestead era in eastern Montana. It was named for a large sandstone outcrop known as "Castle Rock", one of the prominent natural features in the area. Established in 1910 with George Binkerd as postmaster, the building was used as a residence and post office, typical of small post offices that dotted the northern Great Plains.

Two years later Binkerd filed a homestead application with the General Land Office in Miles City and he was granted a patent in 1918. In 1919 he gave up the postmaster position and Mary Baughman took over and operated the post office until 1926 when it closed and the mail was handled out of Forsyth.

After doing business at the post office, residents would often visit the nearby community center and church. Long-time area resident Mary Dowlin recalled how the center held dances which lasted all night, ending in time for the floor to be swept and chairs set out for the Sunday morning church service!

The log building used as the post office also served as a residence for several years. The BLM and Western Energy recognized the historical significance of the structures and wanted to protect them for posterity. According to Senior Scientific Specialist Mike Shea, "Western Energy has a commitment to all resources in the area, with cultural values considered along with resources such as air, water, and wildlife."

To move the structure, Western Energy hired ROCON House Moving of Billings to brace the fragile building and move it approximately two miles. The entire process took about two weeks and company officials estimate the Castle Rock Post Office will be moved back in 2004. Ironically, after all the care taken to move the building, a severe thunderstorm recently damaged the roof of the historic structure.



The Castle Rock Post Office and living quarters in its original location in front of the Castle Rock "keyhole" to the Stocker Creek Valley. (Photo compliments of Western Energy)



When coal mining operations crowded the historic Castle Rock structures, Western Energy moved the buildings and will return them close to their original location when the mining is complete.

# Devil's Elbow Recreation Area

*Jaime Arnold, Canyon Ferry*

The Butte Field Office hosted a dedication ceremony July 19 for the newly finished Devil's Elbow Recreation Area.

Located on Hauser Lake about 12 miles northeast of Helena, the site has long been known as Devil's Elbow because the lake takes a sharp turn there. The area now offers boat ramps, camp sites, toilets, and swimming and picnicking areas, thanks to the cooperative efforts of Pennsylvania Power & Light Montana, The Conservation Fund, Lewis & Clark County and the BLM.

As part of the dedication, members of several Indian tribes gathered for a site blessing. A three-day encampment to commemorate the Indian cultures encountered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition followed.

Brad Rixford, Butte Field



A three-day Indian encampment at Devil's Elbow this summer commemorated the Indian cultures encountered by Lewis and Clark. (photo by Jaime Arnold)

Office recreation planner, and Kent Satterlee, engineer, received awards for their roles in

developing Devil's Elbow. Brad spent many hours in planning meetings with the Montana Power Company, Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and other state and county agencies under a FERC hydroelectric re-licensing process initiated by MPC. He also prepared the site plan and researched recreational sites and requirements.

As the contracting officer, Kent worked on the survey and ensured that the facilities were constructed according to the design. He also incorporated the latest techniques and standards for construction and facilities which helped make the project cost effective.

Devil's Elbow is open year-round, but no services are provided in the winter months.



Boat launch and docks at the newly finished Devil's Elbow Recreation Area. (photo by Ann Boucher)

# Jory Bundy



The fire season of 2000 stressed crews and resources in Montana to the limits and it was seasonal firefighters like Jory Bundy that provided stability in an otherwise hectic fire year. According to Phil Gill, Miles City's Fire Management Officer, "It is the extra effort of firefighters like Jory that enable us to get the job done year after year."

A Miles City native, Jory started working as a seasonal firefighter while attending Miles Community College and he has been fighting fires in the Miles City Field Office area for six seasons. This year he was hired as a career-seasonal engine operator but now that his engine foreman is acting station manager in Miles City, Jory has quietly

assumed many of the foreman's duties.

As a career-seasonal, Jory can work anywhere from 6 to 11 months depending on the fire season and the funding. Last year he was on the initial attack of "too many fires to count" and as of July 10, has fought eight fires already this season. As you might expect, Jory likes the excitement of fighting fires and gets job satisfaction from being responsible for one of the "heavy" engines. Since there are so many "rookies" or new fire fighters this year, Jory has spent much of the season training and mentoring the new employees. One of the challenges is the political side of firefighting - working with individuals who don't understand BLM's organization or philosophy of firefighting.

On the personal side, Jory is married and he and his wife, Angela, make their home in Miles City.



David Squires of the Miles City Field Office taught youngsters the fine art of knot tying using coat hangers as giant hooks and parachute cord for fishing line at the 10th annual Fishing Week Event held July 12. The event attracted more than 80 children ages 6-12 for a fun summer evening of educational stations and fishing. Each year BLM and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks sponsor the event with funding from the Custer Rod and Gun Club and Walleyes Unlimited. Other community partners provide food and prizes.



## Calling BLM Retirees . . .

*The BLM Retirees Association meets on the first Tuesday of odd-numbered months at Elmer's Pancake and Steak House in Billings Heights. Each meeting starts at 11:30 a.m. and features a short program. For more information contact Cynthia Embretson at 252-1367 or Shirley Hefner at 259-1202.*

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