

Thomas Stuart Homestead  
Historic Context Report  
Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site

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## **Thomas Stuart Homestead Site: Historic Context Report**

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Deer Lodge Montana is currently developing plans for a new contact station. One potential location will affect the site of a late-nineteenth-century historic homestead. Accordingly, the National Park Service and the Montana State Historic Preservation Office need more information about the historic importance of the Thomas Stuart homestead site to determine future decisions concerning the contact station. The following report provides the historic contexts within which to assess the resource's historic significance according to National Register of Historic Places guidelines. The report examines the site's association with Thomas Stuart, a Deer Lodge pioneer, and the Menards, a French-Canadian family, and presents the wider historical context of the fur trade, Deer Lodge's mixed cultural milieu, and the community's transformation into a settled, agrarian town. Though only indications of foundations and other site features remain at the homestead, the report seeks to give the most complete picture of the site's history.

### **Site Significance and Integrity**

The Thomas Stuart homestead site is evaluated according to the National Register of Historic Places, a program designed in the 1960s to provide a comprehensive listing of the United States' significant historic properties. Listing on the National Register officially verifies a site's importance and requires park administrators or land managers to consider the significance of the property when planning federally funded projects. In order to be included on the National Register, a site must reflect a range of criterion derived from the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Indeed, the National Register is one component to the larger federal preservation program along with an advisory council on historic preservation, the Section 106 process, a wide variety of federal acts and agencies, and the National Park Service, which administers the National Register. The Register determines a property's significance based on an association with events, historic patterns or people, the expression of distinctive elements of architectural design or construction, or the potential to provide information important in prehistory or history. An intensive process of identifying, and professionally documenting and evaluating potentially significant sites creates nominations to the Register.

Through this procedure, state historic preservation officers continue to develop a large catalog of historic properties.<sup>1</sup> Although the following report does not constitute an official nomination, it does rely on the criterion established by the National Register in order to provide an accurate historic context of the Thomas Stuart homestead site.

Assessing the property through the lens of the National Register's Criterion A, which evaluates properties based on historic developments, allows for evaluating the significance of the site. The Thomas Stuart homestead site falls under the "Exploration/Settlement" Area of Significance due to its construction in the late nineteenth century and its direct association with the early history of Deer Lodge City and the Deer Lodge Valley. The site is connected to an array of historical trends that have all contributed to the development of the valley. A culturally mixed world that represented the last vestiges of the fur trade era, Euro-American ranching and mining, and the migration of French-Canadian ethnic groups to the area are all historic developments with which the site maintains a strong association. However, due to the homestead's demolition in the 1920s or 1930s, the site no longer conveys its relationship to this history. While subsurface deposits may reveal more information regarding the residents' material culture or the area's ranching and mining, it visually displays little of these historic patterns of settlement.

Criterion B of the National Register evaluates how historic resources exemplify an individual who made "demonstrably important" contributions to the local, state, or national context. This report evaluates the site's association with Thomas Stuart and his contribution to early Deer Lodge history and, like Criterion A, the "Exploration/Settlement" Area of Significance remains most applicable in this regard. Lacking its buildings, the site is unable to represent Thomas Stuart's involvement in the foundation of Deer Lodge City. Furthermore, evidence indicates that while the Stuart family lived in Deer Lodge from the late 1860s through 1915, they resided at the homestead for only four years, from 1880-1884. Residing a relatively brief time at the homestead in relation to his half-century residence in the town, Thomas Stuart's subsequent residence within the city limits of Deer Lodge more adequately demonstrates his importance to the community.

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<sup>1</sup> John Fowler, "The Federal Preservation Program," in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Robert E. Stipe, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 35-54.

Once cleared and used for overflow parking and grazing by Conrad Warren, the homestead contains very few surface level remains but it may yield potentially significant archeological information with more thorough archeological investigation. Hence, the site holds potential significance under Criterion D, which evaluates historic resources according to their capacity to yield valuable archeological information. Given the site's late-nineteenth-century European-American construction, the archeological Area of Significance under this criterion is "Historic—Non-Aboriginal." Surface-level archeological assessments conducted during the latter decades of the twentieth century suggested more extensive subsurface deposits. A 2003 survey, conducted by archeology graduate students at the University of Montana, recommended that an excavation may offer archeologists an opportunity to examine changes in material culture of a less privileged, working-class socio-economic group that would not be observable elsewhere on the ranch. In this regard, the homestead site may currently maintain a much higher level of integrity than it demonstrates under Criterion A and B.

## **Thomas Stuart Homestead: Site Description**

The Thomas Stuart homestead site is north of Deer Lodge in Powell County, Montana in the historic Deer Lodge Valley. The valley contains the Clark Fork River, Deer Lodge City, and the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, managed by the National Park Service. Deer Lodge is located along Interstate 90 in the western third of Montana and lies west of Butte and southwest of Helena. The site lies near Main Street, and within the boundaries of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. The “Stuart field,” where the remains are situated, are south of the main concentration of historic buildings of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch that park visitors now tour regularly.

The surrounding landscape is largely undeveloped, aside from the built environment of Deer Lodge and the ranch facilities, and evokes the expansive open space that predominated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The homestead site is situated within a grassland valley of the Clark Fork River drainage and lies between the Continental Divide to the east and the Flint Creek Mountain Range to the west. The mountains that bound the semi-arid Deer Lodge Valley offer a striking setting for the Deer Lodge community and the historic Grant-Kohrs ranching enterprise. The component landscapes of the present historic site include the Home Ranch complex, the Grant-Kohrs and Warren residences, extensive pasturelands for hay production and grazing, as well as the riparian areas and woodlands that thrive along the Clark Fork River, Johnson Creek, and Cottonwood Creek. Although the Kohrs Ranch operations once encompassed over 27,000 acres and claimed over ten million acres of feed, water, and grazing rights on public land in the intermountain west, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site presently consists of 1,618 acres.<sup>2</sup> Rolling rangeland surrounds the site as it did when the Stuart home and outbuildings still stood, and standing in the Stuart field, a visitor can clearly view the pastures of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch, the Flint Creek mountain range to the west and the larger Grant-Kohrs Home Ranch compound to the northwest.

The homestead site, in its earliest years, did not belong to the historic Kohrs-Bielenberg Ranch until Thomas and Ellen Stuart sold the property to Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg in 1884. The site is located

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<sup>2</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., “Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One: Landscape History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis and Evaluation,” July 2004, 1-11, 1-13, 1-1.

southeast of the larger ranch complex and is on the east side of the railroad tracks, whereas the greatest concentration of the Kohrs and Warren home ranch buildings are on the west side of the tracks. Walking to the northwest from the homestead site on the designated path, a visitor would cross the railroad tracks and encounter the Grant-Kohrs Ranch House, Bunkhouse Row, and the blacksmith shop and garage. The site is within a 2000' distance of the larger Grant-Kohrs residence. The Stuart pasture lies to the north of the site and the Stuart meadow is west of the site and directly south of the Grant-Kohrs complex. Both of the pastures, including the small field in which the homestead site is situated, were incorporated into the functioning of the Grant-Kohrs ranch presumably when they were sold in 1884. The homestead site, in general, is on the eastern edge of the present ranch property and grazing and hay pastures surround the site to the north, west, and southwest.

Also located in the Development Zone of Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, the homestead is east of the present curatorial building, north of the visitor parking area, and behind jack-leg fencing that prevents visitors from casually walking through the field. The Johnson Creek riparian area contains the area to the south and tall Cottonwood trees prevent a clear view of Deer Lodge to the south. All remaining indications of Thomas Stuart's homestead site are situated on a small knoll with very gradual slopes to the northeast and southwest. It consists primarily of a series of depressions in the ground and scatters of glass, brick, and stone possibly used in the original buildings. Previous archeological assessments have identified a series of nine extant features, which the author corroborated on a site visit in September 2011. These include two circular depressions that hold brick and glass fragments and a linear mound that extends 13 meters and rises 10-20 cm above the ground. A high concentration of brick, some of which suggests deliberate coursing, lies in the vicinity of these three features. Also extant are two more depressions (one of which is thought to have been used as a privy pit), a concentration of stones, two rectangular depressions (one of which consists of three smaller depressions), and two concrete slabs at the northwest section of the field.<sup>3</sup> Please refer to Figure 3 for clarification on the arrangement of the site's features.

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<sup>3</sup> Montana Cultural Resources Information System Form, "Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site," 24PW798, GRKO-1426-TS1, 2003, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana, 160-161.

Artifacts that remain at the site consist of fragmented brick, clear and amethyst colored glass fragments, a small assortment of iron pieces, milk glass, and machine cut and modern wire nails. A collected artifact, a molded bottle of clear glass with the words “Barton’s Dyanshine,” may also be related to the site.<sup>4</sup> Although there is no extant structure, the site’s archeological remains still reflect the historic activities that occurred there and the multiple hands through which the property passed before the National Park Service Foundation acquired it in 1970.

### **The Homestead Site and the Historic Grant-Kohrs Ranch**

Neither of the homestead’s residents were prominent ranchers like Bielenberg, Kohrs, or Warren, but when Kohrs purchased the property in 1884, he brought it within the realm of cattle ranching. Therefore, a brief summary of GRKO’s ranching history is helpful in understanding the landscape’s overarching significance in national history and the general cause for the site’s potential significance.

The Thomas Stuart Homestead site is within the boundaries of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site (GRKO) and is embedded within the larger history of the ranching enterprise in the valley. The Grant-Kohrs Ranch is managed by the Park Service as a working ranch in its unrivaled depiction of the open range cattle industry that swept across the American West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Grant and Kohrs greatly influenced the regional beef market and laid the foundations for “a virtual empire of open and free grassland.” The ranch originated with Johnny Grant’s use of the Deer Lodge Valley in 1857 to winter his cattle, thereby bringing the first non-native animals into the general vicinity of GRKO. In 1859, Johnny Grant settled in the Deer Lodge Valley and built the first recorded permanent structure built by a European at the confluence of the Deer Lodge River and Little Blackfoot Creek. Grant gradually developed a larger home ranch and expanded his cattle operation to such an extent that, by 1860, his herd was large enough to be driven to California to be sold. In 1860, Grant convinced other traders, like the Stuart brothers (James and Granville, Thomas’ older brothers), among others, to settle in the Deer Lodge Valley. After moving closer to Cottonwood, the small settlement that became Deer Lodge, Grant constructed a larger

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 161.

house and expanded his ranching enterprise. As Grant enlarged his ranching and farming activities, Conrad Kohrs arrived in Deer Lodge in 1862 as a gold prospector on his way to Idaho. By 1864, Kohrs began farming in the Deer Lodge Valley, expanded his regional butchering operations, and began his own cattle ranching business. In 1866, Johnny Grant sold his ranch to Conrad Kohrs and his half-brother, John Bielenberg, and left Deer Lodge.<sup>5</sup>

Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg, Kohrs' half-brother and business partner, expanded their cattle ranching and butchering business exponentially in the late 1860s. The two gradually built a ranch that produced carefully bred cattle and supplied ranchers in Montana with high-quality stock to build their own herds. In 1868, Conrad Kohrs married Augusta Kruse in Iowa and the two moved back to the ranch shortly thereafter. By 1871, the Kohrs' residence was one of the largest and finely decorated houses in Montana. As the placer mining rush waned by the late 1860s, taking with it the local demand for beef, Kohrs and Bielenberg made substantial changes to their ranching business. The two implemented new breeds into their ranch, expanded their hay and grain cultivation, and, in 1874, Kohrs began selling his cattle to the Chicago markets. In the late 1870s, the Kohrs and Bielenberg Ranch expanded again through horse breeding. The two experimented with Clydesdale and Merino sheep breeding.<sup>6</sup> By 1883, the ranch became one of the largest in Montana with Kohrs' and Bielenberg's purchase of two-thirds of the shares in the DHS Ranch (Davis, Hauser, and Stuart). In doing so, the two came into a ranching partnership with Granville Stuart, another enterprising and prominent rancher who had hoped for substantial profits from Montana's open-range cattle boom. This expansion effectively involved Kohrs in a variety of regional stock organizations and in regional politics as well. Like Granville Stuart, Kohrs was both a member of the Montana Stock Growers Association (Granville served as president of the association in 1884) and served on the Territorial Legislature in Helena.<sup>7</sup> In 1884, Kohrs and Bielenberg purchased the Tom Stuart home and gained access to Johnson Creek as well

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<sup>5</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One," 1-1, 2-19, 2-20, 2-21, 2-22, 2-24, 2-31.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2-31, 2-33-2-34, 2-35.

<sup>7</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 218, 158; John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One," 2-37.



as a variety of agricultural outbuildings. The winter of 1886-1887 devastated the Montana cattle industry and the Kohrs and Bielenberg, as well as Granville Stuart's, herds suffered substantial losses.<sup>8</sup>

By 1920, after continually expanding the ranch's holdings and improving its facilities, Kohrs and Bielenberg sold a majority of the ranch's lands before their deaths in 1920 and 1922 respectively. However, in 1932 Kohrs' grandson, Conrad Warren began managing the ranch. During his tenure, Warren transformed the ranch into a modern breeding enterprise. Beginning in 1940, after purchasing the home ranch, Warren also implemented a variety of conservation programs to improve the ranch's pastures and intensified the ranch's agricultural production. In 1970, however, he sold the older portions of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch along with acreage and easements that surrounded the home ranch, as well as the Thomas Stuart homestead site to the National Park Foundation.<sup>9</sup>

The transition toward federal ownership of the larger Grant-Kohrs Ranch began in the late 1960s when Conrad Kohrs realized his children would not continue managing the family ranch. In order to protect his family's history and contribution to Montana's history, Con and his wife Nell approached National Park Service officials in hopes that eventually the organization could purchase and manage the ranch. By 1967, historian Merrill J. Mattes surveyed the ranch and confirmed its historical importance. Mattes also recognized the potential for a new form of interpretation, "living history," or the use of "living demonstration areas" for Park Service administrators to use at a site like Grant-Kohrs Ranch. Despite this assessment, federal acquisition of the property continued slowly, and by 1969, administrative progress depended on an act of Congress and a funding appropriation. This hurdle threatened to delay federal acquisition and frustrate Warren's efforts at selling and preserving the ranch. Rather than wait for a Congressional act, Theodor Swem, Assistant Director of the National Park Service, suggested an arrangement with the National Park Foundation. Congress designed this organization as an official partner of the Park Service in order to purchase, with private donations, properties such as the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and hold them in trust until Congressional funding became available. Although Con Warren did not immediately pursue this avenue,

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<sup>8</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One," 2-37, 2-38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2-50, 2-57, 2-83.

negotiations with the Park Service and the National Park Foundation continued through 1969. In 1970, a previously tenuous relationship between Warren and Park Service officials eased and the two parties ironed out formal arrangements regarding property divisions, easements, and the antiques associated with the historic buildings and the ranching operation. The Warrens' decision to donate, instead of sell, the artifact collection motivated the Advisory Board in its October 1970 meeting to "emphatically recommend that the National Park Service negotiate immediately" with Warren to obtain the ranch. The Foundation officially acquired the property on November 13, 1970. Formal planning for the new potential park ensued, and the National Park Service began to draft the enabling legislation for a House of Representatives meeting in April, 1971. Legislative negotiations over the course of the following year ended on August 25, 1972 when President Richard Nixon signed the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site into law, thereby bringing a working cattle ranch under National Park Service management.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Douglas McChristian, "Going Into the Cattle Business: NPS Acquisition," in "Ranchers to Rangers: An Administrative History of Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site," National Park Service, July, 1997.

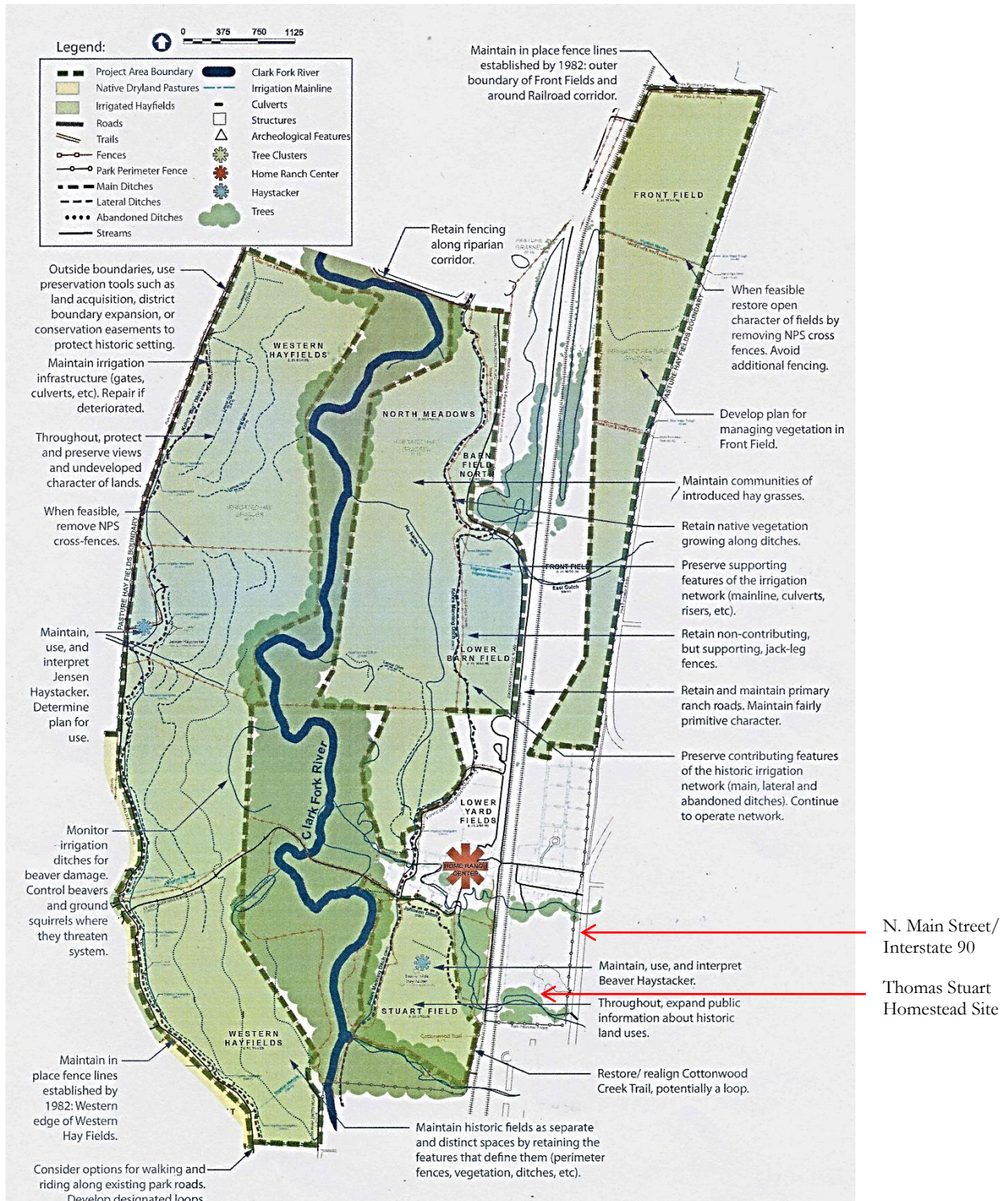


Figure 1- Shapins Belt Collins, "Grant-Kohrs Ranch: Cultural Landscape Report, Part Two: Treatment Recommendations," February 2009, 45.



Figure 2- Grant-Kohrs Ranch, NPS Historical Base Map, 1958-1971, John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One: Landscape History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis and Evaluation," July 2004, 2-195.

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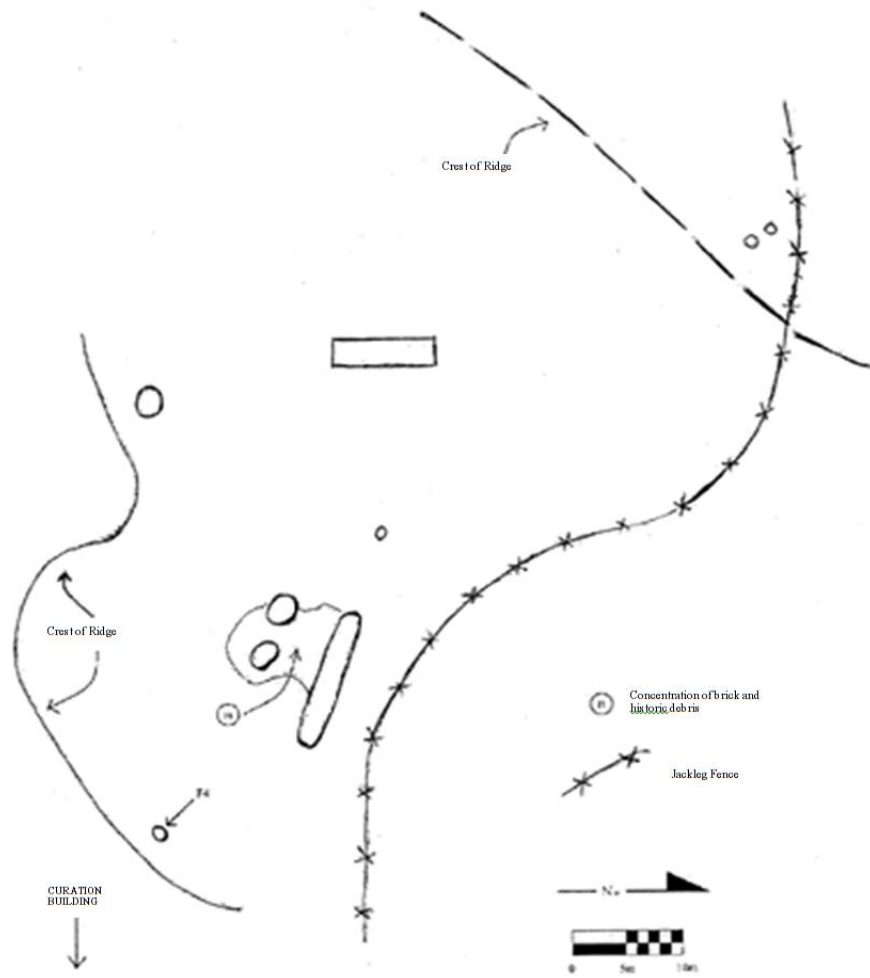


Figure 3 - This map is drawn from the 2003 Montana Cultural Resources Information System assessment and has been modified in order to provide a clearer representation of the site.

## Site History

From 1880 to the 1920s, the homestead was home to two families, the Stuarts and the Menards, but remained within the larger functioning of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch for the majority of the twentieth century until the National Park Service acquired the historic ranch in 1972. The site's history includes various physical changes it underwent and the utilitarian uses by private and federal owners. In 1880, Thomas Stuart purchased the land surrounding the homestead and the adjacent field, now referred to as the "Stuart field," from Colonel J.C. Thornton.<sup>11</sup> Stuart presumably built the house, barns, and other outbuildings in 1880. However, the exact date, order of construction, and original arrangement and appearance of these buildings remains unclear. Four years later on April 5, 1884, Thomas Stuart sold the 160-acre parcel to Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg for \$4,500 along with all water rights and buildings associated with the property.<sup>12</sup> In February and March of 1884, Thomas and his wife experienced the loss of three of their children to diphtheria.<sup>13</sup> This circumstance may have contributed to his decision to sell the property and homestead and move to the neighboring town of Deer Lodge into a house owned by his brother, Granville Stuart.<sup>14</sup>

After Thomas, his wife Ellen (or Helen) Armell Stuart, and any surviving children relocated in 1884,<sup>15</sup> the house presumably remained vacant or became the residence of another ranch hand after Kohrs and Bielenberg purchased it. Documentation currently cannot confirm any particular use for the house or

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<sup>11</sup> "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," newspaper article, source unknown, date unknown, approximately 1924-1935, article came from Vivian Kemp's estate, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana.

<sup>12</sup> Deed transfer, Thomas Stuart and Ellen Stuart to Conrad Kohrs, 5 April, 1884, Powell County Courthouse, Deer Lodge, Montana. This transaction was also recorded in Deer Lodge's local newspaper *The New North-West* on April 4, 1884: "Mr. Thomas Stuart, a few days since, sold his ranch north of town to Mr. Con Kohrs for \$4,500. This ranch adjoins that of Mr. Kohrs, and contains some excellent meadow land."

<sup>13</sup> Granville Stuart to Nancy Stuart, 25 February, 1884, and Granville Stuart to Amanda Stuart, 11 March 1884, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 3, Mansfield Library Special Collections. Sam Stuart to Granville Stuart, 3 March 1884, Samuel Thomas Hauser Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Montana Historical Society. Thelma Shaw, "Family Histories," in *Powell County: Where It All Began*, ed. Dorene Courchene (Deer Lodge, 1989), 466.

<sup>14</sup> Sam Stuart to Granville Stuart, 3 March, 1884, Samuel Thomas Hauser Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Montana State Historical Society. Sam stated, "Thomas has been having more trouble than anybody—all of which you have heard before this time, so I will not repeat the sad details." Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 1 July, 1884, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 2, Montana State Historical Society. Granville wrote, referring to the house in Deer Lodge, "That was all right about your moving into the brick house, and you are welcome to stay as long as you wish." Thelma Shaw, "Family Histories," in *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 466.

<sup>15</sup> The 1910 United States Manuscript Census for Deer Lodge City in Powell County, Montana, indicates that two of their children, Alice and Earl, were born prior to 1884 and would have moved with the family to another household at the ages of six and two respectively.

changes made to the property between 1884, when Thomas Stuart sold the land, and 1899 or 1900, when the Menard family moved in. The only verifiable change to the property occurred when John Bielenberg moved and attached another structure to create a north wing to the house. This addition occurred before Antoine Menard rented the home in 1899 or 1900.<sup>16</sup> In 1924, the Menard family left the house after a dispute between Mr. Menard and Augusta Kohrs, Conrad Kohrs' wife, and the building sat vacant. Migrant workers occasionally occupied the building in the early 1900s until a ranch manager tore it down to keep them from using it.<sup>17</sup> A local newspaper noted the building's dismantling and recognized it as a "landmark of '80" and the "red dwelling house" of "pioneer and plainsman" Thomas Stuart.<sup>18</sup> In 1954, the Conrad Kohrs Company sold the property to Conrad K. Warren, and it remained associated with the larger operations of the ranch until the Park Service Foundation purchased the deed from Conrad and Nellie Warren in 1972, thereby bringing the homestead remains under the management of the National Park Service.<sup>19</sup>

Oral histories containing information of the original homestead clarify the general configuration and appearance of the site. According to Alice Farnsworth, the daughter of Antoine Menard, Thomas Stuart's original dwelling was a one-story, three-room frame house with its bedrooms constructed as "lean-to or pantry type structures" attached to the living room. This description, along with the only available visual representation of the buildings on Stoner's 1884 map, reflects the National Folk House style, as labeled by McAlester, which spread across the U.S. and became increasingly common from 1850 to 1890 as the railroad gradually advanced westward. The National Folk House style was constructed of wood framing covered by

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<sup>16</sup> Winifred Brown, "Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment," Archeological Salvage Investigations at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana, 1975, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Alice Farnsworth (Menard), interviewed by John Albright and Cheryl Clemenson, Deer Lodge Montana, July 1, 1975, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana; "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site: Conrad Kohrs," last modified July 30, 2006, <http://www.nps.gov/grko/historyculture/people.htm>. "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site: John Bielenberg," last modified July 30, 2006, <http://www.nps.gov/grko/historyculture/johnbielenberg.htm>. "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site," last modified August 21, 2006, <http://www.nps.gov/grko/historyculture/conradwarren.htm>. Who had the building torn down remains unclear as the home ranch underwent a transition of ownership in the 1920s after John Bieleberg and Conrad Kohrs' deaths in 1922 and 1920 respectively. Conrad Kohrs Warren did not work at the ranch as a hired hand until 1929.

<sup>18</sup> Alice Farnsworth (Menard), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975; "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

<sup>19</sup> Deed transfer, Conrad Kohrs Co. to Conrad Warren, 15 July, 1954, Powell County Courthouse, Deer Lodge, Montana. Deed transfer, Conrad and Nellie Warren to the National Park Foundation, 13 November, 1970, Powell County Courthouse, Deer Lodge, Montana.

wooden sheathing as these supplies became more easily available by the railroad. American folk housing previously utilized heavy logs, sod, or “heavy hewn frames” along the East Coast prior to railroad’s westward surge in the 1850s. Despite the new balloon, or braced framing technique, the essentially basic and rectangular (often one level) form of the folk house persisted.<sup>20</sup> Based on a photograph of another house in Deer Lodge in 1867, Thomas Stuart’s home may have been a hall-and-parlor type that pioneers commonly made with light framed walls and expanded with a front porch and rearward addition. Thomas Stuart’s original design seems to have been one-room, whereas the hall-and-parlor was usually two rooms wide and one room deep. However, the patterns for enlarging space with additions could vary.<sup>21</sup> Although unlikely, the Stuart home could also have been a variation of the Tidewater South design, which predominated the pre-railroad era in the coastal South and mixed with the Midland tradition as settlement expanded west. With the Tidewater South type, folk houses commonly featured one story, one-room depth, and “one-story shed extensions[,]...typically added to the rear of...linear plan houses as more space was needed.” This tradition persisted through the railroad era and influenced folk housing as it spread westward.<sup>22</sup> A historic photo of one Deer Lodge home (Figure 4) pictures two lean-to or shed-like structures attached to either side of the moderately pitched, gable-roofed main room with outbuildings in the direct vicinity of the house. This plain building closely resembled common folk housing types of the Tidewater South and the National Folk traditions.<sup>23</sup> All of these folk building techniques—the frame construction, one-room, one-story plan with lean-to type additions that easily enlarged the home’s interior space—support Alice Farnsworth’s 1975 description of the homestead. The site’s builder, whether Thomas Stuart or another individual, likely drew from similar materials available and built the home according to a similar, if not identical, folk housing style that predominated in America’s expanding territory in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>20</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 89.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 82, 75, 94.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 94, 76-77.





*From Archives & Special Collections, Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula*

Figure 4 - "Home in Deer Lodge, Montana," 1867, A.F. Thrasher, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula.

The home's arrangement changed when the Menards moved into the house in 1899 or 1900. At that time, another addition had transformed the building into a two-story, eight-room house with two bedrooms upstairs and two downstairs.<sup>24</sup> The home featured a larger porch that faced the south, and a small porch that faced either the small race track north of the house or the fairgrounds across Main Street, east of the house. Two barns were on either side of the house, although which sides remain unclear. Another barn also stood between the house and the railroad tracks. The Menards, however, did not use either barn as Bielenberg and Kohrs stored hay in them. All three buildings stood on a four-acre plot now referred to as the "Stuart field."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Alice Farnsworth (Menard), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975; "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

<sup>25</sup> Alice Farnsworth (Menard), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975; Vivian Kemp (Stuart), interviewed by John Albright and Cheryl Clemenson, Deer Lodge, Montana, July 1, 1975, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana. One front porch faced north, in the direction of the race track owned by Thomas Stuart, and the other faced south, on the opposite side of the house. Which side of the house was the front remains unclear as Alice Farnsworth refers to both porches as "front" porches. "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site; Winifred Brown, "Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment," 4,6.

During the Menard's stay (1899 or 1900-1924), the interior of the home featured both painted and floral papered-walls and curtained and double-hung windows. At one point, the home's painted exterior was deteriorating, and John Bielenberg supplied red barn paint to Antoine Menard who painted the structure. A coal stove in the kitchen and living room heated the house, and kerosene heaters kept the bedrooms warm. Kerosene lamps lit the interior and a "chandelier type lighting device" illuminated the dining room. Water came from a water pump to the south of the house. The Menards owned all the furnishings including a sofa and two "stuffed barrel shaped chairs."<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, maps of Deer Lodge provide little clarification regarding the homestead's arrangement and orientation. J.J. Stoner's 1883-1884 bird's eye map of Deer Lodge (Figure 5) showed a grouping of five buildings that sat along C Street (later changed to Main Street).<sup>27</sup> This collection of buildings was situated close to the intersection of a creek, presumably Johnson Creek, and the railroad tracks. The buildings were on the west side of C Street/Main Street and directly across the street from the fairground complex.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of Stoner's visual representation of the homestead, the structure's exact type and organization remain vague. Applying Alice Farnsworth's oral description of the site's arrangement to the Stoner map does not clarify which buildings were the house and the two barns. Alternately, applying Stoner's representation of Thomas Stuart's homestead to the map associated with the 2003 survey (Figure 3) provides a similar lack of clarity. Stoner's map vaguely confirms the concentrated scatter of glass and brick identified by the 2003 survey in the general vicinity of the homestead site. According to this relative leap of logic, this concentration may be connected to the large building (or two adjoined buildings) as shown closest to the creek on Stoner's map.

After the buildings' demolition, property owners altered the "Stuart field" in a variety of ways that may have affected the integrity of extant cultural and/or archeological resources. Before NPS acquisition of

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<sup>26</sup> Alice Farnsworth (Menard), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975.

<sup>27</sup> Dorene Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began* (Deer Lodge, 1989), 189. Street names were changed in Deer Lodge from 1909 to 1911 and the letter designations (A, B, C, D) were no longer used.

<sup>28</sup> David E. Kyvig, and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000), 74. Such bird's eye maps were popular from the 1840s to the 1920s and pictured an urban area from the height of 2,000 to 3,000 feet and were drawn by artists in order to create an aesthetically pleasing representation of the community. While the map's scale may not be accurate, permanent features within the town were accurately depicted, making the use of such a map useful in determining the layout and general appearance of the town.

the property in 1970, ranch managers used the small field for pasture and visitors used the space for overflow parking for events at the fairgrounds across the street. According to the varied and changing demands of the ranch, workers also plowed, seeded and burned the site as needed.<sup>29</sup> After NPS acquisition in 1970, managers no longer used the space for parking, but, following the ranch's rotational grazing practices, the ranch periodically graze cattle there.<sup>30</sup> All subsequent archeological and cultural inventories completed between 1975 and 2009 confirm the use of the field for grazing.<sup>31</sup> The 2007 archeological site status evaluation noted that grazing activity on the site had been especially intense in 2006, though gave no reason for this heightened use.<sup>32</sup> The field lies within the park's "Development Zone." A 2008 map of land use at Grant-Kohrs Ranch in the document, "Foundation for Planning and Management" shows the "Stuart field" squarely within an area currently used for grazing along with the pastures that constitute the rest of Grant-Kohrs Ranch lands.<sup>33</sup>

(Figure 6)

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<sup>29</sup> Winifred Brown, "Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment," personal communication with Conrad Warren, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Cultural Resource Inventory, GRKO-1426-TS1, 24W798, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge Montana, 2003, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Montana Cultural Resources Information System Form, "Class III Cultural Resource Inventory," 2003, 158, 161; John Milner Associates, Inc., et al., "Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Cultural Landscape Report, Part One," July 2004, 3-9-1; Archeological Site Status Evaluation, 24PW00798, Intermountain Region, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, evaluated by Christine Ford, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana, 2007, 2008, and 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Archeological Site Status Evaluation, May 8, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> "Foundation for Planning and Management," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Montana, June 2008, 11,12.

Thomas Stuart  
Homestead Site



Figure 5 – Wellge, Henry, 1883 Bird's Eye View of Deer Lodge City, county seat of Deer Lodge Co., Montana, J. J. Stoner, 1884, Montana Memory Project, Montana Historical Society Research Center, accessed December 30, 2011, <http://cdm16013.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/single-item/collection/p15018coll5/id/252/rec/3>.

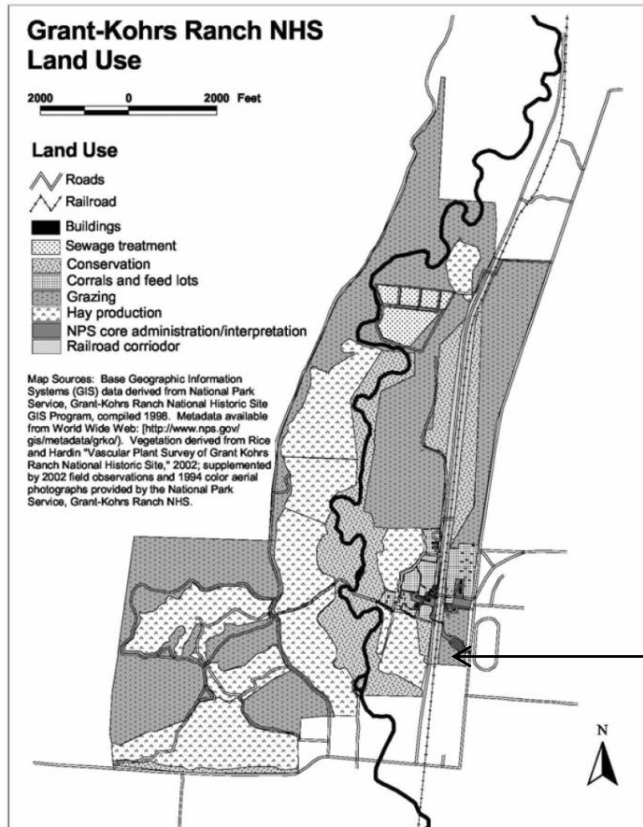
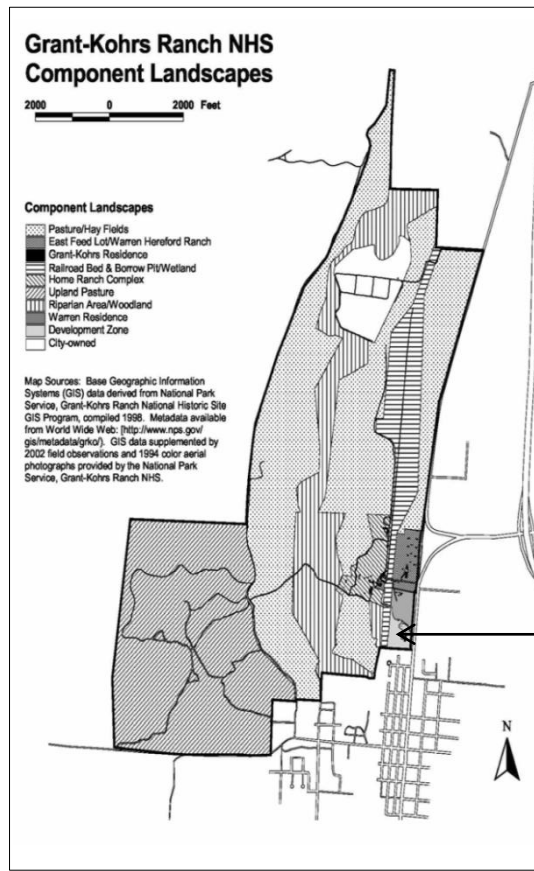


Figure 6 - "Foundation for Planning and Management," National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Montana, 11,12.

## Thomas Stuart and Western Settlement

Montana historians most strongly identify the Stuart homestead with one of the state's most prominent pioneer families. Granville Stuart was among the first Euro-American settlers in the Montana Territory and became a well-known rancher, territorial politician, and historian. His youngest brother, Thomas Stuart was a foundational figure in Deer Lodge and contributed in significant ways to its initial establishment and continued survival as a frontier community. Therefore, in his civic and economic activities, Thomas Stuart is an individual of local significance. Through the 1920s, Deer Lodge locals remembered Thomas Stuart as an important pioneer and town builder. The forces that brought Thomas Stuart to the Deer Lodge Valley in the late-nineteenth century and those that led to his career as a miner, businessman, and active philanthropist and community member echo important regional and even national trends. In bringing his Piegan and French-Canadian wife to the valley's intercultural community, he was among the earliest settlers of the fledgling town. Unlike Granville, Thomas was not a prominent territorial and state figure, nor did he write as profusely or share Granville's preoccupation with his own role as a Montana pioneer. The historical record on Thomas Stuart, therefore, is somewhat scant and reconstructing his life's chronology requires a few inferences. Despite this frustrating dearth of information, Thomas Stuart remains one of Deer Lodge's recognized "fathers" as he built and supported various essential functions of a self-sustaining community on the American frontier. Although Thomas was often overshadowed by his older brother's prominence in Montana's history, Thomas made his own reputation as a pioneer and town father and was remembered at the time of his death as a "sturdy citizen of Montana [who] assisted in her building."<sup>34</sup>

Born in Muscatine County, Iowa, in 1839, Thomas Stuart grew up on an earlier frontier in which white settlement was increasingly common. The year before his birth, his father Robert Stuart decided to move the family, then consisting of Thomas' mother Nancy and his three older brothers, James, Granville and Sam to the Iowa Territory from Putnam County Illinois.<sup>35</sup> In 1852, Robert left the Stuart home in Iowa

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<sup>34</sup> "Thomas Stuart, Old Settler, Dead," *Silver State Post*, May 27, 1915.

<sup>35</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West: the Pioneer Life of Granville Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4, 5, 6.

with his two eldest sons, James and Granville, and headed farther west to California to prospect for gold.<sup>36</sup> Thomas did not see his older brothers until they reunited again in Montana more than ten years later. Consequently, Thomas was surrounded by important male figures who, like many of their contemporaries, were swept up in the rush to the West in the search for the “mother lode” and the wealth that mining promised if only a miner was persistent or lucky enough. In 1861, Thomas followed in his father and brothers’ footsteps and left behind his mother and younger sister, Elizabeth, in Iowa.<sup>37</sup> As he headed for the Colorado gold rush, Thomas migrated with thousands of other young men in a national westward movement. In doing so, Thomas set his course as a pioneer of the West and dedicated the rest of his life to the formation of one of Montana’s earliest white settlements and cities, Deer Lodge.

By 1861, however, the Colorado and California gold rushes were in gradual decline, and veterans of these stampedes headed farther north into the Idaho Territory and what would become Montana Territory. The year 1862 ushered in a major gold rush to Montana, and Thomas responded to this shift and headed north.<sup>38</sup> In 1861, Thomas received a letter (addressed to “Tom Stuart, Colorado” or “Pikes Peak Country”) from his brothers at Gold Creek, near present day Deer Lodge, who were excited about the prospects of their diggings. Although he didn’t respond to the letter right away, Thomas showed it to his “Pikes Peaker” friends in Colorado who subsequently organized a group of sixteen men to find James and Granville at Gold Creek and their small settlement, American Fork, in the spring of 1862.<sup>39</sup> The next spring, Thomas moved to Boise City, Idaho to take advantage of the placer mining boom and remained here for approximately one year before heading to Virginia City, Montana in April 1864, just one month before the Montana Territory’s congressional establishment.<sup>40</sup> In travelling from Boise City, Thomas followed the general exodus of itinerant miners from Idaho’s gold fields toward Montana’s rumored gold strikes.<sup>41</sup> In Virginia City, Granville helped

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>37</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 60; Paul Robert Treece, “Mr. Montana: the Life of Granville Stuart, 1834-1918” (PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 1974), 183.

<sup>38</sup> Malone et al. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 65.

<sup>39</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 70; Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 193; Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier: as Seen in the Journal and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart, Gold-Miner, Trader, Merchant, Rancher and Politician* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1957), 211.

<sup>40</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen Baumler, “More than the Glory: Preserving the Gold Rush and Its Outcome at Virginia City,” *Montana: the Magazine of Western History* 49 (1999): 65.

James run the Dance, Stuart and Company Store, a mercantile that offered a wide variety of goods. While Thomas assisted his older brother with the store,<sup>42</sup> he plied his mining trade in the boomtown Virginia City, which attracted the “veterans” of the Colorado mining rush and became one of America’s most bustling gold camps.<sup>43</sup>

In May 1865, Thomas accompanied Granville on a prospecting trip in the upper end of Deer Lodge Valley, and though they returned to Virginia City, the two eventually moved to Deer Lodge where James had established another business venture and store with Frank Worden, Stuart and Co.<sup>44</sup> In Deer Lodge, Thomas Stuart continued his mining and prospecting ventures, occasionally in cooperation with his brother, Granville.

In 1865, Thomas also married his wife, Ellen Armell, the daughter of a Piegan woman, Ellen Pine Woman, and a French-Canadian trader from Fort Benton, Montana, Augustin Armell.<sup>45</sup> Current documentation cannot confirm whether they were married at Fort Benton or in Deer Lodge. In 1870, however, Thomas, Ellen, and their daughter Mary resided in Upper Boulder in Jefferson County, approximately thirty miles to the southeast of Deer Lodge. Mining and/or claim speculation likely drew Thomas here.<sup>46</sup> Granville’s letters demonstrate that both Thomas and Granville participated in claim speculation. Both sought to profit from their claims through speculation since the buying and selling of claims was the quickest and easiest way to make money.<sup>47</sup> In the early 1870s, Thomas realized large financial gains from the high grade ore mined from his properties at Lower Boulder, south of Helena in Jefferson County, and at Pioneer, close to Deer Lodge in the Gold Creek Mountains. In fact, Thomas was so successful that he loaned Granville, \$1,000 when his older brother needed money. Such ventures earned Thomas the

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<sup>42</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 85, 98, 99; Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 301, 303.

<sup>43</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 65-67.

<sup>44</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 304; Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 100-101.

<sup>45</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 303; Milner and O’Connor, 106; And undated document submitted to the Historical Society of Montana by Mrs. Minnie LaBreche granddaughter of Augustin Hamel states: On December 27<sup>th</sup> in the year 1846, I Nicolaus Point, missionary of the Society of Jesus, baptized Pehame et Seinike (Ellen/Helena Pine Woman) (from the Indian Peganes) who was about 29 years of age and to whom was given the name of Helena....On the same day, I have questioned the same Helena and Augustin Hamel...and with their mutual consent [sic] I have solemnly married them...” accessed 12 December, 2011, <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tsmith&id=I340>; Roxanne DeMarce, ed., *Blackfeet Heritage 1907-1908: Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Browning, Montana* (Browning: Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980), 247.

<sup>46</sup> United States Manuscript Census, Upper Boulder Precinct, Jefferson County, Montana Territory, 1870. This census record listed Thomas as a miner.

<sup>47</sup> Larry Barsness, *Gold Camp: Alder Gulch and Virginia City* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1962), 66.



reputation of being a “No 1 prospector” whose luck provoked jealousy in his older brothers.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps due to his jealousy, in 1873, Granville criticized Tom and Ellen’s relative lavishness in hiring “Chinamen [to] *do all the washing* &c. [Ellen] now wants a cook & will doubtless get one soon.”<sup>49</sup>

The 1880 U.S. Manuscript Census recorded Thomas as a horse breeder rather than miner in Deer Lodge. Clearly, Thomas engaged in both activities simultaneously. At this time, the family included four children, Mary (12), James (9), Isabel (6), and Jessie (4).<sup>50</sup> During this time period, Tom had enough money to hire bronc busters for his horse operation. That these employees were African-American drew additional criticism from Granville.<sup>51</sup> In other words, in employing a variety of individuals from the area, Thomas not only demonstrated financial success but also raised his brother’s racist disapproval and likely the jealousy of a younger brother’s achievement. Packed within this exchange is a complex racial narrative that influenced the lives of Deer Lodge residents. Regardless of the town’s somewhat remote location on the frontier, racist ideology, social hierarchy, and labor issues affected individuals such as Thomas Stuart and his employees.<sup>52</sup>

Thomas’ involvement in mining in the area through the 1880s and 1890s appears to be extensive.<sup>53</sup> During these decades, Thomas and Granville worked as partners and often in coordination with other prominent citizens like Sam Hauser, a well-known and powerful local capitalist and banker who served briefly as territorial governor in the 1880s.<sup>54</sup> In the company of such a local magnate, Thomas and Granville engaged in mining claim development and the buying and selling of claims for profit. In January 1880, Thomas voiced

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<sup>48</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big As the West*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>50</sup> United States Manuscript Census, Town of Deer Lodge, County of Deer Lodge, Montana, 1880.

<sup>51</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big As the West*, 139.

<sup>52</sup> The scope of this report cannot accommodate a thorough examination of this topic. For more information on the dynamics of community formation and social order in the West please consult Richard White, “New Communities and the Western Social Order,” and “The Transformation of Western Society: Migration,” in *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), see especially pages 183-187, and 320-323.

<sup>53</sup> More intensive deed research could reveal a more significant mining record than what is described in the narrative. In September 2011, the author conducted deed research at both the Powell County and Deer Lodge County courthouses in Deer Lodge and Anaconda respectively. Because Deer Lodge City was once part of Deer Lodge County rather than Powell County, the records reflect a more intensive involvement by Thomas Stuart in that area’s economy. Though brief and limited by time constraints, the records at the Anaconda courthouse were replete with transactions involving Thomas Stuart purchasing and selling a wide variety of deeds and claims during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. A more thorough analysis of these records would be necessary in order to gain a clearer picture of the extent to which Thomas was involved in the regional mining industry.

<sup>54</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 71, 107, 111.

his indignation regarding the way the Sam Hauser and Granville had treated him “in the matter of not buying [his] claims on the Original.”<sup>55</sup> Due to miscommunication between the men, Thomas lost some of the property at the Original claim at a financial loss. In November of the same year, Granville wrote to Thomas, “Hurrah for the big lode, it is a big thing as you will see by enclosed certiff[icate] of assay.” The brothers apparently realized promising and profitable gold and silver ore from one of their mining claims.<sup>56</sup> The brothers remained in correspondence regarding various mining investments through 1880.<sup>57</sup> In June 1882, however, Thomas needed to liquidate a few of his claims and wrote Sam Hauser for a favor, “I am in need of some money immediately and write to you to see if you would make me an offer for my interest in the Hope.” Thomas reminded Hauser that the “mine is looking extremely well and has been for a long time...don’t be afraid to make me an offer.”<sup>58</sup> Like all other miners of this era, Thomas encountered fluctuations in his fortunes. In 1883 and 1885, Thomas and Granville corresponded about mining claims at Pioneer, and in 1891, the brothers prospected on claims at the Hope Mine in Butte.<sup>59</sup> Because this claim was especially promising, Granville warned Tom to remain quiet about it lest anyone usurp their claims. Ultimately, however, the sellers misled the brothers regarding the quality and quantity of the ore on their property, and when Granville “sifted the Hope matter down, it was not near so favorable for us as we had been led to believe from the outside talk.” The brothers were in no financial position to take suit against the Hope Company who misled them, but after confronting the company’s president and “having a long siege with him,” Granville secured an acceptable settlement for Tom and himself.<sup>60</sup> In January 1888, Thomas Stuart also prospected at Gospel Mountain (between Deer Lodge and Butte).<sup>61</sup> Most likely in 1890, Thomas Stuart lost money in the Stuart Stamp Mill in Anaconda, though his association with the mill remains

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<sup>55</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 8 January, 1880, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 2, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

<sup>56</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 10 November, 1880, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 1, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

<sup>57</sup> The author does not currently have access to letters between the brothers which describe mining interests in 1881. Presumably, their correspondence and mining activities continued in these intervening months.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Stuart to Sam Hauser, 27 June, 1882, Samuel Thomas Hauser Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Montana Historical Society.

<sup>59</sup> The author does not have access to the brothers’ full correspondence in these intervening years.

<sup>60</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 21 February, 1891, Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 2 July, 1891, Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 16 February, 1892, Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 17 May, 1892, Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 22 May, 1892, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 3, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

<sup>61</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 188.

unclear.<sup>62</sup> In September 1892, the brothers “struck a small bonanza” at their Hope claims with low grade ore, but Granville did not anticipate the claim to last much longer than December of the same year.<sup>63</sup>

Although Thomas participated intensively in the mining in the region and was in direct communication with Montana’s early well-known miners and businessmen, his involvement in mining throughout the region does not automatically qualify him as a significant or prominent figure in Deer Lodge history. His career as a miner, however, lends clarity to his business activities and to the extent of his network of associates. It is certain that Thomas Stuart actively navigated the boom and bust cycle of mining as it expanded in the early 1860s and contracted by the 1880s in the Montana Territory, the Deer Lodge Valley and beyond.<sup>64</sup>

### **Thomas Stuart as a Pioneer and Town Builder**

Thomas also actively participated in the development of what was still a small frontier settlement when he arrived in 1865. Indeed, Deer Lodge was not a mining town but rather served as the business center for many mining camps in the valley and beyond, and as a community for miners, ranchers, and businessmen to raise their families.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Thomas arrived in the Deer Lodge Valley precisely when settlement in Montana was beginning to boom. The greatest increase in the number of both farm and mine towns in Montana occurred between 1864 and 1865 and again in 1867 to 1869.<sup>66</sup> Thomas Stuart began his family and career as a businessman and local philanthropist just as more towns began to dot the Montana landscape. In doing so, Thomas and his mixed family contributed to the cultural history of Deer Lodge as he settled the area in mid-1860s, just a few years after prominent men like Johnny Grant and James Stuart had established the town with their families. Although these mixed families that were once common in the region became less socially acceptable towards the end of the nineteenth century, the multicultural milieu that these men forged through their marriages to Native American and métis women created a particular historical dynamic.

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<sup>62</sup> Vivian Kemp (Stuart), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975; Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 9 November, 1890, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 3, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

<sup>63</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 22 September, 1892, and Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 2 December, 1892, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 3, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

<sup>64</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 64-65, 71.

<sup>65</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 122.

<sup>66</sup> Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95, 98.

Once he moved his mixed family to the homestead site in 1880, Thomas Stuart created a setting that local Deer Lodgers viewed as a communal gathering place in the first decades of the town's existence. Annual rodeos held at the homestead offered community members the opportunity to compete in the contests or observe from the corral fence that served as a "grandstand." The Nez Perce, reportedly, were also guests at the events. Furthermore, seasoned plainsmen at the contests used Thomas' home as "headquarters" wherein they shared "stories of their feats and daring enough to supply the utmost desire of fiction writers of western thrillers."<sup>67</sup>

In addition to providing the town with a venue in which locals could gather and share in the cultural history of the community, Thomas contributed to Deer Lodge's establishment, so much so that in his obituary locals remembered him as "a sturdy citizen of Montana [who] assisted in her building."<sup>68</sup> In 1878, he served on the board for the Montana Collegiate Institute Corporation, Deer Lodge's first and only college.<sup>69</sup> Thomas further supported education the town by donating \$5,000 to build St. Mary's Catholic school. Despite his Presbyterian faith, he believed "in the need for quality education in the town." Thomas also served on water rights committees, joined the fire department, organized in 1872, and acted as the town's night marshal for ten years.<sup>70</sup> Thomas was also a "devoted Mason" and was a charter member of the Masonic lodge in Deer Lodge when it a group of Deer Lodge men established it in 1869.<sup>71</sup> In this particular function, Thomas Stuart engaged in a fraternal group that, through its emphasis on "law and order, community improvement, and cultural and charitable activities," was an important stabilizing force for communities on the frontier like Deer Lodge.<sup>72</sup> The Masonic order also solidified the new racial and gender hierarchy that replaced the older, mixed culture in the Montana Territory. The group concentrated power with white men and secret rites, distinctive hand signals, and passwords enforced the group's exclusiveness. Although the organization historically dedicated itself to religious tolerance and humanism, it nevertheless provided the

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<sup>67</sup> "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

<sup>68</sup> "Thomas Stuart, Old Settler, Dead," *Silver State Post*, May 27, 1915.

<sup>69</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 114, 155; Vivian Kemp (Stuart), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975.

<sup>71</sup> "Thomas Stuart, Old Settler, Dead," *Silver State Post*, May 27, 1915; Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 89.

Stuart brothers a way to socialize with the other white men in the valley (whereas their friendship with Johnny Grant gave them access to the mixed community), and it concentrated authority among the white, male pioneers of the town.<sup>73</sup> In this sense, Deer Lodge's Masonic members helped forge social order in a variety of ways.

Thomas Stuart's civic and professional activities extended beyond Deer Lodge as well. In 1885, Granville, then president of the Montana Stockgrowers Association, used his political clout with sympathetic members of the legislature to appoint Thomas to the position of Territorial Veterinary Surgeon. Granville achieved this "political maneuver" in order to keep the position filled despite Thomas' poor qualifications for the position.<sup>74</sup> When territorial official found a more experienced candidate, Dr. Keefer, Granville asked Thomas to resign. Granville argued that "Cattlemen [were] anxious to have an experienced man as examining surgeon, for if that disease (possibly referring to Texas Fever) once gets among wild cattle on the ranges, it would be quite impossible to ever stop it and if you should decline to resign you see what a position it would put me in."<sup>75</sup> Thomas, however, did not resign without protest. On July 5, 1885, he wrote to Sam Hauser, the new territorial governor, and explained that when Hauser had the opportunity to appoint Dr. Keefer "don't you do it for he is not a proper person for the position, all of which I can satisfy you of."<sup>76</sup> Hauser and Granville ultimately forced Thomas to resign his post, but he served briefly in an important territorial function. The open range had reached its zenith in the 1880s, and stockmen's interests gained so much political clout that 1885 was known as the year of the "Cowboy Legislature."<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, as an employee of Conrad Kohrs, Thomas Stuart was also associated with the cattle ranching industry. Thomas Stuart worked as a general laborer at the Kohrs ranch and, towards the end of his life, in the summers, he maintained a ditch for the Kohrs and Bielenberg Ranch.<sup>78</sup> In this varied manner,

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<sup>73</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big As the West*, 105.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>75</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 20 May, 1885, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 3, Mansfield Library Special Collections; Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 156; Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 218.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Stuart to Sam Hauser, 5 July, 1885, Samuel Thomas Hauser Papers, Box 21, Folder 6, Montana Historical Society.

<sup>77</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 162.

<sup>78</sup> "Thomas Stuart, Old Settler, Dead," *Silver State Post*, May 27, 1915. The exact dates of Thomas Stuart's employment for the Grant-Kohrs Ranch is not known. The 1910 United States Manuscript Census for Deer Lodge City in Powell

Thomas Stuart contributed to the economic, cultural, and communal development at the local level in Deer Lodge City, but also at the territorial level, as cursory as that involvement may have been.

### **Thomas Stuart and Local Memory**

Evidence demonstrates Tom's intensive involvement in the economic forces that brought development to the region, and local memory reflects the importance of these activities for the community. The nostalgia with which Deer Lodge residents remembered Tom in the 1920s reveals the extent to which his career as a pioneer, miner, and horse breeder contributed to his reputation as an important founding father of Deer Lodge. Although Tom occupied a place in the collective Deer Lodge memory in the early decades of the twentieth century, by the latter decades of the twentieth century, he was not commemorated to the same degree as his older brother Granville.

Thomas Stuart built his reputation as a pioneer and upstanding citizen in Deer Lodge, and through this association the homestead site derives potential significance. Upon its demolition in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the Deer Lodge community remembered the historic "landmark of '80" as connected with the pioneer and plainsman, Thomas Stuart. His inclusion in the 1904 pioneer portrait gallery assembled by a local committee that included Conrad Kohrs demonstrates Thomas' relative prominence in Deer Lodge history and the degree to which locals understood him to be an important figure along with his brothers, James and Granville. The project aimed to collect images of well-known Deer Lodge citizens and began in the 1870s by an amateur historian, S.A. Willey. His collection of mounted images "excited unusual interest with many old timers..." and "the desire developed among a number of old time citizens to secure all, or as many as possible, of old time pictures of...well known Deer Lodgers, and have them assembled in similar groups and rephotographed in uniform style with the first." Thomas Stuart appears once in this photo collection along with his two older brothers James and Granville, Reece Anderson, Johnny Grant, and Conrad Kohrs, among others.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, celebration of its pioneers was important in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Deer

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County, Montana, indicates that Thomas Stuart was listed as laborer in odd jobs, this could have referred to, among a variety of jobs which Thomas may have taken, his seasonal position at the Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

<sup>79</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 389, 396.

Lodge as the community held a downtown parade honoring the town's earliest residents. No doubt Thomas Stuart was among the marchers or those honored in this 1912 parade through Deer Lodge's Main Street that commemorated its founders and celebrated Deer Lodge's fiftieth anniversary.<sup>80</sup> (Figure 7)

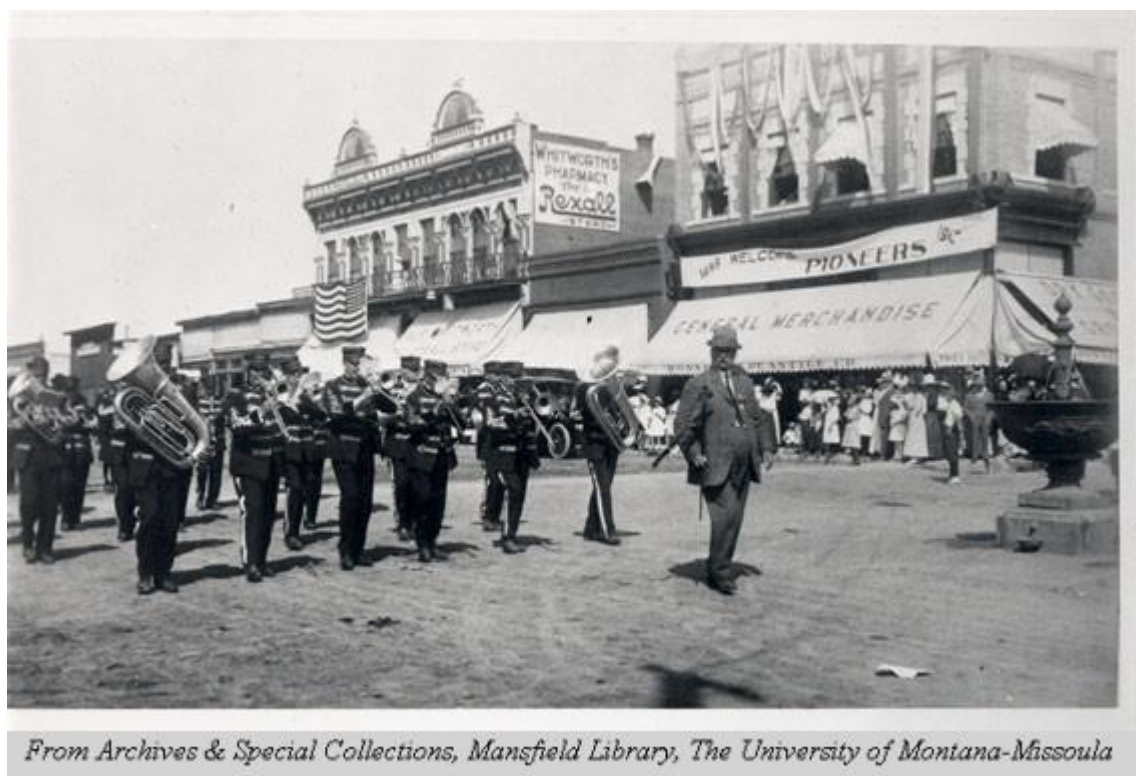


Figure 7 - "Parade in Downtown Deer Lodge Honoring the Pioneers," August, 1912, Kohrs Family Papers, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula; Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site Collections, GRKO 17233, Deer Lodge, Montana.

Although Tom's life is not well documented, it is clear that he contributed in concrete ways to the town's development. The local perception of Tom as a founding pioneer and of his homestead as a "landmark" justifies his local historical significance. Like Granville, Thomas was one of the earliest to settle in Deer Lodge. He was involved in local business ventures, supported local schools, and helped forge the foundations of the town that has persisted into the twenty-first century. In general, a community's earliest pioneers founded new towns by constructing their homes, developing streets, civic centers, and creating legal and financial structures. But they also contributed to the collective memory and identity of the locale. Given the

<sup>80</sup> Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site Collections, GRKO 17233, Deer Lodge, Montana.

importance that Deer Lodge once placed on its founding members, Thomas figured prominently in Deer Lodge's collective memory and identity as a town carved out of the perceived wilds of the Montana Territory. In his case studies of the earliest agrarian settlers of the West historian Dean May argued that "when frontier areas are settled, they are strongly imprinted by the cultural modes prevailing at the time of migration among those who made up the main currents of the migratory stream." Furthermore, May points to cultural geographers who "have long recognized the importance of the founding peoples as shapers of culture in new societies."<sup>81</sup> Although Thomas Stuart may not receive the same degree of state-wide recognition as his brother, Granville, the community remembered him as one of Deer Lodge's founders worked in less prominent positions that nonetheless shaped Deer Lodge at the local level.

Despite the nostalgia that characterized Deer Lodge residents' recollection of Thomas Stuart, contemporary newspapers reveal the hierarchical arrangement of the Stuart brothers in territorial residents' minds. This view of the brothers has proved to be more enduring in the late-twentieth century historical record. Newspapers and public announcements often referred to Thomas Stuart as Granville Stuart's brother rather than as an independently important figure. For instance, in 1885, the *Daily Yellowstone Journal* cites Thomas Stuart as the veterinary surgeon recently appointed as "the brother of Granville Stuart, ... one of the leading stock growers and most respected citizens of the territory."<sup>82</sup> Later that year *The Daily Yellowstone Journal* refers to Thomas as the "brother of the Hon. Granville Stuart."<sup>83</sup> In July 1887, Thomas is, once again, referred to as the brother of a much more familiar figure.<sup>84</sup> This relationship may have lent Thomas credibility in his position as Territorial Veterinary Surgeon and may have made Thomas more familiar for those outside of the immediate Deer Lodge area. This view of Thomas and Granville reflects the differing roles that both played in Montana history. While Granville often occupied himself with region- and state-wide political and economic affairs, Thomas remained locally active in smaller-scale economic activities.

Granville, unlike his brother Tom, participated in one of the earliest overland migrations, the California gold rush, with his brother James and their father Robert Stuart in 1852. James and Granville's

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<sup>81</sup> May, *Three Frontiers*, 106.

<sup>82</sup> "Montana Mention," *The Daily Yellowstone Journal*, March 25, 1885.

<sup>83</sup> "Montana Mention," *The Daily Yellowstone Journal*, May 5, 1885.

<sup>84</sup> "Local Items," *The Daily Yellowstone Journal*, July 24, 1887.



subsequent wanderings in Montana elicited a certain awareness of the historical uniqueness of their journey, so much so that the brothers shared in the duties of keeping a daily journal. Granville was acutely aware that he was “witness to a series of great historical events which could never be repeated in this country,” and both brothers judiciously recorded their adventures.<sup>85</sup> The two brothers eventually saw themselves as historically important men in the foundation of a new American society on the frontier. They wrote in detail with the foresight that their experiences would be of interest to subsequent generations.<sup>86</sup> Overland treks like theirs often elicited more diary writing than usual due to the novelty and excitement of a journey over vast landscapes that harbored peoples strange according to their eastern or Midwestern sensibilities. Western-bound men and women turned to their journals to record their daily lives and the breathtaking scenery they encountered. They produced documents that reveal the rhythm of daily life and provide insight into popular beliefs and values.<sup>87</sup> In his letters and diaries, Granville demonstrates this view of the historical movement that, in many ways, he led. Like the miners who rushed to California’s gold fields, Granville and James were “well aware that they were participating in a great national adventure, the march of American civilization across the continent...[and] saw themselves as part of a heroic enterprise in which their participation should be recorded.”<sup>88</sup> While Thomas participated in the Colorado gold rush, by the time he made this journey in 1860, the mining rush had already been in full swing for a decade and the journey’s novelty may have waned somewhat. Due to his later entrance into this national movement, Thomas perhaps did not see the journey and his participation in it as highly unusual or novel and, therefore, was not prompted to document the details of his travels for posterity.<sup>89</sup> Hence, Thomas was not able to claim being “the first” pioneer or discoverer of gold in Montana as his brothers did, rather he was among the first to settle in the Deer Lodge Valley and establish the city of Deer Lodge, and his contemporaries consider him a pioneer and founder in his own right.

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<sup>85</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 78-79.

<sup>86</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 78-79; Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 39.

<sup>87</sup> John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 3, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 300.

<sup>89</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 1, 6, 11.

Granville garners much more historical attention not only because he was among the very first of American pioneers to venture into and settle in Montana, but because of the distinguished reputation he made for himself as a rancher, vigilante, politician, and Montana's official historian. Granville became one of the more well-known ranchers in Montana and, with business partner Sam Hauser, he took advantage of the final years of the beef bonanza of the open range in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Granville became heavily involved in protecting the interests of Montana's cattle ranchers and served as a member of the upper house of the legislature, called the Council, with other cattlemen in 1882. In 1884, Montana cattlemen elected Granville as the president of the newly reorganized Montana Stock Growers Association. Although he distanced himself publicly from the vigilantes who tracked down and killed horse and cattle thieves, Granville led the most well-known group, commonly known as "Stuart's Stranglers." In fact, Theodore Roosevelt, a Dakota cattleman himself, knew about Granville and his group of vigilantes of Montana. In 1894, Granville's political involvement eventually earned him his appointment as United States minister to Uruguay and Paraguay, an appointment noted in both the *Helena Independent* and the *New York Sun*.<sup>90</sup> Towards the end of his life, Granville became heavily involved in writing Montana's pioneer history and completing and promoting his own reminiscences. In general, Granville gradually assumed the "identity of Montana's founding pioneer" and was among the most prominent members of the Society of Montana Pioneers. Fittingly, in 1913, Granville identified the exact location where he, James, Reece Anderson, and Thomas Adams found gold in 1858. Those interested in Montana's history commemorated it with a sixteen-foot marble pillar that could be seen by passengers on the passing Northern Pacific rail line.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Granville viewed himself and his fellow Montana pioneers as the harbingers of civilization. In response to the belief of some Montanans that he was the state's "pioneer of pioneers," Granville wrote in his memoir, "I was here to greet the brave men and noble women who...crossed the plains...to lay the foundation of this magnificent state." Granville's reputation and efforts at writing the history of early territorial Montana and a separate memoir earned him the position of "State Historian" according to "An Act to Provide for the Preservation, Collections and Publications of Historical Facts of the Early Settlement of the State of

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<sup>90</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 161-162, 216, 218, 219, xiv, 291-292.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-337.

Montana.” This act supported him financially while he attempted to finish his pioneer history and personal reminiscences. Granville’s political supporters essentially created this act for Granville, an aging and financially unstable man, and Governor Stewart enacted the legislation in 1917 in order to support one of Montana’s most legendary pioneers.<sup>92</sup> The attention that Granville received late in his life speaks to his prominence in the collective understanding of Montana’s pioneer past.

More practical reasons also contribute to a general lack of information about Thomas and his relative absence in the historical record. That Thomas produced so few letters explains, in part, why historians know so little about him in comparison to his brother. Indeed, letters can reveal information not only about an individual’s private relationships and personal feelings, but about their economic and civic activities as well.<sup>93</sup> Thomas seems to have had a particular aversion towards writing letters and corresponding with his family in general. In Granville’s letters to their mother Nancy, he occasionally lamented Thomas’ reluctance to write. In one instance he wrote, “Thomas hates to write letters worse than poison” and suggested that Thomas should have to do his “writing for a year as punishment” for being so lackadaisical in his correspondence.<sup>94</sup> Granville beseeched Thomas to write more often and asked “Why don’t you write? I am extremely busy yet I am compelled to write at least ten letters in a week,” thereby drawing attention to Granville’s industriousness and Thomas’ comparative inability to prioritize according to his older brother’s sense of familial responsibility.<sup>95</sup>

The lack of documentation means more than a general difficulty in reconstructing Thomas Stuart’s life. For personal or other circumstantial reasons, Thomas did not participate in the creation of “the shared memory of Montana pioneers” through the composition and publication of reminiscences, as did so many overland pioneers later in life.<sup>96</sup> As the initial rush westward became less immediate by the end of the nineteenth century, the memory of the journey “became increasingly suffused with the light of adventure and visions of glory— (and) the original participants began to turn out memoirs and reminiscences.”<sup>97</sup> These

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., xiii, 339.

<sup>93</sup> Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, 1-2.

<sup>94</sup> Granville Stuart to Nancy Stuart, 17 February, 1882 and Granville Stuart to Sam Stuart, 3 August, 1882, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 1, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>95</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 2 June, 1882, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 1, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>96</sup> Clyde A. Milner, “The Shared Memory of Montana Pioneers,” *Montana: the Magazine of Western History* 37 (1987): 2-3.

<sup>97</sup> Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, 302.

documents have garnered unique historiographical attention for their ability to craft and reinforce a nostalgic view of frontier history. That Thomas did not write a memoir automatically excluded him from the notoriety and nostalgia that came to surround many western pioneers. Often these memoirs revised certain elements of the overland journey, exaggerated the Indian threat of violence, and drew attention to the hardship in conquering the wilderness that validated a pioneer's emigration and settlement. These memoirs forged a shared memory that fit into a collective remembrance of the past. This process brought greater attention to a select group of pioneers and a certain portrayal of experiences that early-twentieth-century audiences reading about the West found most exciting.<sup>98</sup> As official historian for Montana late in his life and having composed the majority of his own reminiscences, Granville participated to a much larger degree in the shared memory of Montana pioneers than his younger brother Thomas.<sup>99</sup> This helps to explain why Granville, as an elderly man, insisted on being remembered as the discoverer of gold in Montana although as a younger man he considered himself “*among* the first to find gold in Montana.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Granville took the opportunity to write reminiscences about his life in the first decades of the nineteenth century “at a time when the American West had taken on a highly charged nationalistic significance.” At this time, male professionals increasingly dominated the study of American history. In their interpretation of the nation's founding fathers, they built on and enhanced “familiar nationalistic and reverential motifs” that bolstered the heroic image of prominent, male pioneer figures like Granville.<sup>101</sup>

Although Thomas Stuart did not contribute to this tradition of self-congratulatory memoirs, by the virtue of his activities he earned a position among the ranks of the founding pioneers of Deer Lodge Valley and Deer Lodge City. Although the evidence is scant, it is reasonable to conclude that Thomas was among the earliest settlers in Deer Lodge along with his brothers. He engaged with and contributed to the mixed cultural milieu of the time, and actively forged the community's economic, social, and cultural foundations. He made significant contributions to the Deer Lodge community and locals remember him as one of the

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<sup>98</sup> Milner, “The Shared Memory of Montana Pioneers,” 6, 4, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 339; Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 458.

<sup>100</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 57-58; Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 151.

<sup>101</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, xiii; Patricia West, *Domesticating History: the Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 94.

area's "fathers." His documented activities in Deer Lodge and his established place in local memory secure his local importance.

Although Thomas Stuart influenced early Deer Lodge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the homestead site does not represent his local importance. Few of his activities as a community builder occurred while he lived at the site, and those that did are not demonstrated through the site's limited surface-level physical remains. The Stuart family lived at the homestead for four years after having resided in the vicinity of Deer Lodge City for fifteen years and they continued to live in the town after Thomas' death in 1915. Therefore, the bulk of the Stuart's residence did not occur at the homestead site. Furthermore, the racetrack and corral fencing, which served as a grandstand for the annual rodeo held at the homestead site, while unique and relevant in its portrayal of western life and capacity for fostering the Deer Lodge community, represents a short-lived phenomenon. Virtually no physical features pertaining to this particular feature and function of the homestead site remains. Owned by Granville, the brick house in town into which Thomas Stuart's family moved in 1884 is no longer extant but may, in fact, have more accurately represented Thomas' various contributions to the community since he resided there for a longer span of his productive years as a Deer Lodge leader. This brick house may have held a stronger association with Thomas' noteworthy activities in Deer Lodge when it still stood. In sum, the homestead's association to Thomas Stuart's life as a pioneer and founding father of Deer Lodge remains somewhat tenuous despite his relatively prominent and potentially significant status in Deer Lodge history.

### **Western Settlement: Deer Lodge and the Transition from a Western Métis Community**

In addition to its association with an important local citizen, the Thomas Stuart homestead represents the West's late-nineteenth-century transformation from a culturally heterogeneous settler society to a region dominated by Anglo-Americans, along with increasing industrialization and agriculture. The period of significance begins in 1880 when Thomas Stuart purchased the land and apparently constructed the

buildings associated with the original homestead site, and ends in 1930 when the buildings were reportedly demolished. The site, most notably, retains significance through its strong association with the influential Stuart family and with the culturally mixed social milieu that once characterized the fur trading era and persisted through the late nineteenth century. This frontier society relied upon cultural plurality for survival and to forge a meaningful community, and it established the earliest foundations for Euro-American settlement in the Deer Lodge Valley. Gradually, with the intensification of ranching and mining and the influx of settlers from the East, this mixed community became less socially acceptable. The placer mining and open range booms ultimately brought business ventures and permanent settlement to Deer Lodge that, in turn, fueled the importation of racially strict and intolerant Victorian-era social norms that scorned cultural intermixing with Native American groups. Indeed, this homestead site represents the transition from a pluralistic, mixed race milieu towards an industrial, agricultural, and Euro-American society. Similarly embedded in the historical process of the area's settlement, a French-Canadian family, the Menards, lived in the home for twenty four or twenty five years, and their residence reflects larger patterns of international migration that brought French-Canadian families to communities such as Deer Lodge. Therefore, the Thomas Stuart homestead site is associated with social, cultural, and economic changes that the Deer Lodge Valley underwent during the late nineteenth century.

### **Deer Lodge's Mixed Cultural Milieu**

Constructed in approximately 1880, the Thomas Stuart homestead site originated within a culturally mixed environment that reflected centuries of the fur trade's economic and social relationships between Native Americans and Europeans. This mutually beneficial exchange characterized the western frontier into the late nineteenth century. The era of the fur trade brought native tribes into cooperation with Europeans and Euro-Americans, but faded with the increasingly aggressive importation of Victorian social norms that marginalized a relatively complex social environment. Pioneers gradually shaped western lands into a landscape peopled with European American communities connected by railroads to Eastern markets and dotted with schools, courthouses, frame houses, prisons, and reservations for traditionally nomadic tribes.

The Thomas Stuart homestead, however, is representative of the waning moments of this world of cultural plurality. At the homestead, native and white cultures interacted and mixed in early Deer Lodge in a manner that differed markedly from the more restrictive social structure that emerged in the late nineteenth century and came to dominate such settlements through the twentieth century.

This fleeting historical moment of cultural intermixing did not occur in the absence of violence, familial dysfunction, or communal tensions. Nor did it represent an illusory egalitarian society that “white civilization” destroyed. Yet, blurred cultural identities, ethnic blending, and cultural plurality rather than strictly delineated white and Indian groups characterized many early frontier communities like Deer Lodge. Historian Elliot West has pointed out western society’s reluctance to confront the “blood lending” and cultural exchanges common to the colonial scene, “[n]or, for that matter, have historians shown much enthusiasm for working within the complexities and cross currents of intermarriage and the convergence of peoples.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the Thomas Stuart homestead site illuminates an overlooked but important historical realm and reveals the degree to which such a confluence between peoples occurred, and this imbues the site with interpretive relevance.

In order to contextualize the cultural dynamics of late-nineteenth-century Deer Lodge, a brief explanation of the broader social dynamics of the fur trade and westward European exploration and movement is necessary. The homestead site represents this transition and the cultural interaction that ensued, as well as the economic and social foundations for much more intensive Euro-American settlement in Montana by the end of the nineteenth century. The fur trade era propelled European frontiers northward and westward and brought whites into a network of complex relationships with their Native American trading partners.<sup>103</sup> This social dynamic, which spanned the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, ultimately bred a cooperative and mutually dependent relationship between European traders and Indian tribes that, for a time, provided economic and social support for both indigenous and white individuals. In forging such cross-cultural bonds, native women, white traders and trappers, and Indian kin groups all established a social setting

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<sup>102</sup> Elliot West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 124-125, 166.

<sup>103</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 41.

unique to the Upper Missouri trade that displayed elements of both Euro-American and Native American cultures.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, the successful execution of the fur trade necessitated the collaboration between Native American groups who knew the country intimately and could provide support and protection to European traders who, in turn, offered access to trade and material goods otherwise inaccessible to indigenous people. Although the social dynamics of the fur trade could vary widely, the trade system created a distinctly interracial and intercultural society.

A common form of solidifying trade relationships in this emergent milieu was marriage between Native American women and European men. Nineteenth-century mountain men and their mixed families illustrated the remarkable extent to which cultural intermixing through marriage occurred on the western frontier. According to historian William Swagerty, of all the trappers and traders who settled on the Great Plains, [n]inety-one percent of them remained with their Indian or métis family. Indeed, strong bonds of kinship within their wives' native families incorporated these Euro-American men into the Native American community.<sup>105</sup> Indian women could occupy positions as cultural liaisons, mediators and "economic informants" that brought them status but ultimately invited irrevocable change to tribal cultures across the West. The fur trade society also produced multi-lingual métis women who commanded French, English and multiple aboriginal languages that they used according to the social situation at hand. Native women also entertained fur trade post employees with ceremonial dances that the traders welcomed with gifts. By using their skills, labor, and sexuality, many plains women ensured profitable trade relations between Native Americans and Europeans and this arrangement remained at the center of trade exchanges into the 1860s.<sup>106</sup> In fact, mixed unions became increasingly common after the 1840s when the trade in beaver hides declined and mountain men became more heavily dependent on Indian men to hunt bison, bear, deer, and raccoon skins to sell to agents. This shift in trade relations brought a heightened reliance on marital and familial

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<sup>104</sup> Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (2000): 427.

<sup>105</sup> William Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 11 (1980): 174

<sup>106</sup> Lansing, "Plains Indian Women," 413-414, 427, 415.



connections between Euro-American and Indian tribes and produced a growing mixed blood population.<sup>107</sup> White traders and mountain men also gained superior trading and status privileges, a loyal source of furs and trade, and prevented their Indian relatives from trading with other companies through strong bonds of kinship.

An arrangement between a native woman and a white man could take on multiple forms from more casual and temporary sexual liaisons, to temporary “marriages” that might continue through a trader’s stay in an area, to more enduring marriages that persisted for years.<sup>108</sup> Longer relationships often brought native women and their mixed children into a non-native world at trading posts or white settlements where they may have had to conform to different cultural conventions. Yet many chose to retain their Indian culture through methods of child rearing, for instance. Regardless of their location, “these women did not necessarily fully abandon their Indianness or fully adopt or accept Euro-American ways,” and Native American culture and customs often persisted with surprising tenacity.<sup>109</sup> Other mixed couples lived outside of white settlements in close proximity to the wife’s family, which allowed tribal women to draw upon familiar sources of support while living with their white husbands. In either case, a great degree of cultural intermixing made communal life possible during the fur trade.

One such diverse milieu was Fort Union, on the Upper Missouri River. This prominent trading post offered “a community with a distinctive social organization” where the intersection of cultures that it fostered clarified the potential for cultural plurality on the fur trade frontier. Located near what is now the Montana-North Dakota border on the Upper Missouri River, Fort Union was the center for regional trade where Cree, Assiniboine, Crow, and Blackfeet exchanged buffalo robes for European goods such as utensils, cloth and weapons. Pierre Chouteau, Jr., who ran the post for many years, accommodated a range of scientists, journalists, missionaries, and government explorers and invited many European and Euro-American individuals into the ethnically diverse culture that pervaded the post. While at Fort Union, a guest might encounter English, French, Spanish, German, Assiniboine, Crow, Herantsa, Cree, Mandan, and Blackfoot

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<sup>107</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 119.

<sup>108</sup> Lansing, “Plains Indian Women,” 420-421; Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” 164-165, 166.

<sup>109</sup> Lansing, “Plains Indian Women,” 422.

individuals along with the “engagés,” or the all-male contract labor force who were usually of French-Canadian origin. Indian and mixed women at the fort made and sold moccasins, leather shirts, trousers, and coats to visitors and large feasts concluded trading sessions. Mixed families were quite common and “[p]ractically all of the superintendents, traders, clerks, and engagés at Fort Union had Indian or mixed-blood wives or companions.”<sup>110</sup>

An example of Fort Union’s cultural interaction was Medicine-Snake-Woman, a Blood Indian (a band of the Blackfeet tribe). In 1840, she married a prominent bourgeois trader of Fort Union, Alexander Culbertson (who also helped found Fort Benton in 1847). As a result of this marital arrangement, Mrs. Culbertson became a prominent and well-respected liaison between white explorers and her people.<sup>111</sup> Medicine-Snake-Woman, having married one of the most important businessmen of the Upper Missouri, enjoyed material wealth and took pleasure in wearing “the finest white women’s gowns when she attended balls held in her honor at the various trading posts.” She also liked wearing colorful jewelry and was a skilled horsewoman. However, she still “ate the raw brains of freshly killed buffalo, enjoyed a feast of fat, broiled puppy, was proud of her skill as a porcupine quillworker, insisted upon calling upon an Indian medicine woman to doctor her sick child, and cut her long, shining, black hair when a brother was killed in battle.” Although she did not speak English, her husband conversed with her in her native tongue. Medicine-Snake-Woman’s pleasure in “playing Indian” at their luxurious Peoria, Illinois home in the late 1850s and early 1860s provides further evidence of this fascinating mix of “white” and “native” worlds. Here, Medicine-Snake-Woman lived in lavish surroundings but every summer she erected a Blackfoot tipi on the family lawn and wore her Indian dress in homage to her people and her native ancestry.<sup>112</sup>

Many of these trappers’ and traders’ familial arrangements bore striking resemblance to that of Johnny Grant, a figure familiar to Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site and the greater Deer Lodge Valley. From 1862 to 1867, Grant and his large métis family lived in Deer Lodge city in a large house in

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<sup>110</sup> Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), xi-xii, 26, 111, 119, 126, 127.

<sup>111</sup> Joel Overholser, *Fort Benton: World’s Innermost Port* (Helena: Falcon Press Publishing, 1978), 19; Don C. Miller and Stan B. Cohen, *Military and Trading Posts of Montana* (Missoula: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1978), 12; John C. Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 61-62.

<sup>112</sup> Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri*, 62-63.

which Grant regularly hosted communal dances.<sup>113</sup> Johnny had multiple native wives and cared for a large brood of mixed children through his growing and successful cattle operation.<sup>114</sup>

Trappers and mountain men often arrived in the West unfamiliar with native culture and steeped in the Euro-American social environment. Yet they quickly adjusted to their new environment and adeptly learned to interact and intermarry with the native peoples who sustained their trade, and provided a reliable network of support. This, in turn, necessitated for men like Johnny Grant a “flexibility of attitude and constraint of behavior that has few parallels in the annals of American history.”<sup>115</sup> In other words, fur trade society required open-mindedness for cultural accommodation and demanded behavior that conformed, to a certain degree, to native customs, thus creating a process of acculturation rather than deculturation. Though not without prejudice, trappers, traders, and mountain men exercised a heightened sensitivity to a variety of cultural views and did so, according to historian William Swagerty, more than any other social group settling in the West in the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, this diverse cultural and economic milieu laid the foundations for Euro-American farmers, ranchers, miners, and merchants to settle the West and establish towns. Because many mountain men were also heavily involved in a wide array of business ventures, they ultimately paved the way for subsequent pioneers who transformed the cultural, economic, and natural landscapes of the region.<sup>117</sup> To a certain extent, the late-nineteenth century development of towns like Deer Lodge relied on the groundwork laid by *métis* and Native American societies.

In 1858, when James and Granville first settled in the valley in 1858, Native Americans composed the majority of all inhabitants of the region, and nomadic hunting remained the most common method of subsistence and, like other mountain men, the brothers readily interacted with their indigenous neighbors and quickly intermarried. Their love of the open space and freedom that they found in the West<sup>118</sup> was perhaps

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<sup>113</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 105, 123.

<sup>114</sup> Lyndel Meikle ed., *Very Close to Trouble: the Johnny Grant Memoir* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996), 80.

<sup>115</sup> Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” 177.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-179.

<sup>117</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 120.

<sup>118</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 152.

partially wrapped in their relative liberty in having left more strict social and racial codes behind in Iowa. The brothers welcomed the more fluid cultural and sexual exchanges that occurred between white men and native cultures in this environment. Although he didn't necessarily participate in the fur trade, Thomas' marriage to Ellen Armell came at the end of the era when he associated with others involved in mixed marriages and who, like Granville, remained loyal to their families. Indeed, the Stuart brothers entered a frontier society "on the eve of its upheaval" and began their marriages—however long they lasted—just as the fur trade declined.<sup>119</sup>

The Stuart brothers, James, Granville and Thomas, all participated in the late-nineteenth-century legacy of the fur trade as they married native and mixed women and lived in the culturally mixed community of Deer Lodge. Although Thomas Stuart was not engaged with the fur trade at its height in the early-nineteenth century, in 1865 he did marry Ellen Armell, the youngest daughter born to the French-Canadian trader and interpreter to the Blackfeet, Augustin Armell, and a Piegan woman, Ellen Pine Woman. Augustin and Ellen Pine Woman's mid-nineteenth-century marriage demonstrates the strength of Augustin's economic and social relationship to bands such as the Piegans, a band of the Blackfeet tribe, who were virulently opposed to the incursion of whites. This marital arrangement also reveals the extent to which the economic relationships behind the fur trade facilitated cultural exchange between antagonistic tribes, such as the Blackfeet, and Europeans, a tradition furthered by Thomas and Ellen Stuart.<sup>120</sup>

Traders and pioneers widely recognized the Blackfeet tribe as the most formidable force of the northwestern plains, and they reached the height of their power in the mid-nineteenth century. The Blackfeet

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<sup>119</sup> Treece, "Mr. Montana," 219.

<sup>120</sup> Undated document submitted to the Historical Society of Montana by Mrs. Minnie LaBreche granddaughter of Augustin Hamel states: On December 27<sup>th</sup> in the year 1846, I Nicolaus Point, missionary of the Society of Jesus, baptized Pehame et Seinike (Ellen/Helena Pine Woman) (from the Indian Peganes) who was about 29 years of age and to whom was given the name of Helena...On the same day, I have questioned the same Helena and Augustin Hamel...and with their mutual consent [sic] I have solemnly married them..." accessed 12 December, 2011, <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tsmith&id=I340>. Treece, "Mr. Montana," 303. Historical Society of Montana, "Augustin Hamell, 1800-1859, 1860," in *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Volume Ten, 262 (Helena: Eagle Printing Co., 1940), accessed 12/20/2011, [http://www.archive.org/stream/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich_djvu.txt). The couple had reportedly been married according to Blackfeet custom several years prior to this Catholic ceremony. This information, however, is from the Notes and References section of the document, which contains uncited biographical summaries of Montana residents. Roxanne DeMarce, ed., *Blackfeet Heritage 1907-1908: Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Browning, Montana* (Browning: Blackfeet Heritage Program, 1980), 247. Ellen's name was also spelled "Helen" and her last name, Armell, may have been alternately spelled "Armelle," "Hamel" or even "Hamel." The author has chosen the spelling "Ellen Armell" due to its more common usage in historic documents.

were highly successful at keeping unwanted Euro-Americans out of their territory into the mid-nineteenth century and were the last to negotiate a treaty with the U.S. government. However, increasing Blackfoot and Piegan interaction with Euro-Americans through the nineteenth century demonstrated the extent to which this formidable tribe engaged and intermixed with Euro-Americans through the 1870s when Thomas Stuart and Ellen began their marriage. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, the Piegans profited from the arrival of traders and, through trade relations with Euro-Americans, the band gained easier access to greater material wealth, horses, pre-made tools, and guns.<sup>121</sup> At the time of Tom Stuart and Ellen Armell's marriage, the Blackfoot tribe had been trading with whites for nearly one century. The emergent cultural and economic setting involved in this early- to mid-nineteenth-century interaction gradually led to the development of a unique blend of Indian traditions and white cultural and material influences.<sup>122</sup> Although Blackfoot independence waned by the end of the nineteenth century and their lands became increasingly confined by white settlement, a mixed cultural environment developed between the Blackfoot bands and Euro-Americans that often centered on Fort Benton, one of the forts in which the Armell family resided.<sup>123</sup>

Forts and trading posts were places where mixed families lived and European and Native American cultures converged. One of the most isolated trading posts in North America, Fort Benton served a similar function as a regional trading and transportation hub like Santa Fe in the southwest and Denver in the Central Rockies. By 1853, the fort, though remote, was a wealthy trading post with an increasingly important role as a base for traders and explorers to identify and establish water routes across the continent. In fact, the fort became the oldest continuously occupied white settlement in Montana.<sup>124</sup> In 1860, the first steamboats reached Fort Benton and with increased white settlement in Montana through the 1860s, it became the source of supply for basic goods to many white settlements in the territory including Deer Lodge and

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<sup>121</sup> John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 21-22, 44, 205, 124.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 71, 72.

<sup>123</sup> Historical Society of Montana, "Augustin Hamell, 1800-1859, 1860," in *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Volume Ten, 262 (Helena: Eagle Printing Co., 1940), accessed 12/20/2011, [http://www.archive.org/stream/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich/contributionstohvol10hist1940rich_djvu.txt). The Armell family lived at Fort Union, Fort McKenzie and Fort Benton and Ellen, according to this source, was born in Yankton South Dakota. This information, however, is from the Notes and References section of the document, which contains uncited biographical summaries of Montana residents.

<sup>124</sup> Overholser, *Fort Benton*, v, 20-21.

Missoula.<sup>125</sup> The fort also served as the official site for treaty negotiation between tribal leaders and American officials, as well as the location for councils to forge peace treaties between Blackfoot bands and other tribes, such as the Nez Perce and the Flatheads.<sup>126</sup> Traffic at Fort Benton peaked in 1867 with the height of the territory's mining rush as it began to supply the sudden influx of migrants. But in the mid-1870s, movement of goods and people through the post gradually declined as the placer boom waned and the transcontinental railroad neared completion.<sup>127</sup> In the early 1860s, communications and travel between American Fork and the Deer Lodge Valley, where James and Granville Stuart were located, and Fort Benton was common and would have undoubtedly remained so through the 1860s.<sup>128</sup> The author has no documentation to prove Thomas' presence at Fort Benton at any date, however, considering the frequency of communication between Deer Lodge Valley residents and Fort Benton, it would not be a stretch to surmise that Thomas at least visited the fort in the early 1860s, then at its height of importance for the Montana Territory. While travelling to or securing supplies at Fort Benton, Thomas may have met Ellen, whose family maintained economic ties to the post during this period.<sup>129</sup>

The Armell family's involvement in Fort Benton spanned more than two decades and perhaps longer. Regional trappers and traders knew Ellen Stuart's French-Canadian father, Augustin Armell, as "an intelligent voyageur who had been in the country many years," and he lived with his family at a variety of forts, including Fort Clark, Fort Union, Fort McKenzie and Fort Benton in the early decades of the nineteenth century. At these forts, Augustin constructed several "trade houses" which locals recognized as Hamell's (or Armell's) houses. Sometime after 1850, Augustin moved to Yankton, South Dakota, where Ellen was born, but returned to Fort Benton periodically, perhaps with his children, until his death in 1859 or 1860.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, through Piegan and French-Canadian familial networks, the Armells maintained substantial economic ties to Fort Benton through the 1850s and perhaps later as Ellen became older. That

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<sup>125</sup> Overholser, *Fort Benton*, 28, 39.

<sup>126</sup> Ewers, *The Blackfeet*, 208, 210, 245.

<sup>127</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 73.

<sup>128</sup> Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier*, 201-204.

<sup>129</sup> The precise details regarding where and when Thomas first met Ellen remain unclear.

<sup>130</sup> Historical Society of Montana, "Augustin Hamell, 1800-1859, 1860," in *Contributions*. This information, however, is from the Notes and References section of the document, which contains uncited biographical summaries of Montana residents and may be based on hearsay rather than actual documentation.

Thomas possibly met his future wife at Fort Benton and married her in the mid-1860s was not unusual even though the fur trade was nearly over. As a Blackfoot agency and a trading post, Fort Benton was home to many mixed residents. The 1870 census showed thirty-six males and sixty-two females listed as half Indian, fifteen female Indians (mostly wives to white men), and sixteen individuals listed as “quarter blood,” and “virtually all” were of Blackfoot ancestry.

Thomas Stuart and his family probably maintained some association with the fort for some time after their marriage. In an 1870 letter to Granville Stuart, James Stuart described visiting Thomas Stuart’s family in Fort Benton while Thomas visited their mother, Nancy Stuart, in Iowa. Although unclear if James was visiting Thomas’ wife and children or an extended family, James relayed this rather uneventful stay to Granville and said that “conversation on their part was limited to an occasional yes or no—[and James] stayed half an hour and retired without an invitation to call again.”<sup>131</sup> The details and dynamics of this interaction remain unclear, but the interaction revealed that Thomas’ family, whether immediate or extended, resided in a trading post characterized by cultural plurality through the 1860s and 1870s. Despite the unimpressive communication described by James, the eldest Stuart brother considered Thomas’ mixed family members important enough to visit them while travelling elsewhere.

Living in mid-nineteenth-century Deer Lodge, Thomas joined other prominent white men who participated in the intercultural environment that prevailed in the valley and in surrounding forts such as Fort Union and Fort Benton. For example, Johnny Grant married Native American women and regularly invited Indians of many surrounding tribes to his large ranch in the valley, as did James and Granville Stuart when they lived in their American Fork cabin. Dances held in the valley brought Euro-American men and native and mixed women and children together. James and Granville regularly attended these festive affairs, for which women donned their best buckskin clothing decorated with complex beadwork, bright calicos, moccasins, leggings, shell ornaments, feathers and tinted porcupine quills.<sup>132</sup> The winter season of 1862, for example, involved continuous social gatherings and dances. Johnny Grant hosted a New Year’s Eve ball during a blizzard with sub-zero temperatures, but once the travelers reached Grant’s home they danced

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<sup>131</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 333.

<sup>132</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 64.

through the night, and in the morning Johnny treated his guests to breakfast. The forty-below temperatures prevented their departure so guests napped and reclined on buffalo robes until Grant served lunch, after which the dancing resumed and he provided supper. Finally, the following day, January 3, the guests could go home after two days of festivities.<sup>133</sup> While he lived in Deer Lodge, Johnny Grant held frequent dances in his large residence that hosted white men and many native women who, on occasion, brought as many as thirteen babies to the gatherings. A December 1865 *Montana Post* article described the predominance of “aboriginal danseuses” at the event but emphasized that “Even those who could not speak English were very courteous in gesture.” Tellingly, the article described Johnny as “the great medicine man of the mixed French-Indian race who ranch around Deer Lodge.” The mixed-race community persisted in Deer Lodge well into the 1860s.<sup>134</sup> These events brought the Stuart brothers into close physical contact with native women and motivated them to choose sexual partners according to a culturally intermixed environment.

In 1861, Granville married Susan Michel, the daughter of Paul Michel, a resident of Cottonwood (Deer Lodge) who had both French-Canadian and Nez-Perce ancestry. However, this relationship dissolved in April 1862. In the same month, Granville married Awbonnie Tookanka, a Shoshoni woman. Though Awbonnie maintained little connection with her Shoshoni family, she spoke both Shoshoni and English fluently and lived among a mixed Deer Lodge community during the early 1860s. James engaged with a variety of short and slightly longer-term relationships with Indian women throughout his life. In 1862 or 1863, James may have fathered a son by Susan Michel, the same woman Granville married. Named James Stuart, Michel’s son who lived with his mother’s people, the Nez Perce. In 1864, James married Ellen Lavatta, of Mexican and Shoshone ancestry, and this marriage lasted for seven years.<sup>135</sup>

These relationships of these prominent men set a precedent for Thomas and Ellen Stuart’s marriage. In the Deer Lodge Valley, a tightly-knit community of native and mixed women brought a wide range of languages and customs into contact with one another. Through a combination of signed and spoken words women in the valley communicated with one another successfully enough to organize an 1862 revolt against

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<sup>133</sup> Treece, “Mr. Montana,” 232-233.

<sup>134</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 105-106.

<sup>135</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 65-67.



the men. After the “Grand Stampede of women,” in which the women may have marched together and abandoned their daily responsibilities, the men were forced to pacify the group with “gifts and promises.” In 1863, a few native or mixed women remained in the valley and could have provided Awbonnie with guidance in “the ways of the grandmothers,” Native American traditions pertaining to marriage, child-birth, and motherhood. In this close community, women shared their recipes, handicrafts, sewing designs and customs inherited from their native families.<sup>136</sup> Deer Lodge grew from this mixed cultural milieu in the valley; the founders of Deer Lodge City were predominantly those with mixed families. In the early 1860s, the men who inhabited the valley sought to establish a “magnificent community a mile square” for their families and hired a surveyor for the newly formed Deer Lodge Town Company. The group consisted of Louis Demers, Leon Quesnelle, John Pemberton, Johnny Grant, John Powell, and Fred Burr, all representatives of the last vestiges of the fur trade in Montana. The men invited James Stuart, then married to Ellen Lavatta, into their company and elected him president.<sup>137</sup> These prominent regional figures set the social and cultural stage for Thomas’ marriage to a mixed woman.

The Thomas Stuart homestead was an important component of this community that once characterized the Deer Lodge Valley and the city of Deer Lodge. The mixed Stuart family resided in this area in the late-nineteenth century amid the remnants of the fur trade social structure that had enabled the Stuart’s marriage. According to a newspaper article from the late 1920s or early 1930s, the Thomas Stuart homestead site annually hosted rodeos in the surrounding fields during the fall months. Guests and contestants from the Deer Lodge valley gathered there, including tribes such as the Nez Perce who were engaged in their annual migration through the valley. After the contests, “plainsmen” used the Stuart home as a “headquarters” or meeting place wherein they shared their feats and accomplishments on the frontier.<sup>138</sup> These rodeos reflected the cultural mixing that had prevailed in the Deer Lodge community for well over twenty years and had roots in the fur trade era prior to the permanent settlement of Deer Lodge City. The homestead provided a place

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 65-67; 79-80.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 66, 100.

<sup>138</sup> “Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of ’80, Being Torn Down,” approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

for Native American and Euro-American cultures to interact, thereby producing cultural plurality that was unique and compelling if not brief in the annals of Montana's settlement history.

### **Ranching and Mining: the Gradual Transformation of the Social and Economic Landscape of the Deer Lodge Valley**

As successful as these communities may have been in facilitating trade and cultural interaction between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, an expanding American society and its Victorian-era ideals marginalized this mixed cultural milieu. The mining and open range booms of the late nineteenth century opened the doors for increased settlement in the Deer Lodge Valley, thereby bringing small frontier settlements like Deer Lodge within the reach of socio-economic forces from the eastern United States. Gradually, the railroad and other increasingly travelled overland routes to the West helped import a social and economic order that ostracized members of this mixed environment. Thomas and his brothers not only engaged with and benefited from this cultural plurality, but they were also heavily involved in the transformation of Montana into an industrially and agriculturally productive landscape.

The free grass that brought white settlers to the Montana plains during the 1870s made possible a viable and "indigenous" cattle industry by the 1880s. This livestock trade originally grew from the demands of the Oregon Trail as travelers required rested work animals as they crossed the plains on their way farther west. In the early 1860s, when the earliest miners arrived in the area, they discovered ranchers were already taking advantage of the bountiful rangeland that supported large herds of cattle. For example, once he left prospecting, Conrad Kohrs turned to stock raising for a more reliable income, bought Johnny Grant's ranch in 1865, and was quickly one of Montana's prominent stockmen. The rise of Montana's cattle industry paralleled that of sheepherders and horse ranchers. All three groups sought to take advantage of the rangeland when it became increasingly available as the federal government removed Indian tribes from their native lands. After open-range ranching gave way to stabilized cattle raising, Montana also became

increasingly known for its finely-bred horse herds developed by prominent horse breeders like W.E. Larabie of Deer Lodge, C. E. Williams of Helena, and Nelson Story of Bozeman.<sup>139</sup>

Horse breeding of the late 1800s was a burgeoning industry along with cattle ranching and both contributed to the early economic foundation of the region and, in turn, to the settlement of communities such as Deer Lodge. When Thomas Stuart purchased the property across from the fairgrounds and established his home and horse enterprise, he became a relatively significant economic contributor to the town. Residing in Deer Lodge during the 1880s, Thomas Stuart undoubtedly would have known about the prominent Deer Lodge horse breeder W.E. Larabie and been apprised of the techniques involved in managing a horse herd. When Granville Stuart asked Thomas to shift into cattle ranching, Thomas may have been involved in an existing lucrative enterprise he did not wish to abandon.

Although Thomas Stuart was not as directly involved in the cattle industry as were Granville Stuart, Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg, he did raise thoroughbred horses at the site. Thomas Stuart and the previous owner of the property cooperated on the site to raise a “large band” of horses, presumably bred for racing and sulky racing.<sup>140</sup> In 1975, Vivian Kemp, Thomas Stuart’s daughter, recalled that her father once had a half-mile race-track north of the house and south of Conrad Warren’s home where he presumably trained and raced his thoroughbred horses. This may have been the site of an annual rodeo where cowboys broke horses and spectators watched the various contests such as bronc-riding from the corral fence. After the contests, the plainsmen who participated in the events gathered after the contests at the Stuart home across the street from the fairgrounds.<sup>141</sup>

In the process of jumpstarting his own involvement with cattle ranching in the region, Granville Stuart wrote Thomas on February 2, 1880, to recommend that he sell his horses and transition into the cattle business with Granville and Reece Anderson, their long-time friend and business partner.<sup>142</sup> Later that month,

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<sup>139</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 145-146, 151.

<sup>140</sup> Vivian Kemp (Stuart), interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, 1975.

<sup>141</sup> “Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of ’80, Being Torn Down,” approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. If this site was not where the rodeo was held, considering the historic document’s vague description of the event’s location, the fairgrounds may have been used instead.

<sup>142</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 2 February, 1880, Granville and James Stuart Papers, Reel 2, Mansfield Library Special Collections.

Granville continued to urge Thomas towards cattle ranching and thought he could secure Thomas a position as a herd manager if Thomas could “only arrange matters so as to move on and take charge of a herd.”

Granville even offered for Thomas to use the rangeland he had already picked out near the Yellowstone River. Despite Granville’s offer to help him set up the new company, Thomas was not willing to relinquish his investments in the horse breeding and racing industry. Thomas never became involved in the cattle business, and the degree to which he remained involved in horse breeding and racing during the remainder of his life remains unclear.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, horse breeding was a burgeoning industry along with cattle ranching, and both contributed to the early economic foundation of the region and, in turn, to the process of settlement of communities like Deer Lodge.

The prospect of rich gold deposits brought significant numbers of whites to the Idaho and Montana Territories through the 1860s and, like ranching, the mining industry invited increased settlement in the area. The influx and subsequent concentration of people helped initiate the gradual establishment of communities such as Virginia City, Helena, and Deer Lodge. By the 1860s, earlier centers of mining like California, Nevada, and Colorado were in decline, and eager prospectors, like Thomas Stuart, began to infiltrate the slopes of the Rocky Mountains in Idaho. This excitement quickly spilled into what would become the Montana Territory, and a major gold rush ensued by mid-1862.<sup>144</sup> The social and economic momentum behind the Montana gold rush influenced settlement patterns across the state and helped to create centers for trade, commerce, and government.

The Stuart brothers were also actively engaged in this transformation of the Deer Lodge Valley through mining. Granville and James Stuart participated in the earliest of Montana’s mining rushes, established a small community oriented towards mining, and several years later, helped establish Deer Lodge City with Thomas. Granville asserted in his later years that the first documented discovery of gold in Montana occurred in the spring of 1858 when he, James, and their friend, Reece Anderson, found placer gold deposits at Gold Creek where they established a small settlement, American Fork. Although the discovery never produced reliable diggings or a substantial town, Granville and James sent an enthusiastic letter to Thomas in

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<sup>143</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West: the Pioneer Life of Granville Stuart*, 166.

<sup>144</sup> Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 65-66.

Colorado explaining their findings at Gold Creek (approximately eight miles to the northwest of Deer Lodge).<sup>145</sup> Although this letter brought sixteen of Thomas' friends to the small settlement, Granville and James' activities at Gold Creek did not independently bring new people to the area but rather induced travelers already making their way through the region to stay at American Fork and try their luck at placer mining. News of other major strikes, such as Alder Gulch that gave rise to Virginia City, brought a substantially greater number of people to the region.<sup>146</sup> Having failed to strike worthwhile deposits at Gold Creek, the brothers engaged in business pursuits elsewhere in Montana. Granville and Thomas eventually settled in Deer Lodge in the mid-1860s and, like many other hopeful prospectors and businessmen of the era, they used the growing town as a base for their various mining and ranching endeavors.

While a resident in Deer Lodge in the 1880s and 1890s, Thomas Stuart was involved in a variety of mining ventures in the area and his older brothers described him with a measure of envy as a "Number 1 Prospector."<sup>147</sup> Thomas pursued many mining interests through the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s that often involved claim speculation in cooperation with other businessmen like Granville and Sam Hauser. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Thomas was heavily involved in mining claims in Butte, Anaconda, and the Gold Creek Mountains west of Deer Lodge. Through these activities, Thomas contributed to the development of the valley and helped establish the economic foundation for increased settlement.

Although Deer Lodge was not strictly a mining town, it did serve as the business center for approximately sixty mining camps by the end of the 1860s. Thomas Stuart provides a clear example of how Deer Lodge functioned as a hub for trade and a town for miners and their families to live. Rather than a raucous mining town, Deer Lodge became more socially "cultivated" according to Euro-American sensibilities. By the late 1860s, Deer Lodge had expanded from a settlement consisting of a few log cabins and business to a town boasting a business district, a blacksmith shop, a manufacturing business, hotels, saloons, butcher shops, corrals, and a brewery. At the end of 1865, the community contained three steam

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<sup>145</sup> Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier*, 211; David Lavender, *The Rockies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 165; Milner and O'Connor, *As Big As the West*, 138, 70. Montana historians dispute Granville's claim that he and his mining party were the first to discover gold in the area.

<sup>146</sup> Treece, "Mr. Montana," 209-210; Malone et al. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 65.

<sup>147</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 138.

sawmills, a drugstore and a hardware store. The once isolated frontier settlement continued to grow and by 1869 Deer Lodge had a bank, and several churches, and produced two newspapers.<sup>148</sup> One observer described Deer Lodge as “peopled by a relatively larger number of families than other towns, . . . (and) it’s cozy dwellings (were) built on good sized separate lots, surrounded by shade trees, and neatly inclosed [sic]. This “combine[d] with other characteristics . . . [gave] it a distinctive and superior appearance, while the industry and thrift of its denizens [was] particularly noticeable.”<sup>149</sup> Although Deer Lodge and the Thomas Stuart homestead site were not directly associated with mining activity, the city was, in some ways, a product of the mining rush, and served as a center for trade and commerce where families like Thomas Stuart’s could enjoy a more stable place to settle, engage in prospecting nearby, and raise families in a thriving community.

### **Anglo-American Social Norms and Deer Lodge’s Mixed Community**

Economic development in the Deer Lodge Valley brought irrevocable social change for Deer Lodge’s mixed community. Ranching and mining opened the doors for an influx of settlers who imported their Victorian-era ideals and helped transform the social landscape from a culturally mixed environment towards a settled, and predominately Anglo-agrarian society. This gradual shift occurred over the course of the late nineteenth century and affected the French-Canadian and Euro-American trappers and traders, mountain men, and ranchers and miners, like Granville and Thomas, who partook in the cultural plurality forged by the fur trade. Furthermore, the closure of this lost world of the fur trade “signaled the termination of a very old process in North American, and United States history,” and represented the end of a social experiment that a growing American society could not fathom nor accommodate.<sup>150</sup> Members of this *métis* community felt the growing intolerance towards the racial and cultural mixing that characterized frontier life and enabled Euro-American survival in an otherwise remote land. Individuals like Johnny Grant, Granville Stuart, and Thomas Stuart participated in the waning era of the fur trade and experienced the transition towards a society dominated by Euro-American principles that marginalized the mixed milieu they were

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<sup>148</sup> Edna Jacobsen, “Family Histories,” in *Powell County: Where It All Began*, ed. Dorene Courchene (Deer Lodge, 1989), 120. Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 118, 120, 104.

<sup>149</sup> Courchene, ed., *Powell County: Where It All Began*, 122.

<sup>150</sup> Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, xi-xii, 239.

familiar with. This “attitudinal tide was a crucial turning point in western...cultural life” illustrated by Deer Lodge history and the Thomas Stuart homestead.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, these men responded to this pressure in a variety of ways; while some fled the region, others remained in Deer Lodge despite increasing ostracism.

The world most familiar to the mountain men and French-Canadian traders began to wane by the 1840s with the incremental decline of the fur trade. Many men had to find other means of living with their mixed families, but most honored the paternal and marital obligations of their marriages.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, many of the traders at Fort Union left the post with their mixed families that once pervaded the community by the late 1850s rather than “suffer abuse and humiliation in ‘civilized’ locales where white prejudice was far more openly expressed.” These families traveled north to the Red River settlement in Canada that offered a retirement type community for fur companies’ aging traders.<sup>153</sup> When the U.S. government established reservations during the 1850s and 1860s, many mountain men and their Indian wives moved to her tribe’s federally allocated reserve or found refuge in the Northern Rockies where they avoided the mining rushes and the changing landscape of the American West after the Civil War. These men sought “semisedentary retirement” in trading communities. Regardless of where they chose to flee the coming onslaught of American settlement, memoirs, journals, and letters written by mountain men revealed a disappointment in the disappearance of the fur trade world that was more remote, wild, and perhaps free from the more strict and race-based social dictates of Euro-American society in the East. The mixed environment represented “a charm in the life of a free mountaineer from which one cannot free himself, after he once has fallen under its spell.” The lure of this lifestyle could have left an enduringly pluralistic society, and “had the Americans not come, possibly a line of *métis* or halfbreeds would have existed from Oklahoma to Saskatchewan.”<sup>154</sup>

Johnny Grant’s exodus from the Deer Lodge Valley in 1867 reflects this same dynamic. When he and his large family left Deer Lodge for Manitoba after selling the ranch to Conrad Kohrs, Grant also departed with over one hundred men, many of whom were friends of James and Granville Stuart, and doubtless with a

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<sup>151</sup> John Mack Faragher, “Americans, Mexicans, Métis: A Community Approach to the Comparative Study of North American Frontiers,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*, eds. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1992), as quoted in West, *The Way to the West*, 121.

<sup>152</sup> Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” 180.

<sup>153</sup> Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 129-130.

<sup>154</sup> Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders,” 174-175, 176.

large caravan of women and children. Like similar mountain men, Johnny Grant sought a “good place to bring [his] family to live,” or a place where his mixed family could fit in, which was no longer possible in Deer Lodge. While America’s western lands became increasingly influenced by Victorian-era ideals from the East by the second half of the nineteenth century, Manitoba offered Grant’s family an environment in which “a general friendship existed between all classes, rich or poor, and of every nationality or creed.”<sup>155</sup> A similar departure occurred at Fort Benton. Through the 1880s, most mixed families left after a marked influx of white women led some white husbands at the fort to sever their relations with Native American or mixed women, although many did not abandon their mixed families and moved with them to the north.<sup>156</sup>

The Stuart brothers equally immersed themselves in the mixed race community of Deer Lodge but when forced to choose between seeking a community that accepted their *métis* families or their potentially profitable business ventures, the brothers chose the latter.<sup>157</sup> Although Thomas and Granville remained in Deer Lodge with their families when the social stigma against “squaw men” became increasingly pronounced, they were both reticent to abandon or distance themselves from their mixed brood. This social pressure can be viewed with excruciating clarity through the increasing anxiety Granville Stuart felt regarding his Shoshoni wife Awbonnie, his large mixed family, and the unmitigated pressure from Nancy Stuart who urged her sons to abandon their wives and find more “suitable” or white wives.

While marriages like Thomas’ were common in the fur trade, this mixed world produced relationships that “changed almost immediately from a proud social asset to the badge of a pariah” when increasing numbers Anglo-Americans arrived.<sup>158</sup> When Euro-American men like Thomas Stuart married mixed or native women, they transgressed the constructed boundary between the “savage” and “civilized” and eventually threatened other colonists’ sense of racial superiority.<sup>159</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the social relationships made by pioneers like Thomas Stuart, which had originally occurred beyond the reach of

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<sup>155</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 123-124.

<sup>156</sup> Overholser, *Fort Benton*, 295.

<sup>157</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 123-124.

<sup>158</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 67.

<sup>159</sup> Richard Godbeer, “Eroticizing the Middle Ground,” in *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, ed. Martha Hodes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 92.



Euro-American social mores, encountered the more restrictive attitudes that settlers brought with them from the Midwest and the East.

Thomas' mother, Nancy Stuart, never hid her bias against her sons' marital status, and her attitudes reflected the common belief that her sons had abandoned a "civilized" way of life by marrying native or mixed women. In, 1866, when Granville returned to West Liberty, Iowa, to visit their mother, he wrote to his brother James that he told their Iowa family about the brothers' mixed families. Granville reported that he and his brothers, "including Thos (Thomas) are considered as being a little more wicked than the inhabitants of Sodom & Gomorrah but being popularly supposed to be worth a half a million more or less, it rather has a tendency to make us popular in this d—d puritanical, hypocritical neighborhood."<sup>160</sup> When Nancy urged Granville to dissolve his marriage, thereby abandoning his children, Granville responded in March 1870 that as much as he wanted to disassociate from his "present condition" he could not bring himself to desert his family. Granville continually wondered how acquiring a white wife and a "normal" family could help his perpetually unstable financial situation, perhaps suggesting that Granville saw his prospects as greatly hampered by his being labeled a "squaw man." According to historians Milner and O'Connor, the transgression of social norms, did not seem to bother Granville until his later years when he began lamenting his "trapped" plight and plotted his departure from his mixed family, a plan he never followed through with.<sup>161</sup> When Thomas visited Nancy in 1870, Granville expressed to James in writing that Tom might succumb to her pleas for her youngest son to mend his ways, stay in West Liberty, and marry a white woman. Granville thought this change would benefit Tom and advance his social and economic mobility.<sup>162</sup>

The brothers' family revealed their disapproval most blatantly in 1867 when Sam Stuart, another of Thomas' older brothers, arrived in the Montana Territory from Iowa with his wife Amanda, who vehemently disliked her brothers-in-laws' mixed families. She and another white woman ridiculed the Stuart brothers' native wives by strutting around the home dressed in blankets. After the three brothers sided with their wives,

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<sup>160</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 114-115.

<sup>161</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 141-142, 143.

<sup>162</sup> Treece, "Mr. Montana," 342.

Sam and Amanda decided to return home in the spring of 1868.<sup>163</sup> But despite Granville's defense of his métis family in 1867, he expressed much more ambivalence about them in 1873. Granville's words revealed the brothers' feelings about their marriages in the face of harsh social criticism when he said: "I shudder with horror when I contemplate getting old in my present fix (with his mixed family), or ever to get poor would be awful, it does very well while one is young, but it don't last, & my repugnance to my present mode of life increases daily...just think of having to go anywhere with such an outfit (family) as mine...[and] live in defiance of public opinion as we have always done...[W]ith my present outfit I can never go anywhere else...I remember your (James) saying that you or I could never marry any respectable or high toned or rich woman after our conduct."<sup>164</sup> Such a damning portrayal of one's family life revealed the depth of Granville's sense of ostracism and his changed attitude in response to the shifting social circumstances by the end of the nineteenth century. Given the family's relatively regular communication, Thomas may have shared these feelings.

By the 1880s, the Stuarts fully recognized the anomaly of their mixed families within an increasingly dominant white culture. In an 1882 letter discussing Nancy's move to Deer Lodge from Iowa, Granville asked Thomas if he could "fix up a room for her at your house," referring to the homestead. Since the situation at Granville's home on the ranch was "most too wild...a place for [Nancy] this year and my family would be a greater shock to her than yours (Thomas)'...," Granville was reluctant to host his mother at his own home.<sup>165</sup> Granville was anxious about his mother's reaction to both Thomas' and his own family arrangements, but may have been especially concerned about her reaction to the skin color and perhaps the customs of his Shoshoni wife and their multiple children. By the 1880s, Granville had moved his family to a home ranch near Fort Maginnis where he struggled to establish a successful ranching business. Having long been aware of and sensitive to the changing racial judgments of Montana society, Granville viewed the ranch as a refuge for his Shoshoni wife and mixed children "where a remnant of frontier egalitarianism seemed to

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<sup>163</sup> Milner and O'Connor, *As Big as the West*, 121; Treece, "Mr. Montana," 317.

<sup>164</sup> Treece, "Mr. Montana," 350-351.

<sup>165</sup> Granville Stuart to Thomas Stuart, 18 February, 1882, Fort Maginnis Montana to Deer Lodge Montana, Letter Press Books of Granville Stuart, Reel 2, Mansfield Library Special Collection.

exist.”<sup>166</sup> Although occurring nearly twenty years later, this desire to find a haven from societal ostracism parallels the mountain man’s retreat and search for refuge in the Northern Rocky Mountains for his mixed family.

Moreover, such a significant social shift towards intolerance of cultural intermixing reflected a larger cultural phenomenon of westward movement in American history. The West represented for settlers two opposing sets of opportunities. Its expansive topography lured settlers west with vast amounts of available land and unique economic possibilities. In this respect, the West was a place pioneers saw as fundamentally different than the more populated East. However, emigrants also sought to change the West into a familiar place that could be called home. This impulse sought to transform this endless expanse of open land from a foreign “there” to familiar “here” through permanent settlement and the establishment of familiar institutions such as schools, organized religion, and law. The Stuart brothers embodied both trends that animated America’s westward advance. They enjoyed a wild and isolated place, and, in many ways, forged a new life for themselves independent from their Midwestern family, as so many American emigrants sought to do. For many Euro-Americans, the West was a space that begged to be tamed and conquered according to Manifest Destiny, and the Stuart brothers also employed this ideology through their work as miners, ranchers, businessmen, community builders and politicians. Though they may not have thought of themselves in such terms, men like Thomas Stuart sought to transform such an unruly place as the wilds of Montana into a “habited” and “civilized” place, thereby inadvertently transplanting “proper” Victorian sensibilities and white America’s entrenched sense of racial hierarchy.<sup>167</sup> Ultimately, Thomas Stuart’s mixed family was caught between these seemingly opposed veins of thought.

In this sense, the Thomas Stuart homestead site represented a flourishing culturally mixed environment that became socially unviable by the end of the turn of the nineteenth century. The decline of this world was just as revealing as its existence and lends the site significance through its association with the historic trends that made possible the settlement of Deer Lodge. The site and the rich social history that

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<sup>166</sup> Milner and O’Connor, *As Big as the West*, 210.

<sup>167</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 99, 135-139. Richard White, “Part Three: Transformation and Development,” in *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 181-182.

transpired there reveals the rather nuanced and culturally fluid world of the American frontier and belies the more traditional historiographical portrayal of a dominant white culture overtaking and extinguishing native culture in its wake. According to historian John Faragher's community approach to the study of the western frontier, a close look at communities such as Deer Lodge allows historians to more clearly understand the frontier as a "zone of cultural interpenetration."<sup>168</sup> The cultural milieu represented at the Thomas Stuart homestead site offers an opportunity to reassess the late-nineteenth-century frontier in precisely this regard.

Faragher's reminder that the "triumph of Anglo-American patterns of agrarian settlement in North America must not cause us to neglect the earlier forms of community that preceded the outcome" is relevant in its application to Thomas Stuart's homestead. Indeed, this site is a testament to Faragher's argument that "frontier history is the story of the contact of cultures, their competition, and their continuing relations. It cannot be the story of any one side."<sup>169</sup> The assault on native cultures, that is, occurred gradually rather than all at once with the infiltration of American settlers, and in the process, a great deal of cultural interplay, accommodation and cooperation occurred. In the process of laying one of Montana's earliest cities, Deer Lodge's founders forged cross-cultural liaisons and created a culturally fluid, if fleeting, environment. This homestead site reminds any student of American history of a world that once cultivated cultural plurality by necessity. Though it was certainly not without its inequalities and biases, this opportunity for cross-cultural intermixing was ultimately lost with the implementation of the reservation system and the imposition of social norms from the East. Furthermore, the pioneer hall of fame portraits do not picture the native women who married white men, bore their children, reared their families, and kept their homes along with their white, female counterparts. Their presence and the native culture they imparted to early pioneer communities suggests an early society that is culturally mediated and mixed. The Stuart homestead site, as a temporary locus for the life of Thomas Stuart's mixed pioneer family, is thus connected to a more nuanced history of white settlement across the West.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Faragher, "Americans, Mexicans, Métis," 93.

<sup>169</sup> Faragher, "Americans, Mexicans, Métis," 109.

<sup>170</sup> West, *The Way to the West*, 124.

### **The Menards and the French-Canadian Community**

Even though a white Anglo society predominated by the twentieth century, Deer Lodge retained elements of ethnic diversity. The family that resided in the old Thomas Stuart homestead from 1899 or 1900 to 1924 indicates the continued presence of people outside the white, Protestant, Anglo norm. Occupying the home in the early decades of the twentieth century, the Menard family contributed to the functioning of the Kohrs and Bielenberg Ranch. The Menards maintained their French-Canadian cultural identity while living at the ranch and were a part of a larger international migratory trend that brought Canadians south to the U.S. in search of work and opportunity. A French-Canadian from Quebec, Antoine Menard met his wife in Winnipeg, Manitoba and brought his family to Deer Lodge as other Menards moved to the area in 1899 or 1900. Antoine Menard had worked as a maintenance man for the Kohrs and Bielenberg Ranch for six or seven years before bringing his family there to live, and he continued to work at the ranch until 1924.<sup>171</sup>

This family's move to the U.S. was part of an immigration pattern that altered the ethnic makeup of communities throughout the Midwest and in settlements like Deer Lodge. By the middle of the nineteenth century, many French-Canadians began emigrating from Quebec to south of the international border, a trend that persisted through the 1890s. Like other migrant patterns, French-Canadians tended to settle in regions where family or other French-Canadian residents already lived. Initially, French-Canadians from Quebec relocated to Midwestern states such as Minnesota, but as more land became available in western areas of the U.S., French-Canadians traveled further in the direction of job opportunities and land.<sup>172</sup> Antoine originally moved from Quebec to Winnipeg, Manitoba to run a wheat farm. He most likely made this transition during the late 1870s or early 1880s, a time when residents of Quebec expressed concern over the noticeable outflow of factory workers from the area. According to an 1882 newspaper article in Quebec, emigrants left for adventure and the "easy acquisition of luxuries," and younger generations sought freedom from the patriarchal society at home.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Alice Farnsworth, interviewed by Albright and Clemenson, Deer Lodge, 1975.

<sup>172</sup> Virgil Benoit, "Gentilly: A French-Canadian Community in the Minnesota Red River Valley," *Minnesota History* 44 (1975): 280, 281.

<sup>173</sup> Benoit, "Gentilly," 281.

As he moved to Montana to fill a ranch hand position, Antoine followed the trend of settler occupations in regions like Montana. Canadian migrants often became stock raisers, but, to a large degree, gained employment as farmers and ranch hands.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, during the late 1800s and early 1900s, the international boundary between Canada and the United States meant little to transient laborers searching for work in the industries that transcended the border. Perhaps responding to the same economic forces as emigrants from Quebec, a large “army” of migrant laborers floated across the international boundary and were often “lured west by gold, adventure, or the possibility of land.”<sup>175</sup> American railroad companies played on the existing lure of western settlement by sending agents into Canada to distribute promotional material that advertised economic opportunity. These companies successfully created “a huge community of itinerant manual laborers ever on the move in the sparsely settled Rocky Mountain and Pacific regions.”<sup>176</sup> In his moves from Quebec to Winnipeg to run a wheat farm and subsequently to Deer Lodge to work as a ranch hand, Antoine Menard demonstrated the desire and ability to move across borders to obtain new economic prospects as so many other Canadians and French-Canadians did. As soon as Menard identified a suitable and stable place to work and raise his family, he moved his family to the Deer Lodge Valley.<sup>177</sup>

By the 1870s, Frenchtown Valley, sixteen miles west of Missoula, was home to “some fifty gentlemen of French extraction,” drawn west by friends and/or relatives and who often came in single families or in a group of a few families. These French-Canadians retained many of their national customs and their cultural identity and were in relatively close proximity to the Deer Lodge Valley, perhaps providing a degree of familiarity and cultural continuity for those who moved to the area. Indeed, the French tended to congregate near Missoula in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and established a cultural foundation in the region that may have attracted other French and French-Canadian settlers like the Menards. Other European ethnic groups such as the Finns and Germans settled in a similar pattern in Montana. These groups also sought to maintain their cultural identity through familial cohesion, living in proximity to other Finns and

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<sup>174</sup> H.G. Merriam, “Ethnic Settlement of Montana,” *Pacific Historical Review* 12 (1943): 160.

<sup>175</sup> Evelyne Stitt Pickett, “Hoboes Across the Border: A Comparison of Itinerant Cross-Border Laborers Between Montana and Western Canada,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 49 (1999): 19.

<sup>176</sup> Pickett, “Hoboes Across the Border,” 21.

<sup>177</sup> Lillian Menard Cardwell and Alice Menard Farnsworth, interviewed by Christine M. Trunnell, Deer Lodge, Montana, April 19, 1983, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deer Lodge, Montana.

Germans, and practicing traditional customs learned in the homeland.<sup>178</sup> Antoine Menard's daughter, Alice Farnsworth, recalled the French community in Deer Lodge when she and her sister Lillian Cardwell were growing up at the homestead during the early 1890s. The Menard home was open to everyone at the ranch (or perhaps everyone in Deer Lodge), but the French immigrants primarily attended the many dances held there. According to custom, guests brought instruments, baskets of fruits and cakes, and created a lively social scene among the French community that the ranch lacked.<sup>179</sup>

Reflective of the history that formed early Deer Lodge, the homestead site once occupied a prominent place in local memory. Early-twentieth-century Deer Lodge residents remembered the site as a "landmark" due to its association with a well-respected pioneer and plainsman and with the locale's frontier history.<sup>180</sup> The homestead was the site of significant historical developments in Deer Lodge City and Deer Lodge Valley as it represented the Stuart family residence, the social and economic transformation of the American West, and regional ethnic migration. The site is perhaps one of the few locales that once contained one of the fur trade's last vestiges of a mixed cultural milieu, a lost world of plurality that helped to lay the foundation of settlement in Deer Lodge. Indeed, mixed families were the earliest to settle the town, yet the pioneer halls of fame do not exhibit the native and mixed wives of pioneers like Thomas Stuart, thereby presenting an unbalanced picture of the character and make-up of Deer Lodge's earliest society in the mid-nineteenth century. The historic trends associated with the Thomas Stuart homestead ultimately adds a great deal of nuance to the traditional historical narrative of America's westward expansion. However, the homestead retains little physical integrity. Due to the absence of structures, only a series of depressions remain, and the homestead no longer conveys its historic significance.

### **Potential for Archeological Information**

This historically significant site has lost surface-level integrity, but historic archeological remains may provide further information that would demonstrate how the homestead reflects its historic contexts. Two

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<sup>178</sup> Merriam, "Ethnic Settlement of Montana," 159, 165, 166-167.

<sup>179</sup> Lillian Menard Cardwell and Alice Menard Farnsworth, interviewed by Trunnell, 1983.

<sup>180</sup> "Tom Stuart Home, Landmark of '80, Being Torn Down," approximately 1924-1935, on file Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

families, the Stuarts and Menards, inhabited the homestead over the course of 44 years during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and, due to this span of time, the site could provide insight into the development of Deer Lodge and the character of life at the Grant-Kohrs Ranch. Late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first century surface-level archeological assessments, however, have revealed only limited information about the homestead's history, and a more extensive archeological examination may yield more valuable material.

In June and July 1975, Winifred Brown conducted the first formal inventory of the homestead site to determine the potential effect of the proposed parking area and visitor pathway on any extant cultural resources. Brown located the foundation of a “barn associated with the Tom Stuart house” (identified as such through personal communication with Paul Gordon) in the path of a proposed pathway. To avoid excavating the foundation, park planners altered the direction of the pathway to the Kohrs ranch house. Test pits in the vicinity of the proposed construction area revealed a variety of historical artifacts within the topmost layer of soil, including bottle and window glass, ceramic shards, nails, and metal pieces (stove parts, hinges etc.), the majority of which dated to the nineteenth or early-twentieth century. However, the link between Thomas Stuart and these varied artifacts is tenuous. The Menard family's subsequent habitation, property owners' plowing and seeding of the field, and park managers' use of the site for grazing and as a parking lot made the artifacts difficult to attribute directly to Thomas Stuart. According to Brown, the “odd concentrations of artifacts and the changes in soil, vegetation, and ground surface seems to have been coincidental and due more to subsequent use of the area rather than to uses associated with early settler times.” Since the Stuart home site was “already designated as a historic region not to be disturbed,” and because the planned pathway through it could easily be changed, Brown simply advised the NPS to avoid the area altogether during the first stages of the area's development as national park unit.<sup>181</sup>

In 2003, the park completed a more systematic inventory of the homestead site. The Cultural Resource Inventory reported that planners had followed Brown's recommendations to avoid the site through the course of the park's development. The inventory project identified nine discrete features of the

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<sup>181</sup> Winifred Brown, “Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment,” 2, 4.



homestead's remains: two circular depressions, which contained pieces of brick and rock, a "linear feature" (a mound 13 meters long, 2 meters wide, and 10-20 cm in depth), a small circular depression, a concentration of stones, a rectangular feature composed of three separate depressions, a depression thought to be the privy, a small rectangular depression and two concrete slabs.<sup>182</sup>

Subsequent site inventories made no further inquiry into the subsurface archeological content of the area, and no extensive excavation has yet occurred. Twenty-first-century reports monitored the effects of grazing and Columbian ground squirrel burrowing activity on the integrity of the site. The 2003 Montana Cultural Resources Information System Form listed erosion and trampling from cattle as potential impacts to the site, but noted that the site "appears to be in good condition, and despite the field's use for grazing periodically and its use in the past for overflow parking during events at the fairgrounds across Main Street, the site's integrity does not appear to be compromised."<sup>183</sup>

A 2007 Archeological Site Status Evaluation reported little cultural material disturbance due to either Columbian ground squirrel activity or grazing, yet park managers used gassing techniques in order to control potential ground squirrel encroachment. In 2008, ground squirrels and grazing only minimally affected the field. By 2009, burrowing was much more pronounced, and the site had been grazed heavily for a short period of time. Neither activity had disturbed the surface-level resources on top of the knoll where the Thomas Stuart homestead site once stood.<sup>184</sup>

Two assessments in 2003 attest to the site's archeological integrity. The Cultural Resource Inventory identified the possibility that an excavation "may also present a unique opportunity to examine material cultural changes over time" and could potentially "offer a comparative case of culture change in an agricultural operation associated with a distinctly different socio-economic strata than afforded by the Grant-Kohrs materials." The 2003 Cultural Landscape Inventory recommended that the park more thoroughly assess the site for potentially significant archeological remains before any further ground disturbance

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<sup>182</sup> Cultural Resource Inventory, 2003, 49-51.

<sup>183</sup> Montana Cultural Resources Information System Form, "Class III Cultural Resource Inventory," 2003, 158, 159.

<sup>184</sup> Archeological Site Status Evaluation, May 8, 2007, September 26, 2008, September 10, 2009.

occurred.<sup>185</sup> Similarly, the Cultural Resources Information System Form lists the site as potentially eligible to the National Register due to Thomas Stuart's relative prominence in Deer Lodge history and to the site's potential to yield unique archeological material. Accordingly, the inventory recommends "extensive testing and/or full mitigation by excavation" if substantial ground disturbance threatens the site.<sup>186</sup>

Surface-level reports indicate the presence of historical artifacts including bottle and window glass, ceramic shards, nails, and a variety of metal pieces, as well as the presence of a foundation of a structure originally associated with the Thomas Stuart homestead.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, nine separate features, which include a series of depressions and concentrated brick and stone scatters, may also indicate the presence of more substantive subsurface remains.<sup>188</sup> Due to continued ground disturbance over the course of the late-twentieth century, these extant features and artifact scatters can answer little in the way of the arrangement and use of the complex of buildings, which included one house and perhaps two barns. A more extensive archeological investigation may contextualize surface-level remains and clarify some of the existing questions associated with building locations and orientations, the site's function as a private residence and horse breeding center, as well as the homestead's relationship to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

Similarly, more in-depth archeological information may answer persistent research questions pertaining to the Stuarts and the Menards and their respective activities while living at the homestead. Deposits of cultural materials, artifacts, foundations, or structural remains could reveal aspects of the daily lives of individuals working on a ranch. According to a 2003 Cultural Resources Information assessment, such information could "present a unique opportunity to examine material cultural changes over time" in a similar way that past excavations at the Grant-Kohrs Home Ranching building complex revealed. For example, excavations in Unit 7 of the Grant-Kohrs home ranch, near the kitchen and basement doors, presented a stratified deposit with "qualitatively and quantitatively different materials in Levels 1 and 2." Level 2 contained luxury items and evidence of objects such as wine and liquor bottles, condiments and canned foods, whereas Level 1 contained material more directly pertaining to the ranching operation such as

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<sup>185</sup> Cultural Resource Inventory, 2003, 70.

<sup>186</sup> Montana Cultural Resources Information System Form, "Class III Cultural Resource Inventory," 2003, 158, 158-159.

<sup>187</sup> Winifred Brown, "Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment," 2, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Cultural Resource Inventory, 2003, 49.

barbed wire, tools, and building material. A similarly stratified deposit at the Thomas Stuart homestead site may reveal what seasonal and daily routines characterized its residents' lives and the material objects used in these activities. Subsurface remains might show the Menards' French-Canadian ethnic preferences, and the lowest stratum of deposits could also illuminate the culturally mixed world of early Deer Lodge when the Stuarts resided at the site. Such materials might demonstrate the extent to which Ellen Stuart incorporated her Piegan (Blackfoot) ancestry and its traditional culture into her family. Therefore, a more complete archeological examination may assist in reconstructing the lifeways for two groups of inhabitants and serve as a valuable comparison to the material culture remains found at the Kohrs household.

In recent decades, a sequence of ground disturbing activities including plowing, seeding, parking, and grazing at the site have threatened its archeological integrity, but the extent to which these activities have impacted the site's information potential remains unclear. Winifred Brown's 1975 assessment questioned the integrity of surface-level cultural remains and suggested that, due to grazing, plowing, seeding and parking, the arrangement of the artifacts reflected subsequent activity not related to their historic era.<sup>189</sup> However, Brown did not consider subsurface deposits. According to the 2003 Cultural Resources Information assessment, the site's archeological integrity is quite sound despite the aforementioned activities. The site's potential to yield valuable archeological information pertaining to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch and the community of Deer Lodge contributed to the assessment's recommendation for the Park Service to provide for "extensive testing and/or full mitigation by excavation" before proceeding with any construction activities.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Winifred Brown, "Parking Lot/Visitor Center Assessment," 4.

<sup>190</sup> Cultural Resource Inventory, 2003, 159.