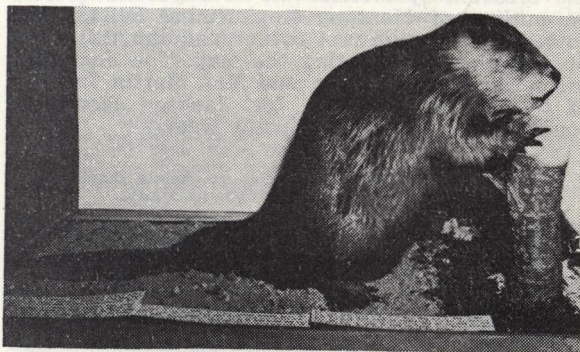


# BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MUSEUM



## DILLON, Beaverhead County, MONTANA

*Located on Montana Street, Highway 91,  
north of the Union Pacific Railroad depot*

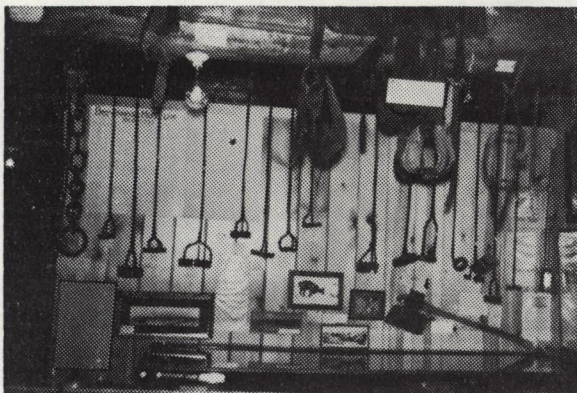


Trapped and Donated by E. W. (Ted) Renfro

This museum, a memorial to Beaverhead County's colorful past, and a symbol of the typical generosity of the average westerner in contributing toward a project that will reflect pride in preserving the traditions of his pioneer ancestors, is one of Dillon's most interesting attractions.

The City of Dillon was named for Sidney Dillon, president of the Union Pacific Railroad,





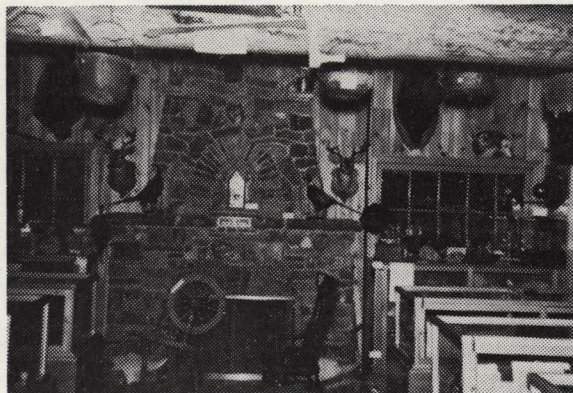
Old hand forged branding irons, typifying the beginning of the Montana cattle industry which flourishes in Beaverhead county, "The Home of the T-Bone Steak."

when the branch line "Utah & Northern" was completed to this terminal in 1880.

Dillon is nestled in the heart of Beaverhead valley and is the county seat of Beaverhead county, southern gateway into Montana. The Beaverhead river flows through the valley and just west of Dillon. The name "Beaverhead" was derived from a promontory of rocks at the north-east end of the valley resembling a beaver swimming with its head out of water, now known as Beaverhead Rock. Lewis and Clark, on their exploration trip through the valley in 1804-1805 named this the "Valley of the Beaver's Head," also the beaver, a fur-bearing animal, were said to be plentiful in the river as well as smaller streams of the valley.

An etching on glass set in the front door of the museum symbolizes the county's name with an outline of Montana emphasizing Beaverhead county in its southwest corner and the full form of a beaver surmounting the map. The door is a memorial to the late Mr. and Mrs. Martin Jackson of the Big Hole basin. Mr. Jackson served as county commissioner for many years.

Scores of relics from pioneer days are neatly displayed in modern show cases or hung from the walls.



Fireplace of native rock, a memorial to the late John and Thilda Peterson, operators of a large cattle ranch on Horse Prairie. Their brands are in mosaic of white quartz at the top of the chimney outside.

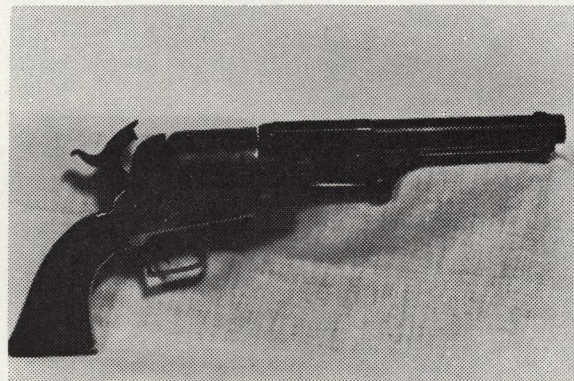
On the beam of the building shown here are two saws, a cross-cut and a rip saw, used by George D. French, pioneer carpenter of Bannack in the early 1860's, in making the coffin in which Henry Plummer, the bandit-sheriff of Bannack, was buried after being hanged by the Vigilantes.

If you are thirsty, ice cold water is available through the courtesy of Eliel's, a pioneer Dillon store, who gave an attractive drinking fountain in memory of the founders, the late Leonard, Frank, Adolph and Lambert Eliel, in 1880.

A display case showing Indian artifacts of local interest is another memorial to Byron Orr, a World War II battle casualty, while still another was placed in the museum in memory to the late Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Lossi, beloved residents and early day merchants of Wisdom.

In the museum may be seen a tangible record of Beaverhead's colorful background. There is a diverse collection of Indian artifacts, representative of the American aborigines who found wild game abundant in the area's mountains and valleys.

Henry Plummer's gun, a .44 caliber Colt. With this 4-pound weapon he is said to have been the most deadly shot in the West, firing all six shots in four seconds by fanning the hammer. After being shot through the right shoulder by Hank Crawford, he traded this gun to Peter Wilson, pioneer, for a lighter revolver.





There are relics of the mining industry, including many specimens of ore, rock and minerals, lures which swelled the tide of western immigrants in the 1860's.

Other displays include old glassware and china, guns, branding irons, forged iron implements, clocks, furniture, silverware, lamps and household articles, many brought across the plains by ox team, not to mention bones of prehistoric animals.

Also exhibited are many rare old photographs of local pioneers and notables of early day Montana. Photos depicting the mining industry at Bannack, Glendale and Argenta, including the electric gold dredge, first of its type in the world, which operated on Grasshopper creek in the 1890's.

Enumeration of all the interesting objects would fill many pages but the opportunity to visually picture the manner in which the early settlers of the Treasure State rounded out their daily life is noted in what has been assembled to their memory.

Located in the heart of Montana's earliest explorations, Beaverhead county was first visited by white men when Lewis and Clark came up the river by canoe and portage in 1805. From that time on there was an infiltration of Hudson Bay trappers, missionaries and gold seekers.

The famed western adventurers James and Granville Stuart wintered with the Indians in 1848 near the present site of Dillon awaiting the settlement of the Mormons in Utah.

The first white population attracted to Beaverhead county followed the discovery of gold along Grasshopper creek in 1862 and the subsequent founding of Bannack, 21 miles southwest of Dillon. This mining settlement, now a "ghost town," was named Bannack after the Bannock Indians. It is now a state park, visited by thousands each year.

The Territory of Montana was created in 1864 with Bannack as its first capital. Beaverhead county was created a year later and Dillon became the county seat shortly after it was founded in 1880.

The Grasshopper "diggin's," (miner's parlance for mines) brought honest, industrious and fearless men to the region but also their parasites, the unscrupulous "road agents," whose robberies, holdups and murders are unparalleled in the history of the west.

As gold mining progressed, hundreds of fortunes being panned from the creeks, Beaverhead's ranching and agricultural resources were recognized and in 1864, the first cattle were trailed in from California to wax fat on the lush wild native hay. The livestock industry proved profitable and five years later the first band of sheep, trailed from Oregon, grazed on the rich grass lands.

*"A people that take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants."*

*—Macaulay*