

Plucky Butte Girls

The Butte Daily Post

October 25, 1911

That homesteading in Montana is a picnic of hard work is attested to by Miss Marion Green and her younger sister, two lady stenographers of this city who filed on homesteads in Fergus county last spring and stayed on their holdings this year till the early part of this month.

While visiting in Lewistown, the young women heard of a couple of desirable locations that were open to filing, and with the assistance and counsel of friends proceeded to live the simple life of the rancher. The first of March they left Lewistown and went by stage to Musselshell, a distance of 50 miles, then to Flat Willow in a neighbor's wagon and the rest of the way, seven miles, on horseback to their ranch. These ranches are seven miles from Winnett, and 75 miles from Lewistown.

The girls secured the services of a halfbreed to build them a cabin. In the way of a laborer this was the best they could do, and were it not for the fact that the elder of the two girls was a pretty good manager and financier, the half-breed would have made good as a lawyer in getting money away from his clients. As it was he succeeded in getting all that the building of the cabin was worth. Miss Marion's cabin was built first and made of logs. The aboriginal architect wanted to charge \$100 and have the girls furnish the materials and board him while building was in progress.

With the natural antipathy for hard work and long hours characteristic of his race, Miss Marion tells that if she got breakfast for him at 6 o'clock he would never get to work before 9, and if she waited to get his breakfast at 8 o'clock he would be sure to be back for dinner at 9, so their hardest work for the month that he was building the 10x12 shack was to see that her carpenter stayed on the job. She and her sister had the time of their lives keeping the Indian at work.

But the cabin was finally finished and the two girls moved in. They had their furniture, which consisted of two stoves, two tables, two beds, dishes, chairs and everything for the furnishings of two cabins, for there was another one to be built on another homestead as soon as they could succeed in getting a white carpenter. The cost of getting the furniture to the ranch and getting settled in their cabins was nearly \$200.

Eventually the second cabin was started, and this one was made of lumber and built by a white man. The log cabin cost in the neighborhood of \$88; the lumber or board shack about \$55.

The log cabin, which is the smaller of the two, boasts of an upstairs, which Miss Marion uses as a storeroom, and is about 10 rods distant from that of her sister, so that visiting back and forth was an easy matter* for the two girls during their stay there.

Their wood they hauled, sawed and split themselves. There was no other way of getting it, so they went to the streams about a mile away and carried it home.

All the water they used they had to carry a mile, and when the weather got warm they were unable to use the water from the streams, so they finally bought a horse and two water bottles. Then they had to go horseback to a mountain spring six miles away, and all summer carried the water this distance. Their groceries and meats were

all brought from Winnett during their stay there. They went once a week for their mail to Winnett.

When they finally succeeded in getting their gardens plowed and each girl had an acre, it was May 6, and every one in the vicinity had finished plowing and seeding before they could get any one to do theirs. This did not ~ disconcert them, however, and when they had their plowing done they started in at their gardening themselves. They planted cabbage seeds in boxes in the early part of May. Their potatoes, which were ready for digging in July, took the premium as the finest in the section.

They had all the carrots, onions, peas, beans, turnips, rhubarb, corn, horseradish, citron, cucumbers, squash, popcorn, tomatoes and flowers they could use- They go into raptures over their flowers, but modestly tell that the tomatoes didn't ripen and neither did the popcorn. They pickled the green tomatoes and had everything they wanted in the way of vegetables all summer. When asked what they did in the way of watering them, they said "Oh, it was all dry farming except the dishwater and the scrubbing and wash water. It was hard enough to carry water six miles for these purposes, not to think of carrying water for irrigation."

They dug a root house and put away all the vegetables they hadn't used, to have them in the spring for seeding.

"Did you have a well dug?" was asked.

"Mercy, no; we tried to do this ourselves. You see we had no pick, so we used an axe and a shovel. We started it five feet square and dug it eight feet deep. That was as far as we could go and throw the dirt up out of it. We used a ladder and chopped the ground up, because it was hard and we could not get it loose with the shovel. Then when we got down too far to throw the dirt over our heads we put an egg box in the bottom of it and stood on that to shovel. Then it got too deep for us even with the box and we left it till next spring. We will finish it then."

"What would you have done if you had struck water?"

"My goodness, don't you know we were scared to death of that all the time we were digging?"

"Why, you were looking for water, weren't you?"

"Sure I But we were afraid of our lives that at any minute we might strike it and it would come rushing in and drown the two of us," and their eyes bulged out in fright at the mere thought of the well.

There is one thing about it though, and that is if there are any bachelor homesteaders who can do better than digging a well with an axe and a shovel, they are doing some good work.

"Are your ranches fenced?" was the query.

"No, not yet. We planted 20 acres of turkey red wheat this fall and next year we will try to fence it. Then after we commute we may rent it out on shares."

"Thon you didn't take it up to sell or for speculation?"

"Oh, no, indeed. We are going to hang onto those ranches."

"Were you never afraid to stay off there by yourselves?"

“Oh, no. We had no neighbors and never any bother from prowlers. We had visitors nearly every Sunday, as the ranchers and the cow punchers often came that way. Then, of course, there were those who would get hungry occasionally, and as they were always looking for bronchos, according to their story, we had callers often who conveniently dropped around about dinner time and made the next farm house for supper. One fellow came one Sunday and we didn’t ask him for dinner, so he came back the next Sunday and brought three others with him. We had just had dinner and they said they hadn’t had breakfast yet. We got them lunch and charged them 35 cents each, and were never bothered with them again.”

With the planting of some of their acreage to wheat, these two enterprising young women have started on the right road and they say they are going to stay with the ranches till they have the whole thing producing.

They have a horse, a dog and a cat, and these are left with neighbors till spring. The younger girl was given a dog and cat when they went on the farm early in the spring. One evening the dog got lonesome and went back to town. The girl cried after him—of course she doesn’t want this told—and some one gave her another pup. This one remained and the cat and dog, with the horse, will go back to prove up on the ranch early in the coming spring.

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The Butte Daily Post (Montana), October 25, 1911. <mthspublic.newspapers.com>

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