

Transcription of handwritten letter of 13 February 1972 from Roy Bandy to James Thigpenn

Transcribed by Glenn Borckenhagen on 03 November 2018

Helena Feb 13 '72

Dear Jimmy: -

The enclosed picture is a photograph of a 21 x 30" oil painting I have over my fire place. The painting is [from?] an enlarged Kodak picture I made of my survey camp at an over-night stop on the summit of the Big Horn Mts. while enroute from one job to another. It was in August 1912 at an elevation of 9560 feet. Another wagon and the horses to the right are not shown.

My Wife, Inez was cook, we had not been married very long. She is frying ruffed grouse for breakfast. My brother Willis, far left, killed as we traveled along an old trail that is "nobody knows how old". The old trail probably was originally made by buffalo and indians traveling from summer range to winter feeding grounds in prairie country of eastern Montana. None of us had ever been in that country before. We were picking our way, following directions given by sheep men. The only wagons to travel it had been sheep men, and they only went as far as the state line. The Crow Indian Reservation lay on the Montana side, so we were on our own in finding a way off the mountains down into the Little Big Horn river valley. It was rough and precipitous. It was nearing sundown as we approached that campsite, and the big snow bank offered the first water we had seen for our over-night camp. A small amount trickled for a ways below the crusted snow.

As soon as the wagons stopped every one began to get supper started, - unload the cook stove, get fire wood, dig food from boxes, peel potatoes, cut ham, wipe dust off the dishes from the cupboard in the back of the wagon. This accounts for the clutter of pots and pans scattered about.

A tent was set up for Inez, others slept out under the star-studded dome.

Soon the smell of frying ham and boiling coffee wafted on the breeze.

The next morning the creek was dry, and ice was on the water pails I had filled the evening before! The horses, turned loose to graze during the night had no water until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

I was prompted to snap the picture of the early morning as I stood waiting for Inez to cook breakfast. I had no thought of preserving a scene of historical value. I wanted only to preserve the beautiful scene.

I have known you only a short time, but our short talk over at Kalispell convinced me that you enjoy many things I do, and we speak the same language about finding all Survey corners and the like, and most likely you have had many camp scenes your family remembers. So I thought you would enjoy having this picture for your collection.

Yours truly
Roy