

Alexander Louis Demers

In the Pacific Northwest in 1879

Chalk Courchane

The Demers family was mercantile store owners on the Flathead Reservation and, Alex Demers' half-brother T. J. Demers was the founder of Demersville, Montana.

Alexander Louis Demers was born in Montreal, La Prairie, Roussillon, Québec, Canada, October 16, 1849. "His father, Louis Demers, was born and reared in Canada and resided there during his entire lifetime. In his younger days he was engaged in farming in the vicinity of Montreal, but later turned his attention to the contracting business. His wife, whose maiden name was Henrietta Durancean, was likewise a native of Canada and they were married near Montreal. He died in 1885 at the age of eighty-three years, and she passed away in 1893 at the age of seventy-nine years. They were the parents of eight children. A History of Montana, by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, 1913, Volume II pp 1138-9. Alexander was the oldest of eight siblings. Gretchen Metz

"In the public schools of Montreal Mr. Demers obtained his early educational training and while at school he learned bookkeeping, which occupation he followed generally until he left home. He earned his first money as a boy working in a dry-goods store in Montreal. He started in as cash boy but at the end of three months was put behind the counter as salesman. His salary at the start was seven dollars per month and this sum he handed over intact to his mother. He remained at home until he had reached his legal majority and then came to the United States, locating first in the city of Chicago, where he worked for two years in a real-estate office, and going thence to the southern part of the country, stopping at different towns and following various occupations for the ensuing year, at the end of which he returned to Montreal. He remained in his home place for the next six years and during a part of that time was engaged in the grocery business, later turning his attention to contracting. Many fine buildings in Montreal stand as a monument to his handiwork." A History of Montana, by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, 1913, Volume II pp 1138-9.

"On leaving home the second time he went to Colorado, where he was clerk for a railroad company for one year, at the expiration of which, in [1879] he came to Montana."

Demers opened his first general store in Arlee in 1879. He soon left the management of the Arlee store to his brother Hector and open a second store in St. Ignatius. After Hector died in 1889, A.L. sold the Arlee store to Alex Dow. In 1902, Demers sold the St. Ignatius store to George Beckwith. Prior to that, Demers shared ownership of the store with Marion Prideaux. In 1942, Walter H. McLeod became president of the remaining Demers store in Arlee."

<http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv65853>, University of Montana-Missoula, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections [The Beckwith Mercantile Company was founded in St. Ignatius, Mont., by George Beckwith in 1902. A Canadian, George Beckwith came to St. Ignatius from Missoula in 1902 and bought the general store from Alexander Demers. Beckwith also established grain elevators in St. Ignatius and Ravalli and the Beckwith Restaurant in St. Ignatius. Beckwith's store had the first telephone in St. Ignatius. George Beckwith was the first mayor of St. Ignatius when it incorporated in 1938. <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/collection/data/58037900>]

[“Alex Dow, post trader and dealer in general merchandise, Arlee, Montana, was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, March 2, 1862, and is a son of Alex and Ellen Harris Dow, the former a native of Beauharnois, Canada, and the latter of Herefordshire, England, who when a child came with her parents to America and settled in Nauvoo, Illinois; they subsequently removed to Salt Lake City.

The parents of Alex Dow, Sr., lived and died in Canada. At the age of 11 years young Alex ran away from home and went to St. Louis, where he lived until the breaking out of the Mexican war, when he enlisted and marched and fought with the victorious armies of our country during that struggle Chapultepec being the last battle in which he participated. He was discharged near Fort Bridger and soon after began riding the pony express, which he followed for several years. In 1861 he was married to Ella Harris and three years later moved to Virginia City, Montana, and engaged in placer mining, meeting with only moderate success. During the winter of 1864-65 he settled in Deer Lodge and in the spring located near Frenchtown, and engaged in farming until 1881, when he moved to the Bitter Root valley, residing there until 1890, when he joined his son, Alex at Arlee, where he remained until his death, January 17, 1891, at the age of sixty-nine.

Mrs. Dow, the mother, is still living and resides with her son. Of five children all but Alex are deceased. He was but two years old when his parents located in Virginia City, and but four when they settled near Frenchtown. Here in the primitive schools, he received a rudimentary education. Schools were few and far between, scholars were few and scarce, young Alex and his sister sometimes represented the numerical status of their school. Subsequently he was privileged to attend a night school and thus terminated his school days. At the age of nineteen years he began herding cattle and assisted in driving herds to the railroads for shipment. Early in 1883, he opened a grocery store in Frenchtown, during the construction of the railroad at that place, but the business not proving congenial he disposed of it. His next venture was in horses. In the spring of 1884 he took a large drove into Canada on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, this trip being successful and occupying his time for two years. In the spring of 1886 he settled in Thompson Falls, engaging in the butchering business and handling cattle until 1889, in the spring of which year he purchased A.L. Demer's trading post at Arlee, where he has since done a profitable business.” History of Montana: 1739-1885 A History of Its Discovery and Settlement, 1885, Warner, Beers & Company, page 317.]

Alex is the half-brother of Telesphore Jacques DeMers and brother of Hector DeMers. Hector Demers resided in Arlee, Montana and was accidentally killed in a railroad car collision in the Arlee yard in 1909. He was the Arlee merchant and postmaster. He was buried in Frenchtown, Montana.

“Alex Demers of Frenchtown, arrived in Helena last evening and this morning started for Montreal, Quebec.” Helena weekly herald, November 13, 1879

“Alex,” as he is familiarly called by his large circle of friends and acquaintances started in business in St. Ignatius mission in 1880.” His store contained a large stock of general merchandise that included dry and furnishing goods, hardware, groceries, provisions, saddlery, boots and shoes, and produce. He also had a hotel of two stories that was 30x30 feet. “Alex Demers had built a rooming house in 1895 back of the store he later sold to George Beckwith.” Early Days by Miss Beaver, “Mission Hotel” luxurious accommodations in 1911, Mission Valley News.

He left St. Ignatius in 1902 to move to Missoula and started a harness and saddle shop. In 1907 he moved again to the Flathead Reservation to Arlee and opened a mercantile store. He was postmaster for twenty-five years, part of the time in the Flathead country and four years at Arlee. He owned a large ranch located three and one-half miles distant from Arlee. He was on the school board, and a member of Fraternal Order of Elks.

“Married
Demers-Lambert

At Flathead Agency, M.T. October 8, 1880 Alexander Demers to Grace Eugenie Lambert.” Helena Weekly Herald, October 28, 1880, page 7.

“Mr. Demers was married at the Agency, in January of 1881 [this seems to be off a few months!], to Grace E. Lambert, who was born and reared at St. Paul, Minnesota, and who is a daughter of Judge Lambert, formerly of St. Paul, Minnesota. Seven children have been born to this union and concerning them the following data are here incorporated: One died when two years old; Grace E. married W. H. Yost and resides in Butte, Montana; Louis A. is associated with his father in business at Arlee; he is also notary public and United States commissioner; Eugene L. is engaged

in bookkeeping at Butte; Alice married O. V. McIntire and resides at Arlee, Mr. McIntire being a clerk and interested in the Demers Mercantile Company; Florence B. is a fine artist and has painted some beautiful pictures; she resides at home with her parents; Lambert L. is attending school.” A History of Montana, by Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, 1913, Volume II pp 1138-9. “I also have an oil painting of a mountain stream by Grace DeMers Yost.” Robert McIntire Louis DeMers was born June 28, 1883 in St. Ignatius, Montana and died May 1, 1970. His last residence was in Arlee, Montana.
<http://www.locateancestors.com/louis-demers/>

Grace Eugenie Lambert Demers was born in 1860 and died in 1918.

Alex Demers was a musician as was every member of his family. His daughters were very good artists. “Alexander and Grace had several children, Florence, Eugene, Grace, Alice and others.” Gretchen_Metz, October 6, 2003 DeMers Connection [Gretchen Metz, daughter of Harriette DeMers Rowe] “One of his children was Alice Demers (I think she didn't capitalize the M) who married O.V. McIntire; she was tragically killed in a car-train collision in the mid-1920s along with two of her children. My father, Edward McIntire, survived. Alice was my grandmother.” Illinimac68, March 29, 2009. Oliver V. McIntire came to Montana in 1908. He was head of the Pablo Mercantile Company in Pablo, Montana. He was born in Oakland, Illinois on September 23, 1888, son of John Edward McIntire and Elsie Allen. He was worked at the Demers store in Arlee as a clerk for seven years. After living in Ronan he moved to Pablo to start the Pablo store. He and Alice had three children: Virginia (1913), Jean (1915) and Edward Alexander (1918). Montana Its Story and Biography: A History of Aboriginal and Territorial Montana and Three Decades of Statehood, edited by Tom Stout, Volume II, American Historical Society, 1921, pages 525-526.

“At the celebration of the feast of St. Ignatius, held July 31, 1884, Charlo, the head chief of the confederated tribes of the Flathead nation, not being present, the command and direction of the Indians on this occasion was shared by Michell, Arlee, Battice and *Joseph*, who maintained the best of order through their regularly organized police soldiers. Among the notables present were Michell, chief of the Pen d'Oreilles; Joseph, son of the grand chief of the Calispels, and the head captain of the police soldiers; Battice, acting chief of the Pen d'Oreilles and captain of the police soldiers; Arlee, chief of the Agency band of Indians. Representatives from the distant Flatheads, Kootenays, Pen d'Oreilles and Calispels were present. Also the Rt. Rev. J. B. Brondel, bishop of Helena, the Rev. Father Catalda, Superior General of the order of Jesuits in the Rocky mountains; the Revs. Van Gorp, Palladino, Bandini, Tremblay, Guidi, and Dols. Among the visitors were Major Ronan, agent of the Flatheads; Thomas A. Tutt, wife and two daughters and niece from St. Louis ; Mr. Post, from St. Louis ; Mrs. Joseph Murphy and her daughter Eva and two sons from St. Louis; Colonel Charles D. Curtis and wife and children, Major Robert C. Walker, U. S. A., and Miss Helen Galen, of Helena; Mrs. Jack Demers and Raphael Bisson, of Frenchtown ; Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Demers, Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Lambert, of the reservation, Mr. Baird, and others.” History of Montana: 1739-1885 A History of Its Discovery and Settlement, 1885, Warner, Beers & Company,

“Harry A. Lambert, formerly resident of Helena for a number of years, and lately bookkeeper for Caplice, Smith & Co., of Missoula, has purchased an interest in the mercantile business of Alex Demers of St. Ignatius mission. We trust the new firm will do a rushing business.” Helena Weekly Herald, November 30, 1882, Page 7

“Miss Alice Shawe, of St. Paul, niece of Hon. John S. Prince, of that city, passed through Helena on the west bound train last evening en route to St. Ignatius mission, where she will spend a few weeks with Mr. and Mrs. Alex Demers.” Helena Weekly Herald, June 17, 1886, page 8.

FLATHEAD FESTIVITIES.

Over 1,000 Indians Participate in the Celebration of St. Ignatius Day at the Mission.
Ceremonies at the Reception of the Papal Ablegate A Sermon in Kalispel.

Every year the 31st of July, the feast of St. Ignatius is celebrated on an extensive scale at the St. Ignatius Mission on the Flathead Indian reservation, and the tribes who have felt the civilizing and christianizing influence of the Mission congregate there on that day in great numbers to attend the church services and participate in other exercises. This year the celebration was postponed until the Sunday following the feast, and accordingly yesterday saw the customary services conducted. The peculiar interest of these proceedings draws annually a crowd of visitors to the Mission, and last Saturday night the following parties boarded the west bound train at Helena, bound for the Flathead reserve :

Monsignore Straniero, the Pope's ablegate, Rt. Rev. Bishop Brondel, Rev. C. Pauwelyn, Mrs. D. W. Fisk, Surveyor General Greene, Samuel W. Langhorne, Maj. R. C. Walker, J. G. Sanders, J. U. Sanders, J. E. Hendry, J. S. Keerl, W. E. Sanders, J. B. Walker.

A GLORIOUS SUNRISE.

Arriving next morning at Ravalli, a station on the Northern Pacific 162 miles west of Helena, the clerical travelers were met by Rev. L. B. Palladino, who had conveyances in abundance to transport the whole party to the Mission. At the early hour of 5:30 in the morning the drive of five miles was commenced. The road stretched over a low divide in the mountains and as the party reached its summit a matchless view was accorded them. The towering peaks of the Mission range, rising five or six thousand feet above the valley, were in full view, though the early hour of the day and a slight fog made them appear but gigantic masses of dark purple in the dim distance. The sharp outlines of their craggy summits were clearly defined against the sky which was already assuming a roseate tint from the advance shoots of the rays of the rising sun, and just as the travelers reached a point from which an unobstructed view was obtainable the glorious luminary peeped from behind a beetling crag on one of the topmost peaks, rose inch by inch until it cleared the summit and burst upon the landscape magnificently brilliant, sending its rays across the valley, dispelling the mist that hung in the air and with its searching radiance penetrating the defiles of the mountains, disclosing to the view escarpments and gorges in their rugged sides that were a moment before wrapped in impenetrable obscurity. It was a glorious sunrise, and such a one as only Montana can produce.

AT THE MISSION.

Arriving at the Mission the residents were found in expectation of the arrival of the Monsignore and the Bishop. From the portals of the church rows of evergreens formed a long avenue down which the

dignitaries proceeded to a bower of pines where the Bishop vested for the morning service. On either side of the avenue over 1,000 Indians were ranged in two lines, their persons reverentially disposed in a kneeling posture with faces toward the procession. Their large number, peculiar dress, respectful attitude and systematic arrangement produced lasting impressions upon the minds of those who witnessed the novel spectacle.

The vast congregation of aborigines followed the Bishop into the old Mission church, a large building erected in 1856 by Father DeSmet, and there mass was celebrated, the Indians meanwhile reciting their prayers aloud in the Kalispel tongue. At the close of the service the Indians, to the number of 600, approached the altar and received Holy Communion. There are about 1,600 Indians on the reservation and they are all Catholics.

A SERMON IN KALISPEL.

Later in the day, at 10 o'clock, the celebration of high mass was commenced. Monsignore Straniero officiating. These services lasted about two hours and a half and were unusually interesting. Bishop

Brondel preached an eloquent sermon in English and between periods the words of the discourse were translated and delivered in the Kalispel tongue by Father Guidi for the benefit of the Indians. The Father

must be very proficient in the language, for he translated and spoke the sentences in Indian as fast as the Bishop pronounced them in English.

At the end of the mass the Bishop administered the sacrament of confirmation to about 100 Indian boys, girls, men and women. At the conclusion of this ceremony the Monsignore gave his blessing to the Indians and the congregation dispersed. Throughout the service a choir of Indian girls, taught by the Sisters of Charity, who have a convent at the Mission, sang the different numbers of the mass music and between whiles a brass band of fifteen instruments, played entirely by Indian boys, rendered difficult selections in a surprising manner. The degree of civilization, education and accomplishment, to which the Indian girls and boys have been brought by the noble efforts of the Sisters and the Fathers is astonishing to all and would open the eyes of those who believe there is no good in the Indian and no possibility of reclaiming him from a state of barbarism.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

In the afternoon a programme of exercises was conducted by the Indian girls and boys of the Mission schools, that gave fair evidence of what the American native can accomplish by means

properly imparted instruction. It consisted of vocal and instrumental music, dialogues, readings and the other usual features of a school exhibition. To the credit of the participants as well as of their learned instructors it must be said that they were all admirably rendered. In the college the fathers are training and educating about 140 Indian boys, and at the convent the sisters here in charge 80 Indian girls, the pupils ranging in age from tenderest childhood to young man and womanhood. The boys are taught all the branches of a useful education and are likewise many of them trained in different trades, many articles of their own workmanship attesting their proficiency in carpentering, blacksmithing, tinning, harness and saddle making several of them, also are apt type setters. The girls, besides the branches of a plain education, are taught the additional accomplishments of music, painting, sewing and cooking. Both boys and girls likewise study the classics and foreign languages. There is really no limit to the attainments within their reach. The opposition of the parents, however, to education renders it difficult to keep the children at school any length of time. This is one of the greatest obstacles the missionaries have to meet, yet by their unflinching zeal and the good results of their past teachings, yearly becoming more and more evident, they are successfully combatting this prejudice which must eventually be overcome.

THE MISSION ITSELF.

Even without the exercises of yesterday the mission itself furnishes a prolific theme for descriptive articles. The hospitable fathers will show the visitor the log house where Father De Smet lived when the mission was established 40 years ago, the huge barn that was erected in the early days when long transportation made the nails in it alone cost \$500, the well preserved church, built in 1850, the first house of worship in Montana, the large and handsome college building, where the boys are educated, the shops where they work at trades—and other numerous objects interesting either on account of past or present uses, while the kind hearted sisters will tell him of their labors in the early days, compare habitation then with the present three story convent, show him an orchard full of trees laden with apples and plums and set before him at table the most delicious berries and fruits, grown in their own yard and preserved in their own culinary department, exhibit the accomplishment of their Indian pupils—in a word, make the hours fly in entertaining conversation and interesting sightseeing. One should visit the Mission and see all for himself.

HOSTS AND GUESTS.

The Helena party were royally entertained at the Mission. Fathers Palladino, Guidi, D Aste and Bendini vied with each other in showing them around and performing constant acts of courtesy, even to the extent of dining the whole number beneath their hospitable roof and notwithstanding the hearty appetites of the visitors there were spring chickens enough for all! To the sisters, too, they were beholden for many kind attentions, and Mr. and Mrs. Alex. Demers, who reside at the Mission, tilled the cup of welcome to overflowing by entertaining them at their own house. Besides the Helena people already enumerated, the following visitors were in attendance: Major

Ronan, the Flathead agent, and Mrs. Ronan, their niece and nephew, Miss Annie Carter and Mr. Carter, Mrs. Dr. Tremblay, of Massachusetts, Mr. and Mrs. Alex. Demers, of the Mission, and Miss Alice M. Shawe, a fair guest of theirs from St. Paul, Mrs. Cogan, Mr. Sterling and Mr. Adams, of Missoula.

The Helena party returned this morning with the exception of Monsignore Straniero, Bishop Brondel and Mr. J. S. Keerl. The Monsignore was to leave this morning for Portland, the Bishop to-night for Helena, and Mr. Keerl was to remain a few days to visit McDonald's Peak, Flathead Lake and other points famed for their beauty of landscape.

INDIAN CHIEFTAINS.

There were six different tribes of Indians represented at the Mission yesterday, as follows : Kalispel, Pen d'Oreille, Flathead, Kootenai, Blackfeet and Cree. The following distinguished aboriginal princes : were likewise in attendance : Arlee, chief of the Agency Indians ; Michael, chief of the Flatheads, and Baptist, chief of the Mission Indians." *Helena weekly herald. volume, August 5, 1886, Page 7*

"St. Ignatius Day (at St. Ignatius Mission on the Flathead Reservation)

RECEIVING VISITORS.

The Mission has always a hearty welcome for the strangers within her gates. The fathers and sisters dispense hospitality in a bountiful manner and charge themselves with entertaining all who may visit them. Mr. Alex. DeMers, store keeper at the Mission, and his estimable wife also have at St. Ignatius a comfortable and hospitable home, within whose precincts they entertain visiting friends with a lavish hospitality never surpassed. Among the guests at the Mission yesterday, who enjoyed the hospitalities, were: Bishop Brondel, Father Lindesmith, army chaplain at Fort Keogh, Father Cataldo, Superior of the Jesuits in the Northwest, Father Buchard, the eminent missionary of San Francisco, Mrs. General Meagher, of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Daly and C. M. Connell, of Butte ; F. W. Gilbert, Superintendent of the Rocky Mountain division N. P. E. R., and wife, Thomas Williams, Treasurer of Missoula county, wife and brother, Hon. R. A. Eddy and wife of Missoula, Mr. Creighton, of the Murphy-Worden Company, Missoula, Maj. Peter Ronan, Indian Agent for the Flatheads, accompanied by his wife and children and Miss Isabel Clarke, Mr. Adams, clerk at the Jocko agency, C. P. Connolly, of Helena, and representatives of the Helena press. There were others from the neighboring towns, and altogether the gathering of visitors was unusually large. They all enjoyed the day and witnessed the various exercises with great interest." *Helena Weekly Herald. (Helena, Mont.), August 4, 1887, page 2*

"I well remember my first look of the beautiful lake [Flathead]. I left Missoula on March 3, 1888, drove to the St. Ignatius Mission, where we stayed that night with Alex Demers, general merchant of that point. The view of the Mission Range, the most picturesque range of mountains in the state of Montana, was simply wonderful, with McDonald glacier showing plainly from all angles. We drove next morning northerly along the foothills of the Mission Range to the foot of Flathead river at the top of the ridge and looked down on the lake, I was enchanted; it resembled enormous emerald setting in a ladies ring and I

immediately shouted, "Eureka," this is the spot have been looking for", and I still here, nearly 38 years in one valley." The Pioneers, Sam E. Johns, 1943, volume 9, page 71 "Kul is pel" Dec. 21, 1925, G. F. Stannard.

"Missoula People

Alex Demers and J.E. Clifford of Demersville left here on Tuesday for a short trip Anaconda, Butte and Helena." The Anaconda Standard, November 16, 1890, Page 6

"Alex Demers the Demersville brick manufacturer was a visitor to Missoula on Wednesday." The Helena Independent, June 7, 1891, Morning, Page 2

"Alex Demers was in from St. Ignatius mission on Friday." The Anaconda standard, July 12, 1891, Page 6

"Alex Demers of St. Ignatius mission, spending a few days in the Garden City." The Anaconda Standard, July 16, 1893, Page 6

"Personal Mention

Mrs. W. B. Parsons and family have returned from an extended camping trip to Flathead lake. They left Missoula on Aug. 6 and joined the family of Alex Demers. Tents were pitched at the foot of the lake. Later they were joined by the Misses Alice and Louise Hathaway. Miss Anna Brooke of Helena, and Harry B. Parsons, and his cousin, Bert Smith of Missoula. Several members of the party are greatly increased in avoirdupois, and report a pleasant and enjoyable time generally." The Anaconda Standard, September 24, 1895, Page 6

"Missoula News

Alex Demers of St. Ignatius mission, is making a business visit in town." The Anaconda Standard, March 18, 1896, Morning, Page 10

"Missoula News.

Missoula, March 22. Alex Demers and Alex Dow are in town from the reservation." The Anaconda Standard., March 23, 1896, Morning, Page 10

"Missoula Notes

Alex Demers came in from St. Ignatius mission to-day on a business trip." The Anaconda Standard, Sunday Morning, February 6, 1898, page 10.

"Missoula Notes

Alex Demers of St. Ignatius is in town on business." The Anaconda Standard, March 5, 1898, Morning, Page 10

“Personals

Alex Demers and children are down from the reservation and will visit friends for a few days,”
The Anaconda Standard, July 1, 1899, Morning, Page 12

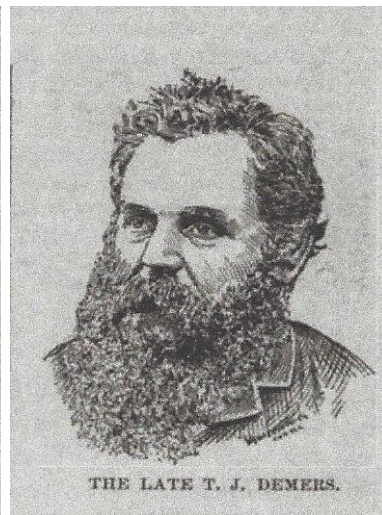
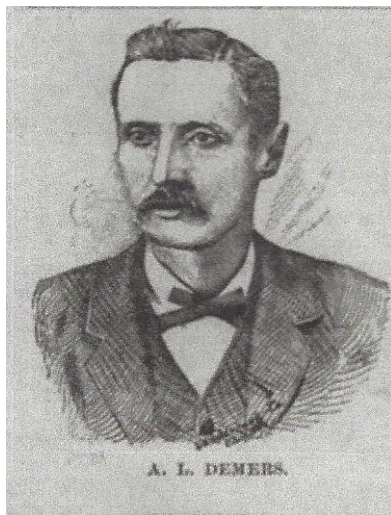
“Personals

Alex Demers is visiting in the city from his home at Arle (sic).
The Anaconda Standard, July 17, 1899, Morning, Page 12

“LOUIS BROOKS DROWNED.

Endeavored to Swim a River but Lost His Life.

Missoula, Nov. 21.-Harry A. Lambert has received from Alex Demers at St. Ignatius mission information of the accidental drowning of Louis Brooks in the Pend d'Oreille river. Joe McDonald brought the news to the mission. McDonald, Brooks and others were driving cattle and had got the herd across the river at the ferry above the mouth of the Jocko. After the cattle were across McDonald and the others took their horses down to the ford for a crossing for themselves, but Brooks took the bridle from his horse and started to swim at the point where the cattle had been crossed. His horse went down at the first jump and Brooks disappeared at the same time and did not show up again above water. His companions sprang into the stream to seize him in case he rose, but they waited in vain. Brooks had been cautioned about trying to swim the river at that point, but he did not heed the advice.” The Anaconda Standard., November 22, 1899, Morning, Page 12

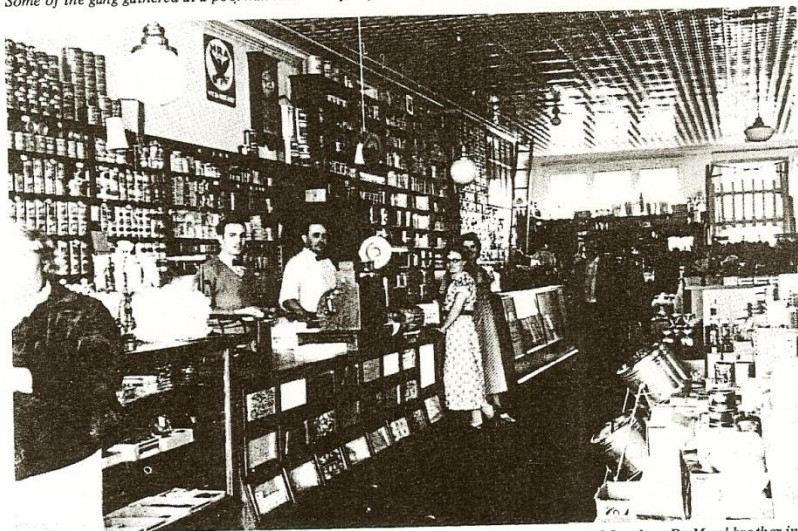


“There is a Native American connection with Alex deMer's half brother, he married a Blackfoot Indian woman and they had at least 2 sons, who became attorneys, I think. Their father was T. J. (Jacque) DeMers.” Gretchen Metz

“The Demers Mercantile Company Ledger contains entries of purchases and credits at the St. Ignatius store from 1881-1883. Customers listed in the ledger include Major Peter Ronan, Charles Allard, Sisters of Providence, and many members of the McDonald and Finlay families.”
University of Montana, Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections



Some of the gang gathered at a pool hall in the early days. Can you recognize any of the faces?



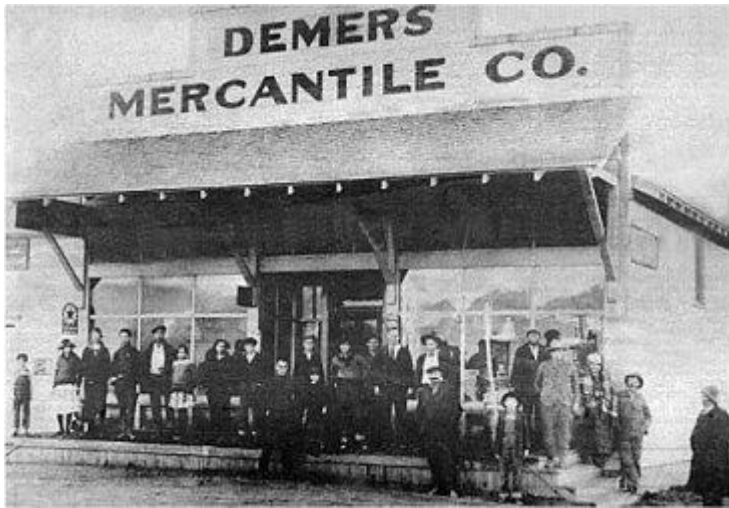
Basil Dellinger worked for De Mers Mercantile for many years. Harry Bouch, Louie and Lambert De Mers' brother-in-law, was co-owner and operator.



Harry Bouch and Pablo Espinoza, Sr., in front of DeMers Mercantile Company.



VARIOUS GOOD OLD BOYS pose in front of the old De Mers Mercantile in Arlee when it was the growing town's chief store and largest business. That device at the left is a modern addition — a gasoline pump.



Purchased from Four Winds Trading Post (\$12.00) From DeMers Estate, Arlee, Montana

“The St. Ignatius merchant, Alex L. Demers has come to Missoula on a brief visit to his family, who now reside on East Front Street.” Daily Inter Mountain, Butte, Montana, April 12, 1901, Page 8

“COW MORTGAGE EXCLUDES CALF
IF THE CALF WAS BORN AFTER THE MORTGAGE.
A VERY NOVEL DECISION

Supreme Court of Montana Holds That Mortgage for a Cow Doesn't Include Calves Born After Signing of Mortgage Unless so Agreed.

Helena, Dec. 28.--A novel point, raised for the first time in Montana, was passed upon by the supreme court then it held that a chattel mortgage on certain cows does not cover their calves, in gestation at the time the mortgage was executed, but born prior to foreclosure; there being no reference in the mortgage to the increase of the cows.

The point was raised in the case of Alexander L. Demere against Davis Graham, as sheriff of Missoula county, Alexander Morrigeau, James Sloan and M. H. Prideaux. Graham holds in his possession \$600, the proceeds of 87 calves sold by him under a stipulation that he should hold the proceeds until the final determination of the action.

The Dispute.

The plaintiff claimed the money because he held a chattel mortgage on the mothers of the calves at the time they were born. The appellant, Prideaux, claimed the money because of the sale of the calves to him by Sloan, the mortgagor, after the sheriff had seized them, but before he sold the calves and the plaintiff's mortgage.

The district court of Missoula sustained the demurrer of the plaintiff to the defendant's (Prideaux) answer, and in default of further pleadings by Prideaux, entered judgment for the plaintiff. Prideaux appealed.” The Billings Gazette, December 31, 1907

“The opinion was given in connection with the Missoula County case Alexander L. Demere.”
The River Press, (Fort Benton, Montana), January 1, 1908

“Local Society

Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Demers accompanied their daughters, Misses Florence and Alice Demers returned on Monday afternoon to their home at Arlee, after a brief sojourn in the Garden City.”
The Daily Missoulian, December 21, 1909, Morning, Page 12

“GOVERNMENT SELLS LOTS TODAY
OWNERS OF LAND IN FLATHEAD TOWNS ARRIVE TO PROVE UP ON PROPERTY.

Addison M. Sterling of Ronan, Frank L. Worden of Ravalli, Alex L. Demers of Arlee and others of the present residents of the townsites on the Flathead reservation, are in Missoula for the purpose of proving upon the two lots to which they are entitled under the government regulations before the auction sale. There will be a good many of the lots taken up in this way and these locators will have their rights protected before the sale. The prospective bidders in the open sale are not well represented this morning in the reservation crowd which is in town, but it is expected that most of the buyers will be here by tomorrow morning. One of those who came last night, when asked if there was any indication of a spirited contest for the lots said: "I have not heard of many bidders, but there are some of the lots which are specially desired by persons for one purpose or another and these will probably make lively bidding when the sale opens." The Daily Missoulian, November 15, 1909, Morning, Page 4

"Louis Demers of Arlee, spent Tuesday in the Mission in connection with organizing the Society of North American Indians." The Ronan Pioneer, December 15, 1911

"The mayor stated that Alex Demers had paid no to the first communication sent by the council in regard to the condition of his houses on West Front Street and City Clerk Smith was instructed to give him another notice. Should Mr. Demers take no action on this regard, the council will declare the houses a nuisance and will tear them down." The Daily Missoulian, July 6, 1912, Morning, Page 10

"Judges of Election

Arlee Precinct No. 35 Louis Demers" The Ronan Pioneer, September 20, 1912

"Arlee

The Demers Mercantile company have installed a new Fairbanks scale at the store." The Daily Missoulian, November 25, 1912, Morning, Page 3

"DeMers-McIntire.

A wedding of interest to a large circle of friends was quietly solemnized at 7 o'clock last evening in the court room of the Missoula county courthouse. Miss Alice DeMers and Olle V. McIntire, both of Arlee, were the contracting parties. A. L. DeMers, father of the bride, gave his daughter away and Miss Florence DeMers and Jack Maloney were attendants. Judge A. L. Duncan performed the ceremony in the presence of a few intimate friends of the bride and groom. At the conclusion of the service there was a wedding supper served, at the Palace hotel. Mr. and Mrs. McIntire will make their home at Arlee where Mr. McIntire is connected with the DeMers Mercantile company." The Daily Missoulian, January 12, 1913, Morning, Page 7

"Alex Demers of Arlee spent the day on business in Missoula." The Daily Missoulian, March 28, 1913, Morning, Page 2

“Suit on Note

W.A. Mentrum brought suit in the district court yesterday to recover a note from Alex Dowd and A. L. Demers. The amount said to be due is \$632.20 with interest and an additional \$100 is asked as attorney fees by the plaintiff.” *The Daily Missoulian*, April 26, 1913, Morning, Page 12

“Montana Notes.

LIVINGSTON —A of number rods are going into the Yellowstone Park. The fishing is reported fair.

Arlee.—The Jocko River here furnishes good trout fishing and anglers are busy. Chair and whitefish are also present. Dull-colored flies are much used. Grasshoppers are equally good. Nearly all the flies noticed by me in use were brown-backles. Mr. Alex. Dow tells me that Jocko Lake furnishes unusually good fishing. Sometimes a single line is rigged with nine hooks and, if left down a short time when the trout are biting freely, will often secure nine trout, or a fish on each hook, at a single time. The boys usually take from 50 to 60lbs. of trout in a day's fishing.

The charr of these waters is the Dally Varden and it grows to quite a good size. The whitefish in schooling make the characteristic movements in the water and a whole school of a thousand of these fish will all come to the surface at once. BON.” *FOREST AND STREAM*, VOLUME 39, 1892, PAGE 297

“GREAT CELEBRATION AT ST. IGNATIUS IS HELD
ARLEE SCHOOL DISTRICT REJOICES OVER DECISION FAVORING CONSOLIDATION.

St. Ignatius, May 23.--(Special.) —The consolidated school district of Arlee, which represents the entire reservation country in Missoula county, today held a splendid celebration in honor of the decision of the county commissioners, which maintained the present organization of the district instead of segregating the territory into smaller districts as had been petitioned by a minority.

The entire reservation was represented; thee were chidren and their elders and teachers from every school district. Sr. Ignatius was hostess to more than 500 of the school children and their parents. It was a holiday if which will always be remembered here.

The celebration begun at 10 o'clock in the morning with the preliminary contests in the great spelling match. As this message is sent tonight, there is a grand ball in full swing, following a banquet, as the final number in the jollification program. There were baseball games, children's dances, speeches and thorough good feeling from early till late.

Gladys Moore of Ravalli is the champion speller of the district. John Myers of Mud creek took second honors. In the primary grade contest, Moedert Schmitzler of Mud creek was champion, with Esther Ripley of Ravalli second. Thus, Ravalli and Mud creek swept the field.

When the preliminary spelling match had been held in the morning, there were brief addresses made by Superintendent Logan of the Arlee district, Dr. W. W. Kemp of the state university, and Professor C. W. Tenney of the state superintendent 's office. Luncheon followed, during the Intermission.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, there was a delightful Maypole dance given by the children's class of the Arlee school, 14 in number, under the direction of Miss Goodrich. Then came the finals in the, spelling match.

By winning the championship, Miss Moore gets the silver cup donated by the business men of Ronan, as well as the prize pen of Orpington chickens, John Myers, second, was presented with \$2.50 in cash.

Moedert Schmitzler, winner in the primary class, won a camera, the gift of Stanley Scarce of Ronan. Esther Ripley, second, received \$2.50.

The presentation speech was made by Mrs. Reinhard, county superintendent of schools, -whose decision in the division case preserved the present excellent organization of the district. All of the words in the speller were given to the winners and then they were asked to spell words which they had not studied. It was a great contest.

Following Mrs. Reinhard, there were brief talks by Dr. Kemp and Professor Tenney.

There were two baseball games. Ronan defeated Leon by the score of 10 to 5. St. Ignatius won from Arlee in an exciting game, score 8 to 2.

In the evening there was a banquet given by the St. Ignatius Commercial club at the Mission hotel. It was delightful meal. The guests were: Mrs. Reinhard, Dr. Kemp, Professor Tenney, Superintendent Logan, Dr. Rossner and wife, O. N, Mason, Stanley Scarce, F. J. White and wife, Mrs. Wilburn, Ross Lemire, A. M. Sterling, A. J. Brower and wife, F. W. Rrye, E. E. Healey, J. S. Innes, R. J. Holland and wife, Dr. Heidleman and wife, Louis Demers. A. McIntyre, Florence Demers, H.R. Robideau, C.W. Maxwell and wife, F. K. Slocum, J. Rafferty, Messrs. Devine, Ellis, Rount, Pollard, Savage, Rich and Smith, Misses Melanson, Ferguson, Berry, Kreis, Fowler, Burke, Dickson, Tobin and Goodrich, Judge and Mrs. Burke ,W. H. Sabin, G. H. Beckwith and A. B. Beckwith.” The Daily Missoulian, May 24, 1913, Morning, pages 1 & 4

“Twice-A-Day Classified Ads

For Sale – Real Estate

For sale – 80 acres land; 60 acres of fine timber; 20 acres of meadow; four miles southeast of Ronan. Demers Mercantile Co., Arlee, Mont.” *The Daily Missoulian*, June 20, 1913, Morning, Page 7

“Twice-A-Day Classified Ads

For sale - Ranches

For immediate acceptance we will sell 80 acres of agricultural land 3 miles from Arlee, for \$2,500. All fenced. Demers Mercantile Co., Arlee, Mont.” *The Daily Missoulian*, June 30, 1913, Morning, Page 7

“Alex Demers of Arlee, who owns two vacant, dilapidated houses on East Front Street, was rebuked by the commissioners. These houses, moved when East Front Street was opened, were left high on a bank so that the porches overhang the sidewalk. The commissioners declared the structures eyesores and ordered the porches removed. The work was started yesterday afternoon.” *The Daily Missoulian*, August 14, 1913, Morning, Page 2

“Boom in Building Experienced in Arlee

Demers Mercantile company is erecting two large haysheds adjoining their warehouse and expect to start a third in the near future.” *The Daily Missoulian*, September 30, 1913, Morning, Page 5

“Official Proceedings of Missoula County Commissioners for Quarter Ending March 1, 1914

Alex DeMers overcharged assessment \$22.86” *The Daily Missoulian*, March 24, 1914, Morning, Page 8.

“Local Brevities

Mrs. A.L. Demers and Miss Florence Demers came in yesterday from their home at Arlee to remain a few days visiting and shopping.” *The Daily Missoulian*, May 5, 1914, Morning, Page 2

“Local Brevities

Miss Florence Demers of Arlee is ill at St. Patrick’s hospital.” *The Daily Missoulian*, May 7, 1914, Morning, Page 2.

“Hustle and Hurry in Bust Saltese.

Alex Demers of Arlee and Chris Jacky of Missoula went through to Larsen on mining business and on their return home stopped off to greet many friends and acquaintances.” *The Daily Missoulian*, May 17, 1914, Morning, Page 6

“Local Brevities

Miss Florence Demers was a guest in the city yesterday.” *The Daily Missoulian*, July 10, 1914, Morning, Page 2

“Upon proper petition accompanied by affidavit, filed by Louis Demers president of DeMers Mercantile company of Arlee, it is ordered unanimously by the board that certain mortgages owned by said company and aggregating the amount of \$4,215.00 be stricken from the assessment list of said company for the reason that the indebtedness of said corporation in the excess of the amount of said mortgages. Also certain store buildings of said corporation be reduced to \$600.00.” *The Daily Missoulian*, August 17, 1914, Morning, Page 2

“Letter to Teachers.

Ravalli, Mont., Aug. 22, 1914. To the teachers of district 28: All our schools will open Tuesday Sept. 1st. Following is a list of our teachers: Luther Case, June Whiting, Fannie Ferguson, Mildred Ingalls, Arlee; Mettie Slocum, Ravalli; Lucile Brown, Julia Cox, Grace Lorentz, Grace Saner, St. Ignatius; Caroline Rich, Alice Hardenburgh, Leon; Phoebe Finley. Elizabeth Smith, Elliott school; Clementine Gross, South Moiese; Katharyn Kunkle, North Moiese; Bessie Dissett, Crow creek; F. W. Frye, Azelie Savage, Anna Rafferty, Alice Oyen, Barbara Kain, Ronan; Marcia Jackson, Hillside; Mamie McNamara, Fairyview; Mary Corbin, Grandview; Pearl Mayer, Mud creek; Elizabeth Clebe, Clairmont.

Each one-room school teacher will be allowed five dollars per month for janitor service. She should secure a janitor at once and see that the buildings are kept thoroughly clean and that the janitor service in general is satisfactory. Don't try to teach in a dirty, dingy school room. The toilets must be kept clean and decent, even if it is necessary to inspect them every day.

See that all children are provided with the necessary, text books. Possession of required is a condition of membership in the schools. As it is nearly impossible to get dealers to handle school books, it will be necessary for teachers in schools situated at a distance from the towns to immediately order by parcel post from Helena, the books needed by their pupils, collecting and remitting as rapidly as the books are distributed. The children must pay cash. For Ronan and vicinity Stanley Scarce will handle the books; for St. Ignatius, Miss Dowd; for Arlee, the Demers Mercantile Co.” *The Ronan Pioneer*, August 28, 1914

“Judge Lenz Rules on Several cases.

The suit of Miles F. Bixler against the Demers Mercantile company, involving debt. Was dismissed as settled.” The Daily Missoulian, March 16, 1917, Page 8

“Alex Dow, Alex Demers and Tom Adams were in town yesterday from the Flathead mission, where they report having had a great chicken eating match on the fourth. Adams ate all the feathers, and Demers who held the money staked, blew it in for beer.” The Daily Missoulian, July 7, 1917

“Brief Bits of Missoula News

Alex Demers a pioneer merchant of Arlee, spent yesterday in town.” The Daily Missoulian, August 8, 1917, Page 7

“Burglars Blow Safe at Arlee

Burglars at an early hour this morning blew the safe of the Demers Mercantile company store at Arlee.

Louis Demers, son of Alex Demers manager of the store, awakened by the sound of an explosion at his home about 150 yards distant, hurried to a neighbor’s and secured a gun. Arriving at the scene he shot at the robbers through a window and ducked for a place of safety. Five shots were fired him in return, but evidently the intruders were scared away as no trace of them was seen afterwards and nothing in the safe had been disturbed.

Sheriff Green Called.

A call for help was sent to Missoula and Sheriff Green and Deputies Higgins and Coffey left immediately by automobile.

The first word of the affair reached The Missoulian office through the dispatcher of the Northern Pacific here, who had gotten the news from the agent in Arlee. The town was in darkness and it was some time before telephonic communication could be had as there is but the one phone in town, that at the store.

Work of Professionals

There were about \$85 in the safe as Mr. Demers had just made a deposit yesterday. The work was evidently done by professionals as nitroglycerin was used for the job. The neighborhood was being scoured this morning in hope that the burglars could be run down up to the time of going to press no definite information was available. The exact number in the holdup is not known.” The Daily Missoulian, August 11, 1917. Page 8

“Mr. and Mrs. John Tevan are coming in from Arlee, where Mr. Texan has been employed with the Demers Mercantile company, to make their home in Missoula. Mr. Tevan will be employed by the Missoula Mercantile company in one of its warehouses.” *The Daily Missoulian*, March 15, 1918, Page 8

“A Last Look at Arlee’s Business District

Prohibition went into effect in 1920 but you could still send your kid out for a “bucket of beer” and men still came from Missoula and Frenchtown to gamble in Arlee.

One night the gambling at the “Bucket of Blood” saloon was closely watched by the men gathered there. A man from Frenchtown was raking in pile after pile of silver coins. Many tried their hands, only to lose their stakes. Daylight came, and alerted by the grumbling curses the gambler decided to quit. Throwing his heavy winnings into a blanket he started up the tracks for home. Soon he was aware that several men were following, dodging low every now and then. Certain his life was in danger he hurried faster, never knowing that the men were scooping up the money dropping through a hole in the blanket.

In spite of the gambling and drinking, Arlee, like the rip-roaring mining towns of Montana, continued to grow. Alex De Mers, who had good business sense under that derby hat which he always wore, incorporated his business in 1912 as the De Mers Mercantile Company and built a larger store, now next to Kyl-Yo Western Store. Near the store he started a lumber yard, knowing that lumber was needed for new houses for both Indian and whites.

When wheat yielded abundantly on the virgin soil, De Mers built an elevator near the Northern Pacific tracks so that settlers to the Reservation would have storage for their grain.

As Arlee grew other stores were started. Among them was “Mars Store” run by a Mr. Saleway who sold eggs from China. Haines who later opened a store in Missoula followed Saleway. By that time there was enough farm wives raising chickens so that he sold “farm fresh eggs.” With the coming of homesteaders in 1910 there were other stores in Arlee but De Mers Mercantile was still the leading business.

Chinese laborers worked laying the Northern Pacific tracks and some remained in Arlee. The De Mers had a Chinese cook, a confident of the boy Louie De Mers. When the family went on vacation at Flathead Lake the cook went along to do the cooking.

About 1900 there were two Chinese restaurants in town run by John Sing and Tom Joe. John Sing had to get clean water early in the morning. He would make the half-mile to Finley creek several times with buckets suspended from a wooden yoke. Sing had many customers who appreciated his efforts. A big meal at Sings could be had for 25c. Tom Joe like to play pool and when not busy could be found shooting pool.

There were other restaurants in Arlee. An almost forgotten café was run by a French couple, the Grattons, “Ye Old Boon Restaurant” was popular although the name of the proprietor is lost.

Pablo Espinoza would work at anything to earn an honest dollar, and in 1927 he was offered a job when the restaurant cook had quit. Pablo knew nothing about cooking but needed the job. He invested his last penny in 5 pounds of hamburger and two loaves of bread and was open for business. Hamburgers and coffee cost 25c, chili 25c, hashbrowns and eggs 50c and a big steak \$1. Business was good but as soon as other work turned up Pablo stopped cooking.

Arlee had its hotels also. Felix Barnaby’s large hotel stood near the railroad tracks but burned in 1929. Octave Couture Sr. did a rushing business during the homestead days with his hotel. Octave’s hotel had a combination Chinese cook and chambermaid.

The widow Mrs. Memory had a nice rooming house, although like all of Arlee it was without running water. She also had a café, so up until the mid 30’s the teachers got rooms and meals there.

As Arlee became a self-sufficient community De Mers Mercantile Company kept abreast with the times and installed a gas pump in front of the store. No longer was a hitching rack and blacksmith shop an important part of business.” Early Days by Miss Beaver, Mission Valley News, June 6, 1984, page 6

“Firewater and doctoring

Alex DeMers came from Montreal, Canada, before the Flathead Indians had moved from the Bitterroot to the old Jocko Reservation near Arlee. He was employed by Major Peter Ronan as a clerk at the Agency. Later he worked on construction of houses promised by treaty to the Indians.

When the Flathead Indians came to the Jocko Agency; Alex DeMers left the Indian service and started his own business, a general store at St. Ignatius. His supplies were freighted by ox team from Deer Lodge. They forded streams and climbed steep grades where only a trail had been made by men on horseback.

It was in St. Ignatius that his son Louis (Louie) DeMers was born, 1883. An Indian lady, Mrs. Barnaby assisted at the birth as there was no doctor in Mission Valley.

While Louie was still very small, Alex DeMers returned to Arlee to take charge of the store there. Mr. DeMers also operated a livery stable, rooming house and restaurant, as an accommodation for customers coming from a distance.

DeMers dealt in lumber too, and the lumber piles gave his son Louie a playground as well as a advantage point from which to safely watch exciting events.

With the aid of white man's "firewater" the Indians out on terrific celebrations. When Louie was about eight he watched such a celebration from his favorite spot behind a lumber pile.

Horrified Louie saw the Indians fighting with butcher knives. Running to the restaurant he brought back the Chinese cook to watch. Later the cook said, "Me see Charloway cut in pieces."

Someone else became frightened and ran for Alex DeMers, who came with an ax handle to stop the fight. The cook cried, "Charloways bleed all run out."

When Alex saw the extent of Charloway's cuts, he ran for a great length of sheeting and a sack of flour.

He laid the bleeding Charloway on the sheeting and packed his slashed legs in the flour. Then Mr. DeMers had his patient carried to the Indian village where he was obliged to lie quite for about six months. When at the end of the time the flour was removed showing the injured legs healed perfectly." Early Days by Miss Beaver, Mission Valley News

"The DeMers lost their cook

Alexander (Alex) DeMers was born in Montreal, Canada, and he established one of Arlee's first and longest lasting businesses.

He came to Arlee by freight wagon and was employed at the Jocko Agency by Major Peter Ronan. Here he met Grace Lambert from Minnesota, a guest at the Ronans. Later they were married.

By 1879 Alex DeMers opened his own store in Arlee. Then expanding established a general merchandise store, hotel and livery stable at St. Ignatius. His supplies came by ox team from Deer Lodge.

About 1900 the St. Ignatius Store was sold to George Beckwith but Alex continued to operate the Arlee store.

Alex DeMers' son Louis (Louie) was born in 1883 the year the Salish or Flathead people moved to the Jocko Reservation, now called the Flathead Reservation.

Each summer the Alex DeMers family with their friends would enjoy a 10-day vacation on Flathead Lake. Alex would charter the steamboat "State of Montana" and they would cruise the shoreline coming back to camp on Polson Point at night.

The DeMers Chinese cook always accompanied the family and divided his services between boat and camp.

The vacation was a wonderful time for all but it seemed that the young boys especially enjoyed it. There was always something to see or do. When the boat was anchored the boys spent their time swimming, fishing, exploring, hunting frogs and generally having a good time.

One day they came in all excited over a highly successful frog hunt. Someone had left a loaded shotgun lying on the bed. Young Louie, full of high spirits grabbed it and banged away at a fly on the wall.

Louie was knocked down by the recoil. From the kitchen came a wild yell, "Gee – Chil, me no stay, me go away. Lilee killee me."

The cook not hurt but badly frightened, left at once still crying that Louie had tried to kill him. The DeMers family had to hire a new cook." Early Days by Miss Beaver, Mission Valley News

"Tracing the history of a merchant

The De Mers name is a familiar and enduring one invariably linked with Arlee. Alexander L. De Mers, "Alex", arrived before the Indians left the Bitterroot. Coming from Montreal, Canada, Alex DeMers worked for Major Peter Ronan at the old Jocko Agency. When the Northern Pacific railroad staked a right-a-way across the Reservation the far-seeing Frenchman opened a trading post in 1879 at the present town of Arlee.

In a few years De Mers was able to start a mercantile store in Saint Ignatius, putting his brother Hector in charge of the Arlee store. In 1895 De Mers sold his Arlee store to Alex Dow and in 1900 the Saint Ignatius store was sold to George Beckwith.

After a short business venture in Missoula, Alex De Mers bought back his Arlee store and there he stayed. De Mers also operated a livery stable and had a long hitching rack to one side of the store building, since his customers came to town in horse drawn vehicles or on horseback.

De Mers laid in a fine line of light rigs varying from two-wheeled rigs to the two-seated surrey with a fringe on top. His most popular number was the buggy with springs, a three low top, seat upholstered with leather, and a box in back to carry the picnic basket. Every young fellow wanted to take his girl out in a buggy behind a high stepping team. However this glorious vehicle was beyond the reach of most for it sold at the price of \$34.95.

The Hammond Company also established a store in Arlee with a Mr. Combs as manager. At that time liquor was not to be sold on the Reservation but was easily obtained by following the trail over the hill to Frenchtown. On one occasion an Indian already well lubricated came in the night to the Hammond Co., building pounding on the door demanding liquor.

Mr. Combs refused, declaring that he had none. The Indian tried to break down the door. Frightened Combs shot through the door and killed the man.

The Indian's companions all fired by alcohol were greatly incensed and began to make plans to kill the storekeeper.

Combs thoroughly alarmed, raced out as the group approached. There was a "helper" engine steamed up and puffing by the water tank. The frightened Combs ran to the depot and quickly persuaded the train crew to take him to Missoula and safety.

Mr. Combs never returned and Alex De Mers was called on to help out. Alex kept an ax handle under the counter to quell disturbances. He not only kept the peace but got the business rolling in **short order**. [See more on this story in Montana's Flathead Reservation and Its Outlaws, of which four were hanged in Missoula on December 19, 1890. David C. "Chalk" Courchane, 2014 on this site]

For a time a son-in-law of Alex De Mers ran a "One Price Store, Strictly Cash." It was not a success as the other stores carried creditors for a year and the bill was settled in the fall when the livestock were sold.

What difference does the date make when Bruner's Grocery in Arlee ran this ad:

In the old days the cat slept

In the

Cracker Barrell To Keep the Mice away

Trade at Bruners Both Modern and Sanitary

Early Days by Miss Beaver, Mission Valley News, May 23, 1984, page 6.

Alex wrote to Flathead Agent Peter Ronan from St. Ignatius on Jaquary 3, 1891.

"Dear Sir:

In answer to the copy of letter from the Hon. Commissioner of Indian Affairs I beg to say that I have not sold in the last six months any breech loading arms, pistols of any description, fixed ammunition or metallic cartridges.

Very respectfully Yours,

A. L. Demers Trader." "Justice to be Accorded to the Indians – Agent Peter Ronan Reports on the Flathead Reservation, Montana, 1888-1893, p-187, Peter Ronan, edited by Robert J. Bigart, Salish Kootenai College and University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

The Arlee Mercantile daybook documents customer purchases made over disparate intervals from 1900 to 1908, and notes dating as late as 1910, at B. H. Denison's general store in Arlee, Montana. The clientele in this book represent various groups within the region at that time

including farmers, Native Americans, and railroad workers. University of Montana, Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections

Enthusiastic Get-Together Meeting at St. Ignatius

That was a hummer of a get together meeting held at St. Ignatius last Saturday evening. Delegates were present from all over the reservation, Missoula, Hamilton, Plains and Thompson Falls. Missoula sent 11, Dixon 12, Ronan 9, Polson 5, Flathead Farmers' Association 7, Flathead Farmers' Co-operative Union 5, and other portions enough to swell the delegate list to 58.

All day from about noon the delegates arrived and the business men of St. Ignatius devoted their entire time toward entertaining and looking after the comfort of all in attendance. Geo. and Andrew Beckwith, P.

C. Thompson, Dr. Mathews, A. K. Lusk, G. W. Buckhouse, V.A. McCormack and other St. Ignatius boosters were on hand all the time and to them must be given the credit of holding the best meeting so far on the reservation.

The meeting was held in the St. Ignatius opera house and was called to order at 7:30 by A. B. Beckwith, president of the St. Ignatius Commercial club, who briefly stated the object of the meeting and extended a cordial welcome to delegates on the part of the organization and the citizens of St. Ignatius as a whole.

He designated H. L. Burleigh of Plains as chairman of the meeting who accepted the position in a short speech, pledging himself to a fair and impartial position as presiding officer.

The business of the meeting was then taken up, first of all being the matter of assignable titles to the homesteads of the reservation covered by the reclamation project. This matter has been discussed at every school house, every meeting and every home on the reservation, and for that matter all over Western

Montana for the past month or six weeks, but it was the paramount question with most everybody present for all that. Delegates from the Farmers' associations would listen to nothing but an unequivocal endorsement of the petition circulated lately praying for congressional legislation, and threatened to do

all kinds of things to former action on this subject unless everything else was made to give way to their pet scheme. To avoid any such dire calamity those who thought it easier to get the same result by departmental ruling, surrendered and the atmosphere cleared suddenly. The meeting indorsed the petition and every body was happy.

Roads on the reservation were discussed by several delegates and a committee was appointed to draft a resolution to be presented to the meeting. This committee reported in favor of asking the commissioners of the three counties to build as much road this year as possible and to hurry up the matter of rights of way over Indian allotments. Another important matter discussed was the sale or lease of the allotments of old, infirm and non-competent Indians. A committee was appointed which included Duncan McDonald, chairman of the business committee of Flathead Indians, and his idea from the Indian standpoint was adopted. It is only fair to state that his idea was the one which this paper has advocated for two years past, and should it be adopted by the department, will, we believe, solve the question to the entire satisfaction of all.

The report was to the effect that the lands of old, infirm or noncompetent Indians should be leased or sold, at the option of the Indian, and that the agent in should have the authority to in lease same without first obtain the consent of the Indian. It also recommended that the lease money be paid out in monthly installments, thus preventing a wasteful extravagance in cases where those to whom it might be paid were not competent to properly care for their money. r- It would thereby provide many with the means of having a living, where now they are suffering from lack of food and clothing. Each subject under discussion was carefully considered and it is thought that much good must result from the action taken.

After the meeting had closed all adjourned to the Michaud hotel where a bountiful banquet had been provided, and after eating the good things, toasts were responded to by one delegate from each organization. Geo. Beckwith acted the part of the toastmaster to the entire satisfaction of all and with three cheers and a tiger for the St. Ignatius Commercial club and the citizens of St. Ignatius in general, the meeting came to an end.

- The delegates present were

Arlee-Alex Demers, John Matt.”

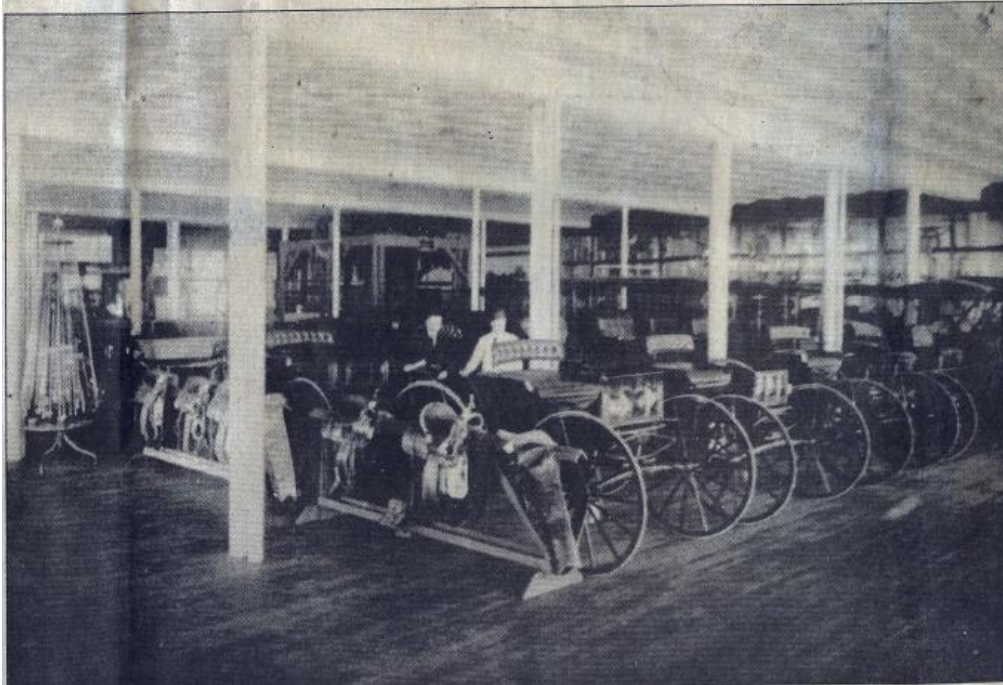
Ravalli-Duncan McDonald.” The Ronan Pioneer, (Ronan, Missoula County, Montana), March 15, 1912, Page 1

“Alex Demers was in Missoula yesterday from Arlee, buying supplies for the Demers Mercantile company of that place,” The Daily Missoulian., January 27, 1914, Morning, Page 2

“Find Body of Child in River

Missoula, June 4—The mystery of the disappearance of 4-year-old Vola Jauron, which has wrecked the peace of the communities of Evaro and Arlee for the past two weeks, was solved Saturday night when the body of the little girl who vanished suddenly from a grove near Arlee, Sunday, May 20, was discovered by Mike Pellew, an Indian scout, in a log jam in the Jocko river, a mile and half from the locality where she was last seen.

Pellew had been fishing when he saw a tiny foot appear above the surface of the water near the jam. He rescued the body and immediately called the DeMers Mercantile Company at Arlee. L. A. DeMers and H. A. Bouch went to the river and brought the water-soaked corpse to Arlee, where it was easily identified as the body of the missing girl. It was in fair state of preservation. The body was brought to the city morgue late last night and a coroner's Inquest will be held today. However, there is no evidence that could lead to any other possible verdict than that of accidental drowning. Arlee people say.” *The Columbian*, June 27 1923, page 3.



LINE UP OF BUGGIES at De Mers Merc in Arlee was enough to set any young blade's heart pounding. But as Miss Beaver points out, the top of the line model was pretty well out of reach, being priced at \$34.95.

“DeMers Family One of the Earliest At St. Ignatius

Editor's Note: The author of the following biographical sketch of a prominent pioneer of the Mission and Jocko valleys was written by Mrs. Grace E. Yost, his daughter, who is a resident of Butte.

Alexander Louis de Mers came west primarily because his physicians insisted he leave the humid air of Montreal for the mountains and dry climate of the far west to recover from the effects lingering after the then epidemic of lagrippe, leaving his lungs treated by more serious consequences.

His early education was in the schools of Montreal; also later in the English military schools for study and training as required by the mother country. He had soon attained the rank of captain. His ambition was always to study architecture – in fact did leave buildings he drew plans for

contracted for and built before leaving his native country. He also decided to lend his talent in music, the urge which kept him in as a member of several orchestras. In idle moments we recall his carving pieces of wood into pieces of art. Stones from the peach he had enjoyed was a beautiful carved "basket." He visited always the art galleries there. Cabinet pieces bespoke art put in building. However this all was to be compensated for in helping to build a new country with its beautiful scenery and the promise it held, much as did his brother who had preceded him here and with whom he was associated in the general merchandise business in Frenchtown for a time. He was employed at the Jocko agency by the U.S. government and had some part in making the little church there.

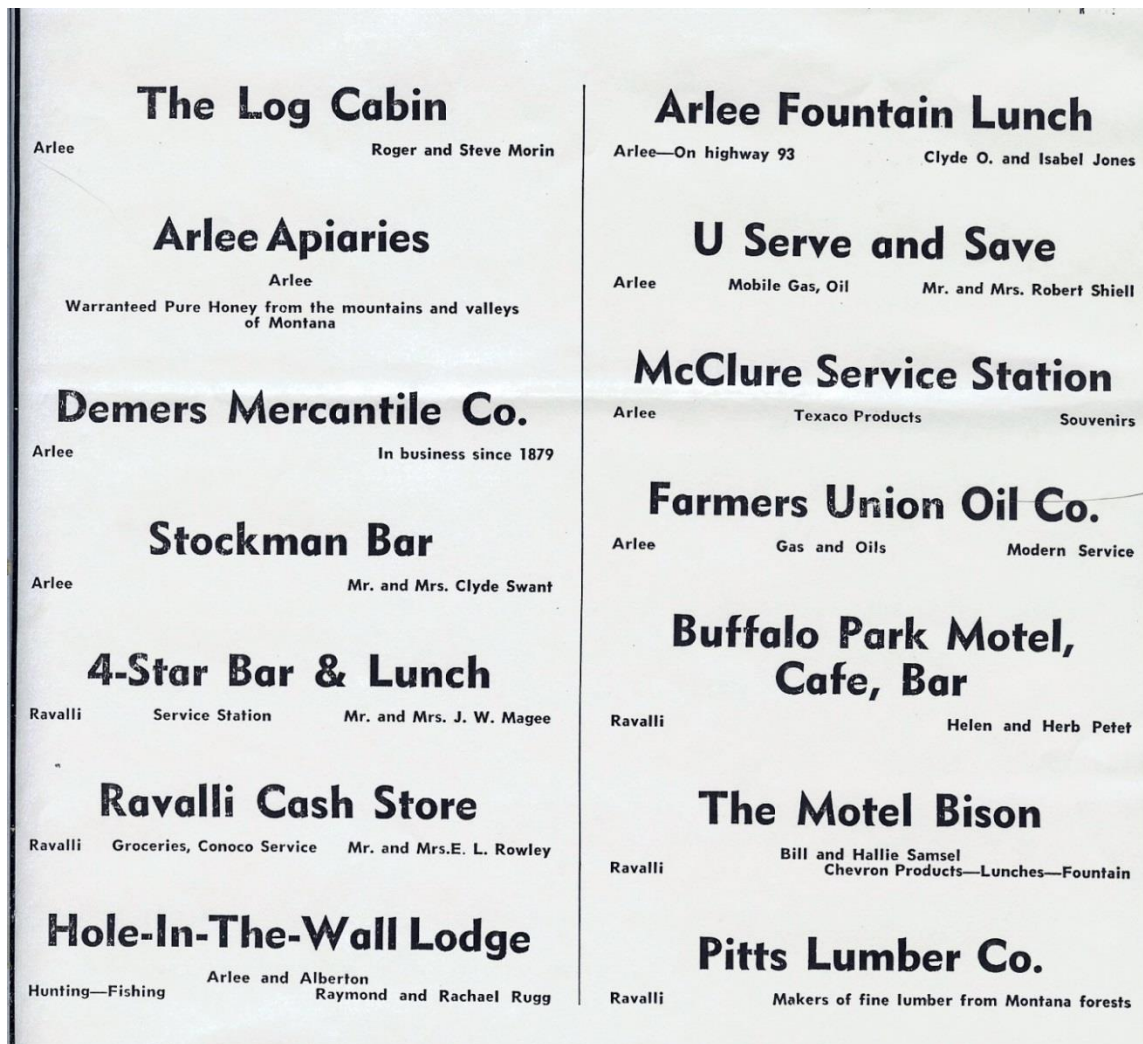
It was at this time he met Miss Grace E. Lambert, the daughter of an early attorney, Judge Henry Augustus Lambert of St. Paul, Minn., whose parents passed away and on completing her education at the Convent of the Visitation there made the arduous journey by rail, then stage coach, to make her home with her brother and his wife and family, Harry A. Lambert, then chief clerk and assistant to Major Peter Ronan at the agency. Mr. de Mers and Miss Lambert were married there in October, 1880. Not long after they moved to the St. Ignatius Mission, where he established a hotel and restaurant business (a little store still standing) which all was sold at the time he moved to Missoula.

During the early years the great help and education of his family to carry on by the Jesuit school and Sisters of Providence, of which order Mr. de Mers' sister in Montreal was a member, the family feels so grateful for all it meant through the years. Later Mr. Raleigh Markoe, of St. Paul, tutored the boys. Miss Sara J. Goodale of Watertown, N. Y., our very versatile and adequate governess, prepared us for the move to Missoula in 1901. Help in Mrs. De Mers' household was well supplied by young women so carefully trained by the nuns in housekeeping generally.

As far as I can see without reference to early day history, Pony express must have carried all mail – at least to Missoula – where Mr. de Mers drove his own wagons for freight, supplying the stock for business.

Yes, there is the building our father drew plans for and had built in Missoula, in which the Federal post office was housed, also at times in the store at the Mission.” Pioneer-Post St. Ignatius Centennial Issue, 1954

“The DeMers Mercantile Co. has been incorporated with a capital stock of \$25,000, by Mary K. DeMers, A. L. DeMers and others.” Paint, Oil and Chemical Review, Vol. 54, no.1, July 3, 1912, Chicago, page 30.



Pioneer-Post St. Ignatius Centennial Issue, 1954

“My Forty Years Scribblin’s

Early Reservation Days

This interview was written in 1961 and published in Montana’s Little Legends (1963). Louis Demers remembers his father and others’ contributions to the Jocko and Mission Valleys.

The Demers name is a familiar and enduring one in Western Montana, these families being instrumental in the development of the Jocko and Mission valleys.

Alec Demers, father of Louis A. Demers, to whom we are indebted for this article, arrived in the country before the Indians were moved there from the Bitterroot Valley, and was assigned to Major Peter Ronan at the Indian Agency as a clerk. A short time later he was assigned to

construction in preparation for the moving of the Flathead, or Salish, people to the new reservation.

After the move was accomplished Alec Demers left the Indian service and started a business of his own, a store at St. Ignatius, freighting supplies from Deer Lodge by oxen, fording the Jocko below the site of Arlee.

Louis (Louie) was born at St. Ignatius in 1883, the year the Salish moved from the Bitterroot.

[Said to be the first white child born in St. Ignatius.]

Later, a Dr. Dade was sent to the reservation and stayed to minister to the ailing for a great number of years, but in 1883 no doctor was available and Louie was ushered into the world by an Indian lady, a Mrs. Barnaby.

Prior to the coming of the Northern Pacific, someone, possibly the Hammond Company, had established a store at Arlee, we are told, and shortly after the completion of the railroad a Mr. Combs was operating the business under the jurisdiction of the Missoula Mercantile.

At this time, the Indians, under the scourge of the white man's liquor, were wont to put on terrific celebrations, procuring at least part of their supply from off the reservation by a trail across the hills to the Frenchtown valley.

On one occasion one of the celebrants, already under the influence, came to the building in the night and demanded liquor from Combs. The storekeeper refused, or declared that he had none; whereupon the Indian began to break the door down. Combs threatened to shoot, but the man, past reasoning, continued to batter his way in. The storekeeper shot through the door and killed him.

The Indian settlement, incensed, and fired by alcohol, began to organize a scalping "bee" with Mr. Combs as the principal. But the storekeeper learned of their intentions in some manner and was well aware that his survival hinged on one circumstance, escape. By now the railroad was completed and a "helper" engine sat placidly snoring beside the water tank. The badly frightened storekeeper ran to the depot and called the division superintendent, gaining permission to have the engine and crew take him to Missoula, and safety.

Mr. Combs never returned and Alec Demers was called in from St. Ignatius by the Missoula Mercantile to take charge of the business. It seems the new storekeeper found it necessarily to

keep an ax handle handy under the counter to quell an occasional disturbance; but quell them he did and got the business straightened out and rolling.

Mr. Demers also operated a livery stable since the settlers must come to town by horse-drawn conveyances for supplies, though some came only as often as every six months. He also dealt in lumber, the piles of which furnished Louie a vantage point from which to watch many scenes that are history today.

After the business became well established Alec Demers sent back to Canada for his sisters and his brother, Hector. Hector Demers died while working for the railroad when he fell between the caboose and a box car and was cut in two. After the tragic death of his brother, Alec Demers sold his interests to a man named Dow and returned to St. Ignatius for several years, but returned to Arlee to resume operations for a second time.

Louie relates an incident that took place "when he was a kid of eight or nine" after the family moved to Arlee, and the Indians were in the midst of a celebration.

He had been watching from a favorite spot behind one of his father's lumber piles when he heard a shot. One Indian had sent a bullet through the lower thigh of one of his comrades and left a little ball of flesh dangling from a six inch sinew. The fellow, apparently unhampered by the streak of daylight through his leg, stalked about, proudly jiggling the grisly decoration saying "see-see."

The man was later shot by a Game Warden who in turn was shot and killed by the young Indian's mother in an altercation in the Swan Valley.

Another time, from his vantage point behind the lumber pile, Louie saw the Indians get into a scrap with butcher knives. Running to the restaurant he summoned the Chinese cook and together they watched "while Finley cut Charloway to pieces."

Someone ran for Alec Demers who in turn, ran for a sack of flour and some sheeting. He laid the bleeding Charloway on the sheeting and packed his slashed legs in the flour. Mr. Demers had the patient carried to the Indian village where he was obliged to lie quiet for approximately six months. When at last the flour was removed the injured limbs were perfectly healed.

Louie remembers with pleasure his father's summer camp at Polson Point on Flathead Lake when he and his brothers and sisters were young children. His father would charter the steamer

"State of Montana" and several families would avail themselves of the opportunity to tour the shoreline for ten-day vacations, complete with a Chinese cook, the services of the latter alternating between the boat and the shore camp. When the boat was at anchor the children of the party swam, fished, hunted frogs and whiled away the time much in the manner of children of today.

One day in particular the boys of the party had come in high spirits after a successful frog hunt. Someone had left a shotgun lying on a bed, and Louie, with a small boy's impulse, grabbed up the weapon and banged away at a fly on the wall. Results were instantaneous. Louie was upended from the recoil while from the kitchen came a wildly excited "Gee—Chli—me no stay—me go 'way—tly killee me!" [Jesus Christ—me no stay—me go away—try kill me!] The fly probably suffered nothing worse than shellshock, but the Demers cruise was in the market for a new cook.

While the Demers family still resided at St. Ignatius, the Indian people employed a formula for giving thanks. It was a New Year's custom for them to line up single file, dressed in their best blankets and moccasins. The white families lined up also, leaving both front and back doors open. As the red men filed through, each one shook hands with each member of the white family. The clay was at its muddy best and "Sometimes," said Louie, "we shook hands for two whole hours!"

General Miles, Louie relates, was very interested in sign language so Indian agent Charles Coe, while on a business trip to Eastern Montana, met with Miles and agreed to arrange a succession of meetings at Arlee for the purpose of instruction. Bitterroot Jim, an expert in sign language, John Delaware, and Mose Big Sam were chosen as instructors. The three Indian men, together with General Miles and Indian Agent Coe, held a rendezvous at Demers store each day to converse by movements of the hands.

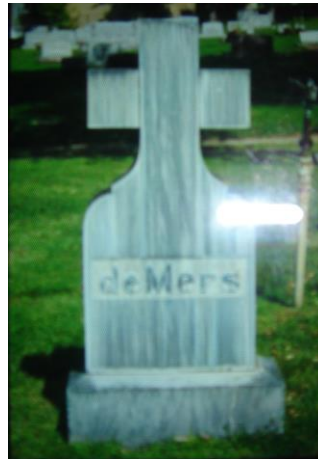
The procedure? Before beginning the conversation Bitterroot Jim would take out a long, well decorated pipe and a buckskin bag of tobacco mixed with kinnikinnick leaves. After due time and ceremony the pipe was lighted and passed to each Indian and then to General Miles. The General became proficient in sign language, and so, this writer might add from observation, has Louie Demers.

The Demers store is still a landmark at Arlee. Louis Demers, a brother, and two sisters still make their home there although they have retired from the mercantile business."

“DeMers Mercantile, a multi-purpose store, sold everything from baling wire to Bromo Seltzer. The store had shoes on a high wall of shelves, and once as the clerk opened a box I saw old-fashioned, button-topped shoes. Behind the store stood a dilapidated warehouse; peeking in there, we saw fancy carriages. Lore has it that folks came from California and offered a price to haul all this stuff away. The storeowners grinned to themselves, thinking how they were dumping this worthless stuff on these dudes, and the California folks smiled smugly because of the deal they were getting. Everybody was happy.” Jo Anne Troxel - <http://www.distinctlymontana.com/montana-community/06/11/2011/thousand-buddhas> [Jo Anne Troxel, a native Montanan, lives in Bozeman, Montana. She is a retired English teacher and now spends her time as a social activist, and supporter of the arts. She is currently working on a novel set in the Jocko valley. She also writes poetry.]

For Arlee at the DeMers the regular grain dealers are The DeMers Mercantile, H. L. Haines and R. J. Holland. The Grain Dealers Journal, page 456, vol. 35, no. 1, Chicago, July 10, 1915

Alexander L. DeMers died in 1928.

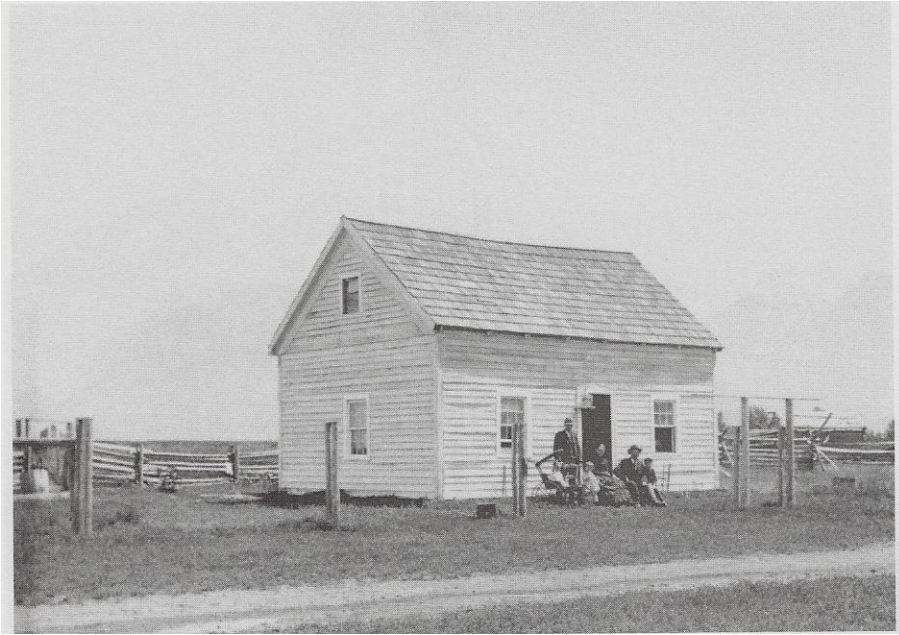


<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=88573280St>.

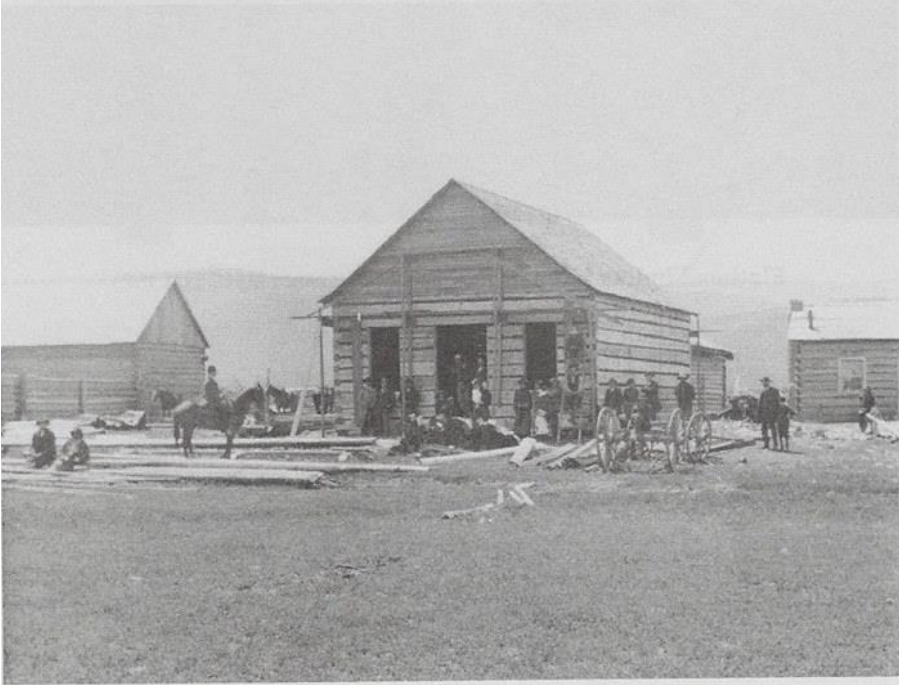
Mary Cemetery, Missoula, Montana

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi->

[bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=DEmers&GSmn=-.&GSbyrel=in&GSdyrel=in&GSst=28&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=88573279&df=all&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=DEmers&GSmn=-.&GSbyrel=in&GSdyrel=in&GSst=28&GSctry=4&GSob=n&GRid=88573279&df=all&)



*Above: Trader's residence (Alex L. DeMers). (MHS H-1352).
Below: Trader's store, St. Ignatius Mission. (MHS H-1351).*



“Interview with Robert DeMers, 517 Ford St., Missoula. (A follow up by Butte research assistant should be worthwhile: Mrs. Jack Demers, 79 years old, lives 1101 West Broadway, Butte. Her son says she has many anecdotes to relate of the early days, many of which he has heard and forgotten; he would like for me to interview her, feeling she would be more willing to talk when urged by him. However, she does not make her annual visit to Missoula until August.” “I Will Be Meat for My Salish” The Montana Writers Project and the Buffalo of the Flathead Indian Reservation, written by Bon Whealdon and others Edited by Bob Bigart, Salish Kootenai College Press and Montana Historical Society Press, 2001; Notes: page 217

In 1942 the president of DeMers Mercantile in Arlee was Walter Herbert McLeod (1887-1963).

[“Walter H. McLeod was born in Missoula, Montana, on September 30, 1887 to Charles Herbert and Clara Louise (Beckwith) McLeod. He graduated from Missoula County High School and continued his education at the University of Montana, where he was a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity.

He left college to begin his career with his father's Missoula Mercantile Company in 1911. In 1920 he became Vice President and in 1941, upon the retirement of his father, he became president of the Mercantile and of the Kalispell Mercantile Company. He became president of the Hotel Florence Company in 1939 and of the Demers Mercantile Company in Arlee, Montana, in 1942. He was also a director of the Hammond Lumber Company of San Francisco from 1941 to 1958, the Northern Pacific Railroad Company from 1948-1961, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis from 1948 to 1950, the Montana Power Company from 1955 to 1962, and the Montana Taxpayers Association from 1944 to 1961. Long active in Republican politics, he never entered public service directly, but the Mercantile provided considerable support for Republican interests.

The Missoula Mercantile and its branches and affiliates were one of the largest business concerns of the Pacific Northwest. Allied Stores Corporation purchased the Missoula Mercantile Company in 1959 for \$1,056,000.

He was also active in the Boy Scouts of America; Missoula Lodge, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks; Rotary Club of Missoula; Missoula Chamber of Commerce; and the Missoula Country Club.

McLeod married Olive Wheeler, daughter of Charles S. and Lillian (Marsh) Wheeler in San Francisco in 1915. They had three children: Olive Brewster, Walter Herbert Jr., and Clara Marsh. McLeod died in Missoula on September 13, 1963.

From the guide to the Walter H. McLeod papers, Circa 1885, 1900-1963, (University of Montana--Missoula Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections)] <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w6cw7303>

Sept 22/81

32 ✓
 Quirick Aselin
 To 1 shirt 250 2 pins comb 50 3 00

36 ✓
 Lorette Pablo
 To 4 1/2 lbs Calico 4 00
 1 1/2 " Bleu flannel 1 50
 1 shirt 150 Sugar 1 00 2 50
 1 Tea 75 1 Postock 50 1 25
 Rope 35

— 23 —

36 ✓
 Pte Ignace
 To 2 1/2 " Sugar 500 15 " Coffee 500 10 00
 2 " Tob 300 Calico 100 3 00
 1 Babypup 200 Candles 100 3 00
 1 Rose helle per angelique 50

38 ✓
 Noatta Charvains
 To 1 Blanket 7 00

— 24 —

38 ✓
 Lorette Pablo
 To Sugar 100 Coffee 100 2 00
 Soap 100 B. flannel 50 1 50
 Nails 50 Calico 50 1 00
 Calico 100 Tob 50 1 50
 Broom 75 Raisins 25 1 00

38 ✓
 Joseph Finlay or Fenom
 To Postock 50 50
 Nuts 25
 Matches 25

A page from the DeMers Mercantile ledger, September 22, 1881

Children of Alex and Grace Demers:

1. ? Demers

2. Grace Demers

Born in August 18, 1881 in St. Ignatius, Montana and died in December 19, 1969 in Missoula County, Montana. She married William Horace Yost born June 19, 1877 in Prentice, Illinois and died June 30, 1958. He was the son of Edwin Yost and Lucy Alice Hostetter. He was buried in St. Mary Cemetery, Missoula, Montana. Yost Family History: Germany to 2014, Tim C. Stadler, page 195

“Butte, Montana: A Concert with a solo by Grace Demers Yost a soprano.” The Music Magazine – Musical Courier, November 16, 1922, vol. 85, “Across the Country, page 28.

“Edward S. Boos Photographs

Very rare album collection of 45 early historic photos (40 attached to pages in the album, 5 loose) taken by Boos, a photographer from Missoula, Montana, documenting mostly the Flathead Indians in St. Ignatius, Montana just before the turn of the century. Many of the photos are labeled and others can be identified through the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana. The photos are all in good or very good condition, some showing some handling. The ones attached in the album are approximately 6-1/2" x 4". The 20 cardboard pages are not attached in the binding of the album anymore.

Provenances

This book was given to Grace DeMers (Yost) in 1900 and Boos signed and illustrated the inside cover with Indian Names (?) or the album's title, “Skal-I-Hu Skul-Ki-Ee” by Skul-Ki-Im, (Edward H. Boos) 1900.” The book is signed, “To Grace E. DeMers from Edward H. Boos 3/9/00.”

In 1959, DeMers gave the book to her artist friend and signed it then, “To Florence with all love and my wish to aid in her splendid paintings of our Indians – Grace DeMers Yost, March 16, 1959.” This book sold for \$3,000.00 in 2013.



Find A Grave Memorial# 135010081

3. Alice A. Demers (1892-) Alice married O. V. McIntire and resides at Arlee, McIntire was a clerk and interested in the Demers Mercantile Company.

4. Florence M. Demers Born 1891 in St. Ignatius, Montana. Married Harry A. Bouch.



9340-01 (00181)

Mose Big Sam (misidentified as Louis Ninepipe), and Florence Demers, photographed when she was a student at the University of Montana about 1936. She later married Ed Bouck and became Mrs. Florence Demers Bouck, residing in the Jocko Valley. She was the sister of Louie DeMers, who owned the Demers Mercantile Co. in Arlee, Montana. (Nine Pipes information taken from his June 5, 1917 draft registration records with Lake county, formerly Missoula county, Montana).” (Demers identified in 2001 by Linda Schure of Arlee, Montana) <http://www.historicphotoarchive.com/caps2/00181.html>

[Moses “Mose” Big Sam, born in 1876 and died in 1943 at St. Ignatius, Montana, son of John Big Sam (or Sam) and Mary. He married Ellen Pierre, daughter of Louie Pierre and Frances “Pelesoway” Vanderburg. Bitterroot Salish.]

“MONTANA STANDARD, BUTTE, FRIDAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1938, page 5. Oil Portrait of Hardware Firm Exhibits Life-size Picture of Famed Montana. Of keen Interest to art lovers and historians is the recently executed life-size oil portrait of Duncan McDonald, now on display in the windows of the Montana Hardware Co, on Park street. The strong and masterful features of this grand old man-Montana's oldest living native-born pioneer- have been faithfully reproduced by the brush of Florence DeMers Bouch of Arlee, neighbor and friend of the subject, and a talented portrait painter. They show the interesting admixture of Scotch and Indian blood which is his heritage, for Duncan's father was Angus McDonald, first factor of the Hudson Bay trading post at Post Creek, and his mother an Indian chief's daughter. It is interesting to know that Duncan's childhood, while spent in and around an Indian tepee, lacked nothing in the way of civilized culture, since Angus, his father, kept a tutor in the home and all his children had the

best of English education. Duncan McDonald was born at Post creek early in 1849, and has already passed his eighty-seventh birthday. Of keen mentality, possessing an acute sense of humor, he nevertheless has inherited a certain native dignity which has made impossible the exploitation of his personality either by word or picture. Only because of his life-long friendship for the late Alex DeMers and his daughter, the artist, was he finally persuaded to sit for the painting which has just been completed and which, it is hoped, will eventually find its logical place In the state's gallery of distinguished native pioneers.” <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/4226910/>

B2 — Leader Life October 11, 2001

Portrait of Duncan McDonald loaned to museum

By Paul Fugleberg of the Leader

NINEPIPES — Days of Angus McDonald, the last factor of the Fort Connah Hudson's Bay trading post near the foot of Post Creek hill, were brought alive Sunday, Sept. 29, at Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana.

The occasion was presentation by the Jocko Valley Museum of the loan of a 66-year-old painting of Duncan McDonald, Angus's son, who was born at Fort Connah on March 31, 1849. The oil portrait was done by Florence deMers Bouch of Arlee. Florence and her husband, Harry Bouch, had invited McDonald to his home in 1936 to pose for the painting over a period of several days.

Since then the portrait has remained in a deMers family home except for a time when it was displayed at the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

Recently the deMers family donated it to the Jocko Valley Museum, which loaned it to the Ninepipes Museum. Harrison deMers, a 1951 graduate of Arlee High School and now an attorney in Federal Way, Wash., presented the painting to Perry Francis (AHS Class of '52), representing the Jocko Valley Museum, earlier in the day.

Representing the Jocko Valley Historical Society at the Ninepipes presentation were Francis, his mother Cornelia Francis and Alvaretta Morin. Others present included Ninepipes curator Kim Sprow, Rod Wamsley, Bud Cheff, Jr., Laurel Cheff and Joe McDonald.

The painting was placed in Ninepipes' Impressions of Early Montana gallery, directly across from the Hudson's Bay-Fort Connah exhibit.

In 1964 Cornelia Francis wrote an article for the Missoulian giving the background of the artist, the painting and Duncan McDonald.

The artist told Francis that McDonald was a "friend remembered from the days of her childhood when he would often come in to trade with her father, Alex DeMers (the family in recent years has changed the spelling to deMers) at his store in St. Ignatius. At that time McDonald had a small store of his own in Ravalli where he also operated a hotel and owned a large apple orchard."

Bouch recalled that Duncan McDonald "was devoted to Indian customs and dress and to the traditions that he inherited from his full-blood Indian mother and sustained in his wife, Quilse, of whom he spoke with affection and respect and in his wife, Quilse, of whom he spoke with affection and respect and with whom he lived for 50 years. He was a valued source of Indian legends, which he liked to repeat verbally, and he was considered an authority on Indian folk lore."

The artist also said that Duncan did much of his trading at Ravalli in butter, accepting advance delivery on cattle in payment of supplies and maintaining a livestock shipping center. Ravalli at that time was a busy crossroads point for rail freight and travel.

Duncan McDonald died Oct. 16, 1937, at the age of 88 in the Valley Nursing Home in Thompson Falls. Residents from all parts of western Montana assembled at the Catholic church in Mission to pay their last tributes to "the dean of Montana pioneers." Conducting the funeral was Father Louis Taelman and burial was in the St. Ignatius cemetery.

As to the artist, she and her brothers and sisters started school with the Sisters of Providence in St. Ignatius. She continued her education under a governess from New York, who lived with the family for two years, and at Central School in Missoula.

Francis wrote "After enrolling as a preparatory student in art, English and history at Montana State university for a period, she received her only really formal art training in a year's stud with a Scottish art teacher, Beatrice Howie, who came to the reservation to paint Indians, married and became Beatrice Mackley, a Jocko resident for several years."

The DeMers store meanwhile moved to Arlee and Florence DeMers married Harry Bouch, a partner in the DeMers Mercantile, which was an integral part of Arlee's main street until it was sold in 1959."

Duncan McDonald's father, Angus, was first sent to the Fort Connah site by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1847 to complete establishment of the facility, initially started by HBC trader Neal MacArthur in the mid-1840s. In 1848, Angus brought his wife, Catherine, to the site and a year later Duncan was born. Fort Connah was abandoned in 1872 after the U.S. government paid the Hudson's Bay Company \$450,000 for the post.

As a bicentennial project in 1976 the Fort Connah Restoration Society initiated efforts to preserve the building. Francis said that the original founders of the society were Dorothy Lane, Rod Wamsley, Preston Miller, Walt McDonald and Ray Harbin. The old trading post building was dismantled log by log and rebuilt. Completion of access to the site is pending the final design of US 93.

Jocko Valley Historical Society representatives presented the oil portrait of Duncan McDonald on a loan basis to the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana. Shown above (from left) are Kim Sprow of Ninepipes and Alvaretta Morin of Jocko Valley. In the background is an exhibit depicting the Fort Connah trading post where McDonald was born in 1849.



(Paul Fugleberg/Leader)



(Perry Francis photo)

Harrison deMers (above) donated the Duncan McDonald portrait to the Jocko Valley Historical Society.

Goals of Fort Connah Restoration Society

The Fort Connah Restoration Society was established in 1976 as a bicentennial project with the following long term goals:

1. Restore the fort building on site.
2. Replace buildings as nearly as possible to period of Fort Connah.
3. Provide a living history appearance.
4. Tourist information center.
5. Museum of Rocky Mountain fur trading artifacts.
6. Research library.
7. Provide for a curator who would also be director, overseer, tour guide and security officer.
8. Provide living quarters for the curator.
9. Provide adequate parking and picnic area for tourists or groups.
10. Footpath access to the fort area and cemetery.
11. Restore the cemetery.

5. Eugene J. Demers (1885-1946)

[I am Louis deMers great-niece, my grandfather was Eugene deMers, my mother was his daughter Harriette deMers. I am researching the deMers and Lambert genealogy. I have gone to Quebec to research our early deMers ancestors. I would love to connect with you and add to my book I am putting together on the Alexander deMers family. - submitted by Gretchen Metz on 01/18/2012
Read more: <http://www.locateancestors.com/louis-demers/#ixzz3z4ZeU4Bw>]

[Hi Lambert:

I have posted inquiries, but your answer is the only one so far. We are cousins, many times removed. My mother is Harriette deMers, who is still living, and she is the oldest daughter of Eugene deMers, one of Alexander's sons. She also lives here in Olympia WA. I have lots of photos and some info I can share with you, but I have to go through them to see what might be of interest to you. I also am just beginning on this area of research. I am planning on contacting and getting birth and death certificates from Quebec, if they exist on the grandparents. I am also very interested in info on Grace Lambert, and her father Judge Lambert. Lets share info, Gretchen Metz]

Posted: 2 May 2009 6:34PM GMT

[Hi Larry:

Try going to Google and typing in Demers Family Genealogy Forum and see if that takes you to Genealogy.com. It's nice to meet new relatives, who are your mother and father? My mother is Harriette deMers, whose mother was Ruth Talbot deMers and whose father was Eugene deMers. I am also researching the Lambert line, and have traced them to 1600's in CT. Let me know if you cannot get to that site, and I will try and email it directly to you.

Gretchen]

[Hi Robert:

I just reread your first message to me, and I wanted to say that Alexander was way more than a dry goods merchant. He actually founded the town of Arlee MT, and also before he opened his dry goods store ran a trading store on the Indian reservation there. That I think, is how he met his wife, our great-grandmother Grace Lambert, who was visiting her brother Henry Lambert. He was working there in some capacity, I would have to look at my records to see what. Anyway her was married and had children as well. My mother's father, Eugene deMers was divorced from my grandmother, Ruth and remarried. He had 3 children by his second wife, two of whom still live, one is Harry deMers, lives in Seattle, and the other Lyanne lives on Whidbey Island here in WA. I know she has at least one daughter. My mother, in addition of Jed deMers, her brother, had another brother named Hartman deMers, who is deceased. He has one daughter, Daphne who is married and lives in Anacortes WA. She and her husband have one son, who is in the Navy. All the other deMers I have not done enough research to know about, other than going back to Alexander's history and relatives in Canada, as they are all Roman Catholics, their records are very well kept and take the family's history back to about 1400's in France.

Gretchen]

Posted: 27 Nov 2010 11:08PM GMT

[Hi Robert:

I don't have your email address, so this is the only way I know of contacting you. I re-read our replies, and noticed I did not answer you re:Jed deMers. He was my uncle and died in Mexico 2+ years ago. He is survived by his son Jed deMers who lives in Gig Harbor WA and is a semi-retired civil engineer. He also is survived by a daughter, Jill, who lives in Idaho. Did you get to MT, and did you have any luck with research? I am particularly interested in anything to do with Alex deMer's wife Grace, because my research indicates that Judge Lambert was Grace's father. Hope you see this, and if you can email me at troupadour@msn.com.

Gretchen]

6. Lambert Lawrence Demers

Born on August 10, 1897 in St. Ignatius, Montana. Youngest son of Alex and Grace Demers. "He studied accounting at the University of Montana and returned to Arlee to operate the Demers Mercantile with his father and later his brothers and brother-in-law. They sold out in 1959. During the 1960s he worked as a rural mail carrier in Arlee." "I Will Be Meat for My Salish" The Montana Writers Project and the Buffalo of the Flathead Indian Reservation, written by Bon Whealdon and others, edited by Robert Bigart, Salish Kootenai College Press and Montana Historical Society, page 247.

S.A.T.C. Camp, San Francisco, CA (previously student University of Montana);

He registered for the draft on June 5, 1917. <http://files.usgwarchives.net/mt/lake/military/ww1/draft-dm.txt>

He married Dorothea S. (1906-1990)

"Lambert Demers, an Arlee merchant grew up among the Indians, and can give considerable material on the hunt. He is the nephew of Jack Demers." Buffalo Story: Indians and the Buffalo, told by Dean A. L. Stone, writer Mabel C. Olson, January 28, 1942. "I Will Be Meat For My Salish" The Montana Writers Project and the Buffalo of the Flathead Indian Reservation, written by Bon I. Whealdon and others, edited by Robert Bigart, Salish Kootenai College Press, Pablo, Montana and Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, Montana, 2001, page 29.

[To Getchen Metz,

I have just started with my research on the parents of my grandfather, Alexander deMers who lived in Arlee, Mt- where I was raised. My father Lambert was the youngest of the seven children born to Grace Eugenie (Lambert) and Alexander. I think that their eldest child died at age two. Grace, Alice, Florence, Lewis, Eugene and Lambert all survived. I hope to hear from you soon.
Lambert Lawrence deMers Jr.]

[Lambert Demers was born in month 1898, at birth place, to Louis Alexander Demers and Grace Eugenie Demers (born Lambert). Louis was born on October 16 1849, in La Prairie, Roussillon, Québec, Canada. Grace was born in January 1860, in Ramsey, Comté d'Anoka, Minnesota, EUA. Lambert had 5 siblings: Grace E Demers, Louis A Demers and 3 other siblings. Lambert passed away.]



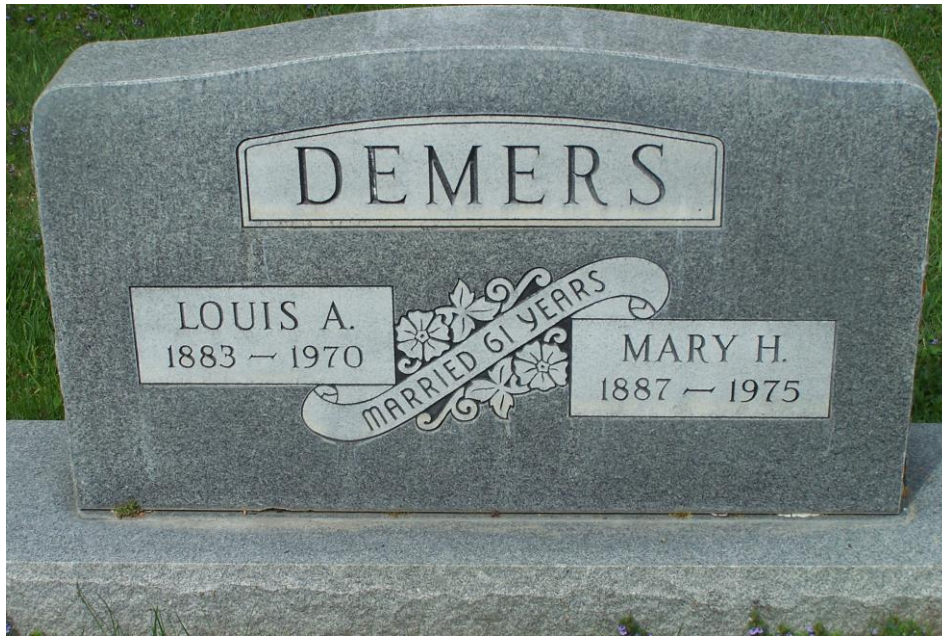
Carol Frey added to Find A Grave

7. Louis Alexander Demers

Born on June 28, 1883. He registered for the draft on June 5, 1917 at age 35 years.

<http://files.usgwarchives.net/mt/lake/military/ww1/draft-dm.txt> He worked at Demers Mercantile Company in Arlee, Montana. He married Mary H. born in 1887 and died August 24, 1975. Buried in Missoula Cemetery in Missoula, Montana.

Died at Arlee, Montana May 1, 1970.



<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=mr&MRid=46887042>

Missoula Cemetery, Missoula, Montana

“Angelo DeMers

Angelo Frances DeMers, 81, a life-long resident of | I a western Montana, died February 9th in Plains’ Clark Fork Valley Hospital. Mr. DeMers was bom August 14, 1899 at Hot Springs, a He worked for 18 years at the McGowen Mercantile and IGroverv in Plains, and later owned and operated the DeMers Grovery there for 20 years. He married Mina Coale on December 25, 1925 in Paradise. Survivors include his wife; a son, Francis (Butte); a daughter, Mrs. Lester Raymond (Plains); a half-brother. Derwin DeMers (Seattle); a sister, Della Roney (Portland); five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Services were held February 12th in the Shrider Chapel in Plains. Burial followed in the Plains Cemetery.” Char-Koosta, February 15, 1980, page 21.