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LOWER SUN RIVER

Lower Sun River is a community not far from the Reduction Works at Great Falls. Here many of the Hill employees live, in homes they have carpentered for themselves. This is a special issue of your Labor-Management newspaper devoted to a peaceful and interesting community.

ALL PHOTOS BY J. T. MULCAHY

We ought to start off by telling you folks that we have had our eye on Lower Sun River for some time. As you know, we’ve been covering community stories around the state from time to time, but the thing that caught our eye about Lower Sun River is the fact that you could almost call it a farming community.

Here the folks from the Reduction Works (and others also) have plots of ground on which they raise produce, not only for their own consumption but for the market. They raise not only all kinds of vegetables, feed and flowers, but they have their cows, their chickens, their bees, their rabbits and hogs for butchering. The men work their shifts at the Plant and then come home and spend their spare time working around their places. Practically every home there was built by the owner.

Life in Lower Sun River revolves around such interesting places as the Lower Sun River Community Club, Emil Pfister’s busy store and the neat brick school house. On this page we show you two groups of Lower Sun River folks enjoying a regular Saturday night dance at the Community Club. Several groups meet here regularly, among them the Lower Sun River Service Club, which is composed of parents of the boys and girls in service. Servicemen and women now number close to 175 and a list with addresses has been sent to each so that correspondence might be exchanged. The ladies prepare a light snack for the social period after the meetings and a collection is taken up at each session for packages to be sent to the boys and girls in service. Mrs. Tom Lester, whose husband works in the Wire Mill, is mailing secretary. It was Mrs. Lester who made a service flag for the club. She has two sons, Donald and Ray, both in Germany now.

These are two views of the Charles M. Russell School below, named after the famed Montana cowboy artist. At the right, the home of Arthur Boles, repairman helper at the Zinc Plant, is shown.

You don’t need to be around Lower Sun River very long to realize that it is an active little community. Things really keep humming. At the Community Hall, as shown in the pictures, the Lower Sun River Service Club meets here also, as well as the Scouts and the 4-H Clubs.
We Go Calling

We dropped in for a Sunday visit on the Dominick Wardinskys and the Jack Murphys at their homes in Lower Sun River.

WE'VE tried to select representative residents of Lower Sun River and to visit them with our camera. We couldn't get everybody, of course, but we tried to get a good cross section.

We felt sure that you would like to see Dominick Wardinsky and Jack Murphy. That's Dominick in the picture at the top surrounded by members of his family. He has been foreman of the Copper Refinery for twenty-seven years and has worked at the plant since 1900. He has seven children—four boys and three girls—all married, and he has five grandchildren in service. He has five acres of ground devoted largely to his beautiful garden. He built his own house and has devised his own water system, which pumps water from a well seventy-five feet down.

Three of Dominick's sons are neighbors—Bill is a bricklayer at the Reduction Works; Harry lives next door and works in the Wire Mill, while Gene, shown with him in the pictures, has just returned to Lower Sun River.

The bottom pictures show you Jack Murphy of the Copper Sub-Station, who started on the job in 1910. He has four hundred strawberry plants on his ground and he cans fruits and vegetables grown on his own place.

Jack Murphy at the switchboard in the Electrolytic Copper Refinery Sub-Station at the Reduction Works at Great Falls.

A COMMUNITY STORY
There's a neighborhood store in every American community. In Lower Sun River the neighborhood store is run by Emil Pfister, affectionately known as the Mayor. Come along with us on this two-page visit with the Pfister family.

There's always at least one gathering place in any community and in Lower Sun River the place where people assemble is a neat brick building with a sign across the top reading "Pfister's Grocery." Since your editors found that this is the spot where it was handy to meet a lot of the folks, we spent quite a bit of time with the Pfister family and in the store chatting with Lower Sun River people.

Frank Curry, the amiable Walter Winchell of the Reduction Works, refers to Emil as the "Mayor of Lower Sun River." Frank, who started to work at the Plant on the same day as Emil more than twenty-five years ago, is more than half right. For Emil takes great pride in Lower Sun River and in its people and is a sort of one-man Chamber of Commerce. He started work as a general office boy, then moved to the warehouse, and later went to work at the Wire Mill. Since 1928 he has worked the change shift as a zinc leach operator. Twelve years ago the Pfisters bought their house, which is a stone's throw to the rear of the store, and the five acres which went with it. Emil had had quite a lot of experience working in his father's bakery on the North Side, so two years after they took over the house Emil started building the store. This year he added a room at the back where folks can go and relax and swap neighborhood talk over a cooling soft drink.

On this page are various views around Emil's store. Two of them show members of the Great Falls Saddle Club. The little girl in the foreground of the second picture is Lenora Pfister, age 6, who borrowed a horse for the picture.

On this page are views inside and outside the store of Emil Pfister. That's Mrs. Pfister at the left in the bottom picture, shown on the job in their store in Lower Sun River.
Everybody in Lower Sun River seems to find his way to Emil's store sometime during the day.

This is truly a community store, this grocery of Emil Pfister's. His jolly wife, Mabel, helps him, and manages the store when Emil is at work. She is assisted by their daughter, Betty, who is sixteen. Shirley, three, is a little too young to help, but does her best.

Mrs. Pfister has her hands full, but doesn't mind. Not only does she have a lot to do in the store, but she maintains her tidy home as well. Last year, when the Mexicans from the beet fields nearby began to trade at the store, Mrs. Pfister took up Spanish so that she could talk to the customers. Not content with that, she raised three hundred rabbits. Some of them were Red Flemish Giants worth sixteen dollars apiece. But the job of taking care of them got too great and they have since disposed of all of them but one.

Last year the oldest daughter, Betty, won the Heisey Foundation Award, which is given "for outstanding improvement in citizenship, scholarship and effort during the past school year." She received fifty dollars cash, so she wisely put twenty-five dollars with it and bought a one hundred dollar War Bond. A junior in the high school, Betty is a graduate of the Charles M. Russell grade school nearby, whose principal is Mrs. Esther Aymes.

When you visit Emil, he will stand with you on the front porch of his store and point with pride to the homes and gardens of Lower Sun River people. He loves all of it.

Emil thinks a lot more people ought to buy plots and build their homes in the Lower Sun River community.

A COMMUNITY STORY
One of the interesting calls we made was to the home of Arthur E. (Art) Stephenson, stripper in the Zinc Tank House. Like others in Lower Sun River, Art built his house himself—the only help he had was with hanging two doors. His wife, Cynthia, helped lay hard wood floors in the living room, so it is truly a family pride.

Stephensons have a bright three-year-old son named Ronnie, and high in Art’s personal affection is his prize cow, Lady; we caught Art in the act of milking her on a warm Sunday evening and we got a shot of them. The Stephensons also have thirty-five chickens and they raise calves for butchering. Usually, Art told us, they have a pig but they don’t happen to have one this year. They have a root cellar where they store turnips, carrots and potatoes and last year Cynthia canned around four hundred quarts of fruits and vegetables.

Art’s flower boxes really tickled us. As you can see by looking closely at the pictures, they are made out of pine slabs. The bark remains on them, and the way the flowers grow in them is really surprising. As a matter of fact, the flower gardens throughout Lower Sun River are really beautiful, and there are many varieties not seen in other sections of the state.

Like other residents of Lower Sun River, the Stephensons enjoy their visit to the Community Club House on Saturday nights. Everybody helps out in the kitchen and these dances are truly community affairs. Sandwiches and soft drinks are served. That is a view of the kitchen at the club house taken on a recent Saturday night during a dance intermission.
A COMMUNITY STORY

A TYPICAL Lower Sun River family is that of Bert Gettle, who has been at the Reduction Works since 1920 and is now an operator in the Zinc Tank House. We were lucky to catch Bert at home just a few hours before Bert, Jr., stationed in the North Atlantic with the Signal Corps, was due to report back for duty—that's Bert, Sr., with Bert, Jr., Mrs. Gettle and daughter Charlene, shown in the garden at the back of their home, while here at the right above we find Bert and his wife looking over their crop of vegetables.

The Gettles have lived in Lower Sun River for seventeen years. There was not even a fence post around when Bert started to build his house. They raise potatoes, corn, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peas, beans, beets, carrots and practically every other vegetable you can name. They have their strawberry and rhubarb plants and they raise alfalfa and have two cows. The Gettles make their own butter and Mrs. Gettle cans about one hundred quarts of vegetables a year.

In addition to Bert, Jr., and Charlene, the Gettles also have another son, Robert, nineteen, who is now attending Naval Training School in Detroit.

The second picture shows Bert on the job the next day as an operator in the aluminum wash room. These sheets are put in a sulphuric acid bath for about twenty-four hours to clean the aluminum plates. The aluminum plates are then shipped to a reconditioning plant.

Another thing that's typical about Bert Gettle is that he is invariably working around his house in his spare time. Naturally, with Bert, Jr., home, he and his family were spending their time with him. But all of us can certainly understand that.
WHAT IT TAKES

ANYONE familiar with the history of this country knows that it was built by people who had no breaks except those they created for themselves. They asked no favors of anyone because they knew they wouldn't be granted anyway. They cut their own roads, built their own homes, hunted and fished for their own food. They didn't look to anybody but themselves for their survival.

In a smaller way, the folks of Lower Sun River do the same thing. Maybe they believe in social security from the cradle to the grave, but at the same time they provide a backlog for themselves.

Too many of us in recent years have come to look to Uncle Sam for everything. TOO many of us have gotten the idea that the government will take care of us no matter what happens. But the government is, or should be at least, the people themselves. So when we put the squeeze on Uncle Sam to help us over the rough spots, we are actually only sponging on our friends and neighbors.

This country was built by hard work, by individual enterprise and by thrift. Take away any of these factors from our national economy and the country will collapse. Maybe the Lower Sun River folks haven't bothered to dope it all out, but they know it just the same.

In every community story we've covered, we've seen evidence of the determination of people to stand as squarely on their own feet as they can, to ask no favors of anyone. In good times and in bad, that realistic attitude pays dividends. It's a survival of the pioneer spirit that built the Northwest in the first place.

Lower Sun River isn't unusual by any matter of means. There are communities like it from coast to coast. They're the good, prospering communities. They are the backbone of the United States we live in.

A LOT of the men we saw in Lower Sun River who work at the Reduction Works are located at the Zinc Plant, and you've heard us refer every once in a while to a Zinc Plant stripper. Maybe you'd like to know what that operation amounts to.

If you'll turn back to page four and look closely at the picture at the top, over at the left, you'll see a man with a boy and girl standing in front of him. That's Ray Vian, a stripper at the Zinc Tank House, and his two children, Donald and Vivian. We caught Ray on the job the following day and watched him strip zinc. The plates are brought down by crane and are set in a nine-plate lift rack. This means that there are eighteen sheets of zinc, one on each side. Ray strips off the zinc with an instrument which looks like a trowel. There are about three lifts to a plate.

EARLIER in this issue we mentioned the boys in service from Lower Sun River. In the Lower Sun River Community Club House there is a large service flag which was made by Mrs. Tom Lester. During the dance, pictures of which we have already seen on page two, we got a picture of this beautiful service flag. It is encased in glass and hangs on the wall of the club house.

One of the boys who gave us a hand in steering us around Sun River was Joe Wagner of the Zinc Operating office. That's Joe at the extreme right with two friends. The young lady in white is the wife of Andy Nelson who works in the Zinc Tank House and that is Andy on the other side of her. These folks are regular attendants at the Community Club dances every Saturday.

On page six we show the group in the kitchen, which is operated by Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Lehman. Everyone digs in and helps out at these sessions; they sell soft drinks of all kinds, as well as sandwiches.

The Lower Sun River Community Club operates under a state cooperative license. It sponsors achievement programs for the 4-H Club of Sun River. The hall is also the site for the 4-H Cascade County Achievement Program.

The officers of the club are Nick Poncelet, president; Evelyn Poncelet, his wife, secretary, and J. W. Powell, treasurer. There are six directors.

LOWER Sun River folks like the music and they should because it is plenty lively. Our photographer held up the proceedings long enough to get a picture of Weber's Orcheatra. The group hails from Great Falls—all of them are local people and they have played every Saturday night for the last year or so.

Weber's Orcheatra furnishes the music for the regular Saturday dances.

AND those are a few highlights of people and places around Lower Sun River.
Frank Schrupp of the Zinc Leaching Plant is a farmer by birth and choice. His garden yields
FRANK SCHRUPP practically paid for his house by the sale of his cucumbers. He now specializes in golden bantam sweet corn for the market and he makes from $300 to $500 a year from his garden.

Frank has been at the Reduction Works for twenty years and is extra foreman at the Zinc Leaching Plant. For seventeen of those years he has been in Lower Sun River. He has four and a third acres of land with two garden plots—one for his home garden and one for the market. He has eighteen plum trees and at one time had eleven beehives. He raises enough hay on his own land for the Schrupps' one cow, and they raise chickens as well. Frank will tell you that he was born on a farm and never got the land out of his blood. He has a hand cultivator with a motor on it and each day he puts in a shift at home as well as one at the Plant. When he is afternoon shift, he gets up at six o'clock in the morning and works in the garden before going on the job. He has worked out his own irrigation system with a pump which pumps the water from Sun River.

There isn't a farm product that Frank hasn't at least experimented with, and he has good luck with practically everything he tackles. He will tell you that irrigation is something of a problem but he, like others like him in Lower Sun River, has solved it. As a result he has a fine plot of fertile land for all to see.

The Schrupps are solid people. They have two sons in service—we met Dana, home on furlough from the Eighth Air Force. A First Lieutenant, he had worked with the cement gang at the Reduction Works before going to war and later in the Zinc Plant. He saved his money to attend Montana State College at Bozeman, where he studied agriculture. Willard, another son, is with the Navy and is stationed now as Pasco, Washington. A daughter, Georgina, works at the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association.

On this page we show you various views of Frank Schrupp and his wife. At the left we see Frank with his motor-driven cultivator; at the right we see Frank and his cow. Frank puts in a full shift at home before going to the plant. 

Typical Americans: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Schrupp, builders and owners of their own home, and the proud parents of two boys serving the cause of freedom. Here they look over their flowers.

And They Took Up Farming

Here's Frank, at the left below, in the Zinc Leaching Plant standing before an Oliver filter. At the right Frank shows us one of his beehives. He has raised millions of bees and knows how to handle them. He has had as many as eleven beehives at one time and that's a lot of bees.

A COMMUNITY STORY
The Bolen Foursome

We really fell for the Bolen family—maybe that’s why we wanted that picture of them played up large. Maynard Bolen works on the Hill; we got a picture of him shown on this page by the cadmium presses. He had just cleaned them. The cadmium sponge collects on the press and must be removed, after which the presses are washed and new cloth and paper put on. The cadmium free solution, containing zinc sulphate, is returned to the process.

The Bolens have two children—Buddy, who will be four this fall, and Bonnie Marie, who is twenty months. Buddy is an active youngster and loves to ride the cow, Lady, which Maynard bought from Ed Farrell of the Zinc Leaching Plant. The Bolens have lived in Sun River two years. They have two gardens and three milk cows and a steer. In addition to that they have thirty hens, forty baby chicks, and a hog for butchering in the fall. (Buddy adds that they also have two cats.)

The Bolens’ home is completely surrounded by a beautiful Russian Olive hedge and by cottonwood trees which provide a shady yard for the children to play in. The place keeps Mrs. Bolen busy, too; she cans around four hundred quarts of fruits, vegetables and meats—chickens, rabbit, beef and pork—each year.

But it is her two grand kids who seem to keep Mrs. Bolen busiest.

Here are views of the Maynard Bolens. The family is up there at the left in the big picture. Below Maynard and Buddy show off their prize cows. At the left Maynard is shown on the job.
The Folks At Home

With three sons overseas fighting the war for Uncle Sam, the Harry Wardinskys are doing their war share. In the meantime they are keeping a wonderful home for the boys to come home to and enjoy.

You folks met Dominick Wardinsky back on page three. Now we want you to meet Harry, one of his sons, and his daughter-in-law. Harry had gone fishing the day we were there, but we got him on the job next day.

Like many another family in Lower Sun River, the Wardinskys have done their share in helping to win the war. They have three boys in service, all of them overseas. They are Stanley, Frank and Gordon. Stanley worked at the Carpenter Shop at the Plant before going into service.

Both Harry and his wife are great flower lovers, and this attractive home of theirs which Harry built sixteen years ago is surrounded by beautiful flowers. They have a little more than two acres of ground.

In the picture at the Wire Mill, Harry is shown operating the welding machine.

This machine joins the loose ends of the wire before it is coiled.
ANOTHER Zinc Leaching Plant man (the majority of Lower Sun River residents come from the Zinc Plant) is Elmer Johnston. Elmer is another who has built his own home by degrees. He and his family have lived there for sixteen years and he has kept adding to it all the time. They have three sons; two are in the service—Vernon, nineteen, is a Seaman Second Class, Malcolm, twenty-five, worked at the Zinc Plant as a stripper before going overseas as a technician—he has been in service forty months. A third son, Allen, lives across the road and works as a zinc stripper. The Johnstons have a huge garden with all kinds of vegetables. They grow crested wheat grass for pasture for their cows and calf. They have one hundred sixty chickens, thirty turkeys, one pair of geese, and last year Mrs. Johnston canned two hundred twenty quarts of fruits and vegetables.

We couldn’t resist the temptation to get a picture of Elmer taking it easy on a Sunday afternoon with his dog Toby. The pup is the favorite of the boys overseas and they are trying to keep him happy and peppy until the boys come home. Another favorite of the boys is Kitty, a 16-year-old cat.

And that, good readers, is our story of Lower Sun River. It is a community that shows, on every side, the zeal of the right kind of people. They create comfort and security for themselves. The next time you’re in the vicinity of Great Falls, take a trip to Lower Sun River.