



# **Behind These Mountains, Vol. I: People of the Shining Mountains Where The Clark's Fork River Churns**

*Mona Leeson Vanek*

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"Behind These Mountains, Vol. I: People of the Shining Mountains Where The Clark's Fork River Churns" begins a trilogy. With oral tape recordings, letters, and written documentation, this engaging book begins the three-volume series that narrates virtually every known event of significance in the northwestern Sanders County, Montana up to the 1930s.

Beginning before the arrival of David Thompson, whose presence was still visible when the fur trade ravished the area, the story continues through a gold rush, prospecting, and construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad: Phases which preceded settlement of the lower Clark's Fork of the Columbia River, the Bull River Valley, and the surrounding region.

Determined homesteaders fascinate and shock readers with exciting log drives down river, pioneering merchants, establishment of schools and churches, and the horrors of the 1910 forest fire. Countless stories of individuals enliven this history, ranging from mildly amusing and tragic to hilarious.

Where else in a book of this sort can one find characters who vow to escape from a local jail "disguised as a bunch of radishes?" or a shingle-mill owner who closed down his mill after having to ante up compensation for too many workers' sawed-off fingers - at \$1,000 per finger.

The chapter on the U.S. Forest Service's arrival in the valley clearly describes the bitter struggles between pioneer ranger Augustus Ferdinand Silcox and local businessmen, led by Clifford R. Weare, who wanted to continue their unfettered exploitation of the public domain.

Hundreds of photographs in each volume enhance the text. The Search Function is a special boon for genealogists and historians as well as the merely curious.

A complete set of footnotes contain details not included in the chapters, and readers who skip the footnotes miss some stirring accounts of vigilante activity during the 1880s.

Footnotes also contain additional accounts of the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which opened the northwest area of Montana to settlement, and provide vivid accounts of problems along this 'most difficult and expensive division' of the entire NPRR line.

You won't want to miss "Behind These Mountains, Volume II: God's Country In The United States Of America, and Behind These Mountains Vol. III: The Fabulous Valley In The Foothills Of The Rockies, which complete the trilogy.

The River Journal, Montana Magazine, and The Missoulian said, because the history is fully documented, Mona Leeson Vanek, longtime resident of Montana, historian and writer, has done Montana a great service.

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