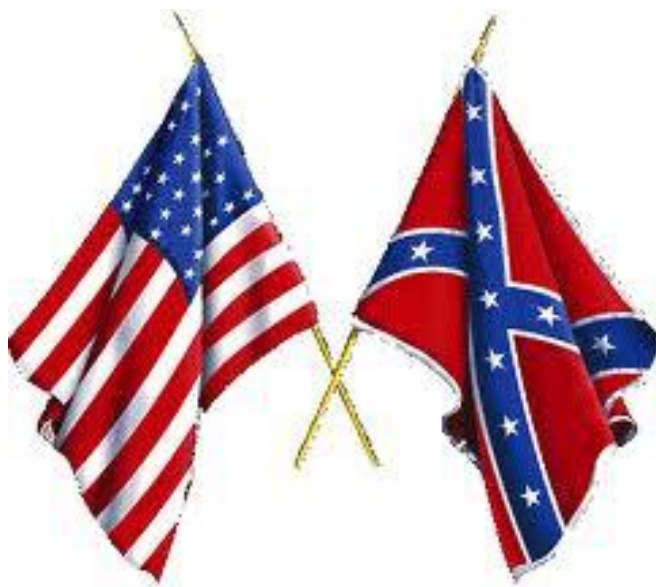


MONTANA'S LAST CIVIL WAR VETERANS

BY JAY S. HOAR



REVIEWED BY GARRY VICTOR HILL

Montana's Last Civil War Veterans. by Jay S. Hoar. Temple Maine; BO-INK-UM Press, 1984. Revised and Expanded Edition. 2010. 67 pages Illustrated.

In 1984 Professor Jay S. Hoar's first version of *Montana's Last Civil War Veterans* was published, but then in 2008 while lecturing he met a descendant of Sarah Miranda Strong Vorus (1840-1942) a Unionist Civil War nurse. Originally from New York State, she had served at Fort Donelson Tennessee in 1861-1862 and fled from there when Confederate forces attacked. In 1876 after her husband's death she settled in Sun Valley Montana and lived quietly for the rest of her life.

What is remarkable is that it was 2010 before she was accredited as outliving Montana's supposed last veteran, Thomas Bainbridge (1846-1940). Professor Hoar has discovered seven other Montana residents who served in the Civil War and also outlived Bainbridge. An eighth, Susan Haines Clayton, (1851-1948) another Union nurse, spent decades in Montana but her last years were with relatives in Oregon. The last of Montana's veterans, Robert Thornburg (1848-1944) was a North Carolinian who must have been amongst the last survivors of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. A die hard Confederate all his life, he recalled that Montana's Bitterroot Valley became a haven for former Confederates. The first of them were deserters from General Sterling Price's forces after his army virtually disintegrated in Missouri in 1864. Others would, follow in the turbulent Reconstruction years.

His work is focused on the last fifteen Civil War survivors, twelve Unionist, two Confederate and one Harvey Edwin Buffington (1852-1939) who at the age of eleven forged his age to serve in the Union Army, but became a courier for both sides. Messages and parcels going back and forth were nothing unusual and doing this was not necessarily considered treacherous.

Montana, although predominantly Unionist in sentiment, had very little to do directly with the Civil War. It was sparsely populated by whites and the first Union Cavalry forts were only established in 1866. The veterans came in with the opening of the far West in the decades after the war.

Using the memories of descendants, family letters, newspapers and assorted archives Professor Hoar reconstructs their lives, so ordinary in some ways, but interesting in others. All show a great deal of resilience and self-reliance – they had to. Beautiful and bountiful as Montana is, this was no place for the weak or faint hearted in the days of manual technology, horse powered vehicles and remoteness.

This book is a valuable addition in three different fields, Montana history Civil War research and the winning of the west.



The Clarke Fork River



The Belly River Both pictures Wikipedia

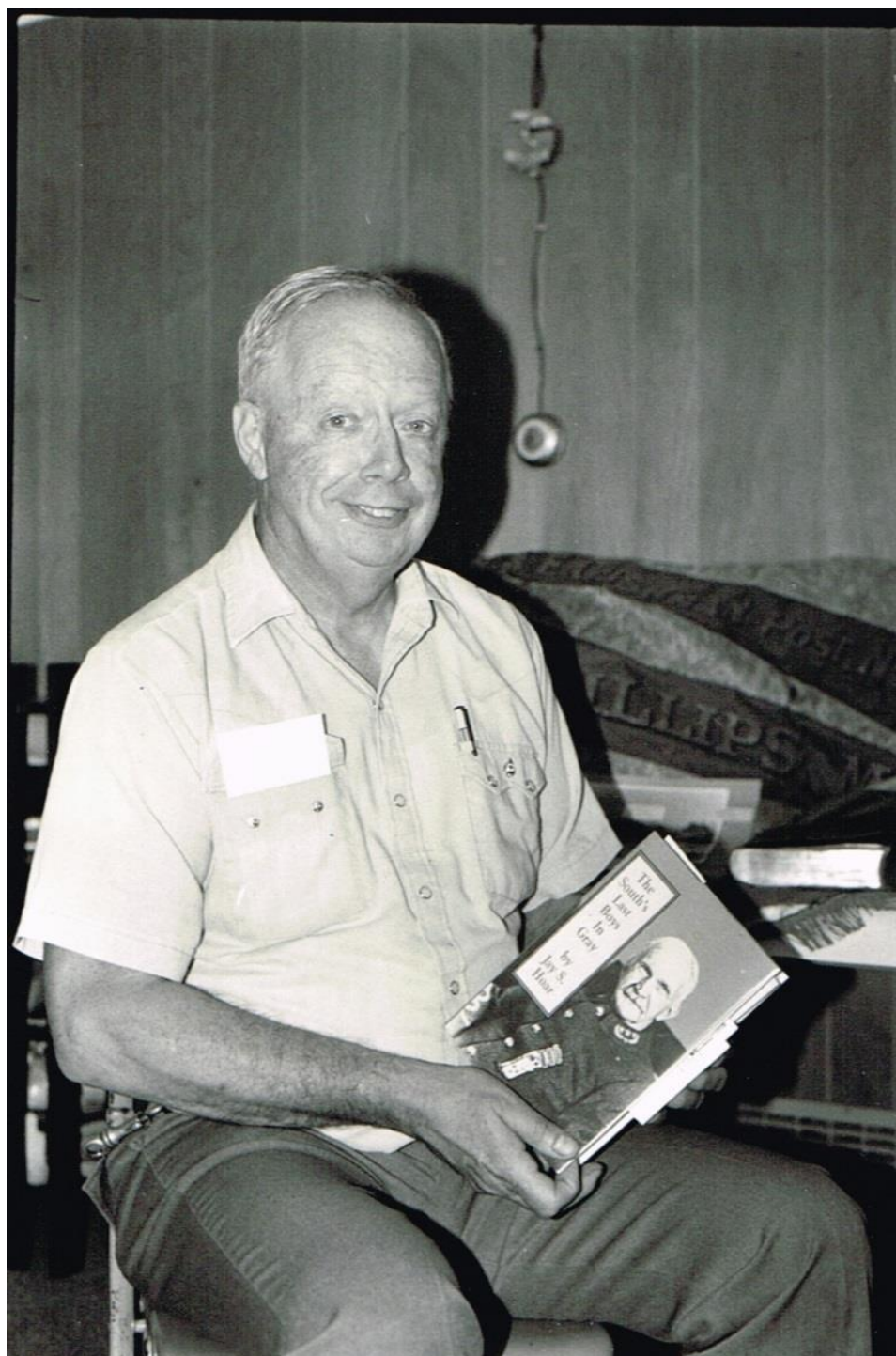
With landscapes like this Montana would have drawn the pioneers in.



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<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=621679>



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