

RAYNOLD'S PASS REST AREA, HISTORICAL MARKER
Milepost 15.8, tangent to U.S. Highway 287, eight feet southeast of
garbage can rack
Cameron vicinity
Madison County
Montana

HAER MT-148-H
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
12795 West Alameda Parkway
Denver, CO 80228

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Raynold's Pass Rest Area, Historical Marker
Milepost 15.8, tangent to U.S. Highway 287
eight feet southeast garbage can rack
Cameron vicinity
Madison County
Montana

Quad: Squaw Creek, Montana (1988)

UTM: 12/453174/4972253

Date of Construction: 2005

Present Owner: Montana Department of Transportation
Helena, Montana

Present Use: Historical marker

Significance: The Raynold's Pass Rest Area is significant for its association with the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) development of roadside rest areas during the 1960s. The department developed a standard design for rest areas, including landscaping, and this site is representative of that standard design. The MDT located many rest areas at scenic areas in Montana to encourage users to stop and spend time at them. The Raynold's Pass Rest Area is representative of the type of rest area established along the state's two-lane highways. While many of the features located at the site are not historic, they still reflect the MDT's philosophy for this type of facility in the late twentieth century.

Historian: Jon Axline, Montana Department of Transportation
July 2014

II. HISTORY

The Montana Department of Transportation began installing interpretive markers about the state's historic next to the highways in 1935. By 1941, there were 98 roadside historical markers located at significant sites throughout Montana. After World War II, the MDT began installing new historical markers and added to the system with geological roadside markers beginning in 1948. The initiation of the Interstate highway program in 1956, however, posed new problems for the popular markers. There was considerable debate among the Montana State Highway Commissioners about the future of the program as there did not seem to be any place for the markers. In August 1961, the highway commissioners directed that historical markers on formerly two-lane highway segments be relocated to the new Interstate highway rest areas. Many on non-bypassed segments, however, were also relocated to new rest areas. In 1966, the MDT relocated the "Raynold's Pass" historical marker from its original location at Milepost 33 on U.S. Highway 287 to the new Raynold's Pass rest area. That marker remained in the rest area until 2005 when an MDT maintenance crew installed the existing "A Tough Business" historical marker in the rest area. The old marker was relocated to a site five miles southeast of the rest area at the junction of U.S. Highway 287 and Montana Highway 87. "A Tough Business" was written by MDT Historian Jon Axline and manufactured in the department's sign shop.¹

III. DESCRIPTION

The historical marker is composed of resin plastic and was installed at the rest area in 2005. The marker is entitled "A Tough Business." The marker board is 4' x 6' and supported by 8" x 10" wood posts. The sign is suspended from a 12" x 5" wood crossbeam by metal hangers and brackets. The marker faces southwest toward the parking lot and is located about 10' from the parking lot and 8' southeast of the garbage can rack (MT-148-I). The historical marker text reads:

A Tough Business

The Madison Valley was well known by mountain men and traders during the first half of the 19th century. Beaver loved the many creeks that emptied into the river and buffalo were common in the valley, making it popular for both Indians and trappers. Located just north of what would become Yellowstone Park, the valley was also a natural corridor into the fur-rich valleys of southwestern Montana. A pageant of fur trade notables were frequent visitors to this region, including Jedediah Smith, Bill Sublette, Joe Meek, Kit Carson, and Henry Fraeb. The fur trade was a cutthroat business where competition for a limited natural resource was tough and sometimes violent. Near here, in October, 1832,

¹ Jon Axline, ed., *Montana's Historical Highway Markers* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2008), 8), ix-xi; Ed Christopherson, comp., *Montana's Historic Markers* (Missoula: Earthquake Press, 1970), 49; Montana State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, book 15, p. 368 (28 August 1961).

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Jim Bridger and Tom Fitzpatrick led a trapping brigade commanded by rival Henry Vanderburgh into an ambush by the Blackfeet Indians. Vanderburgh and one of his men were killed, while several others were wounded. In 1837, smallpox decimated the Blackfeet, including bands who lived in this valley. Four years later, the fur trade was all but gone, ending a colorful and important era in American history.