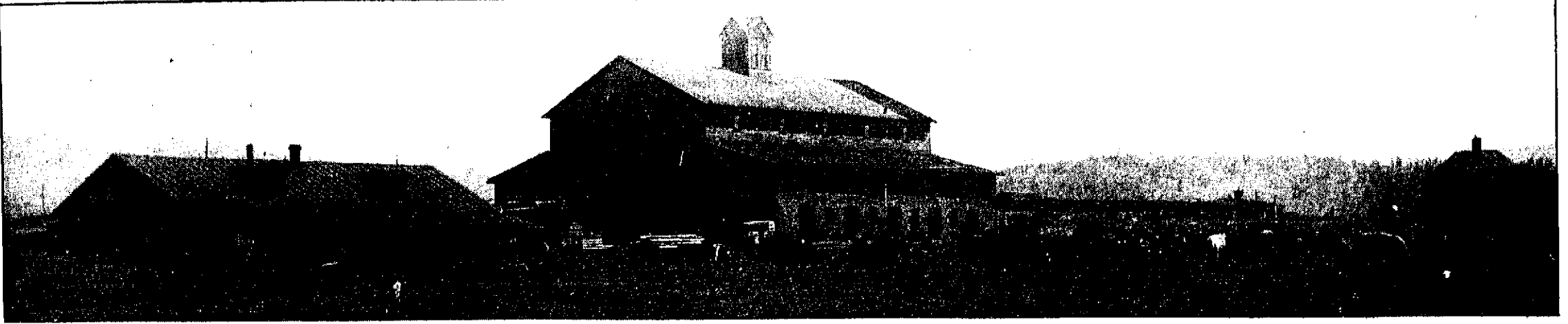


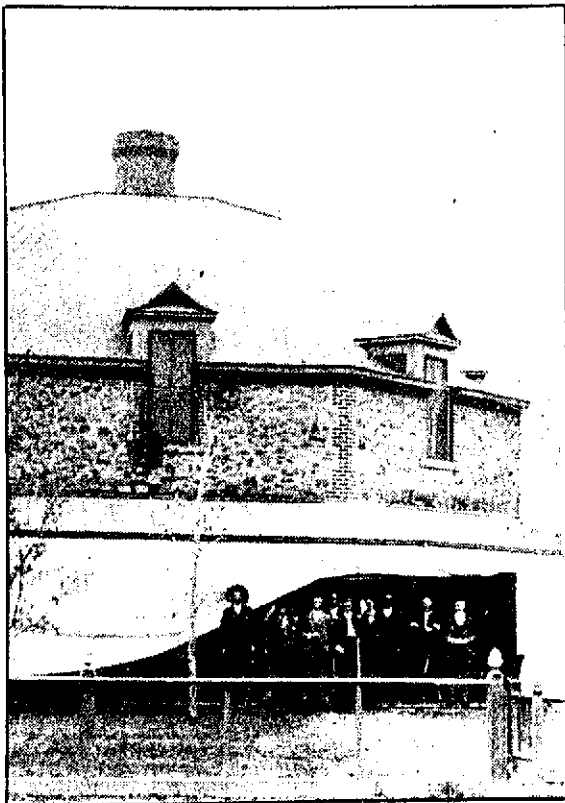
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WEDDINGS
FEATURES

SUNDAY



A turn-of-the century picture of the original Child Ranch. (Photo courtesy of the Kleffners)



1891 picture shows a canvas covering the porch that surrounds the octagon house.

Two dreams

First the Childs, then the Kleffners found their lives linked to a majestic ranch



W.C. Child became depressed and died after he lost the ranch. (Photos courtesy of the Montana Historical Society)

BY HENRY W. JORGENSEN
Special to the IR

As people drive north from East Helena toward Montana City they come to an incredibly large barn. The north end is clad in a rich red paint. In the center are inscribed the words, "Kleffner Ranch."

Next to the barn is a large octagonal shaped house, unusual for this area. It is made of stone and is surrounded by a veranda with an overhang. Buildings and yard are well manicured.

The story of this ranch is the story of two dreams. The one was by William C. Child, whose dream was of a magnificent ranch located in a beautiful setting in the Prickly Pear Valley surrounded by foothills on three sides with the town of East Helena to the north. The other was the dream of Paul Kleffner, present owner of the ranch.

WILLIAM CHILD CAME TO HELENA in 1871 where he was appointed agent for Wells Fargo Express Company. At the same time he worked for Helena Reduction Works.

In 1872 Child was appointed register for the Land Office for Montana Territory by President Grant. It may have been during his tenure in this position that his grandiose dream began to take shape.

Child had become involved in mining precious metals that made him a wealthy man. He became part owner of Lexington Mine near Helena and also of the Peerless Jennie Mining Company.

Open range ranching and the winter of 1886-87 with its aftermath had a great influence on William Child's dream. Range land had become overstocked. There was little snow during the winter of 1885-86, and the following summer was hot and dry. Autumn found both the grass and the stock in poor condition.

A sequence of cold and snow in November with a brief chinook followed by a long and severe cold spell caked the scant foliage with ice.

When chinook winds came in March the cattle industry had been dealt a devastating blow. Carcasses dotted the landscape.

IN 1886 CHILD HAD MADE his initial purchase of land for a ranch from Biddle Reeves. He bought additional land until he had about 3,000 acres. He named it the Whiteface Ranch when he brought over purebred whitefaced Hereford cattle from England. It became one of the first purebred cattle ranches in Montana.

Child believed that the days of great herds of cattle running uncared for on the open range, risking starvation and freezing to death, were over. This to him was neither humane nor profitable.

This belief led Child to build the biggest barn in Montana, and perhaps the whole Northwest. He brought 40 Italian craftsmen to Montana to work on it. The two lower levels are 100 by 100 feet. The central third level is 60 by 100 feet with rafters 30



Paul Kleffner poses for a picture in front of the huge barn built by Child. (Photo by Gene Fischer)

feet above the top floor. The total height of the barn is 55 feet.

The central third-level structure is built with wood. Skeletal timbers are joined by pegs, notching, and bracing rather than nails. The basement and two wings are built with cobblestone from nearby McClellan Creek.

The barn had individual stalls for 500 head of cattle and could accommodate 350 tons of hay. An additional stone shed, 270 feet long, was built to provide shelter for cattle during inclement weather.

SHORTLY AFTER BUILDING THE BARN, The Italians were also at work building a main dwelling house with a classic octagonal design, made popular in the central and eastern states

during the 1860's by Orson Fowler from New York. Each side is 20 feet long. A veranda surrounds the house and at one time could be enclosed by a canvas. The two-story house was built of native granite with bricks around the windows. Walls were 18 inches thick. The downstairs main dwelling space had four large rooms built in a circular fashion. Each room had a fireplace connected to a single chimney in the center.

THE SECOND FLOOR WAS AN OPEN ballroom, where many parties were held. The Northern Pacific and Montana Central railroads traversed the ranch and people came from Helena by train in Child's private railroad car. After a night of dancing they returned by train. Politicians used the house for a meeting place

for lobbies and caucuses.

WITHIN FIVE YEARS William Child's dream had been realized. He had acquired a large ranch in a bowl-like setting in the beautiful Prickly Pear Valley. He had stocked it with beef and dairy cows, horses, swine, and mules, and had provided shelter and necessary hay storage so they would not be at the mercy of the open range.

Then disaster struck. It was 1893, the year of the Silver Panic and a great depression. Many entrepreneurs who had overexpanded were wiped out financially. Child was no exception. He had spent his money and efforts building the Child Ranch and when it was finished, lost it because of

(More on DREAMS, page 2D)

Phony beepers save people from lot of misery

By LESLIE GUTTMAN
San Francisco Chronicle

You're alone at your neighborhood cafe, sitting in the warm, lazy sunshine, tipping back a double cappuccino with chocolate and cinnamon, reading the Sunday paper.

"Hi! Don't we take aerobics together? Aren't you the one who couldn't get up off the floor after that Janet Jackson number yesterday?"

Gad, it's the Together Woman; the one with the Mercedes boyfriend, the Frederick's of Hollywood

workout outfits — the surgically attached ankle weights.

It is the unfortunate soul who, she told the class, can't donate blood because she doesn't weigh enough.

"Don't feel bad, though," says the TW. "It was a killer class. The one right before it was even worse!"

Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep ...

"Gee — Caitlin, is it? I'd love to talk — but I'm on call, that's my beeper. See ya."

For those of you who aren't doctors, presidents or plumbers, the ultimate excuse is now available: the

ersatz beeper.

No longer will you have to suffer the company of bores. Surreptitiously press a tiny button on the look-alike gizmo, and it will begin beeping in 30 seconds.

Freedom!

"Nobody suspects a beeper," said its creator, Eugene Grant, a 69-year-old structural engineer from Sunset Beach, Calif.

Since inventing the fake beeper three years ago as a gag, he has sold close to 17,000 of them.

Beeper buyers have found a myriad of uses for his invention, said Grant. They include:

You are out to dinner at a posh restaurant with friends. Go ahead and order the lobster, get the Beluga.

After the Drambuie — but before the check ... Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep ... Rush to the phone, then come hurriedly back, explaining that you have an emergency and must leave immediately. Forget to pay.

It's about halfway through the poker game, and you are raking it in. Your companions don't seem to be sharing in your good fortune and are starting to look a little like the leading men from "Scarface" ... Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep — Beep ...