

It was a picture-perfect day. An amazing, unmatched, blue sky filled with magnificent clouds, which have a life all their own. The kind of day for which Montana is famous. As I stood there taking it all in, I felt like I had stepped into a real live picture postcard...

A Montana State of Mind





That beautiful day, nine years ago, was my first trip to South Central Montana. The overwhelming joy and the sense of wonder and magic I felt that day, has never left me. I arrived on that glorious day with my family. Together, we spent 10 joyous days enjoying what would become “Our” Montana. And while we didn’t know it at the time, what had begun as a line item on my bucket list would end up changing my life and my family’s lives, forever.

From Billings, we drove west on Interstate 90, through wide open, grassy plains into rolling, lodge pole pine foothills, finally arriving in the rocky, snow peaked mountains. Our destination was a dude ranch in the Absarokee Mountains along Mission Creek south of Livingston. The scenery alone would have made the trip a wild success. When we combined it with our love of horses, the trip became unforgettable.

We spent most of our time riding horses. Finally persuaded to “go to town,” Livingston was quaint and picturesque; with friendly people, good food, fun shops and historic buildings. It was such fun buying

souvenirs, ice cream, western hats and taking pictures, without horses! When our adventure ended, we were completely in love and our trip home to the east coast was long and wistful.

Over the next four years we visited the dude ranch seven times! Visits to Yellowstone Park, an hour from Livingston, were a favorite; we photographed bison, grizzly bears, and elk while my children bemoaned the fact that we could not pet or take the wildlife home! Yellowstone Park is not to be missed.

Living in a part of the country I no longer enjoyed while dreaming about a part of the country I truly loved, I asked myself, “What would I do if I could do anything at all?” My instant reply: “Move to Montana!” On a perfect mid-August day my real estate agent, took me to the town of Big Timber. Driving down McLeod Street was like taking a step back in time. The historic buildings, the homes, the old Grand Hotel, all looked like the back lot for an old Western movie.

Located in Sweet Grass County, Big Timber was established in 1889. History abounds here. The town is friendly and family oriented; the hospitality warm and welcoming. On the last weekend in June the town celebrates with a parade through town and a rodeo on Saturday, a tradition since the early 1900s. Floats, the high school band, horses, antique cars, and faces of young and old with broad smiles make this a unique and wonderful experience to celebrate our nation’s birthday. By the end of the day, I’d found a beautiful home. Our fantastic adventure had begun.

The first winter will never be forgotten by any of us! It was wildly and unexpectedly beautiful, so clean, so crisp, so white, so much of it! We hiked and played in the snow. We fed and tended our horses while it snowed. We spent that entire first winter remembering how much we all love snow!





We snuggled in with logs on the fire, hot chocolate and lots of baked cookies. We loved calling the relatives and friends back east to tell them about the crystal clear skies after a snowfall and the tall peaks of the mountains full of snow. We could “hear” the amazed look on their faces every time.

We felt like modern day pioneers on our new ranch and I have never been so proud of my family rising to those occasions that were new experiences from our city background. When the snows stopped, we realized that we had witnessed and enjoyed the Montana state-of-mind known as winter.

We welcomed spring with open arms, the hills became a wonder of downy soft, multi shaded, green carpets. It is not uncommon for this part of Montana to look like Ireland in the spring. The grasses get tall; and on days when the breeze picks up, they blow in waves across the vast fields. It offers a small insight into how the Crow Indians must have felt when there were no fences and the tall grasses would wave continuously across the vast and endless oceans of prairies. The Montana state-of-mind called spring is one of lush growth, beautiful shades of green and the possibility of a sudden, unexpected, squall of white.

Summer is almost everyone’s favorite Montana state-of-mind. There are never-ending outdoor activities to enjoy; fishing, hiking, and camping out, river rafting, photography and horseback riding. The weather and scenery are perfect. It’s a great time for relaxing which we did a great deal that summer! We did chores and rode our horses in the cool summer mornings. As the day would warm, we packed a lunch, grabbed our inner tubes and floated the Yellowstone River!

We waited for dark, to stargaze! The night sky is so truly beautiful, it defies description. The bright white stars are so close you can reach out and grab them. They twinkle, sparkle and shine from the very first star at dusk until the very last star at dawn.

As the summer faded into fall, there was a crispness in the air with cool days and chilly nights. Before long the trees were changing color, and school had started. Elk would bugle; the bears and their cubs would devour the last of the wild berries, at twilight the coyotes would howl. Soon, Halloween and the snow were back! The fall Montana state-of-mind was sweet with the colors of changing cottonwood trees, aspen leaves, and tall grasses fading soft and dry into the color of straw. The sound of ducks and geese heading south filled the air as hunting season approached.

Montana, for many, has always had a mystical lure and attraction. It’s remote, romantic and in many ways still evokes a feeling of the Old West! Time seems to stand still here. Living in Montana is not for everyone, but to visit and experience our state is a must for all! If you have the inclination or the dream to explore, you should come and see for yourself, why it’s called “The Last Best Place.” You might fall so in love with the Big Sky that moving here will be the only way to get your fill of that amazing Montana state-of-mind! ❖

Submitted by: The Land Brokers Real Estate in Big Timber, Montana, Philip Land, Broker/Owner, 406 932-6892 (office) 406 932-4997 (fax), www.thelandbrokers.net Featured writer for this article is Author, Leslie Stryker of Big Timber, Montana; Pictures copyrighted.



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The River Ranch in Big Timber is known for its nearly one mile of frontage on the south side of the Yellowstone River—truly a fly-fisherman’s dream come true! This 240-acre riverfront property is the “Last Best Place.” With breathtaking views of the Crazy Mountain Range and the Beartooth Mountains, this unique land offers diverse possibilities as a private recreational paradise or a productive multi-family compound. There is potential for a tremendous conservation easement. The superb habitat ensures steady visits from native wildlife and migratory waterfowl. The combination of wildlife, water and inspiring views is simply outstanding. \$3,900,000. (Can be acquired in acreages from 25 to 240 acres.)



The River Ranch

Montana ❖ Sweet Grass County ❖ Big Timber



Eagle Springs Ranch

Montana ❖ Sweet Grass County ❖ Reed Point

Eagle Springs Ranch is a spectacular 440-acre equestrian property with varied topography and abundant wildlife. The ranch has an architecturally designed executive home with the highest regard for quality, exceptional craftsmanship and outdoor living spaces. The private location has year-round accessibility. Abundant water includes three-quarters of a mile of fishable Bridger Creek flowing year round and two spring-fed fishable ponds. There is a guesthouse, large horse barn, hay barn and a barn with apartment. \$3,500,000.



Golden Valley Ranch

Montana ❖ Golden Valley County ❖ Melville

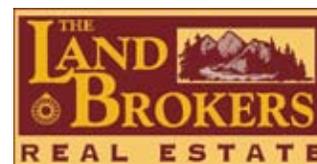
This property has incredible views of the Crazy, Snowy, Judith and Beartooth Mountains. Northeast of Melville, Montana, these 480 deeded acres feature two creeks, an old abandoned original homestead, abundant wildlife and upland birds. Enjoy privacy while you hunt, fish or ranch. This is a wonderful refuge at an incredible price of \$1,150 per acre. \$552,000.



Mile High Ranch

Montana ❖ Sweet Grass County ❖ Big Timber

Only minutes from the fabulous Crazy Mountains and the spectacular Big Timber Canyon Falls, this 480-acre property has total privacy and tranquility. The newly remodeled three-bedroom, three-bath, ranch-style home with covered wraparound porch overlooks breathtaking views of the Crazy Mountains, Absaroka Beartooth Range and the Yellowstone River Valley. There is an oversized three-car garage with ample storage, and the original barn and corrals add to the quiet setting. \$1,700,000.



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Timbered *Elegance*

Just an hour from Billings, Montana is an incomparable opportunity to own one of the most pristine ranches in Montana. Near Big Timber, the sprawling 2,600-acre ranch boasts rolling, timbered hills, natural springs and incredible vistas of the Crazy Mountains, the Beartooth Mountain Range and the Yellowstone River.

This spectacular acreage is both exceedingly diverse and historically productive. Canyons, coulees and open pastures and range are the fabric that make this acreage Rocky Mountain ranch perfect. It is rare to find a holding that embodies so much of what is sought-after in Montana. Privacy, but no seclusion, is the theme that runs through this land, giving you the views and access to mountains, streams and wildlife.

In the heart of South Central Montana, the contiguous size and variety of the property make it ideal for the serious recreational owner or a quality-operator of cattle and horse ranching. The acreage is easily traveled by horseback or vehicles allowing the owner and guests to access





Montana ❖ Sweet Grass County ❖ Big Timber



all that nature has given to this wonderful property. As you explore this vast acreage, you will find the historical pioneer homesite and relics from the Native Americans.

From the highway, a two-mile private road leads to a circular driveway and the main ranch home. The architecturally correct home was constructed using three circa-1850s buildings from Ontario, Canada. The center or main structure was originally a barn, and the two end structures were bunkhouses. It is a beautiful blend of contemporary architecture with modern amenities and the rustic feel of reclaimed timber throughout the home. Large, hand-hewn logs—some as much as 24 inches wide—frame the exterior. The floors were made of reclaimed antique yellow pine boards from a Seagram’s distillery. For those who love to entertain, the flow of the kitchen, dining room, great room and flagstone patios creates perfect dynamics for intimate groups, as well as larger gatherings.

From the circular drive, a flagstone patio creates an inviting setting at the home’s main entry through French doors leading to the generously sized kitchen. Along one side stands a massive dry-stacked fireplace reaching from floor to ceiling. In the center, a large island provides space for setting out a banquet or enjoying a simple family dinner.

Opposite the kitchen is the formal dining room. The room is large enough to comfortably fit an oversized dining table and substantial chairs plus an antique buffet, yet the scale of the room is tempered by the timbered ceiling, bringing an intimate feel to the space. Next to

the dining room and serving as the room’s focal point is another large natural stone quarried fireplace. On the opposite end of the home is the master suite. The room’s hand-plastered, cathedral ceiling reaches 32’.

The main staircase was reclaimed from an old Victorian home in Canada. Dating from the 1850s, the stairway features stunning hand-carved spindles and posts. The rail around the stairs leading to the basement was custom milled to match the original pattern.

Outside, stretching along the entire back of the home, is an oversized patio to enjoy the ambience of miles upon miles of open views of “Big Sky Country.” Several sets of doors open onto the patio, creating an easy flow between the interior and exterior living spaces. Large groups of people can easily mill in and out, and no one feels crowded, yet intimacy and harmony set the tone of the home.

Taking advantage of the natural springs and underground stream, the current owners constructed a lined pond with a floating dock and stocked it with Yellowstone cutthroat. This beautiful valley is enhanced by this water feature.

“Timbered Elegance” offers a home for diverse wildlife, including elk, mule deer, white tail deer and birds that thrive throughout the property. Respectful of their natural resources and avid outdoor people, the owners have worked hard to control noxious weeds and to protect the historically significant remnants from early settlers. This exquisite home is elegant, rustic and welcoming. Offered with 2,600+ total acres. ❖



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