

MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWS SPRING '77

MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY P O BOX 607 BOZEMAN MONTANA .ZIP CODE 59715 PHONE NUMBER 587-0733

COLOMA by Ike Leigland

Approximately two miles northeast of Garnet in the Garnet Range of Mountains are the remains of the old mining camp of Coloma.

Coloma is related to a gold discovery 30 years older than the town itself. In 1865, placer gold was discovered in Bear Gulch, which lies approximately ten miles east of present day Drummond. The town of Bearmouth lies at the head of the gulch and one can still observe the old mine tailings which block the view up the gulch.

The first mining camp in the area at the site of the first discovery was Beartown. The saga of Beartown and the "Beartown Roughs" is a well documented and very interesting portion of mining camp history.

Exploration continued on up the gulch and discoveries of precious metals in commercial quantities were made. In 1892, discoveries at the old shaft of the Nancy Hanks Mine and additional discoveries led to the establishment of Garnet, which soon became the major center of the area.

Other mining camps were also established in the same area. The camps were Coloma, Reynolds, Farther North and Copper Cliff southeast of Garnet. Little is written about these other camps as they were overshadowed by Beartown in the late 1800's and Garnet in the 1900's.

Coloma got its real start in the 1880's when the camps around Beartown began to play out. During this time there were reported to have been 1,000 miners in Garnet and 4,000 miners between Beartown and Coloma, with up to fifty active mines in the area at the time.

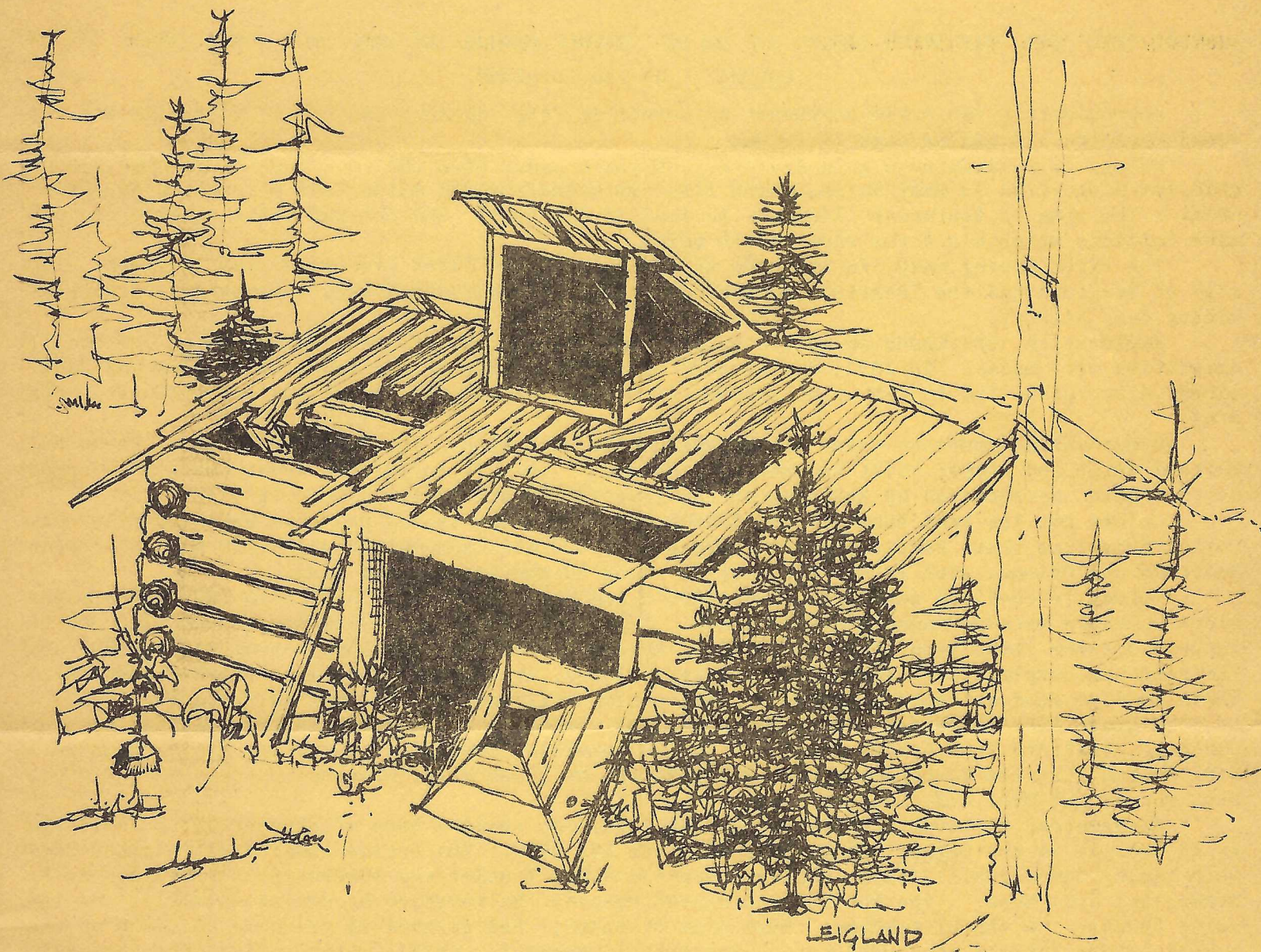
Coloma reached its peak in the late 1890's and had its own post office in 1899. The major mines in Coloma were the Mammoth and the Comet. U.S. Geological Survey estimates that \$200,000.00 in gold ore was taken from the Mammoth Mine. Evidence indicates the camp's boom was in 1897 and the town was complete with the hurdie-gurdies, saloons, stores and other necessities of camp life. There is also some evidence to suggest that a stamp mill was once located in the town.

A stage line connected Garnet and Coloma and residents of Coloma were frequent visitors of Garnet. Visitors from Coloma mentioned in the remaining copies of the Garnet Mining News were D.D. McLeod, Charles Young, Al Gagnon, Henry Marsh, Mr. Cash Moss, Miss May Warner, Jack Crosby, Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. A.J. Rodgers.

An apparent slowdown occurred in 1898 and 1899, but renewed hope of prosperity is indicated by an article in the Garnet Mining News of March 15, 1900. The article indicates that the Mammoth Mining Company will resume mining operation on May 1 under the ownership of Professor A. B. Browne and J.W. Moss. The Montana and Denver Company (believed to be the stamp mill), was issuing checks. A school teacher, Miss Brom of Butte, had arrived in the camp to teach at the school. The article concluded by saying that in general, things were looking prosperous in Coloma.

Apparently the hopes were short-lived and Coloma did not last much beyond 1900. Attempts to resurrect mining in the area in 1916 and again in the 1930's were also unsuccessful.

Some mining still occurs in the area but most claims in the area are tied up in litigation. At last visit, Coloma, although on private property, is accessible to the public. The camp can be reached from Bearmouth, but is easier to get to from Greenough Hill, east of Missoula on Montana 200. The camp is only a few short minutes from Garnet and both can be easily taken in in an afternoon's outing. Coloma as it is today is an excellent complement to restoration efforts at Garnet.



LEIGLAND

BLACKSMITH SHOP AT COLOMA.