

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY

The Society was the brain-child of four people (Dr. Robert Chadwick, mining geologist at Montana State University; McKinley Anderson; attorney; Bert McCroskey, instructor in architecture at M.S.U.; and John N. DeHaas, preservation architect/professor of architecture at M.S.U.)

Work to form an organization began in 1969-70. In 1971 we received our charter from the state of Montana and that fall held our first state-wide meeting in Helena. The first newsletter was published in 1972, an article on the Trail Creek Mining District written by President Bob Chadwick. The article and others that followed are all included in our latest publication, Reflections of the Past. Many of these articles were illustrated with original sketches by Ken Sievert of Great Falls and other artists in our group.

Annual meetings rotate at various sites around the state. The chart below shows the various locations for meetings in the past:

1971	Helena	1978	Butte	1985	Red Lodge
1972	Anaconda	1979	Helena	1986	Anaconda
1973	Great Falls	1980	Missoula	1987	White Sulphur Springs
1974	Bozeman	1981	Livingston	1988	Hamilton
1975	Lewistown	1982	Fort Benton	1989	Virginia City
1976	Dillon	1983	Deer Lodge	1990	Bozeman
1977	Virginia City	1984	Boulder	1993	Dillon
1991	Philipsburg	1992	Lewistown		

Judy Penkake put together a booklet for the 1975 Lewistown meeting with a cover designed by John Devitt. An updated edition was re-issued for our 1992 meeting. Two other booklets have been published: If These Walls Could Talk for the 1977 Virginia City meeting and Dillon and Bannack for the meeting in Dillon in 1976. These are now collectors' items.

In addition to our continuing efforts to inform the public and our elected officials of the urgent need to save the physical evidence of our past we have been active in "hands on" preservation projects. Ken Sievert, Mack Anderson and John DeHaas worked many hours on researching and evaluating two buildings at Granite -- the Miners' Union Hall and Superintendent Weir's House. Title to the buildings was given to the Society and we in turn presented them to the Parks Division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Ken Sievert did a restoration evaluation and cost analysis for both buildings. The Society then proceeded to restore the roof on Supt. Weir's House with help from volunteers from Missoula. Unfortunately we lost the Miners Union Hall to weather (and later to vandals) before work could be done on it. A sign erected by the state marks the site.

Another project was helping financially to obtain both Fraternity Hall and the adjacent Gillian's Saloon for a state park site. Here again Ken Sievert did a study of the buildings for stabilization and restoration. Several members, including Board members Jan O'Brien and John DeHaas testified before the Coal Tax Budget Committee for funds to restore the buildings at Elkhorn, obtain a historic school house and purchase the Parker Homestead near Three Forks. Jan O'Brien, Board member and architect of Billings organized two "clean up" days at the Parker Homestead with the help of Dick Ellis of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

The organization has grown from the four founders in 1969 to more than 125 paid-up members. Dues are \$10 per year for family memberships. A quarterly newsletter is published, and we are encouraged by a number of out-of-state members sprinkled in areas from coast to coast, people who support our goals. These goals were defined when we first organized: "to preserve and maintain ghost towns and historic sites in the State of Montana, and to develop an appreciation of the cultural benefits in the sites, buildings and artifacts that are part of the living museum formed from the beginnings of Montana." The photo below shows a store in Garnet, burned by arsonists some years ago. We use it on our letterhead to remind us of what we can lose.

John N. DeHaas

