



VOL. 38

# Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

WINTER 2008 / 2009



ONE OF OUR GUIDES, CHRIS FISK, TELLS US ABOUT THE WORST MINING DISASTER IN BUTTE'S HISTORY. ON JUNE 8, 1917, 168 MINERS LOST THEIR LIVES IN AN UNDERGROUND FIRE.  
(Terry Halden photo)

## Convention 2008



WE GET TO SEE THE UNDERGROUND SPEAK-EASY THAT OPERATED DURING PROHIBITION. (Terry Halden photo)



AWAITING OUR GUEST SPEAKER, BRIAN SHOVERS AT OUR BANQUET, SATURDAY NIGHT.  
(Terry Halden photo)



ONE ON ONE CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR MINING GUIDES AT THE WORLD MUSEUM OF MINING.  
(Jan O'Brien photo)

TO SEE ALL THE COLOR PHOTOS OF THE CONVENTION - PLEASE GO TO OUR WEBSITE, [www.ghosttown.montana.com](http://www.ghosttown.montana.com) AND PRESS 'CONVENTION 2008.'

Editor

## Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

The **Montana Ghost Town Quarterly** is published four times a year by the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society, P.O. Box 1861, Bozeman, Montana 59771. Phone; 406-522-3856 <http://ghosttown.montana.com> Copyright © 2008, all rights reserved.

Founded in 1969, the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public to the benefits of preserving the historic buildings, sites, and artifacts that make up the living history of Montana.

Opinions expressed in the bylined articles are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the views of the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society.

### Winter 2008 / 2009

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### SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE MONTANA CHRONICLES John Fitzpatrick

A recent book by editor/author John Fitzpatrick of Anaconda, purportedly drawn from notes by John H. Watson, M.D. found in the Hearst Free Library in Montana, describes four adventures the pair had in and around Anaconda. It's fun to read, especially because of our familiarity with such places as the Montana Hotel and Red Lion. You may find it in your local bookstore, or order from Douglas Ferkin, 32780 Frontage Road, Bozeman, MT 59715. (Phone: 1-800-850-3375; email [dferkin@mcn.net](mailto:dferkin@mcn.net)). The book costs \$12.95; add \$2.00/copy for postage.

Bernice DeHaas

## Prez Sez



## John Ellingsen

What a wonderful time we had in Butte!

The bus tours, the walking tours, the World Museum of Mining tours, all with knowledgeable guides that were able to give us background information and answer any questions that we might have. The food, from the hors d'oeuvres at registration, to the banquet, to the Cornish Pastie lunches on the Sunday was superb. It was truly fantastic to rekindle so many old friendships and to make new ones among the 92 people that attended. Our thanks go out to Terry Halden for organizing such a memorable event.

At the general meeting the membership voted to accept West Yellowstone as the location of our convention in 2009. Your board of directors has already started work on the program and details will be posted in future newsletters. Keep the dates September 11th – 13th open in your calendar for another great convention.

John

### PULL UP A CHAIR

Terry Halden

Are we not all responsible in some small way for the demolition of many of our old ghost town structures? In this age of running to our lawyer for retribution for any real or assumed grievances, it is not surprising that owners of property, rather than face the high cost of liability insurance, would prefer to tear the structures down. Several years ago I visited the magnificent mill at Empire, the sister of the 'Drumlummon' mill in Marysville. It was tucked away on the other side of the mountain and rather hard to locate, but when I pulled up, there was another car parked there. The lady driver told me that she liked to come out to the mill and let her teenage son, who suffered from MS, climb in the rafters of the mill. The boy who was about 14 was a nice enough lad, and appeared quite capable of any normal youth activity, but the thought occurred to me: what would the woman do if the boy slipped and fell from the rafters to the ground? The owners I learned were frustrated in their efforts to demolish the mill (because it was a historic landmark) but since then, the mill 'mysteriously' burned down. A hotel in Elkhorn was demolished and moved because of liability fears and as featured in the last newsletter, the Gold Coin mill was also demolished because of high liability costs. All the buildings at Comet, recently purchased by a real estate developer, are rumored to be in danger of being razed, not only to absolve the new owners of liability costs, but also to make way for retirement homes and summer cottages. Take your photos soon because in twenty years there may not be any ghost towns around.

Terry

### New Members

Secretary Rosemary Lee reports the following **New Members** have joined our Association since the last newsletter. **Please make them welcome.**

Van Chappell, Lenexa, KS	Doris Leader, Nashua, MT	Laura Haefer, Billings, MT
Joan Porter, Butte, MT	Deanna Porter, Butte, MT	
Joyce Nelson, Manhattan, MT	Gloria Hardin, Arlington, TX	Sharleen Clark, Glasgow, MT

# MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY BOARD MEETING SEPTEMBER 5, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. by President John Ellingsen in the Treasure Room of the Hotel Finlen in Butte, following the traditional reception for all members, hosted by the board. Members present were John Ellingsen, Terry Halden, Rosemary and Dick Lee, John and Bernice DeHaas, Byron McAllister, Nick Shrauger, Nettie Warwood, Susan Howe, Jan and Maria O'Brien and Gordon Tracy.

It was moved, seconded and passed (MSP) to welcome two new members to our board: Margie Kankrlik of Bozeman and Tom Lowe from Bannack State Park. We appreciate their willingness to serve, and look forward to any fresh ideas they may present as MGTPS enters its thirty-eighth year.

Minutes of the March 2008 board meeting were read and approved, as was the current Treasurer's report.

After discussion it was MSP to hold the September 2009 convention in West Yellowstone. We will headquarter in the Mission Valley between Polson and St. Ignatius in 2010, with our members the Steindorf families of that area assisting with the arrangements.

John announced that new board officers would need to be selected at our September 2009 meeting. At that time, he will have served a maximum of four years as President and Rosemary Lee will have served six years as Secretary/Treasurer. If you will have served two on the board next fall, please think about volunteering to fill these slots.

An example of Montana Ghost Wood, a product of Bitterroot Valley Forest Products, was displayed and it was shared that a percentage of the sale of MT Ghost Wood is generously being donated to MGTPS. Ryan Palma, a representative of the company will be with us at tomorrow's general meeting to talk to the Society members.

The signage project for a walking trail in Nevada City from the train depot to Alder Gulch, proposed by the Montana Heritage Commission, and addressed at the last board meeting, was discussed. It will be brought before the general meeting tomorrow for a vote.

Susan Howe asked about the progress with the slide-scanning project. Dick Lee responded that he would need a new firewire card for his computer to continue working on the scanning. The board approved that purchase.

Tom Lowe asked just what we as a Society do "hands on" regarding ghost town preservation. The answer, provided by John Ellingsen and others is that we, as our Society members age, have become more a lobbying organization. While we physically helped restore the Parker Homestead, located between Lewis and Clark Caverns and Three Forks, we have played a vocal part in saving the ghost town of Elkhorn and the mill at Granite Creek, near Virginia City, supported the State of Montana purchase the Bovey properties in Virginia City and Nevada City and attempted to rescue historic buildings in Granite and most recently influenced the importance of the original Nelson Story house in Bozeman.

We DO need suggestions for projects we could work on or support. Two suggestions were the mill near Sheridan and the French Gulch Mill.

The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

# MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 6, 2008

The annual meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. prior to our banquet in the Treasure State Room of the Hotel Finlen in Butte by President John Ellingsen. Eighty-nine people were present – eighty-three members and six guests.

Secretary/Treasurer Rosemary Lee read the minutes of the September 2007 meeting, which took place in Billings. She also reported that our membership stands at 204, 143 of whom are in-state members, while 61 reside elsewhere. Our current checking balance is \$10,379 before paying convention expenses of an estimated \$4,000, and as of July, our Edward Jones money market account held \$12,359.

Members voted approval to hold next September's convention in West Yellowstone, followed in 2010 by a gathering in the Mission Valley, visiting points of interest between Polson and St. Ignatius. A request was made for volunteers to assist in the planning for West Yellowstone. The Steindorf families from Charo will make arrangements for a meeting place, speaker and events for 2010.

Ryan Palma, representing Bitterroot Valley Forest Products, spoke about their Montana Ghost Wood Product and provided samples for all to see. Using timber destroyed by beetles or fire, the company produces a siding that closely resembles that found in ghost towns. The hope is that people will purchase their product and leave our fine old historic towns intact. They are providing a percentage of their sales to MGTPS to be used in worthy preservation projects.

Dick Lee reported on the signage project along the trail in Nevada City that the board recommended to the general membership for approval. The Montana Heritage Commission oversees the project. After the general membership approved the expense, Ryan Palma and Blain Birmingham of Bitterroot Valley Forest Products, donated the funding of \$3,000.

The meeting was adjourned, and dinner was served, followed by a speech and slideshow regarding Butte's mining history, presented by Brian Shovers, head Librarian at the Montana Historical Society in Helena.

## THE MADISONIAN

January 21, 1882

Re-locating quartz claims has been actively carried on the last three weeks, and many who failed to observe the "representation" clause of the mining law before January 1st are now minus their property.

Two esthetic youths of Helena propose to have a waltzing match for \$100 a side. Where will they get the girls for relays?—Inter Mountain: Virginia City can furnish a couple of girls that can waltz 'em out of their boots, without relays.

Hasenwinkle is going to bring an opera troupe to Montana next summer. He'll go broke, sure, if he does it, unless the prima donna and basso profundo include "Whoa Emma," "Sally Come Up," and similar classical arias in their repertoires.



# THE MONTANA SILVER STAR MINE

The History of a little-known mine

Although some placer mining was undoubtedly done in the area previously, the first recorded date of the 'Montana Silver Star' mine is April 4, 1890, when the County of Jefferson book, 'Location of Discovery of and Claim to Quartz Lode Mining Claim.' indicates the 'Silver Star' mine, in the Hold Fast Mining District was discovered by George E. Carpenter. At about the same time, the 'Rena' Silver Quartz mine was also located, both in the same section, at the southeastern tip of the Elkhorn Mountains in what is now Broadwater County.

Both mines were subsequently purchased by the Silver Star Mining Company of Montana and patented: the 'Silver Star' on October 8, 1891 and the 'Rena' on April 8, 1895. Silver-lead was the mineral originally mined, but production records have not been found and indications are production and profits were extremely minimal. Sometime in the next ten years the Montana Radersburg Mining Company purchased the property, but the transfer of title deed has been misfiled, possibly in the transfer of records to Broadwater County. In any event, the mine ceased to be known as the 'Silver Star' and thereafter, bore the moniker 'Montana Silver Star' a name that is still on current maps of the area.

In 1911, the combined property was assessed at \$300.00 and carried a tax burden of \$6.23. By the following year the unpaid taxes had accrued an interest of \$1.12, and being in default, the property was sold for back taxes to A.E. Spriggs for the amount of \$7.35. Spriggs and subsequently his widow, Josephine Spriggs paid the annual tax bill on the property up until 1930 at which point Mrs. Spriggs took out a Judgment Decree naming the two mining companies (which by this time were no doubt defunct) and became the registered owner.

The next transaction occurred in 1941, when, again, taxes of \$2.71 were in arrears (Possibly, Josephine Spriggs had passed away) and the County of Broadwater became the luck owners of the mines. After that the property has passed through numerous owners but it is fairly certain, little or no mining activity took place.

Today, the main head frame, compressor house and mining buildings are still standing and recent exploration of the 350 ft. shaft by ChrisTucker (see: [www.christuckerminerals.com](http://www.christuckerminerals.com)) show traces of copper and zinc along with other minerals at the lower levels.



THE 'MONTANA SILVER STAR' PROPERTY, 2008





THE HEAD FRAME AND COMPRESSOR SHED AT THE 'MONTANA SILVER STAR' MINE, 2008.

Terry Halden photos

MINE BUILDINGS AT THE 'MONTANA SILVER STAR' 2008.





## PRESERVING MONTANA



The two storey stone barn located on Hwy 200 just before the intersection of Hwy 89 (known locally as Drucat Junction) was constructed in 1884 / 1885 for James C. Adams. Adams was a Civil War hero as a teenager, and spent time in a prisoner of war camp, being released at the end of the war at the age of 16. At age 18, he came to Virginia City to seek his fortune and ended up working for a teamster out of Fort Benton. Saving his money, he bought property in the Sun River Valley, figuring he was close enough to Fort Shaw that he had a ready market for any beef that he grew. He was right and with his money he contracted Swedish stonemasons and had them build the impressive stone barn at the enormous cost of \$10,000. The building, finished in 1885, had stalls for horses (which are still evident), room for storage of wagons, rigging, harnesses etc, and the upstairs had a hardwood floor. It was used for dances, socials, roller-skating parties and had a few guest rooms as well. Since the army personnel at Fort Shaw were frequent guests at

the social gatherings, cavalry horses may have been stabled at the building overnight, but not as a permanent arrangement, as far as is known.

In 1901, Adams had monetary setbacks and left the area for Chicago. He died in 1913. The property went through numerous owners, deteriorating with time and in 1979 a new roof and windows were installed. In the last 30 years it has again gone downhill until the present owners, the Drucat Junction Stone Barn Preservation Company applied for and obtained a grant to re-roof the building (which has been done) and replace the windows (scheduled for this autumn). Various local tradesmen have volunteered their skills and it is hoped that the upstairs hardwood flooring can be renovated as well.

The building's future use is still being debated with suggestions ranging from using it for agricultural purposes (as was its original usage) to a social center, to a museum. The current owners are exploring all possibilities.

## MYSTERY CAMP IDENTIFIED



The Mystery Camp contest that ran in the past two issues of the Newsletter has been identified as the Gildersleeve mine on the upper reaches of Cedar Creek, a stream that runs to the Clark Fork near Superior, Mineral County. It was mentioned as being on the National Register of Historic Places as the most complete example of a depression era mining camp in the Summer Newsletter article 'Worth A Visit' about Superior - hence the clue, "Its going to be interesting to see how many people actually read this rag."

Only one entry was received, and it was the correct answer, so Larry and Vivian Roland from Missoula have been sent a signed copy of my book, 'Ghost Towns and Mining Districts of Montana.' Congratulations to Larry and Vivian.

As far as county museums go, the Broadwater County Museum and Historical Library, located at 113 N. Walnut in Townsend, is in a class of its own - excellent. It tells the story of the area surrounding the Missouri River valley from pre-historic times up to the present in progression as one tours the spacious building. Exhibits include the formation of the land to early inhabitants, to recent history. On display are many items that will not be seen anywhere else in Montana and among these is a buffalo robe, with an original Indian calendar painted on it. The story goes that a local family owned the robe and used it for various household needs until they finally threw it out as useless. It was spotted in their trash dump by a patron of the museum who asked if the robe could be donated to the museum. Permission was granted and now the robe, cleaned up is one of the premier displays of the museum.

Also on display is a hand hewn dug - out canoe, which complete with eight foot wide sail, is sixteen foot in length and is a half scale replica of the type used by Lewis and Clark when they ascended the Missouri above the Great Falls. The sheep ranching industry in the valley is remembered with a complete shepherd's wagon, another display of interest. Local cattle ranching, and of course, mining also have their own displays.

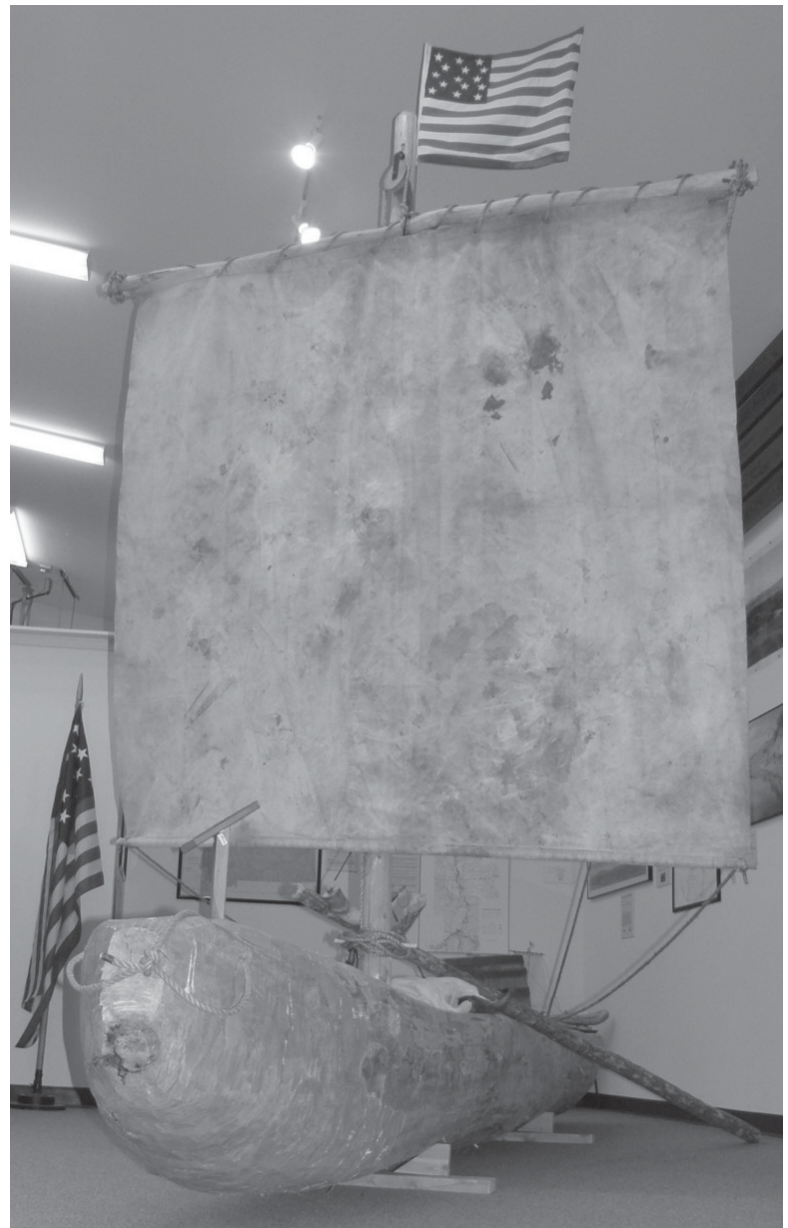
The Museum is open from mid May to mid September, daily, 1p.m. to 5 p.m. and knowledgeable members of the local Historical Association are usually on hand to answer any questions you may have. In lieu of an entrance fee, a donation is gratefully accepted.



THE BROADWATER COUNTY MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL LIBRARY



THE SHEPHERDER'S WAGON



THE REPLICA OF LEWIS AND CLARK'S DUGOUT (Terry Halden photos)





## Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1861, BOZEMAN, MONTANA, 59771-1861

### *NEWS IN BRIEF*

COOLIDGE, BEAVERHEAD COUNTY.....Although silver bearing ore was discovered on October 24, 1873, by Mike Steel and F.W. Parrish, it wasn't until William R. Allen, a former Montana Lt. Governor, became interested in the area at the head of Elkhorn Creek in the Pioneer Mountains, almost forty years later did any serious development occur. By the 1920's a railroad had been built, the massive mill constructed and hydro lines erected to provide power. The town, that Allen named Coolidge after his friend who was to become the thirtieth President, sprang into existence. The stock market collapse of the 1930's brought about the death of the mining operation and Coolidge became a ghost town. Located in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, the site has now been named to the National Register of Historic Places and will continue to be administered by the Forest Service. With this designation, Coolidge can now compete for historic preservation grants.

CUT BANK, TOOLE COUNTY..... In the 1940's after the US Air Force built its base in Great Falls, three satellite bases were built, one in Cut Bank. After receiving basic training in Great Falls, airmen were sent to Cut Bank for advanced training in bombing and gunnery skills before being shipped overseas to the war zones. After the war the airfield and buildings were abandoned and time and weather has taken its toll. The Cut Bank Airmen's Memorial Museum had now been formed and an effort is underway to save the old armament building, where service men worked on B-17 machine guns. The group hopes the community will get behind their endeavor.

GREAT FALLS, CASCADE COUNTY.....Train buffs can now visit the Montana Museum of Railroad History in Great Falls and climb aboard a genuine Burlington Northern caboos. The twenty-eight year old caboos was recently acquired by the museum and in October was transported, on the back of a flat bed truck, to its current resting place, lifted off by crane and placed on track that had been previously laid by BNSF maintenance in preparation for the event.