



# Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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## PHILIPSBURG, 1887



Before the coming of the railroad and the building frenzy of 1888 / 9 - see full story beginning on page 4.

Photo courtesy: Steve Neal, Tex Crowley & Wilma Bruns collection.

## Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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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  
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### Spring 2011

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# The Prez Sez

TERRY HALDEN

My first unpleasant task is to pass on the news that one of our founding members, Margie Wilkins of Lewistown recently passed away. I know our thoughts and prayers go out to her family.

Secondly I must apologize for the few weeks delay in getting this newsletter out to you. Unfortunately I had to spend most of the month of January in hospital as a result of abdominal surgery which was followed by a month of recuperation at home. I am pleased to say I am well on the way to a complete recovery.

The main article in this issue is from our friend Alan Patera in Oregon. Instead of the usual history of a mining town, Alan gives us a verbal 'snap-shot' of Philipsburg and all the developments that occurred in 1887 and 1888. To illustrate the article I have to thank Mike Byrnes for running up to Philipsburg in the middle of winter and taking photographs of the buildings that were built in the era under discussion. The second article is a re-print from the Winter 1999 newsletter by Sig Jacobsen & Bernice DeHaas and is about the social life in Granite during its existence. Granite, of course, was dependent on Philipsburg, and Philipsburg was dependent on Granite and the two articles complement each other. Finally we have a letter from John Stoner correcting me on my article in the last newsletter about the three Gallatin Cities. John points out an error I made in the location of Gallatin City # 1 and the fact the original founders had some solid ideas. I should know better than to write an article that John has any knowledge about! You will note that there is no 'News in Brief' this month – sorry I just didn't have enough time to put it together.

Now for news about the convention. Three major problems were encountered: The lack of adequate accommodations, (the two renovated hotels in town only have a total of ten rooms to rent and these are 'theme' rooms and rent out for up to \$129.00 per night). Our date conflicted with another attraction the Philipsburg Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring, (Miner's Day Reunion, which also put pressure on the accommodation problem). The chef we were negotiating with for the banquet suddenly closed his restaurant (and put it up for sale) and moved away from town. As a result of these set-backs, Gord and Mike, the convention committee, with the approval of the board, had no choice but to relocate the base for the convention to nearby Anaconda. Anaconda has

a total of 68 rooms in three main hotels all reasonably priced in \$60 - \$70 range, along with smaller motels and B & B homes. The three are: the 'Marcus Daly', the 'Vagabond' and the 'Trade Winds'. Our banquet will be at the Jack Nicholas designed golf club, following the personal recommendation by Gord, who has attended banquets at the golf club in the last few months and can attest to the food and service. Meantime, we will all be bused up to Philipsburg on Saturday morning by Tucker Transport (remember them from our Butte Convention?) for several attractions that the convention committee is solidifying and our guest speaker at the banquet will be from Philipsburg.. But always expect some surprises along the way. There will be a full convention program published in the Summer issue of the newsletter – excluding some of the extra surprises!!!

## See You In Anaconda!

### Terry

#### New Members

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

David Andreassi, Bozeman      Mary Kay Flanagan, Bozeman      Amber Borsberry-Coffey, Helena

Daniel Vandeberg, St. Paul, MN      Fred Paulsen, Gardiner      Bob Dallas, Helena      Don Black, Great Falls

Arvid Jankus, Sturgis, SD      Sarah Fournier, Bozeman      Bruce A. Raisch, St. Louis, MO

# *We Get Letters*

Dear Terry,

Your article "Gallatin City, 1, 2, & 3" caught my eye immediately upon receiving the Winter 2010/11 issue of the M.G.T.Q. The story on Gallatin City #1 was of particular interest to me as I had done an in depth study of it a few years ago as part of my interest in Broadwater County's past history. Unfortunately, I found a few errors which I'll try to correct.

Gallatin City #1 was built on the **West** bank of the combined Jefferson / Madison Rivers, not the **East** bank of the Gallatin River. The site was chosen, not only for its value as a prospective paddle wheeled boat landing, but it also straddled the Helena to Virginia City wagon road where it crossed on the Weir & Gallaher ferry.

In late 1862, the 'bunch of Missourians' were really a group of visionaries, twenty-five in number comprising of: N.W. Burris, Alfred Ray, James Bouton, Edmund Ash, George Lemley, M.R. Burris, Felix Burton, Albert Green, William Townsley, Benjamin Townsley, B.B. Burchit, E. House, S. Stimpson, George Wilford, Dr. Gillick, P.C. Wood, Samuel McCann, H.P.S. Smith, Monroe Atkinson, J.B. Cowen, A.F. Watkins, E.P. Lewis, C.M. Davis, G.M. Stapleton and John Ault. They were probably all from the Bannack area, and after selecting the site on November 20, 1862 they organized the Gallatin Town Company on December 30<sup>th</sup> of that same year.

Of the group, N.W. Burris was their leader. The choosing of this particular site was by no means an accident. Burris was perfectly aware of the five waterfalls above Fort Benton, yet he was still bound and determined to make Gallatin City the new 'head of navigation' on the Missouri. Burris and his followers eventually petitioned the First Legislative Assembly for the territory of Montana to enact, in the early part of 1865, the following laws: (1) to 'Incorporate the Upper Missouri River Steam & Navigation Company' (2) to 'Incorporate the Missouri River Portage & Railroad Company' (3) to 'Incorporate the Gallatin Town Company' [Gallatin City #1] (4) to 'Incorporate the East Gallatin Town Company' [Gallatin City #2]. All four of these were granted.

This was a sweeping victory for Burris and his party. He could now go ahead with his plans to dominate the river shipping travel from Fort Benton to the headwaters of the Missouri River, with a fifty year exclusive right for navigation, and the rights to building a narrow gauge railroad around the falls. This part of his dream is seldom mentioned by historians, which is a shame.

N.W. Burris was shot and killed by Blood Indians near the new town site of Ophir, at the foot of the Marias River on May 25<sup>th</sup>, just four months later. With his death also went his dreams. Gallatin City #1 was abandoned and moved to East Gallatin which became Gallatin City #2.

While the site of Gallatin City #2 is well documented and easy to find, finding the exact site of Gallatin City #1 is a bit harder, and is on private land as well. I have visited this site several times..... with permission of course. All you have to do is locate "Ling Rock" (old ferry anchor point) at the FWP's Missouri Headwaters State Park, then look straight across the river to where the town site was. With the help of an 1868-69 Montana Territory Principal Meridian Township map for Township 2 North, Range 2 East surveyed by Benjamin F. Marsh, the exact site can be determined. I went even one step further by locating outlines of the entire site with a metal detector. On days with just the right sunlight, one can distinguish slight depressions on the surface where some of the cabins once stood.

To completely cover the ground of the entire Gallatin stories would take a full length book. There's just too many twists and turns to try and compile it into two pages.

John L. Stoner  
Townsend

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THE MILL HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY  
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WE CLAIM TO MAKE AS  
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We have on hand for sale at the  
**Lowest Market Price Flour and Feed of all Kinds.**

# 1887: PHILIPSBURG BECOMES A CITY

by Alan H. Patera

(photos for this article were taken in March, 2011 by Mike Byrnes)

Philipsburg is a proud pioneer of Montana, having first blossomed in the 1860s, its post office established on January 21, 1868. Philipsburg is among the elite of mining camps, for it evolved into a permanent town, joining the ranks of Butte, Helena and Virginia City. The town faded after the initial excitement, but never died.

Then, in the 1880s, new discoveries up on the western flank of the Flint Creek Range east of Philipsburg led to an inpouring of capital to develop the Granite mines. The town of Granite mushroomed at the site of the mines, and Granite got its own post office on March 8, 1886; but there was no doubt that Philipsburg, at the edge of the valley, was *the* town of the district. Virtually all travel from Granite passed through Philipsburg, as well as that of the other hillside communities of Tower and Hasmark.

As 1887 began there was a general sense of optimism about Philipsburg. The town was well established, with wagon road access and a functioning water distribution system. It seemed destined to be a great year. The mines above town were in fine condition, and full production and employment were expected. The merchants anticipated brisk trade as the population swelled, and the excitement that overtook Philipsburg was manifested by a building boom. This included new downtown buildings for established merchants and newcomers, dwelling houses, and mine construction. Many new buildings were brick. In May, John Cosgrove burned a kiln of 500,000 bricks, but that fell short of demand. Bricklayers such as William Ward had a steady demand for their services.

By early Summer 1887 the business community of Philipsburg included two liverys, three blacksmiths, three hardware stores, two general stores, two groceries, two meat markets, two produce markets, three clothing stores, three dry goods stores, two furniture stores, three hotels (including the highly regarded Kaiser House), three doctors, two druggists, four lawyers, and nine saloons. The population was probably about 1,000.

These businesses were quickly augmented, as newcomers arrived and firms from Helena and Butte established branch stores in Philipsburg. Philipsburg's business community realized that to compete, they would have to expand both their inventory and their buildings to accommodate the additional goods. Some established merchants bought nearby lots and erected new and larger

buildings, and then rented out their vacated quarters, for which there was no shortage of takers. Ben Pizer, not wishing to relinquish an advantageous location, moved his goods to a rented building, then moved his original building to a new location, and erected a larger building on the original site, ending up with a fine brick store at his desired location on Broadway. The saloons and restaurants competed by making improvements in decor. S.A. Nixon added a pool and a billiard table to his saloon. Hotel keeper H. Kaiser built an addition onto his commodious hotel.



The Kaiser House, built in 1878 by John and Herman Kaiser, was one of the finest hotels in Montana. It has recently been restored to its former opulence.

In frontier communities the merchants and businessmen tended to have living quarters within their business buildings to be able to protect them in case of fire or burglary. There was still some of this: William Hubbard rented out part of the first floor of his new building to Mrs. E. McDonnell for a millinery shop, and she rented part of the second floor for living quarters. But Philipsburg took a step towards gentrification as the optimistic and prosperous businessmen built residences away from the business center. Many of them built new houses, a surprising number of them brick, making the town not only look bigger, but giving these gentlemen a first taste of commuting to work.

The town as originally platted was not big enough to contain the new construction, offering another business opportunity. Several town site additions were platted and supplied with roads and water. There was Wilson's addition and Parker's addition; and Pardee & McDonald's addition was to the south, encompassing the area between the town and the site selected for the railroad depot.

## The Town Comes of Age

On January 27, 1887 a weekly newspaper, the *Philipsburg Mail*, issued its first edition, a sure signal that Philipsburg had come of age. The *Mail* often referred to Philipsburg as “the Burg” and Granite as “the Hill.”

Throughout the year there were other signs that Philipsburg was becoming an important place. They had new industry. Two Welsh immigrants, brothers William and Frederick Bowen along with Ezra Thompson, of Butte, purchased lots in Wilson’s addition and built the Philipsburg Foundry, doing their own casting for custom made parts. They had so much business they worked into the night, giving a spectacular display when the molten metal was poured.



Frederick Bowen’s home, built in 1890, along with his brother William’s house next door which is a twin.

Other fine buildings were erected, including a hospital and an entertainment hall. They already had the Miner’s Hospital, where for a prepaid \$1.25 a month you were entitled to any medical care you might need. The new hospital was the project of Dr. W.H. Allen, who took an office in the Kaiser Hotel while he built his hospital on Nob Hill. The *Mail* commented, “The building, owing to its height and position on the hill, will be one of the most conspicuous in town...” The hospital, with steam heat throughout, was opened at the end of October 1887 and contained not only wards for patients, but living accommodations for Dr. Allen and other hospital staff. Christian Wahlen, aged 23, had the honor of being the first patient to die in the new hospital, after he was kicked in the face by a mule.

By fall, Philipsburg had telephone service. This does not mean everyone in town got their own telephone; it meant the town had one telephone, and it required an operator to manage it. That man was Ike N. Smith, who ran his business out of Ben Pizer’s store until he took office space and living quarters in the new Wilson building. They were connected to Drummond, but with only a single phone in town there wasn’t anybody else in Philipsburg to talk to until Dr. Allen had a telephone installed at the hospital.

In November Dr. W.H. Pittwood became the town’s first resident dentist. At a time when smaller towns might have an itinerant dentist pass through every six months, having a resident dentist spoke well for the population and general prosperity. To cap off the year, Joseph Solomon of Missoula and H.M. Ogden and Abe Heyman of Butte announced their intention to light Philipsburg with electricity by the end of the year. At this time both Butte and Helena had electric power and Missoula was in the process of having their system installed.

The only hindrance to the building frenzy, for both Philipsburg and Granite, was the difficulty in obtaining the needed building materials, for this was prior to the railroad, and all goods had to be hauled by team from either Drummond or Anaconda. That spring, the roads were in deplorable condition. The heavier wagons would sink down to their axle-hubs in the mud. What they needed was a railroad.



The hospital built by Dr. William H. Allen, physician for the Hope Mining Company, in 1887, is now a private residence.

## The Railroad

Having a railroad connection was the dream of every mining town, and in 1887 it became a reality for Philipsburg. A 26.5 mile branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad, called the Philipsburg & Drummond Railroad (P. & D. R.R.) was built south from the Northern Pacific main line at Drummond. Construction began at the end of April with a force of 100 graders. It was hastily built over the course of the summer, and its arrival was eagerly anticipated by everybody.



St. Philip's Catholic church. Construction began in 1887 on land donated by Angus A. McDonald.

As the tracks were approaching Philipsburg, an event was described in the newspaper of August 25, 1887:

“A curious spectacle was presented to citizens of the Burg last Tuesday evening by a group of men on Flagstaff Hill. They stood in a circle facing each other, each had one finger raised as though commanding silence, and all were as motionless as though posing to have their picture taken. The group was there when night fell and rendered further sight of them impossible. Subsequent investigation discovered the fact that they were Frank Brown, Angus McDonald and other prominent real estate men listening for the first whistle of the P. &D. locomotive.”

The tracks were laid into the depot yard and the first locomotive arrived on September 10, 1887. Surprisingly, the newspaper didn't make a big deal about it. Buried in a short article on page 2 in its issue of September 15, the paper mentioned, “A large number of residents of the town turned out to witness the arrival of the iron horse, champagne was opened and the band played. Trains are now running regularly....”

With the demand for building materials so great, one would think that the first rail cars would have brought in building supplies and fixtures, but no, Philipsburg had other priorities. The *Mail* noted:

“We learn that the initial consignment of freight to arrive by the P.&D. railroad was to C.B. Houser & Co., the wholesale liquor merchants of this place and the first shipment out was of beer cases which the same firm sent direct to Milwaukee.”

The next shipment was a carload of iron and steel, to be succeeded by literally tons and tons of materials and supplies. On November 3 the *Mail* said, “The quantities of freight daily arriving seem to be constantly increasing and the business keeps the transfer wagons, railroad officials and everyone connected with it on the jump.” And, in the same vein, it said, “W.T. Allison was encountered yesterday, cruising around the streets in search of teams and men to help him move more than a ton of glass which he has down at the depot. It is plate glass for the front of Philipsburg hall, and the buildings of Weinstein, McDonald and Pfizer....” The next week, two more carloads arrived for them.

Not everything went smoothly. For the rest of the year there were complaints about the non-arrival of freight. “Complaints of the management and handling of freight by the railroad continue. Some is carried past Drummond, some shipped to the Burg is unloaded at New Chicago.” Allison & Sherman paid for and expected a large shipment of furniture in October, but couldn't find out anything about it. Dr. Allen had a stove coming for the hospital “which the railroad people have been shipping all about the country regardless of destination.”



Built in 1890 by M.E.Doe and his brother-in-law, J.D.Thomas, the building housed Doe's Drugstore



The cornerstone of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church was laid in 1887. It is now owned by the Presbyterian Church.

Then came the storm of Saturday, October 22, 1887. First came the snow, lots of it. Then the temperature plummeted. By Sunday evening it registered -10°, and it was five days before there was a thaw. Montanans may be used to cold, but this was early in the season, and they weren't prepared for it. A whole carload of potatoes waiting to be unloaded in the depot yard was frozen. At the foundry, the moist sand used for casting molds froze solid, halting that stage of production.

The day of the storm also produced the railroad's first accident. The hastily-laid tracks parted at Stone Station, and, as the *Mail* put it, "the cars distributed themselves over the landscape." No one was hurt, and despite the terrible weather, the tracks were cleared and repaired and operations resumed within 24 hours.

### The Depot

A whole new village emerged at the depot site, which was separated from other town buildings by a good 300 yards. The intervening land was in the Pardee & McDonald town site addition, which saw brisk sales of lots and some construction during the summer. Building began a month before the railroad would arrive. The most impressive building was David Work's two-story hotel and saloon. John Barrett built a saloon, and Mrs. Leon erected her Model boarding house. By mid-November the *Mail* observed:

"The little town growing up around the depot is rapidly becoming a rival to the Burg, being as yet separate and distinct by a stretch of about 300 yards of lots lying between the two still vacant. This new town has already two hotels, a dressmaking and millinery establishment and two saloons, besides a number of dwelling houses. These, with the handsome depot, and the constant stream of freight wagons give an unusual air of bustle and importance to the scene...."

After the arrival of the track, there was still much to be done by the railroad. They first built a temporary passenger depot. They built a round house 70 feet in diameter, big enough for three locomotives. A side track was built, called the Hammond Spur, which was to be used exclusively for the handling of lumber. A water tank was erected, fed by gravity from the reservoir of the Philipsburg Water Co.



The J.C. McLeod building was built in 1890 by J.C. McLeod, Col. J.W. Morse and M.E. Doe. It was originally used as an exclusive shoe store that lasted until 1910. Since then the store has had numerous occupants.

Best of all, they built an imposing permanent depot. The *Mail* spoke with pride in saying it would be bigger than most of the depots on the Northern Pacific's main line. "The house itself is 22x123, of which 80 feet will be for freight, and 43 feet will be for passengers. In addition there will be 300 feet of platform...." A derrick for lifting freight was placed on the platform, and the office of the railroad agent was at one end of the building.

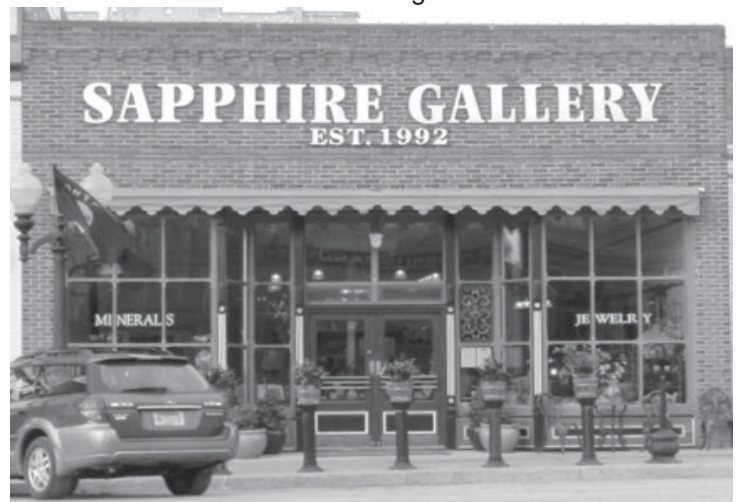
Despite all the influx of people during the year, Philipsburg was largely a peaceful town in 1887. There was petty thievery — the newspaper suggested keeping a close eye on your chickens and pigs during the night — and a few altercations resulting only in bruises. One lurid event that piqued the prurient interest of many was an alley fight between three prostitutes. But there were no shootings or knifings and only one holdup, and even that was just outside of town.

There was a vigilante incident, however. In the dark of the early morning hours of July 15, a group of men abducted F.L. Currie from town and took him to the depot site, meeting up with a group that had similarly captured Louis Demars and Samuel Tolman at Hasmark. They were beaten and threatened with hanging, and told to leave the area. Their offense was claim jumping at the Granite Belle mine at Granite.

Tremendous changes took place in Philipsburg during 1887. One measure of growth is the amount collected for freight in the express business. In October 1886 the amount was \$350.57; in October 1887 it was \$5,902.78, and the proportion was the same for November. At the beginning of 1887, Philipsburg was a small town with a hopeful outlook for its future; by the end of the year it had been transformed into a city with two-story brick buildings lining its Main Street, a railroad and a telephone connection. They had all the amenities of the day, and new aspirations of rivaling Helena, Butte and Missoula in population and influence.

### 1887 Business Directory (partial)

Allen, Dr. W.H.	Physician & Surgeon	McDonel, Robert	Saloon
Allison & Sherman	Builders	McIntyre Bros.	Hardware
Barret & Jacky Bros.	Harness & saddles	McLean, John C.	Blacksmith
Bon Ton	Restaurant	People's Market	Meat
Bowie, Allen P.	Druggist	Philipsburg Meat Market	Meat
Brown, Frank D.	Notary Public, insurance	Philipsburg Sampling Mill	Ore treatment
Brown, Wingfield	Attorney	Pizer, Ben	Men's furnishings
Campbell & Duffy	Attorneys	Schilling, A.	Merchant tailor
Caplice & Smith	General merchandise	Shodair, L.W.	Confectionery
City Livery Stable	Livery	Silver Lake House	Hotel
Climax Chop House	Restaurant	Spacey's Restaurant	Restaurant
Cole & McDonnell	Liquors	Swartz, W.J.	Barber
Crystal Chop House	Restaurant	Turner & Jewel	Produce
Dawson, John W.	Broker	Ward & Giblin	Bricklaying
Durfee, D.M.	Attorney	Weinstein, William	Dry goods
Featherman & Co.	General store	Wilson Bros.	Groceries
Gordon & Co.	Druggists	Yee Wo & Yee ah Yoat	Washing
Grand Restaurant	Restaurant		
Hammond & Co.	Stage lines, livery		
Harding, J.A.	Painting		
Headquarters Saloon	Saloon		
Houser, C.B. & Co.	Wholesale liquor		
Hynes House	Hotel		
Inkamp, Henry	Saloon		
IXL Clothing	Clothing		
Kaiser Bros.	Saloon		
Kaiser House	Hotel		
Kellogg, C.A.	Civil engineer, Surveyor		
Kintner & Hill	Builders		
Kroger's Brewery	Brewery		
Leahy, James B.	Broker		
Leopold	Furniture		
Livingston, H	Dry Goods		



Built in 1887, the building originally housed two businesses, Lutey's Grocery and Barrett & Jacky Bros.' harness shop.





Philipsburg, 1889. Although taken from the opposite direction as our front cover photo is taken, it is easy to see the difference in the number of brick buildings added to the city in just two years. Photo credit unknown

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article first appeared in our Winter 1999 newsletter. As it bears a direct connection to Alan Patera's article above, we thought you might like to see it again.

## SOCIAL LIFE IN GRANITE CITY

by SIG JACOBSEN & BERNICE DeHAAS

Granite, Montana, perched up on Granite Mountain at an elevation of nearly 8,000 ft. above sea level, is located up a winding rutted road about four miles above Philipsburg. Known as the 'Silver Queen' it boomed and busted in a classic pattern, but its boom period was spectacular. It was not until 1875 that a claim was located on Granite Mountain and 1881 that tunneling was begun into the mountain itself. The financing for the project came from a group of backers in St. Louis. The legend goes that after several months of no success the messenger carrying a telegram from the investors to cease operations was going up the hill and passed a messenger coming down, carrying a telegram to the investors that they had just broken through into a large vein of high grade silver ore.

Granite Mountain became the greatest silver bonanza in the world at that time. In about a decade some \$45,000,000 worth of silver and gold was mined. At the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 Granite was represented by a 4,407 lb. chunk of silver ore from the Bi-Metallic mine that yielded 60.6 lbs. of silver per ton. The town of Granite grew rapidly and by 1890 had a population of 3,000, with probably another 2,000 living in the nearby area. Two mines, the Bi-Metallic and the Granite Mountain provided the ore. Mills were built in Granite and in Hasmark and Rumsey.

The name 'Granite' accurately describes both the mountain and the town clinging to its peak. With very few level spots, many houses were built against the hill on one side and on stilts on the other. They were usually small, built of boards, covered with tar paper and clapboard. The 'topsoil' consisted of decomposed granite and was so thin it was impossible to dig a grave on the mountain top. As a result bodies were transported down the mountain to the valley floor for burial in Philipsburg. Wells could not be dug either. Until 1888 water came from Fred Burr Lake by a horse drawn wagon loaded with huge barrels that delivered five-gallons of water to each subscriber, with an extra gallon on wash day. The lake was stocked with fish and often a householder would receive trout included in the water supply. Later a flume was built to take water from the lake to a storage tank above the Granite Mountain Mine. One time a couple of Cornishmen with a longing for fish but no desire to go fishing decided to throw some dynamite in the tank with the idea it would stun the fish. They miscalculated the amount of dynamite to use with the result they blew a hole in the tank. When they were caught it was decided that instead of putting them in jail they were to be given a small lease to work, so that they could pay for repairs to the tank. According to the story, within three weeks they had paid off their debt and cleared an additional \$2,000.



Granite in the 1890's. Note the row of outhouses behind the homes on the lower left of the photo.

Photo courtesy MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Streets were often named for the nationalities of the miners who inhabited them: Donegal Street (Irish), Finnlander Lane and Cornish Row. Others bore names such as Belle Avenue (sometimes called Whiskey Hollow), Broadway, Strauss Avenue and Tram Avenue.

The mine officials, the doctor and some clerical workers lived on Magnolia Avenue – perhaps named by a homesick southerner, for certainly no magnolias were ever grown on a barren peak in the Rocky Mountains of Montana. This area was also known as ‘Snob Hill’ or ‘Silk Stocking Row.’ The only stone house in town was Superintendent Weir’s house on Magnolia Avenue and is the best preserved building. Chinatown lay in the hollow below Main Street opposite to the Miners Union Hall. Like other mining camps in the west, Granite was an amalgam of people and cultures, each with its own customs and traditions adding to the richness of life in the city.

The winter climate was brutal and illness was widespread. Pneumonia was especially prevalent. Not sure of the cause, the Philipsburg Mail in its edition of April 5, 1899 exhorted under the heading ‘Granite News’ *“Considerable filth has accumulated in our streets and alleys which should at once be removed and thus aid in dispensing with further cases of pneumonia.”* Others blamed the exposure during the slow funeral processions from Granite down to the valley, with mourners sometimes becoming victims and thus the cause of other processions. In an effort to combat the scourge mine Superintendent Thomas Weir had a warming house built, complete with a plunge, so that the miners coming off shift could ease the transition

between the heavy physical labor in the mines, which maintained the same temperature year round and the below-zero temperatures above ground. Other diseases besides pneumonia swept the town at intervals. An infantile paralysis (polio) epidemic occurred and at another time ‘black diphtheria’ claimed the lives of many children and some adults. Medical care was provided in the hospital, a large two story wooden structure, staffed with several doctors and nurses. The miners had a small amount deducted from their pay each week to cover their usage of these facilities.



The Granite Mountain Mining Company's Rumsey Mill, Ca 1890.  
Photo Steve Neal, Tex Crowley & Wilma Bruns collection.

As the town grew it acquired other amenities. A four room public school was built. One teacher remembered that she had 65 pupils taking three grades, third, fourth and fifth, in her classroom. Four churches, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal and Catholic added their influence to Granite. Mine Superintendent Weir, a devout Presbyterian, insisted that the mine could produce enough ore working six days a week for the stamp mill to work seven days. Thenceforth, the Granite Mine operated six days a week and was quiet on Sundays.

Fraternal orders built meeting halls which were eclipsed on December 31, 1890 by the grand opening of the Miners Union Hall. This magnificent building housed a large auditorium / theater / dance hall, along with billiard tables, a reading room and union offices. Built into the side of the mountain, it had three stories on the front while the rear housed the auditorium. The masonry building, consisted of granite on the first floor with brick above, had a cast iron and a spring dance floor. It quickly became 'the' social center of the town. Traveling theatrical troupes brought drama and melodrama, while basket socials, dances and lecturers filled the hall on other occasions. For many years the Miners Union Hall stood as a monument to the spirit of the people of Granite, but heavy snow load some years back brought the roof down and later vandals torched what remained.

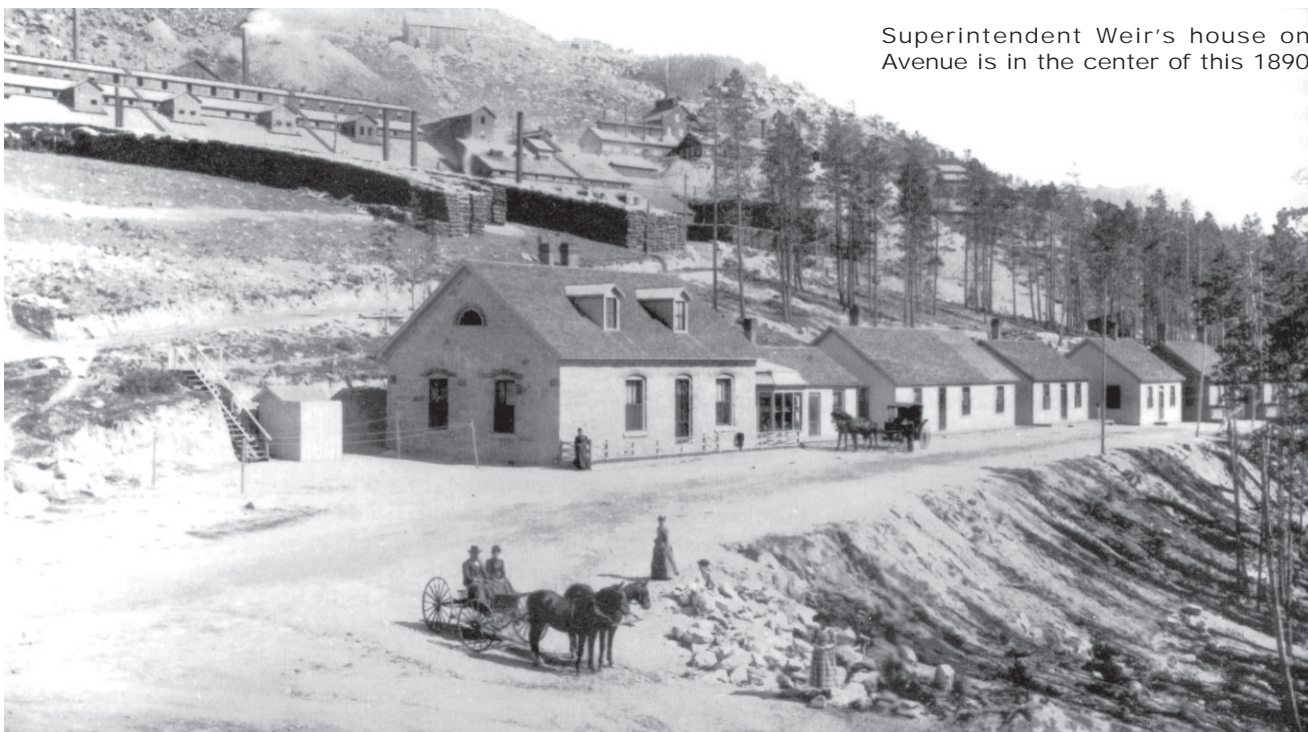
Granite had a roller skating for summer recreation and a frozen pond was used for ice skating in the winter. For thrill seekers there was a four mile bobsled course down the mountain to Philipsburg with the sleds being hitched to a wagon or stagecoach for the return up mountain. Others skied down on homemade wooden skis. Tramways with huge buckets connected the mines with the mills down below and although it was forbidden, often miners returning from a night out in Philipsburg and not relishing the uphill walk

home tried riding the bucket. At least a few times the tramway broke down, leaving its passengers stranded in the air on a bitterly cold night. There was not enough level ground in Granite for a racetrack – horse races were held in Philipsburg – but boxing matches were popular.

Bars, of course, were also social centers and in 1890, Granite had fourteen dubbed as 'saloon', 'saloon and lodging', 'saloon and dancehall', 'saloon and gambling' or any other variation. By 1892 one or two of these buildings were vacant, but a large building at the top of the hill that had been called 'The Granite Association Hall' changed its name to 'Saloon and Dance Hall; Female boarding 2<sup>nd</sup> floor'. It was said "*Saloons may not be evidence of morality, but they are certainly evidence of prosperity*" (Philipsburg Mail April 11, 1889). Like all mining camps, Granite had its red light district, peopled with women named 'Dutch Mabel' and 'Jew Jess'. It was centered in the hollow across Main Street from the Miners Union Hall, in buildings the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps list as "Female Boarding" houses.

The businesses necessary to support a busy town were found in Granite: grocery stores, bakery, furniture store, candy store, hotel, bank, undertakers etc. Many of the names associated with those businesses appear later in Philipsburg or Butte as owners moved on.

Life in Granite changed abruptly on August 1, 1893 when silver was suddenly devalued by the U.S. government. The effects of the silver panic reached the town and the mines and mills closed. The mine engineer tied down the steam whistle and let its wail die slowly as the pressure dropped. According to contemporary reports many people left town at once, not even bothering to pack. Granite was a ghost town for the next three years, and then slowly revived, but it never regained its population or activities of the 1880's and early 1890's.



Superintendent Weir's house on Magnolia Avenue is in the center of this 1890's photo.

Photo from the Steve Neal, Tex Cowley & Wilma Bruns collection



## Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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

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