



Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

VOLUME 41

WINTER 2011 / 2012

FUN WITH THE COMPUTER

(AND, NO, ITS NOT A NEGATIVE)



To see what this cabin looks like in reality, turn to page 9.

Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society,
P.O. Box 1861, Bozeman, Montana 59771.

Phone; 406-522-3856

e-mail: mtghosttown@yahoo.com

<http://ghosttown.montana.com>

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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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Winter 2011/12

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The Prez Sez

TERRY HALDEN

First off, I'd like to thank Linda Dutcher for the extra effort she put out to write the article about the Smith mine disaster of 1943, along with a history of mining activity in the area. A job well done. Secondly, thanks go to Past President Shirley Powell for responding to my call for updated photos of ghost towns and sending in photos she took of Comet this year. This is your newsletter and the submissions from these two ladies are examples of how easy it is to send in an article or photograph that I can put into your newsletter.

Comparing the photos that Shirley took with those I took only a year ago, I can see the small amount of deterioration to the hotel / boarding house in just 12 months. Which is why I believe the Montana Site Stewardship program is so important and we should get behind it. Remember, the next two day training course is scheduled to run in Dillon, May 18-19, which is not too far ahead. Anyone thinking of joining me should e-mail us at mtghosttown@yahoo.com or write to us at our address on the left. M.G.T.P.S. will pay your course fee, but your travel and overnight accommodation expenses will be your responsibility.

Next I'd like to welcome to the board of directors Don Black from Great Falls. Don has done extensive research in the Madison River basin and Madison County in general and we are looking forward to his contributions as a new member of the board.

A new book composed of articles that appeared in our newsletter between 1986 and 2000 is starting to fall into place. The list of articles to include has been finalized, editing and locating photos to use is underway. This time period was when the editor was one of our founders, John DeHaas Jr. who wrote several of the vignettes about ghost towns himself, but also included many articles written by then members that our members today will find interesting. The articles will be re-published as they first appeared in the newsletter with the addition of archival or modern photos to enhance the text – much of how the newsletter appears today. This idea of re-publishing previous articles was originally done in the 1990s using articles from our beginning in 1971 up to 1985. and came out in a book titled

"Reflections", which many of you purchased. This new book is in need of a title and whereas "Reflections 2" appears a little trite, we were thinking of "Echoes". Any comments from the members would be welcomed. The book is scheduled for publication early in the New Year.

Next year, Bannack marks its 150th anniversary and celebrations kick off on Saturday January 7 at 2:00p.m. with the Bannack Association staging a re-enactment of the lynching of Sheriff Plummer and his two deputies by the vigilantes. Other re-enactments are scheduled throughout the year, culminating on the weekend of September 15 /16, when we are holding our convention in Dillon, and will be in attendance.

Finally, as I said this time last year, I am a complete unbeliever in "political correctness", so, I'd like to wish all of you.....

a MERRY CHRISTMAS a
a HAPPY NEW YEAR Terry

New Members

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

At press time we had, unfortunately, not received the list of new members.

Look for a bumper crop of new comers in our Spring Newsletter.

HIGH ORE MINING DISTRICT - COMET, July 2011

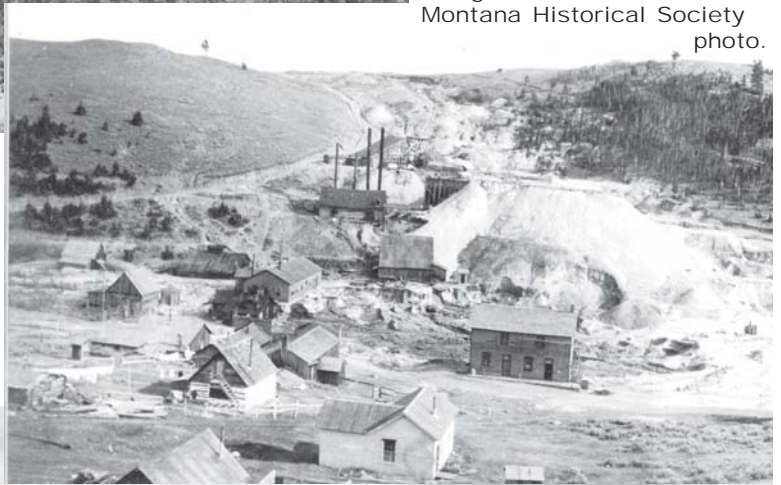


The Boarding House / Hotel at Comet (Some articles refer to it as a boarding house, others a hotel. A Montana Historical Architectural Inventory report, refers to it as a hotel on the plat map but calls it a boarding house in the text!!!).

Below:

A 1916 photo of Comet shows the first mill, built by the Montana Consolidated Copper Company in 1906. The hotel / boarding house had not yet been built. It first appeared in a photo taken about ten years later, which leans toward it being a hotel.

Montana Historical Society photo.



Below:

The two-hundred ton flotation mill at Comet, built by the Basin Montana Tunnel Company in 1926. It was regarded as 'the most modern custom milling plant in Montana' at the time. Ores from Comet and the nearby Gray Eagle mines were processed at the mill.



In response to my call for members photos of ghost towns or mining sites, taken during the summer months, Past President Shirley Powell responded with the two photos of Comet. Many thanks Shirley - Editor.

THE 1943 SMITH MINE DISASTER REVISITED

by LINDA DUTCHER



The Smith mine complex, judging by the cars in the parking lot, Ca 1950.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Photo

Even repeat travelers on Montana Route 308 five miles east of Red Lodge are struck by the sight of 39 gray industrial structures, clad in corrugated metal, standing isolated against the green and yellow sage and grass-covered foothills of the Beartooth Mountains. The historic marker along the highway identifies them as a memorial to 74 miners who died at the site of the worst coal mining disaster in Montana. Occurring at 9:37am, February 27, 1943, the disaster is also listed as the 43rd worst in the United States. The decaying structures are the remains of the surface workings of the Smith Mine which were built between 1906 and 1946.

Although time has taken its toll, it is remarkable that the Smith Mine industrial complex is still standing 58 years after it closed; that it has never been torn or burned down as were the structures directly related to the underground mine disaster. The surface facility continued to be used for a decade after the disaster when the Montana Coal and Iron Company (MCI) shifted operations to its Foster Gulch mines. But in the summer of 1953, the Northern Pacific Railroad notified the company that it would no longer be buying coal from any mines of the Bearcreek District. Foremost, the Montana, Wyoming and Southern Railroad, which had shipped Bearcreek coal since August, 1906, determined it would close its line leaving no practical means of shipping. MCI was dissolved involuntarily in 1980.

The area was reclaimed in 1990 by the Abandoned Mines Reclamation Bureau of the Montana Department of State Lands with funds from the Federal Mine Health and Safety Administration collected from current producers on each ton of coal produced. In 1993, Paul Andersen of GMC Services of Butte evaluated the Bearcreek mining district for the Department of State Lands and Mineral Research Center in Butte and concluded that the Smith Mine portion was eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, even though "recent reclamation has seriously impacted the site". Considerable time and effort was required to nominate the site; including concurrence of the land owners, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Holding; and application for a financial grant from the Montana Coal Board for research, preparation and review of the nomination

papers. It was not until September 30, 2009 that the Smith Mine Historic District was officially accepted and placed on the Register, one of 1,084 sites in Montana and 58 in Carbon County.

Major development of the Bearcreek coal field, an eastward extension of the same coal seams at Red Lodge, took place some 20 years later than mines at Red Lodge because the Rocky Fork Branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad from Laurel, MT, could not be extended over the high divide separating the areas. On November 27, 1889, the predecessor of MCI (The Montana Fuel and Iron Company) was created by Elijah D. Smith, along with Prosper W. Smith, eastern coal baron Edward Berwind, his father John Berwind, and others. Elijah Smith, a Boston millionaire, was the son of Elisah Smith who was a founder of the successful Menasha Wooden Ware Company of Menasha Wisconsin, which has a corporate successor still in business today. Little or no mining was done for 10 years until MCI first developed the Smith Mine as a small-scale wagon mine. From a 1903 visit, United States Geological Survey geologist Cassius Fisher noted that since the first material development in 1900, "the total product of this mine has probably exceeded 6,000 tons, having a value of \$3.30 a ton". With Red Lodge as the nearest shipping point, this was \$1.30 per ton more than the price of coal from Red Lodge due to hauling costs from Bearcreek.



The collapsed Smith mine adit which had been constructed from dry laid sandstone with logs, boards or poles incorporated in the walls. LINDA DUTCHER photo



The Smith mine complex (Conveyor, coal processing plant, coal washery, scale house and tipples), today. Most of the buildings were rebuilt after a 1945 fire.

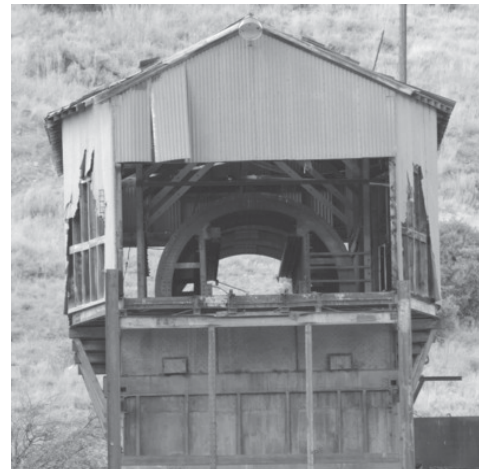
EDWARD FLUECKINGER photo.

In the summer of 1906, Congress passed a law that would make it impossible by 1908 for railroads to sell the coal they mined for any commercial purpose beyond their use of it in locomotives. But in order for coal producers to capture any of this potential commercial market, a railroad would be essential. The Northern Pacific Railroad could not be convinced to build into Bearcreek. Enter Frank Hall, mining and railroad promoter who envisioned a line up the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River, over the Beartooth Mountains to Cooke City and a smelter 10 miles east of Bearcreek using the coal to treat the Cooke City ores. Only the line from Bridger to Bearcreek found backers, thus creating what became a 47-year adversarial relationship with MCI and other Bearcreek producers. With incentives provided by the coal operators, such as free rights-of way and breaks on prices of coal for locomotives, in 1906 Hall and his Pennsylvania investors constructed what was first called the Yellowstone Park Rail Road. Since he secretly planned to sell it to the Northern Pacific, it was cheaply built and poorly run with sufficient cars often unavailable, but it was enough to create the first boom in Bearcreek.

MCI development expanded rapidly. Production in 1907 by 40 miners from 3 entries up to 1,000 feet long into the No. 2 seam was said to be 18,000 tons. This included production from a small mine a mile to the southeast in the No. 3 seam that MCI purchased in 1907 and renamed the Foster or Foster Gulch Mine. This initial expansion also necessitated the construction of surface facilities that included a tipples, boxcar loader, repair shops, washhouse, boarding house and several residences rented to employees. In 1908 MCI produced 21,810 tons and in 1910 production was increased to 59,306 tons. As the workings expanded, a sloping tunnel 3,700 feet from the No. 2 Mine entrance was driven down through 80 ft. of rock to access the No. 3 seam. This created the Smith Mine No. 3. In 1912, production rose to 90,905 tons and the underground workings of the Smith Mine No. 3 and the Foster Gulch Mine had been connected, creating an extensive operation. Eventually the No. 2 workings were abandoned because the No. 3 was a cleaner coal. The No. 3 workings were equipped with a carless hoist and an electric locomotive on the main entry. Surface facilities had also been expanded by 1910 with a modern tipples, shops, powder magazines, office, stable and other buildings.

Initially, Smith Mine purchased electricity from a nearby coal mine, but expansion rendered this supply inadequate. In 1914, the mine manager and John D. Ryan, president of the Montana Power Company, agreed on a favorable kilowatt rate; but when Ryan announced changing the terms of the agreement at a meeting in Butte, the manager walked out without signing. MCI directors subsequently denied the manager's request to build a power plant, but three major stockholders, including Edward Berwind, forwarded \$60,000. This allowed for complete electrification of the operation by 1915. It turned out to be a foresighted business decision since, at that time, the impact of the European War was beginning to be felt in the U.S.

As documented by Axline and Brownell in the National Register nomination papers based on the MCI records collection, unlike many other coal mines in the area, MCI survived the economic ups and downs characterizing the period from World War I to World War II. Coal tonnage mined in 1916 reached a new high of 150,000, in spite of a 2-week shutdown due to a fire. Believed by the mine manager to be arson, the fire burned down the tipples, boxcar loader and other preparation buildings which had to be replaced. In 1917, production increased to 238,844 tons and then dropped dramatically in 1918 and 1919. During this latter period the federal government cancelled many of its coal price guarantees, the Spanish Influenza epidemic temporarily reduced the mine's capacity by half, and Wyoming and Utah mines entered the market and undercut the price of Montana coal. A nationwide United Mine Workers Strike shut down the mine in late 1919 until a 14% wage increase was agreed to and soldiers arrived in Bearcreek to enforce the reopening of mines. In spite of additional problems in the 1920's including increased usage of natural gas and oil for home heating and cooking, mild winters, railroad car shortages and the post-war depression, annual production stayed around 200,000 tons. MCI installed a new electric hoist, tipples and boxcar loaders and several other new surface buildings. By 1929, production was up again to 1,000 tons per day and operations for the first time were fully mechanized; mules were no longer needed.



The Rotary Dump, for emptying coal cars from the mine onto the conveyor belt to the coal processing plant.

EDWARD FLUECKINGER photo.

But then the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began to deepen. Production dropped back to 181,000 tons in 1932 and profits were cut when MCI had to offer longer terms of credit to maintain sales volumes. In 1933, production was boosted to 265,000 tons when MCI negotiated a contract with the Northern Pacific Railroad, ensuring 300,000 tons annual production going forward even though the NP had developed a surface mine at Colstrip which could produce coal at a much lower cost. Believing that capital expansion would improve their market position, a 1933-1936 expansion included a new crushing plant, first aid building, 200-locker washhouse, coal sheds and scales, an elevator next to the processing plant, additional conveyors, cleaning plant, electrical substation, carpentry shop and foreman's office. Then war again increased the demand for coal with production climbing to 352,000 tons in 1941.

February 27, 1943 dawned as a warm day with a clear sky. The full shift of 77 men came to work to collect time - and - a - half Saturday wages and their paychecks. At about 9:30 am a surface worker later reported he had seen a cloud of dust rise from the mine entrance. He had heard no sound, although it was later discovered that a 20-ton locomotive had been knocked off the track by the blast. On the surface at the Foster Gulch Mine, others later reported hearing a muffled explosion. No communication with underground was possible because the phones were dead. By the time local rescuers on the scene advanced through the No. 2 portal, three men were found unconscious near the rock tunnel entrance to the No. 3 Seam. They were revived at the surface, the only three survivors of the disaster. They later recounted an unusual pressure in their ears, but no sound, followed by a hurricane-like wind filled with debris. Heroic efforts were made to rebuild the power and ventilation systems in order to reach the working areas where the miners were last known to be located. Rescue equipment was not adequate in spite of assistance from as far away as Salt Lake City and by March 1st 118 rescuers had been



The remains of the power plant. MCI Co. built it when the Montana Power Co. did not honor its agreement to supply the colliery with power. It was destroyed in a fire in 1926, rebuilt and continued to supply the power until 1942 when a new agreement with Montana Power Co. was entered into.

JON AXLINE and JOAN L. BROWNELL photo

overcome in the gas-filled mine and been treated. On April 9th, rescue worker Matt Woodrow became the 75th victim when he died from the effects of the gas. Their courageous efforts were to no avail, but they enabled the investigation of the disaster by making the workings safe enough to accommodate the official examiners.

After the disaster, five parties conducted their own extensive, independent investigations which resulted in a number of reports and an inquest held in Red Lodge April 12-14, 1943. These were Montana Governor Sam C. Ford's appointed commission, U.S. Bureau of Mines, United Mine



The Blacksmith and repair shop. It also included a coal analysis laboratory, electrical shop and offices.

JON AXLINE and JOAN L. BROWNELL photo.



The remains of the Cameron house. Built by MCI in about 1908 to rent out to employees, it was named for William Cameron, his wife Mary and their family who lived there through most of the building's useful life. After the 1943 disaster, families gathered here to await news of their kinfolk. LINDA DUTCHER photo.

Workers of America, Montana State Coal Mine Inspector Edward J. Davies, and Montana Coal and Iron Company. They all agreed that methane gas accumulated somehow and was accidentally ignited which caused coal dust to go into suspension and ignite in a second explosion, causing a majority of the deaths from carbon monoxide gas and lack of oxygen some hours after the explosion. This was the triple whammy that all coal-mining people fear, the classic chain of events inherent in the mining of the combustible rock called coal. In the end, this was the extent of their harmony since they would not come to agree on a conclusive determination of the source of the methane and the cause of its ignition. (For a detailed discussion of the investigations with a balanced view of the theories put forth by all parties, see the narrative by industrial historian Paul Andersen from 1988 in *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* or the detailed chronologic listing of events and proceedings by Jeffrey McNeish). The area affected by the disaster was soon sealed and allowed to flood, making it impossible for any later investigations to revisit and substantiate any of these theories.

The disaster devastated the population of Bearcreek with some families losing multiple members and one family losing eleven relatives. Left behind were 58 widows and 125 fatherless children, who received a paltry \$447,700 compensation in total

After the disaster, production continued with 538,000 tons mined in 1943 rising to the peak of 576,000 tons in 1944. In October 1945, a damaging fire of unknown origin destroyed the boxcar loaders, tipples, cleaning plants and coal bunkers. The coal processing plant and loader were rebuilt, but on a smaller scale. Decreasing coal quality along with the switch of some industrial and residential customers to other fuels resulted in production dropping to 390,000 tons in 1946 and 200,000 in 1947. From there, a steady decline resulted in a production in 1951 of 100,000 tons, a level not seen since the early 'teens.

The lack of a conclusive cause of the disaster has, no doubt, resulted in a controversy that continues to this day. Active interest seems often to be aimed towards supporting one of the theories to the exclusion of the others in order to assign simple blame in a complex situation. Besides the articles cited here, recent books chronicle the personal stories of the victims and survivors. These include: *Sons of America, Brothers Underground and Quiet Courage, Media Accounts of Montana's Smith Mine No. 3 Disaster*, both published in 2007 by author, Jeffrey McNeish, whose great-great grandfather was a victim; and *Goodbye Wives and Daughters* by journalist Susan Kushner Resnick, published in 2010 by the University of Nebraska Press.

In a jacket review of Resnick's book, Scott Martelle, author of *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West*, refers to the 1943 disaster as "a forgotten moment". To the contrary, places related to the disaster continue to be memorialized anew. A granite monument dedicated to the victims May 30, 1947 at Bearcreek Cemetery where many of the victims are buried, was rededicated August 10, 2006. Along with the 1947 memorial in the Red Lodge Cemetery, in 1989 the City of Red Lodge planted and dedicated 77 trees to the victims at Coal Miner's Park. Now, the Smith Mine site itself has been officially recognized because it, "best illustrates Montana's coal mining heritage.....and is in fact a revered site in the state that stands in testament to the lives that were lost".

Dedicated to the memory of Russell Dutcher who spent his professional life advancing the science of coal and who was fascinated by everything about coal extraction.

TOWER and HASMARK, the *GHOST TOWNS* east of PHILIPSBURG

by TERRY HALDEN

When talking about the mining activity in the Philipsburg area, most attention is given to the fabulous mines on the Granite Mountain. However the hills east of Philipsburg were just as active and spawned two towns that can now be classified as ghost towns.

After Hector Horton located an outcropping of silver ore in what was to become the Cordova, (Hope) mine, the following year, 1866, news got out and the rush was on. Other mines such as the Potosi, the Porter, the Take All and Prince Imperial were staked in the immediate vicinity, whilst other prospectors pushed further into the hills where E. B. Waterbury discovered the Algonquin, and a little to the north Charlie Frost found the Speckled Trout (At some point in the future the word 'Speckled' was dropped and the mine was known simply as the Trout). Others located the Pocahontas, the Scratch Awl, the Salmon, the Headlight and, eventually, the True Fissure.



Above: The True Fissure mine, near Tower.
Below: The Durango mine on the way to Tower.





Above, Below & on Masthead: three original cabins still to be seen in Tower.

On December 15, 1873 a company was formed by a group of Philadelphia businessmen and incorporated as the Northwest Company for the purpose of mining and milling silver ore from the mines east of Philipsburg. They set about purchasing the Speckled Trout, the Pocahontas, Poorman's Joy, and the Kitty Clyde, and then built a ten-stamp mill to process the silver ore. A little town, originally known as Troutville grew and was re-named Tower, in honor of Charlemagne Tower, the President of the company. In September, 1875 the New Northwest newspaper described the town as having twenty or more cabins, along with a boarding house and a storehouse. What the newspaper didn't say was that the mill was a disaster, losing more than 60% of the silver it was processing from the raw ore. In 1875, silver milling techniques were sadly inadequate, although the tailings yielded a bonanza at a later date.

A half mile to the south, up Frost Gulch, the Algonquin had changed hands and was being developed by the Algonquin Mining Company, another Philadelphia based syndicate, that built a ten-stamp mill to process their silver ore, along with that of the nearby Comanche mine. Like Tower, a town sprouted up, that they called Hasmark, a combination of two names, H. A. Styles, the President and C. C. Markell the largest shareholder in the company. At its peak, from April to August 1880, Hasmark had a post office. By 1882 the mill increased in size to eighty-stamps as the company secured a contract to custom mill some of the ore from the Granite mines, but, after two years of robust activity, the contract was not renewed (the Bi-Metallic Mining Company had opened its own mill) and the Algonquin was forced to close down its mill. At the same time the mine was producing lower and lower grade ore and as water had been encountered at the 175 foot level, the company closed down. In 1890, the mill mysteriously burned to the ground. Some said the cause of the fire was the friction created by a hot insurance policy.



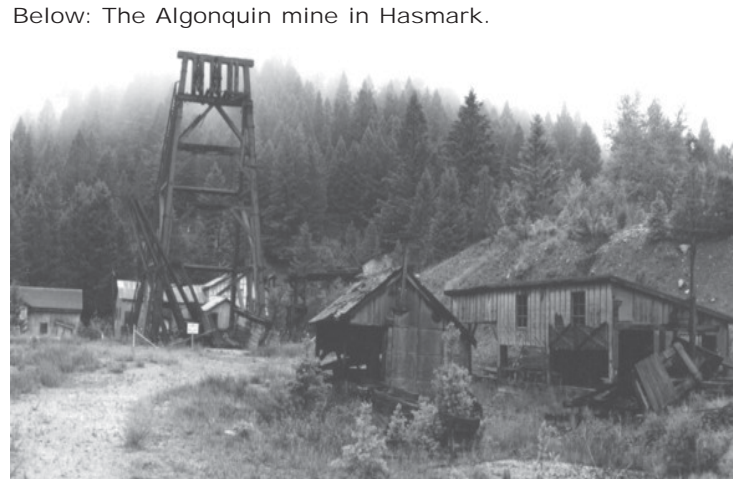
Like the mines and mills of Granite, the 1893 devaluation of silver had a disastrous effect in the hills to the east of Philipsburg. Both towns of Hasmark and Tower were virtually deserted as the mines and mills closed down. Even when the price of silver started to come back, it was the high quality silver mined in Granite that came back and at that, very slowly. Some mining was restarted in the hills east of Philipsburg for the Mining World of January 21, 1911 stated: *' Tower – Extensive improvements have been made on the Montana-Frisco Mining Company property this year. A hoisting plant was installed together with pumps, air compressor and also an electric light plant. The principal values of the property are silver with gold lead as by-products. The company proposed to install a process for the treatment of its low-grade ores which will cost about \$75,000'.*

In 1914, as the First World War got underway in Europe, German U-Boats created havoc in the Atlantic, disrupting the supply of magnesium from South America. High quality magnesium, used in the manufacture of steel, while manganese dioxide, used in dry-cell batteries, was known to exist in the mines east of Philipsburg, and along with a rise in the price of silver, created a second mining boom in the area. The Trout Mining Company re-opened the Trout mine and eventually secured the Algonquin, Bell and Dead Horse mines. The company built a mill near the mine to process the ores the mines were producing. The company operated until 1963. Three other mills were also built in the area. Meanwhile, the Moorlight Mining Company that operated the True Fissure mine near Tower was in business until 1970, although the company was bought out by Taylor-Knapp Company in 1936.

Today, several original cabins, interspaced with occupied cabins exist in Tower, and in Hasmark there are a few cabins but the most impressive feature in the Algonquin Mine where the original hoisting equipment can still be seen.



Above: The Trout mill between Tower and Hasmark.



Below: The Algonquin mine in Hasmark.



The Manganese mill west of Tower.

All photos by Author.

DEATH in DEWEY FLATS

by Terry Halden

John W. Powell, not to be confused with the John Wesley Powell of rafting down the Grand Canyon fame, was born in Virginia in about 1836 and whose ancestry could be traced back to the original founders of Jamestown Colony and beyond to Brecon, Wales. Receiving a good education, Powell turned his back on the 'gentry' way of life and set out west to engage in a life where he was free and living off the land in what became Montana Territory. Granville Stuart met him in 1857, commenting on the encounter in his book. It was the first of several meetings of the two pioneers. Powell's many accomplishments included mining, ranching, trapping, trading, surveying and he was appointed coroner and deputy U.S. Marshal at different times in his life. But it came to an end on the evening of Wednesday, May 7th 1879 in the little hamlet of Dewey Flats.

Powell had secured permission from the local butcher, A. M. Leabo to use his facilities to butcher and hang a steer that Powell owned. Having done the slaughter, Powell withdrew to the Walker and Manning saloon to quench his thirst. In the meantime, John Rhoeder (or Reeder) a slaughter house employee herded some cattle into the slaughter house and wanted to know whose hanging beef was taking up the space he needed to do his job. Being told it was Powell's; Rhoeder went to the saloon and confronted Powell, demanding that he remove his beef from the butcher's shop. Powell maintained he had permission to use the facilities and told Rhoeder he would not. An argument ensued and what happened next has many versions, but all with the same sad ending. One version has Powell reaching behind him, and Rhoeder thinking he was reaching for a weapon (Powell was unarmed) shooting him point blank. Another version has Rhoeder discovering Powell was unarmed and challenging him to "go get heeled", a challenge that would not go unheeded in 1879. Rhoeder withdrew to the slaughter house, Powell located a gun, but when approaching the building was shot by Rhoeder at a distance of sixty feet and died instantly.

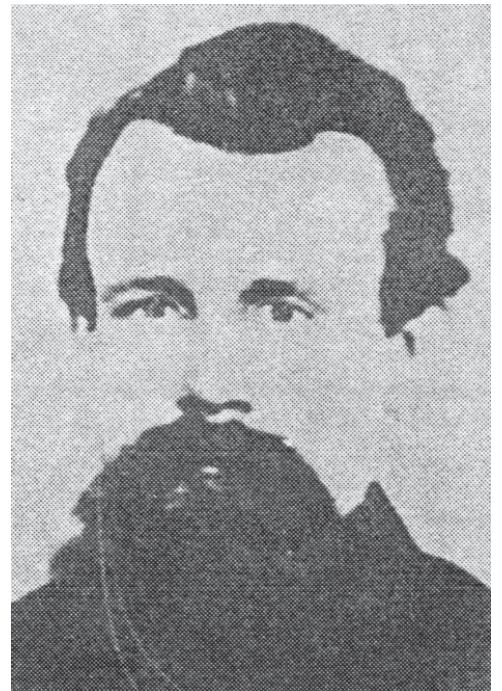
Rhoeder indicated that he would give himself up to the law but when he heard shouts of "Lynch him" from the townsfolk, he thought better of it, fled and was never seen again.

Powell, who in 1901 Powell County was named after, is buried in the Dewey cemetery and only recently, thanks to the efforts of Grace Piazzola Helming, was accorded the honor of a monument.

Information for the above was taken from a Ghost Town Quarterly article written in 1993 by Grace Piazzola Helming, which will appear in its entirety in the forthcoming book reprinting stories published in old issues of the newsletter.



Dewey Flats at about the time John W. Powell was killed there.
MIKE MARTIN photo collection



John W. Powell
Source of photo unknown



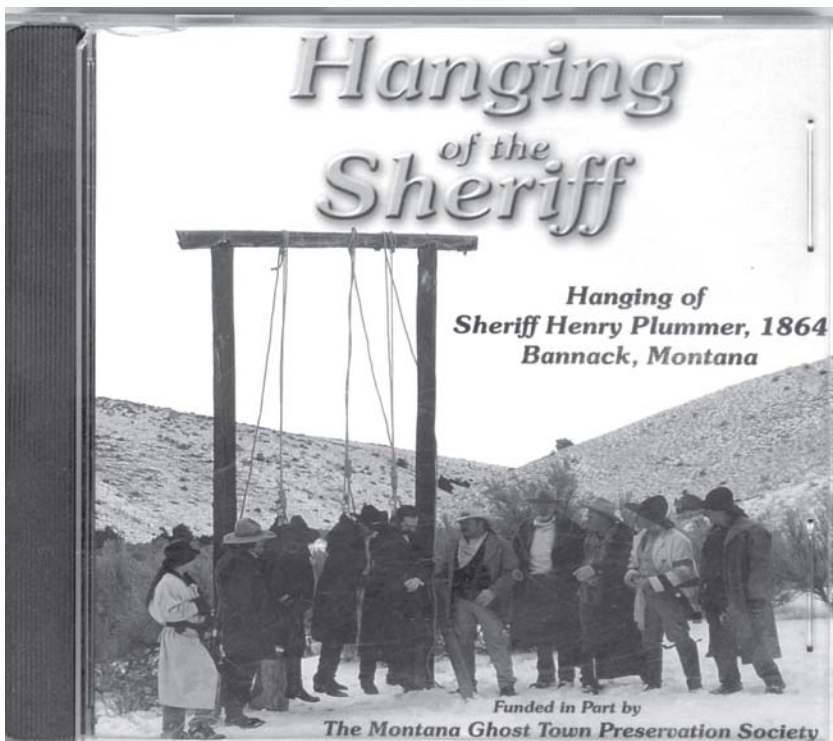
Powell's grave in Dewey cemetery.

TERRY HALDEN photo.



Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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



'The Hanging of the Sheriff' is a 37 minute docu-drama examining the events leading up to one of the most notorious hangings in Montana history that occurred in Bannack on January 10, 1864. Was the hanging of sheriff, Henry Plummer justified to protect the local citizenry, or was this act the culmination of greed, jealousy and the desire of the political powers placed in charge of the emerging territory, by Washington, to get rid of a popular, duly elected officer of a different political stripe? Debated today by historians, scholars and American Western history enthusiasts, the film takes a look at newly introduced evidence that casts a doubt on the long held public belief of Plummer's guilt and the existence of his organized band of road agents bent on widespread robbery and murder. This DVD, researched, written, and produced by Meg McWhinney, one of our Board Members, is of PBS standard and a copy can be obtained from Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society who partially funded the production and would make an excellent Xmas gift.

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