



Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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The Masonic Hall and Schoolhouse, Bannack, January, 2012
Masthead: Governor's residence, Bannack, 1864

TERRY HALDEN Photo
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Photo

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 authors' and do not necessarily represent the views of the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society.

Spring 2012

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2012 Convention Co-Chairpersons:

Tom Lowe and Terry Halden

The Prez Sez

TERRY HALDEN

On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into effect the 'Homestead Act'. Of all the states, it was, what was to become Montana, that registered the most homesteaders, with a total of 151,600 (The next largest number was Colorado with 107,618). John Stoner has submitted an article that typifies the problems faced by homesteaders a century ago in Montana, and in view of the 150th anniversary of the Act we are pleased to publish the story of 'William Radtke's Mysterious Building.' You will find it on page 9. Our newest member of the board, Don Black, has sent us an article on 'Montana Territory's Famous Horse Race' that happened in Virginia City in the 19th century, which appears on page 7. Finally, being aware that John Vipond (one of the three Vipond Brothers Vipond Park is named after) was murdered in New Mexico my curiosity was aroused so I did some research, by phone and e-mail with the Espanola Public Library in that State. I received top notch co-operation, in they located the newspapers that related the events culminating with the execution of the 'guilty' party, copied them and mailed them to me. As a result I was able to relate the story to you in the article 'Death in the Desert' on page 4.

Tom Lowe has done a lot of work in putting together attractions for this year's convention in Dillon. His efforts are just shy of final release, but this promises to be one of our best conventions. Keep the dates September 14 – 16 free and look out for announcements in the near future as things are fine tuned.

In early January, V.P. Mike Byrnes and I attended the re-enactment of the lynching of Sheriff Plummer and his two deputies in a snow covered Bannack. The day was beautiful and sunny, although there was a chilly breeze that accentuated the event. Tom Lowe introduced us to Dale Carlson, the Park Manager, who you will all meet when we visit Bannack at our convention. The evening following we attended the Bannack Association annual dinner which was held at the Elk's Lodge in Dillon, where we met several members of the Association Board including President Linda Mazejka and Shannon Gilbert a past member of our board. An enjoyable evening with a roast beef supper was on the menu.

With the resignation of Margie Kankrlik as our Secretary/Treasurer, following the unfortunate death of her husband Jan, we have a sudden vacancy for that position on the board. However, what has been done is the position has been split into three, Treasurer, Secretary, and Membership Chairman, with each having its own job description. Each job would take about two or three hours a month to fulfill along with attending board meetings in Bozeman two or three times a year on a Saturday. We are earnestly asking for volunteers for the three positions. If you can spare the time and want to help in making this Society work, please e-mail me at: terryhalden@hotmail.com. As the saying goes - the more you put in, the more you get out - and I'll vouch for that.

Terry

New Members

The following **New Members** have joined our Association since the last newsletter. Please make them welcome.

Joyce Morgan, Milltown, MT.

Vern Pomeroy, Bigfork, MT.

Ken Goody, Melrose, MT.

James J. Lennox, Florence, MT.

Donald & Linda Thorson, Corvallis, MT.

Colette Bonstead, Austin, TX.

Roshan Patel, Bozeman, MT.

Shivon Van Allen, Bozeman, MT.

Marsha Bland, Newington, GA.

Bud Hall, Lake Stevens, WA.

Elly Schwarzkopf, Bozeman, MT.

F.J. Zahler, Lewistown, MT.

Carolyn McCartney, West Bend, WI.

M.G.T.P.S. BOARD MEETING

February 11, 2012

The meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 1:00 pm at the Pioneer Museum. Those in attendance were: Don Black, Dick Lee, Loretta Chapman, Margie Kankrlik, Terry Halden. Jan o'Brien was also in attendance via conference call. With a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

Terry Halden introduced Don Black the newest member of the Board. Don Black gave a brief statement regarding his background and is enthusiastic about joining the board.

The next item on the agenda was the approval of the minutes of the September 9, 2011 board meeting. Dick Lee made a motion to approve the minutes as printed in the newsletter, Loretta Chapman seconded the motion, a vote was taken the minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Meg McWhinney was not at the board meeting so there was no update on our Facebook page. However, Margie Kankrlik stated that before she had to resign her position as Secretary/Treasurer, it seemed, based on addresses of new members, that we were reaching a younger group due, in part, to our presence on Facebook.

Next, Terry Halden reminded everyone about the Montana Site Stewardship program that begins May 7th. Terry stated he is going to attend. No one else expressed interest in the event.

NEW BUSINESS

Sue Howe then joined the meeting.

Terry Halden then announced that Sue Howe, temporary secretary/treasurer, is resigning effective April 1st. The club is in need of a new secretary/treasurer and he asked for the board's help in recruiting one. Terry will continue calling people and will put an ad in the newsletter to try to get a response. There was a discussion of dividing up the job and it was suggested that a job description be written.

Terry Halden also stated the club is in need of enthusiastic board members.

Terry than gave an update on the September 14 – 16, 2012 convention in Dillon. He described two sites for the Saturday banquet: University of Montana Western and the Elks Club. The disadvantage of the University of Montana Western is that the MGTPS would also have to provide their own bar. The Elks Club has a full bar and Terry has eaten there and said the food was very good. A discussion was had and the board decided the Saturday banquet would be at the Elks Club, subject to pricing.

Sue Howe then gave the Treasurer's Report. The first item discussed was the phone that costs the club \$40 per month and on which we receive very few legitimate calls. After discussion a motion was made by Dick Lee to discontinue the telephone. Loretta Chapman seconded the motion, a vote was taken and the motion passed. Sue also confirmed that we have retained our 501c3 status.

Dick Lee stated that the club's free web site would no longer be free. He has looked at other free non -profit web sites and found a couple that seemed suitable. A discussion of cost and a new email address ensued. Dick was asked by the board to continue finding the club another host for the web site.

A motion was brought forward by Sue and seconded by Loretta that the club donate \$50 to the Gallatin County Pioneer Museum, in remembrance of Jan Kankrlik, who passed away in January. The motion was unanimously passed, with Margie Kankrlik abstaining.

There being no further business to discuss, Dick Lee made a motion that the meeting be adjourned, Loretta Chapman seconded the motion, a vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned.

Margie Kankrlik

Acting Secretary

M.G.T.P.S.

BOARD MEMBER

We are in need of a Secretary and a Treasurer. If you could spare a few hours a month along with attending two or three board meetings a year in Bozeman, we would encourage you to join us and help us in the running of your Society. To find out more please e-mail: terryhalden@hotmail.com for a full 'job description.'

Remuneration is on the same scale as the President as we are

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER!

DEATH in the DESERT

by TERRY HALDEN



Joseph Vipond, born Oct. 1841 is in his 20's in this photo from the BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MUSEUM

Joseph Vipond, in the meantime had had enough of hard-scrabble mining and returned home to Illinois, married his childhood sweetheart, Hattie, and settled down on the family farm. In 1875 the two remaining brothers, John and William sold out to Joseph A. Browne, who continued to develop the mines in the Vipond Mining District, with the population growing to an estimated two hundred miners at its peak in the 1880s. The little burg even had a post office from 1878 until 1888, but by then the quality of the ore being mined was rapidly deteriorating and the population started moving away. William Vipond continued to live in his beloved Pioneer Mountains, more or less as a hobo, (although he had money in the bank) until his death in 1921 from tuberculosis. John Vipond retained the 'prospecting bug' and wandered down to New Mexico in his search for precious metals. And here the story takes a macabre twist.

In 1894 he was in Rio Arriba County in northern New Mexico. Rio Arriba is Spanish for 'higher up the river' and several tributaries of the mighty Rio Grande are found in the county, but mainly it is desert. John was last seen alive on July 29th 1894, near Rio Gallina, by William Feyerheim and Bernard McGinn, two prospectors he had been traveling with, on and off. They claimed that a few days later, a Mexican, Perfecto Padilla, came to their camp, 'driving two burros that they recognized as belonging to Vipond'. They further maintained that they questioned Padilla but let him go after they appropriated the burros.



William Vipond, born Aug. 1844 is in his late 20's in this photo. BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MUSEUM Photo

Just south of where the Big Hole River has cut a path through the Pioneer Mountains, is a beautiful high mountain plateau known as Vipond Park. On April Fool's Day in 1868, the three Vipond brothers, John, William and Joseph registered their mine the 'Mewonitoc' after locating silver bearing ore in the southwestern area of the plateau. The brothers had come out west from Scales Mound in Illinois in 1864, having been lured by the news of the gold strikes in Alder Gulch. Having arrived too late to register any worthwhile claims of their own in the Virginia City locale, they tried several other locations before hitting the jackpot on the Pioneer Mountain plateau. As word got out, others flocked to the newly created mining district of Vipond, but it was the brothers that discovered the richest outcrop of silver galena, which they named the 'Gray Jockey'.

Five miles to the north at Quartz Hill, more silver deposits were discovered by a George Pettingill and a second mining district was established. The remoteness and the high altitude made development slow, but in 1872 the miners from both districts got together and cut a road north to the Big Hole River. At Dewey Flats several concentrators were built to handle the ore coming off the mountains to the south.



John Vipond, born in England ca. 1838 is in his 40's in this photo. BEAVERHEAD COUNTY MUSEUM Photo

Two other men, J. D. Bentley and Frank Plountenex, testified that they had discovered the remains of a man on October 4th but that the remains had been scattered by wild animals. They had found the skull which bore evidence of being crushed on one side, and they located a Winchester rifle and clothing, they identified as belonging to Vipond. In the pocket of the clothing was a letter from William Vipond, addressed to John Vipond, which confirmed the identity of the body. They also stated that they were aware that Vipond had cashed a \$50 draft a few days before he disappeared and that Padilla had been seen in the village of Cuba in early August, where he spent 20 or 30 dollars. It is interesting to note that the affidavits of all four men were taken on October 12th 1894, two days after Gov. William T. Thornton issued a reward of \$250 for the arrest and conviction of the 'unknown murder(s)' of Vipond. (It was never paid out).

An arrest warrant for Padilla was issued the same day and he was taken into custody on October 20th 1894. Padilla was about 40 years of age, married and had two children, a daughter aged 14 and a son aged 3. He rented a small ranch, on shares, where he raised small amounts of corn, wheat, beans and a few livestock, most of which he used for his family needs, with any excess being sold for other family necessities. William Vipond was notified of his brother's demise and journeyed to New Mexico to take care of the burial arrangements and stayed on for the trial of Padilla. For some unknown reason, the trial did not take place for over a year, starting in November 1895 in the county town of Tierra Amarilla.



It was country like this that John Vipond was prospecting when he was murdered.

RIO ARRIBA CHAMBER of COMMERCE photos.

Most of the evidence against Padilla was circumstantial. He produced a rebuttal witness, Polidor Martinez, who stated that he was with Padilla when they came across the two burros on the trail and that they were not driving them. Under questioning by Larkin G. Read, Padilla's defense lawyer, Martinez admitted that the County Sheriff, William C. Vipond and others had talked to him and tried to get him to say he had seen Padilla 'driving the burros'. A second witness, Pedro Olivas also testified about finding the burros on the trail and that Padilla was not driving them. He too, added that under questioning he had been pressured by the Sheriff and Vipond to change his story. A third witness, H. Noel, the storekeeper in Cuba, confirmed he had seen Padilla driving some sheep into the village and shortly afterwards he had purchased some supplies from him but only spent eight to ten dollars, not twenty to thirty as alleged.



And then came the bombshell. The Santa Fe Daily New Mexican reported that William C. Vipond had spent several weeks conducting extensive investigations into his brother's death and had uncovered an eye-witness to the murder. The prosecution trotted out Jose Archibeque who testified that he was in the vicinity of Vipond's camp on about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of August 6th 1894 when he saw Padilla approaching. He hid in the woods nearby from where he saw Padilla sneak up on Vipond, who was asleep and hit Vipond on the head with a pick ax handle. Archibeque then fled and had remained silent for the last year as he feared for his own life.

Read tried to discredit the Archibeque's statement but the District Attorney, Jacob H. Crist, displayed Vipond's skull and showed the jury how a pick ax handle fitted exactly into the horrible dent. It had, as the newspaper stated, a "telling effect" on the jury, who quickly reached a verdict of "guilty of murder in the first degree".

Padilla was sentenced on December 21st 1895 to be hanged but the execution was delayed by an appeal to the New Mexico Supreme Court. The appeal was denied and on September 9th 1896, Governor Thornton signed the death warrant. September 22nd Rio Arriba County Sheriff Felix Garcia and two deputies picked up Padilla from the Santa Fe jail where he had been housed during the appeal process and boarded a train for Tierra Amarilla. Two days later, Padilla was read his last rites by Fr. Antonio Louvenceau, and still protesting his innocence was executed.

Concluded on the next page.

Rio Arriba Co Mex

Territory of New Mexico
County of Rio Arriba.

I Felix Garcia, Sheriff in and for
the county of Rio Arriba New Mexico,
do hereby certify that I have
executed the within death warrant
on the person of Perfecto Padilla
by hanging him by the neck
until he was dead, between the
hours of 6 o'clock A.M. and 4 o'clock
P.M. on September twenty fourth
1896 at Tierra Amarilla in the
County of Rio Arriba, New Mexico
according to the orders contained
in the within warrant.

Tierra Amarilla, Rio Arriba Co.
Sept 24th 1896
Fees \$100.00
Felix Garcia
Sheriff

The DEATH CERTIFICATE signed by Sheriff Felix Garcia attested to the fact that Perfecto Padilla had been hanged in Tierra Amarilla on September 24th 1896, for the murder of John Vipond. The \$100 fee is what the sheriff was paid for the execution.

NEW MEXICO STATE RECORDS

But was Padilla guilty?

What didn't come out in the trial was the fact that Archibeque and Padilla had been embroiled in a family feud for three or four years; something William Vipond may have stumbled upon and decided to exploit to ensure the suspect in his brother's murder was convicted, especially as the evidence against Padilla was rather flimsy. If the murder had taken place as Archibeque maintained, how did Padilla know Vipond had money worth stealing and why was a valuable, easily disposed of loot such as a Winchester rifle left at the scene? And what was Vipond doing sleeping in the afternoon? With Padilla in jail the whole time, why was Archibeque 'afraid' to let the authorities know what he had witnessed for over a year until William Vipond located him?

Finally, in 1965, a G. Swain wrote to the state archives in Santa Fe, requesting information about Padilla's trial. In his letter, Swain stated Padilla was hanged for a crime he did not commit and that the real murderer had later been "filled with remorse" because he had been responsible for two deaths and as result had confessed to a priest. However, he did not reveal the identity of the real murderer whom he stated was well known in Rio Arriba County.

The true identity of who killed John Vipond will, it appears, remain a mystery, concealed by history, for which New Mexico has several such deaths - Albert and Henry Fountain and Sheriff Pat Garrett to name a few.

I am indebted to Christine and her staff at the Espanola Public Library in New Mexico for digging out newspaper articles that were used in this article.

In the November 28 1894 edition of the Dillon Examiner, the folks in Beaverhead County, were told about the murder in New Mexico. The local paper got some of the facts wrong, including the name of Padilla, who they called Padio, listing him, not as a poor farmer, but a 'blood thirsty all round desperate character.'



MONTANA TERRITORY'S FAMOUS HORSE RACE

by Don Black

When you know and love horses, your free spirit inside says, Let Em' Run Like The Wind. An Irish immigrant and a Native American chief both knew they had that special horse. On a back street in Virginia City, Montana over a century ago, T J Farrell pioneer and Tendoy, a Bannock Chief put their pride and bets on the line. A race with lots to win or lose. The weekly journalists covered the action with their assumptions of the educated settler versus the noble and unfortunate Native American. Below is a transcript, written by Frank Conway, stepson of TJ and Margaret Farrell.

One of the most famous races I can remember was pulled off on a back street in Virginia City and it was about the time the placer mines of Alder Gulch began to wane. Tendoy, a Chief of the Bannocks, and about 500 of his tribe were in town on their way from their reservation in Idaho – they had just been removed a season or two before from their home in the Madison Valley, and they were bound for the buffalo grounds of the Yellowstone Valley. Like all other Indian tribes, they had a running horse, a sprinter which could *run over the moon*, or so they thought, at the quarter mile distance. Tom Farrell also had a little mare, named *Pet* that had never been beaten at that distance. She never saw the day, she would weigh 700 pounds and she was one of the prettiest pieces of horse flesh ever in the state. Tendoy's bunch immediately talked horse race. Farrell also talked horse race and finally an agreement was made to run it a quarter of a mile, Farrell to put up 200 sacks of flour against \$1,000 which the Indians would rustle up, \$500 being paid in gold the day of the race and \$ 500 to be paid in buffalo robes when the Indians returned from their annual hunt on the Yellowstone.

The race took place the afternoon, after the bet was made and the track selected was the hard packed street back of the principal business thoroughfare.

Old time friends of Tendoy were selected as judges and I believe that every man, woman and child in town was lined along the street to see the race. Every Indian in the tribe was also on hand and the betting was so strong that a heap of blankets, Indians had to wager, together with robes, saddles and everything that the flour, rifles, ammunition and whatever else the Redman coveted were piled up on a vacant lot near the finish of the race. All of this represented the wagers made, for the Indian always likes to see his bet placed where he can grab it, at once should he win. Finally after the Bannocks under Tendoy had virtually stripped themselves of everything they had worth wagering, and the white sports had been bet to a standstill, the two horses came out on the track. Tendoy's son, astride a blue roan dish faced Cayuse, was the first to appear and the "Jock" wore a big red blanket hanging pretty loosely. Farrell's "Pet" came next, and as she never did like the smell of an Indian, it was almost impossible to get her close enough to the Indians mount to get a start.



Bannock Chief Tendoy, photographed with what, may well be, his famous horse.

Photo courtesy AUTHOR.

Dick Watson was up as jockey and like the Indian, he did not have anything on his mount except a snaffle bit bridle. Finally the nags lined up and just as it seemed as if it would be a go, the Indian slipped off his blanket by a sudden motion and it fell under Pet's nose...Then she bucked for the first time in her life and Watson went to the hospital. Fortunately for Farrell and the others who had bet their coins on Pet's shanks the word for the start had not been given and as soon as Pet was quieted down, a little bit, Farrell decided he would do the riding himself. He did. Tendoy's son who is now chief of the tribe having succeeded to the position when the old man died, was by this time stripped down to a single rag and no opportunity to play any tricks. Finally the starter got the two nags away about even. Pet, on one side of the street, snorting with indignation because she had to run against an Indian horse and the blue roan of the Indians, kicking at his shadow because the trick by which his rider hoped to win had failed.



Sheriff T. J. Farrell, in later life.

Photo, courtesy AUTHOR

MADISON
HOUSE,
 VIRGINIA CITY, M. T.
 Headquarters of the
National Park
 and
Overland Stage Coaches,
 and general office of the
 Virginia City, Puller Hot
 Springs and Home Park
Express Line.
 (restoring the U. S. mail)
 T. J. FARRELL, PROP'R.
 Also, in connection therewith, The
O.K. Stables

An advertisement from the Madisonian, January 21, 1882 - editor.

There is not much to tell about the running of the race, it did not last long enough to make a story, but when it was over Pet was in the lead by half dozen lengths despite the frantic endeavors of the Indian to win. They did not have enough money or trading facilities to buy cartridges, and it was a pretty glum bunch of Indians which gathered about their champion and grunted their disgust, however, Tendoy's credit was always good. Farrell himself gave the Indians the two hundred sacks of flour which had been put up as stake money. Pat Largey staked Tendoy, and his men to as much ammunition as they wanted and the men who had won their rifles gave them back again, with the understanding that each rifle would be worth a buffalo robe when the Indians returned from their hunt.

To the credit of the Indians, it must be said that they had a splendid hunting season and when they came past Virginia City late in the fall they paid their debts in buffalo robes and beaver skins, but until the day Pet died, it was necessary for her owner to keep her in sight, always in the day time and locked up at night, for there was a least scores of Indians always waiting about the valley, watching for an opportunity to steal the little sorrel mare.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

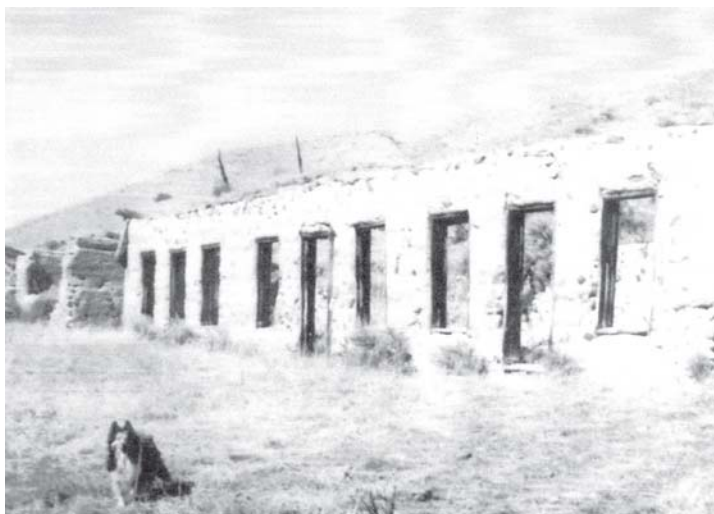
Thomas Joseph Farrell was born in Drogheda, Ireland on February 10, 1843. In 1846, Thomas immigrated with his family to the United States and settled in New York. His mother had died at his birth, and when he was two years old his grandmother brought him to America. The family moved to Missouri and when the Civil War broke out, T J Farrell joined Tucker's Regiment, Confederate Cavalry, rose in rank to Corporal Farrell and then served as Captain Farrell until the Civil War's end.

He left Missouri on May 10, 1864, and by way of Salt Lake City, arrived in Virginia City on April 14, 1865. In Salt Lake he met Osmund B. Varney, nephew of Harriet Beecher Stowe. From there the two came to the Montana Territory and Madison Valley together. Partners in their V F Ranch, they furnished the U S Government with cavalry horse and supplied mounts for General Howard's troops during the chase of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Tribe in the Montana Territory. General Howard gave Farrell his prized pair of field glasses, which lie today in a Virginia City museum.

In the middle seventies, Mr. Farrell married the widow Margaret Conway and three children were born: Bessie, George, and Tommie Joe. They were all born in Virginia City. In 1873 Thomas Farrell was elected sheriff of Madison County and served in that capacity for two years. Thomas owned and operated a prominent hotel (The Madison House) in Virginia City and shortly after World War One he moved to Missoula. Thomas J. Farrell was a member of the Society of Montana Pioneers.

Mr. Farrell died on May 9, 1927.

WILLIAM RADTKE'S MYSTERIOUS BUILDING



William F. Radtke arrived in Broadwater County, seeking a homestead location in 1909. Just how he arrived is uncertain, but it was probably by train like so many other homesteaders of that era. His wife Alvina, and eight year old daughter Esther, may have traveled with him to Montana, but like so many cases, they may have stayed behind while William picked out a location for their future home. Alvina and Ester were definitely residing in the county in 1910, as they were counted on the Federal Census for School District 22 (Nave). Just why William picked the dry desolate area south of Lone Mountain to pour his energy into is anyone's guess, but no doubt he was led there by a local "locator" who supposedly knew the area and therefore was relied on to guide newcomers to favorable choices of ground.

William's choice for his homestead was on the north side of Salt Gulch, about one mile due south of Lone Mountain, more specifically described as the East half of the Southwest quarter and the West half of the Southeast quarter of Section 18, Township 4 North Range 1 East. It totaled the usual one hundred and sixty acres.

Having decided where to locate his claim, William filed his Homestead Entry papers on December 1, 1909, probably through his "locator", who in turn filed them in Bozeman. The filing fee was \$10, and the "locator" charged a commission of \$12 for his troubles. With the papers filed, William could take temporary possession of his claim and would have three years to "prove up" – that is, to make certain improvements to the land, such as 'breaking' or plowing as much land practical to cultivate crops and building a house to live in, along with other outbuildings necessary to sustain a profitable family farm.

William had his work cut out but he plunged into the task headlong. He hired a young by the name of James Smith and eventually 120 acres of the 160 acres was under the plow. The building program of farm structures moved right along. The house would have come first, followed by a barn, granary, tool shed, chicken house and miscellaneous other buildings. Construction materials varied from local logs to rough cut to finished lumber, to concrete. A water well was dug, or more probably drilled to a depth of 96 feet. Three and a half miles of wire fence was strung by the time the three year time limit rolled around.

by John Stoner

With the completion of the "proving up" period, William filed his Homestead Entry Final Proof claim on April 2 1913. Two days later it was approved by the Bozeman office and on September 12, 1913, the patent was signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

Although William now owned his homestead, he wasn't making much money, because as soon as the ink was dry on his patent, he obtained two loans from the Merchants Bank of Winona, Minnesota, no doubt his hometown bank. The first, a mortgage was for \$1000 to be paid back at the rate of \$60 a year and the other (operating loan?) was for \$75 to be repaid at \$15 a year. From there, things went downhill for William, no doubt due to lack of moisture, grasshoppers, who knows what. Having not paid anything on the mortgage for three years (although he did get the \$75 loan paid off) William admitted defeat and sold out to a Francis K. Armstrong for a dollar, with Armstrong to assume the mortgage, on July 26, 1916.

Francis Armstrong didn't fare much better than William Radtke, because he sold out to a Frank House on February 6, 1919 for \$10. In a strange turn of events, Frank House sold out to Lora Armstrong, the wife of Francis, for 410 on March 24, 1925. Times continued to be harsh in this neck of the woods because ownership of the property eventually ended up in the hands of Broadwater County for non-payment of property taxes. Tom Williams bought the old Radtke homestead for back taxes in 1941, and today it is owned by Daniel Williams of Radersburg.

Nothing much has changed on the Salt Gulch homestead in the intervening years and today it looks pretty much as when William first laid eyes on it. Dry, barren and desolate. The only physical evidence left is a forlorn, roofless, concrete walled structure that stares out over Salt Gulch with multiple empty window and doorway openings. Originally 10 by 60 feet in size, it has become the 'Mystery Building'.

For over thirty years I had seen the building from a distance but never gave it much thought until the State Historical Preservation Office in Helena contacted me in 2000 asking me what I knew about it and more or less dumping the assignment of finding some answers into my lap.

The builder of the "Mystery Building" is of course long gone along with any old timers who might have known what the purpose of the concrete structure was. Many people had their own ideas as to why the building was constructed and these ranged from Radtke's living quarters to a chicken house, to a CCC camp.

The chicken house guess was gaining in strength, but I wasn't buying it. Although every homestead had a chicken house, why would anyone in his right mind, particularly in the years between 1910 and 1912 on a homestead located far from any settlements spend money constructing an expensive concrete chicken house with no less than three doors and six windows? I was putting my money, so to speak on it being where the family lived.



The 'chicken house' guess was gaining in strength, but I wasn't buying it. Why would anyone in their right mind, particularly in the years between 1910 and 1912, and on a homestead located far from any settlements, spend money on constructing an expensive concrete chicken house with no less than three doors and six windows? Every homestead had a chicken house, but not one so elaborate.

Seven years after being contacted by SHPO, it occurred to me that the answer was there before us all the time. All that was needed to solve the mystery could be obtained by contacting the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and requesting a copy of the Land Entry file for William Radtke. This I did, and there was the answer.

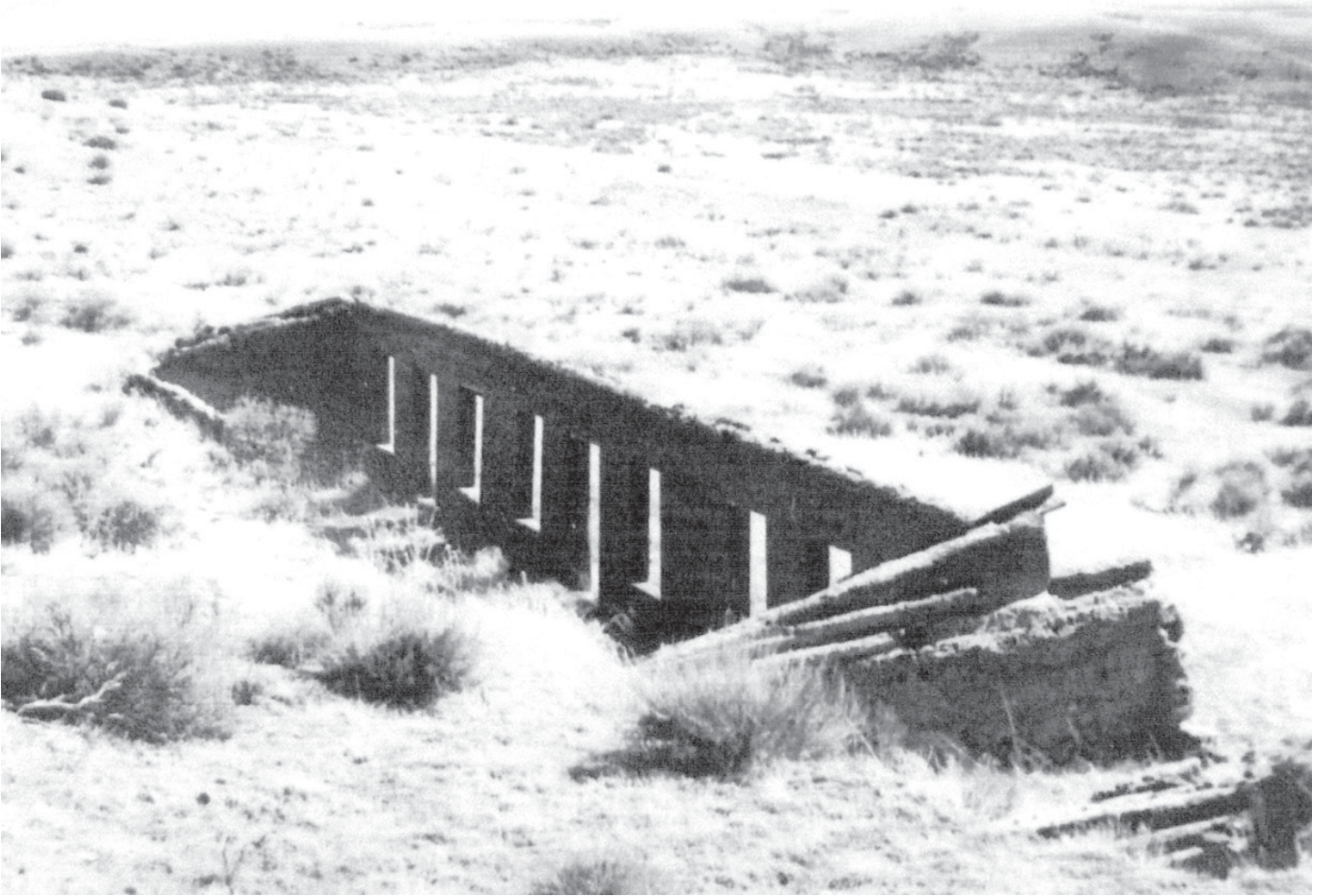


The testimonies of two witnesses along with Radtke's own sworn testimony, which was required as final proof that that he had 'proven up'. Under one question, 'Describe fully and in detail the amount and kind of improvements made on the claim', witness Henry Muller answered "Chicken house, concrete, 60 X 10 feet." Witness Phillip Mockel described it as "Chicken house, cement, 60 X 10 feet," while Radtke stated it was "a chicken house, 60 X 10 feet built of cement over rock."

So now the mystery is solved, however questions still linger. Why did Radtke build the walls out of concrete and rock? There are several native stone structures with a little cement mortar to hold them together, in and around Broadwater County, but nothing like Radtke's nearly solid concrete walls, which would have been time consuming and expensive to erect.

The raising of chickens was commonplace on most homesteads not only for the family's consumption, with excess eggs being sold at local markets, but Radtke's homestead was many miles away from any settlement. And why such a huge and elaborate hen house?

The building is interesting in more ways than one. The south wall, the one with all the openings is eight feet high. The north wall is only five feet high and sits back into a hollowed out portion of the dirt bank. Upon these stout walls were laid wooden poles side by side to form the roof. Probably straw covered the poles as there is no evidence that sod was used. The floor was just dirt. The most interesting aspect of this entire structure is the multiple doors and windows that were once filled openings, although, over time these items were hauled off, no doubt, by neighboring homesteaders when the place was abandoned. These windows were all of the double sash variety, a rather expensive item for a flock of chickens. Each doorway had two doors, and from the door hinge imprints on the jam, one was probably a screen door while the inner one was much heavier, like the front door to a house.



All photos, courtesy, AUTHOR

The family, by the way, lived in a log house 16 X 32 feet, while other buildings were of frame construction.

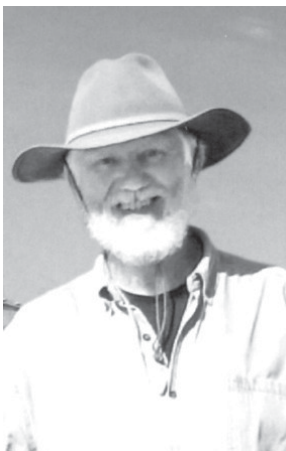
At some point after receiving his Homestead Patent, Radtke built an addition onto the original concrete chicken house, on the west side. Using the same building material he added a 15 X 15 room, five foot high, with one doorway and one window. It had a flat roof, and instead of digging into bank, the natural slope of the bank was the north wall. This structure gave the overall building a short legged 'L' configuration. If the main portion of the building was to be used as a chicken house, this extension could only conceivably be used as a chicken roost.

The next and last addition to the mystery building was a root cellar, framed with logs and covered with dirt, which completed the strange arrangement of Radtke's handiwork.

So now the 'mystery building' is a mystery no more..... or perhaps it has been reduced to more of a puzzle.

OBITUARY

JAN KANKRLIK



Jan Kankrlík, aged 68, husband of our Secretary /Treasurer, Margie, passed away on January 4, 2012, after a long illness. Jan was born in Pizen, Czechoslovakia to Frank and Josephine Kankrlík during a time when the communists were trying to take over the country. Leaving everything, they escaped to Germany, making sure they were 'caught' by U.S. troops. The family came to the U.S. on an American destroyer and eventually made their way to Dallas, Texas where Jan received his education. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Southern Methodist University, his Master's Degree from Virginia Polytechnic and his Doctorate from Pacific Western University, pursuing a successful career in Neurophysiology and Biomedical Engineering. He married his long time sweetheart, Margie in September 1969.

Following his retirement in 2001, the Kankrlíks moved to Bozeman, built their dream home and enjoyed the scenery, the wildlife and the warmth of the people. His smiling face and dry wit will be missed at our conventions.



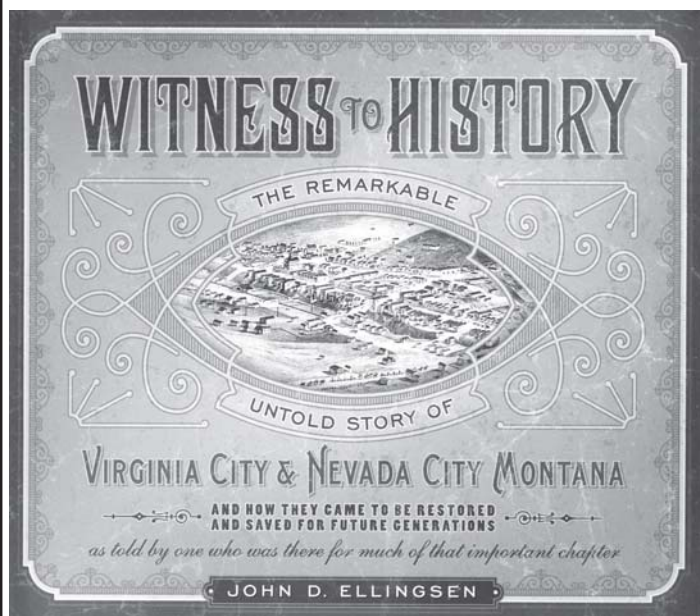
Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

MONTANA GHOST TOWN PRESERVATION SOCIETY
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REVIEW:

Witness to History

by JOHN D. ELLINGSEN



It is difficult to write a book about history and at the same time blend in personal recollections, but our Past President, John Ellingsen has managed to do it in his book, 'Witness to History – The Remarkable Untold Story of Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana.' The book relates a unique perspective on the saving and restoration of Virginia and Nevada Cities, that only the man that, for a long time, has been known as the 'Curator of Virginia City' could tell. Charles and Sue Bovey started the incredible job of saving Virginia City and after their deaths, John continued the effort that culminated in the state purchasing the properties and creating the Montana History Foundation to run the two historic cities. The book is available at the Gallatin Pioneer Museum or your local book store.

Terry Halden