

Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

VOLUME 42

SUMMER 2013



Fort Keough, as it appeared in 1970.

Photo courtesy BERT & JOANNE McCROSKEY

Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

The **Montana Ghost Town Quarterly** is published four times a year by the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society, P.O. Box 1861, Bozeman, Montana 59771. e-mail: mtghosttown@yahoo.com www.mtghosttown.org Copyright © 2013, all rights reserved.

Founded in 1970, 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 M. G. T. P. S.

SUMMER 2013

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2014 Convention: Don Black
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The Prez Sez

TERRY HALDEN

First I'd like to thank V.P. Mike Byrnes for organizing and liaising the repair project at Robber's Roost (see page 7 for full report) along with the crew that turned up to help in the not too favorable weather conditions. Special mention should go to Don Black, in charge of refreshments, who provided a picnic lunch that the workers and guests thoroughly enjoyed.

At the last board meeting, several amendments to the Bylaws were approved. To do this 2/3 of the board has to vote, and with a full board of 16, and facing the usual problem of various absenteeism it was necessary to use the unusual method of securing proxy votes from two members of the board that had indicated they would be unable to attend. Added to the nine board members in attendance, the work of updating our bylaws was completed.

The main changes were: 1) To solve the problem of regurgitating the President because of the stringent rules for his, or her, nomination, the requirements for the positions of President and Vice-President, were simplified. 2) Another change to alleviate this problem was the limit of two, two-year terms for the positions of President, Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer were abolished, although candidates for the positions will still have to be nominated and voted in every two years. 3) To solve the problem of having a quorum at board meetings, the bylaws were changed to drop the status of board members that do not attend, at least two board meetings in a year to 'Honorary' board member with no voting rights.

With the new set of Bylaws it is anticipated that running your Society will be a lot easier. And of course we are always looking for new members of the board who may want to contribute or even if you can't afford the time to become a board member, any idea or suggestion that you may have about improving the Society we would be interested in hearing from you. Our e-mail address is mtghosttown@yahoo.com and, I believe, snail mail still operates.

Enclosed in this issue of the newsletter, on a separate sheet, is the Timetable for the Annual Convention, (September 6th to 8th) this year in Helena. If you plan on attending, please complete the bottom half, and return it to our secretary by August 20th as we have to let the caterer know the numbers for dinner. The base motel is the Red Lion Colonial, 2301 Colonial Drive, Helena (406) 443-2100, where we have arranged a reduced nightly rate from \$135.00 to \$99.00. To get this rate please mention 'Montana Ghost Towns'. There are numerous other motels in the city, most, more expensive but a few cheaper.

You will notice this year we are not asking you to renew your membership at this time as our membership is now on a calendar year and you will be getting a notice in the mail in late fall from our membership chairperson.

See you in Helena!

Terry

PLEASE NOTE: The Photograph tour of the Madison River Valley, set for Friday July 26th has, due to circumstances beyond our control, been cancelled.

New Members

Membership Chairperson Darian reports the following **New Members** have joined our Association since the last newsletter. **Please make them welcome.**

Eugene Lee & Kathy Whitsel, Livingston, MT Paul E. Spencer, Jr. Monico, WI

Mark Hufstetler, Bozeman, MT Barbara Boorman, Kalispell, MT

M.G.T.P.S. Minutes, May, 4, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 1:05PM by President Terry Halden. Other Board members present were Darian Halden, Don Black, Mike Byrnes, Dick and Rosemary Lee, Margie Kankrlik, Gordon Tracy, and Sally Griffin.

Terry moved that we accept the minutes of the Feb. 16, 2013, meeting as printed in the quarterly newsletter. The motion passed.

Treasurer: Sally handed out a printout of the MGTPS income and expenses from July 1, 2013 – March 31, 2013. The reports were approved.

Secretary: Sally said that we had received two letters, both from the Pioneer Museum. One thanked us for renewing our membership and the other thanked us for our \$50 donation in memory of Bernice DeHaas. Then Don presented a bill for a donation of \$150 to the Madison Valley Historical Association for their part in helping with the upcoming photo tour. We also received a box of old photos from Bert and JoAnn McCroskey. Mr. McCroskey was one of the founders of MGTPS.

Membership: Darian reported that we have 198 members. 49 members were deleted for non-payment of dues. She was asked to give the list of those deleted to Don and other Board members in case anyone has further information or we could call them.

Recruitment: Regarding the upcoming photo trip, Don will do a preliminary drive out of Ennis to set up the stops. Let Don know by July 10 if you are planning to go and whether or not you plan on attending the barbeque.

Facebook: Darian said that photos from the convention have been posted on our website. She said we have been getting “likes” from all over the world.

Web Master: Jolene Hintz will be taking this job over now that she is done with school and has graduated (with honors).

Projects: Mike reported that the plans to help with the restoration of Robber’s Roost are going forward. Mike was given the plans by the Virginia City Preservation Alliance for what is needed, and he says it looks like a very doable project. Work is needed on the hand dug well, the door to the root cellar, a fence and a culvert. He showed pictures of what it looks like right now, and he told us what they need done. Mike will purchase the materials and supplies, and he will find some helpers. Any of us could go to help. It will be done the weekend of May 18th-19th. Don made the motion that we spend up to \$500, and this would take the place of the non-specific donation the VCPA had originally requested.

Newsletter: Terry said he had made some changes to the letterhead to improve its attractiveness. Margie has taken over the job of getting the newsletter distributed. She did not encounter any problems.

2013 Convention: On the Saturday afternoon, we were to have had a tour of the Drumlummon Mine in Marysville, but it closed recently. Terry is working on changes. He is thinking of changing the trip to Marysville to the afternoon, which would leave us to spend the morning in Helena.

By Law Changes: Don handed out booklets of the proposed By Law changes and Recommendations and reviewed them with the Board. Don moved and Mike seconded to approve them. Eleven of the sixteen Board Members voted in favor. The vote included 2 proxies in favor submitted by Board Members Tom Lowe and Jolene Hintz.

Then Don moved and Mike seconded that we approve the Policies and Procedures Manual contained in the booklet. The contents of this manual could be changed any time as the need arises. The motion passed, again with the eleven votes needed to approve.

Convention 2014: Don has completed our Use Agreement with the Yogo Inn in Lewistown. We will not be able to use school buses.

Bumper Stickers: Don has checked on the costs to make these for us. It would be too costly for our organization.

Darian said that she thought it would be good to have a logo. She showed an example. It was moved and seconded that she would look into prices to have one made for us.

She has also been checking on having Ghost Town t-shirts made. Mike says that he has a machine which can stamp things on shirts. Also, Shirtworks does this sort of thing. She will check into costs.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20PM.

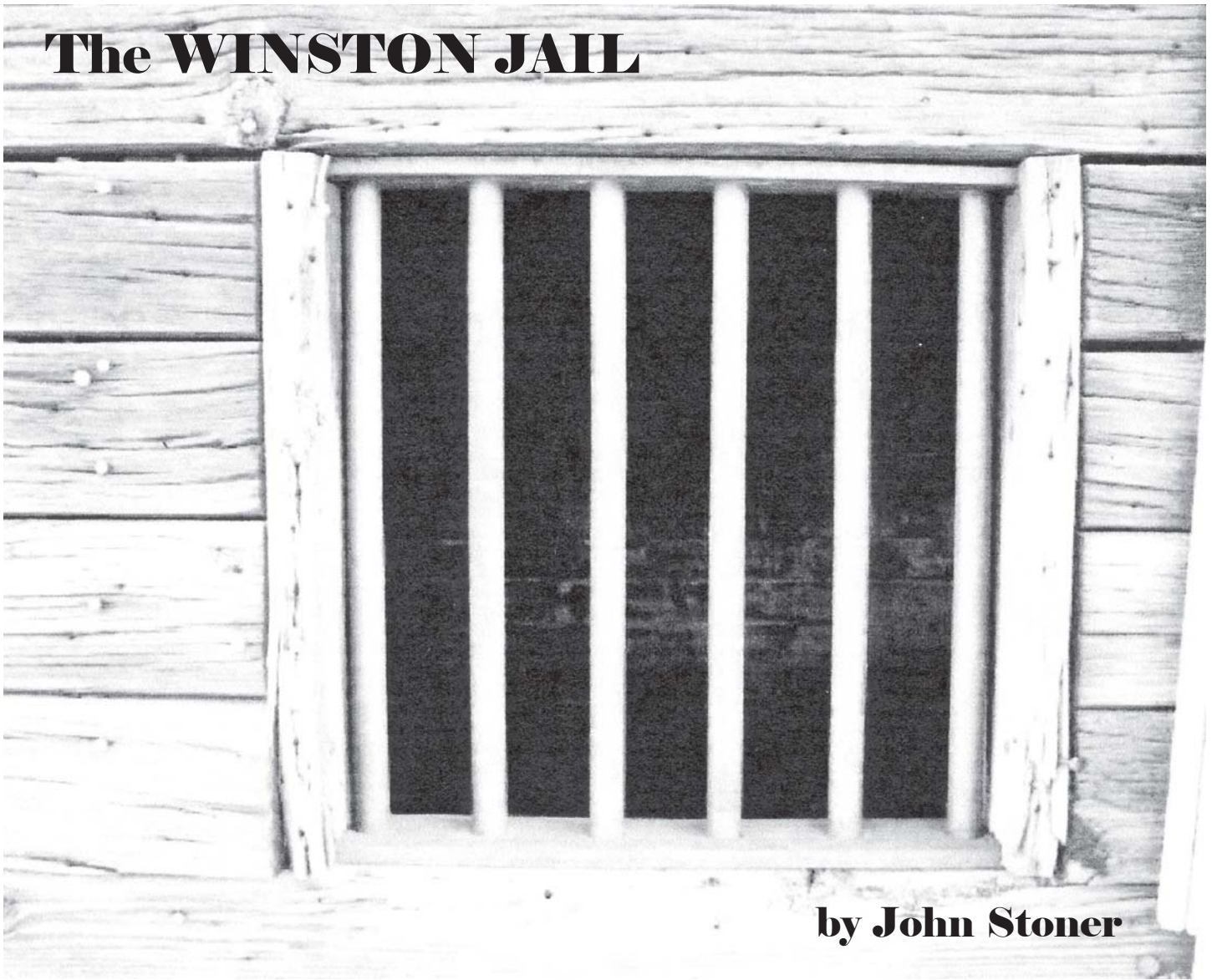
Respectfully submitted,

Sally Griffin
Sec./Treas.

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Gold was discovered in 1864 in Last Chace Gulch, now the winding Main Street of Helena. Old-timers claim that there is more than \$50 million in gold still remaining beneath stores and offices lining the street that was never recovered during the initial gold rush.
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# The WINSTON JAIL



by **John Stoner**

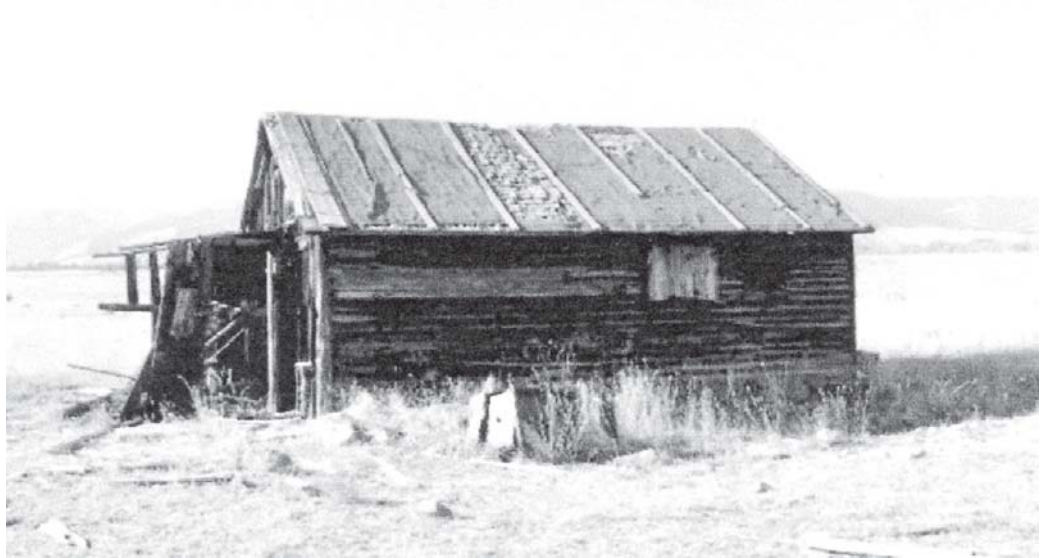
Winston has the distinction of having its only, and original, jail still standing. Perhaps the town's somewhat late arrival upon the scene has something to do with it, because Winston wasn't even plotted until late 1892 ... some ten years after the N.P.R.R. laid its rails across what is now Broadwater County ... and even then it didn't really bloom until around 1900.

A search of the Broadwater County Commissioner's Minutes, at least up through 1910, failed to reveal any mention of a request for bids for the construction of a jail at Winston. There is a possibility that Jefferson County had it built prior to 1897, but doubtful seeing as how the ground upon which the jail stands was designated as a "100 x 100 foot square piece of placer ground" as late as 1902. Although the location of the jail is indicated on a hand drawn map entitled "Winston at its Best—about 1900," the absence of county involvement may be due to the location being outside the plotted town site, and sitting on private property.

The exact date of construction seems to be lost in time, and interviews with local "old timers" has proven fruitless other than to reveal that "its been there as long as I can remember," or "I use to play in it when I was a kid." The only solid documentation that mentions it being a jail, other than its obvious appearance, and the "about 1900" hand drawn map, is in a transfer of ownership of that 100x100 foot piece of placer ground in 1934 between Henry and Fannie Ferne Gulker in which the description on the deed mentions a "jail & etc."

The jail stands off by itself on the northwest side of town, and sits upon an earthen foundation slightly raised above the surrounding ground. The outside dimensions are 16 by 20 feet, with the outside walls and interior room dividers constructed of 4 by 5 inch timbers, and stacked together in a crib like fashion similar to that of a country grain elevator. The front office space is about 9 by 15 feet, while the two cells measure about 7 by 9 feet. An entry porch, or lean-to,

once protected the only door into the office. The office space features a brick chimney, and two plain rail sash windows on either side of the front door measuring 29 by 54 inches. The two cells originally had just one little 14 by 14 inch barred window each facing the outside, and a barred 24 by 24 inch window opening facing the office ... where the jailer could keep a close eye on any prisoners... but alternations at a later date, probably when the building was used as a residence instead of a jail, an additional un-barred window opening facing the



outside was cut into each cell, measuring 20 by 22 inches. The outside walls are covered with shiplap boards. The hip roof, constructed of two by four inch framework, was originally covered with cedar shingles... with some still in place ... but over the years a succession of sheet tin and green rolled roofing paper has been added.

The entryway into each jail cell from the front office was undoubtedly secured with barred iron doors, or at least heavy wooden doors at one time, but now whatever doors were there are missing. It is interesting to note that with the sturdy solid five inch wood walls, the barred windows, and the assumed "escape proof" doors, the ceiling was nothing more than a layer of one inch boards that could have been easily pried apart, and from which a prisoner could gain the attic space and exit the building by either kicking out the one inch boards on either end of the attic, or dropping down into the office through a handy trap door, and assuming no one was around, just walk out through the front door!

Although Winston had its constables, which were duly elected every two years, and their names found in the county commissioner's minutes, nothing has been uncovered by this writer that mentions anyone being incarcerated in the Winston jail. Even though a 1934 deed mentions a "jail & etc." does not necessarily mean the building was used for that purpose at that time.



Two photos of the old Winston jail, taken in 2006.

All photos by JOHN STONER

It appears from what can be seen today that at some point in time the building was abandoned as a jail, and used instead as a private residence. The entire interior, with the exception of the floors and windows, has been covered with hardboard ... and this includes the two cells, and even the barred openings between the cells and the office are (or were) covered. It has already been mentioned that additional window openings had been cut through the walls in the cell area to allow more light to enter. The place has been wired for electricity, but the wiring and few ceiling light fixtures are pretty primitive. A wood/coal kitchen range now sits where a heating stove probably sat before. From the current condition of this structure... both inside and out ... it seems safe to say it has not been occupied for at least fifty years, and probably longer.

The old Winston jail is truly a historical treasure for Broadwater County..



# BANNACK in 1970

The photos below were taken in 1970, by one of our founders, William 'Bert' McCroskey. They were taken during, what became, a predecessor of our annual convention - an organized car convoy to various ghost towns in Montana, that grew. In the upcoming issues of the newsletter we will be proud to show you these photos that Bert and his wife Joanne, recently donated to us. Unfortunately we must present them in black and white, whereas the originals were taken in color slide format.



Compare them to the photos taken at our convention last year - can you see the differences?





# YOUR SOCIETY AT WORK



ABOVE: The rotten base of the well.  
RIGHT: Water-proofing the new base of the well.



On Saturday, May 18th seven members of the Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society descended on Robber's Roost to do some much needed restoration work. In need of repairs was the well structure that was precariously perched atop the eighteen foot deep well; the property needed some fencing to keep out cattle and a local moose; and the root cellar door was wanting a new door frame.

RIGHT: Mike and Darian secure the well to its new base.



Mike Byrnes spearheaded the preservation job, liaising with the Virginia City Preservation Association, who own Robber's Roost. They outlined the most pressing jobs that needing attention and we set a day aside, rounded up some volunteer help, purchased material, rented equipment and did the work.

Mike said "When we left, the well structure was anchored to a solid base, with no chance of any children falling into the well; the fence was complete and a culvert awaiting some gravel that V.C.P.A. are going to supply, was in place. We didn't get around to the root cellar but I will come back and get it done as I have the wood purchased for the frame."



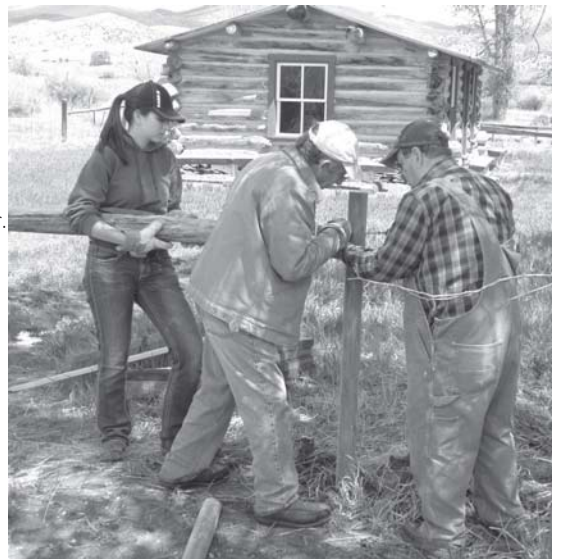
LEFT: The, now safe, old well on its new base

Throughout the day several members of V.C.P.A. dropped by and expressed satisfaction with the work done.



LEFT: Francis and Mike operate a post hole digger.

RIGHT: Darian, Francis and Mike work on the new fencing.



# BROTHER VAN and the BANNACK CHURCH

by Tom Lowe



William Wesley Van Orsdel was a pioneer circuit rider who came to Montana in 1872. Best known as Brother Van, he was a Methodist preacher who founded more than one hundred churches, a university, half a dozen hospitals, and children's home. This is the story of how the Bannack Church came to be.

One hundred and thirty six years ago a band of the Nez Perce Indians were involved in a struggle with the U.S. Government. Under pressure from land hungry whites to move onto a reservation, they fled their homeland in eastern Oregon and central Idaho. The Nez Perce led pursuing troops on a four month 1,100 mile chase that ended forty miles short of their destination in Canada.

After several encounters with the U.S. Army, in which the Nez Perce came out on top, the Nez Perce encamped along the banks of the Big Hole River. Thinking they were safe from the pursuing Army they were surprised by a dawn attack of Colonel John Gibbon and a force of 157 soldiers and 34 civilian volunteers on August 9, 1877. Although the Nez Perce were able to repel the attack and even pin down and inflict heavy casualties on the soldiers, they suffered heavy losses, especially women and children.

Enraged by the loss of their loved ones, on August 12, Chief Joseph's people swept through the Horse Prairie area near Bannack, killing any white men in their path. At the Winter Ranch Mr. Monatgue, a partner in the ranch, Mr. Farnsworth the ranch foreman, and two cowboys were slain. By this time word of the battle at the Big Hole had already reached the people in Bannack and the surrounding area. When the deaths of the ranchers were discovered by a rescue group from Bannack that included Brother Van, the people were terrified of an Indian attack.

Only one year after the battle at the Little Bighorn where Custer and his entire troop were killed, fear of Indian attacks was high throughout the territory. All the people from the immediate area ceased work on their claims and gathered in Bannack for protection. The women and children were put up in the Hotel Meade. Barricades were thrown up at the top of the hill on both sides of Hangman's Gulch. The entire populace was cooped up in town with nothing to do but hope that Chief Joseph's people would not attack.

At this time General Howard was in pursuit of the Nez Perce. He had been reported by an incoming rider to be just twelve miles behind the Indians. Brother Van and John Poindexter volunteered to ride out and inform General Howard of the situation. Howard dispatched a full company of Cavalry to come to the assistance of the townspeople. General Howard then entrusted Brother Van and Poindexter to act as couriers and carry a message to the stage driver who then gave it to the telegrapher to contact military headquarters in Washington D. C. After a fearful night ride they were able to intercept the stage and then return to Bannack.

With all the armed men in town and the arrival of the cavalry, the Nez Perce decided it was better to bypass Bannack. With the threat of Indian attack removed Brother Van recognized a golden opportunity that he couldn't allow to pass.



William Wesley Van Orsdel - 'Brother Van'  
Photo courtesy AUTHOR

Prior to the Indian uprising, the congregation at Bannack had begun to raise money for the church. With all of the idle hands in town Brother Van spread the word that there would be a church raising. The men in town, hard working folks, were glad to have something to do. The miners, cowboys, loggers, soldiers and ranchers all pitched in with much enthusiasm. In record time the new church



was constructed. That Sunday, the first service was held in the church and the people had much to be thankful for. The threat of an Indian attack was over and Bannack finally had its first (and only) church fifteen years after it had been founded.

The story of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce didn't end on such a happy note. Pursued by the army, they couldn't escape because of the new communication system known as the telegraph, Joseph's moves were quickly communicated to fresh troops. Only forty miles from the Canadian border, thinking they were safely in Canada, the Nez Perce camped along Snake Creek near the Bear Paw Mountains. The army had finally caught up to the tribe. The siege lasted from the evening of September 30 until the afternoon of October 5. After suffering heavy losses the Nez Perce finally surrendered. Chief Joseph made his famous speech where he spoke the now famous words, "From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever."

Although the tale of the Nez Perce is a tragic one, one good thing did come to pass during their unsuccessful flight to freedom. With the help of Brother Van, Bannack finally had its first church.



The Methodists Church in Bannack  
Photo courtesy AUTHOR



panned out 22 pounds of gold from a three square foot area of ground. But this was Crow Territory and the Indians ordered the group to leave, if they valued their lives. They took as much gold as they could carry; burying the rest back in the pit they had dug. The land was eventually ceded back to the U.S. by the Crow Tribe, but Weaver had returned back east where he prospered with his new found wealth and the others, no doubt, did likewise. No one returned to the site. In 1916, his wife dead, his children grown, Weaver again came west and returned to the area where the strike was made sixty years before. But the terrain had drastically changed in the intervening years and he was unable to locate any of the landmarks. The buried cache and the rich placer mine is located in one of the gulches near the road leading to Yellowstone Park.

## STRANGE, but *TRUE*(?)

Cyrus Skinner, who owned Skinner's Saloon in Bannack, and many historians believe was the actual leader of the outlaws in the early 1860's, when Sheriff Plummer and his two deputies were stretched on the town gallows, took off without even selling his business interests in town. He got as far as Hell Gate, near present day Missoula and it is claimed that he buried 12 leather bags, each containing several thousand dollars' worth of gold dust – his ill-gotten gain – on an island in the Clark River. Shortly thereafter he was caught by a posse of vigilantes that were pursuing him and he too was stretched. To this day, despite several searches no one has found the cache.

In the early 1870's two miners accumulated a large amount of gold in Alder Gulch and decided to return to the States. They went up the Madison River into what is now Yellowstone N.P. and then along Clark's Fork on an old Indian Trail. The pair camped for the night some distance off the trail a few miles east of present day Cooke City and was attacked by Indians. One of the men was killed but the other managed to escape and hid from the attackers in the dense bush. In the morning he returned to the camp site to find their gold still there, but as their burros had been taken he had no way of carrying it out of the area. He buried in next to a tall pine tree, marking the tree with a cross in a circle and a triangle. The miner never returned and the cache is still buried near the old trail.

Almenzo Yerdon was an old hermit that lived frugally in a cabin on Beaver Creek in the Big Belt Mountains. For almost fifty years he worked several gold claims by himself, converting his gold dust into \$20 gold coins and since he didn't trust banks, he buried the coins in tin cans around his cabin. In 1918, his cabin burned down, with him inside it. It is believed that his wealth, estimated at several thousand dollars, still lies buried in tin cans in an area between three to five miles of his cabin.

In 1878, \$30,000 in silver was stolen from a mine near (the now ghost town of) Castle, by Dirty Cousin Jack, Kid Sancho and Bill Plumpton. Pursuing lawmen caught up with the trio and in the ensuing gunfight all three robbers were killed. However, the missing silver was not found on them and it is assumed they buried the loot somewhere in the mountains. It has never been recovered.

David B. Weaver was an eastern pilgrim that mined gold near Emigrant Gulch in 1864. When the gold ran out, Weaver was convinced that the mother lode was still to be discovered and with a small group, he searched for it. Two years later they found an extremely rich placer where they

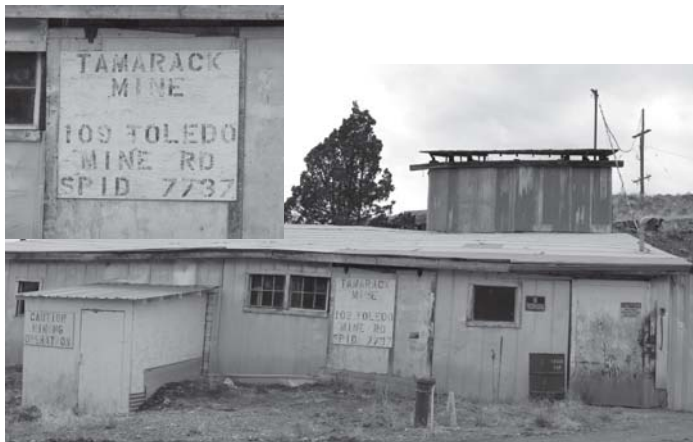
# A Ghost Town Called SMUGGLER(?)

by **TERRY HALDEN**

Driving east on Mill Street, a paved road, from the town of Sheridan, Madison County, the houses on both sides of the road are soon replaced by acreages, until after three miles, where the pavement ends, as you enter the foothills of the Tobacco Root Mountains, you are surrounded by luxury houses. You have entered the old mining town of Brandon. In the early 1860's late comers in the gold rush to Alder Gulch spread out and prospected other streams flowing out of the mountains and as a result placer gold was discovered on what was to become known as Mill Creek. Within a year several arrastras and small mills were in operation, the first of any prominence, being the Brandon mill, for which the emerging town and the creek were named. In 1865, when there was a plebiscite to move the Territorial capital from Bannack to Virginia City, the citizens of Brandon, added the name of their burg, more of a dare than anything – and were surprised, when the votes were tallied to find they had lost to Virginia City by a mere one vote. About a mile north of Brandon, the Toledo mine was discovered in 1888 and was worked, on and off, for over fifty years. Another mine in the area was the Tamarack.

Five miles further up Mill Creek, in 1896 prospectors John Cavanaugh, his brother Thomas and James McDonnell located gold but within a year had sold their eighteen foot deep mine to Dr. Edgar Fletcher. Fletcher named the mine after his wife, Emma B. and by 1904 had a 20-ton cyanide mill processing ore. He was also responsible for building a hydroelectric plant using the water in Mill Creek to supply electricity to his mine and mill. However, after all this expense, there are no production figures for his mine and mill and undoubtedly it soon closed down.

In 1930, Alex Walker of Butte, either bought, or 'jumped' the property and proceeded to organize a company that he called The Smuggler Mining Company of Montana.




The Tamarack mine property, 2013.

**The Smuggler Mining  
Company of Montana**

Now Offers \$25,000.00 of 6% Convertible  
Debenture Bonds

A bonus of 25 shares of capital stock is given with each \$100.00 bond or multiple thereof. Company owns and is operating the Smuggler group of gold mining properties in Madison County, Montana. Property equipped with modern mill and electric power plant. Full particulars on application.



**The Smuggler Mining Co.**  
110 West Granite Street                      BUTTE, MONTANA



ABOVE: An ad placed in the Mining Truth magazine, February 5 1931 edition.

LEFT: The ornate gates to the Smuggler Mining property



The Mining Journal, in its February 28, 1931 edition reported: 'Alex Walker, President of the Smuggler Mining Company is arranging finances to install more machinery at its property. A flotation unit will be added to the mill, a heavier hoist and a pumping plant installed to allow sinking the shaft another 500 feet'. In the November 15 1932 issue of the same magazine readers were informed 'Seattle men are said to have become interested in the company. The ground is equipped with a modern mill, hydroelectric power plant and all necessary small machinery for the crew of 22 men, which is expected to nearly double'. By the following year it was reported that there were 30 log buildings with stone foundations furnishing accommodations for the operating crew.

After making a fair profit, activity was suspended in 1934, and the mine property, along with all the miners' cabins became a ghost town. Perhaps it should be known as 'Smuggler City'?



All photos taken in 2013, by DARIAN & TERRY HALDEN

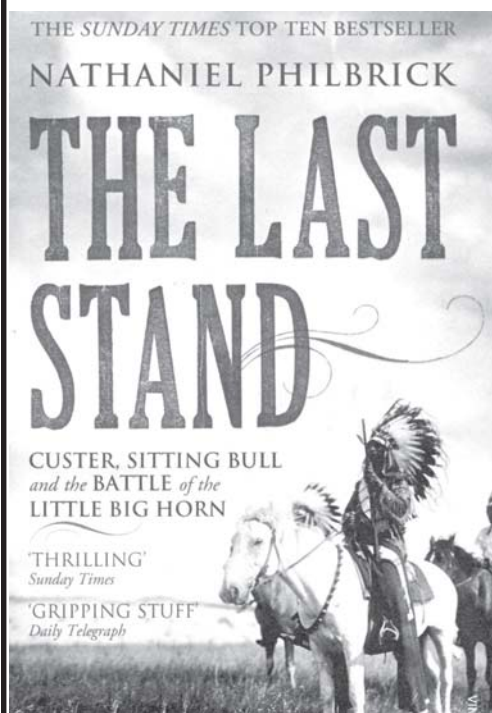




## Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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

### REVIEW:



## The LAST STAND

by Nathaniel Philbrick

Custer's Last Stand, or the Battle of the Little Big Horn, as it is now known, has dominated the history of the west as perceived by the world. Countless books, some good, most bad and some containing absolutely no research or truth have been written over the intervening 137 years. Along comes 'The Last Stand' by Nathaniel Philbrick, who has a Master's Degree in Literature from Duke University and was a 2007 Pulitzer Prize finalist for his book 'Mayflower'. Although he presents little new evidence, he does present the story with a precise literal style that is easily readable and as such the book has garnered many honors, including New York Times 'Recommended'; a Montana Book Award; and in England top of the Sunday Times Best Book Seller list.

The book comes with many archival photos, several maps, extensive notes (grouped together at the back of the book), a bibliography and an index. Recommended for anyone interested in the Sioux Wars or the Last Stand.