



MONTANA  
**GHOST TOWN**  
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

preserving history for the next generation

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**NEWSLETTER**

SUMMER 2017



Downtown Bozeman 1875

GALLATIN MUSEUM photo

# Montana Ghost Town Quarterly

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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 2017

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**2017 Convention:** Margie Kankrik and Marilyn Murdock  
**Directors:** Connie Griffin, Tom Low, Cindy Shearer and Gordon Tracy  
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# The Prez Sez

TERRY HALDEN

Convention 2017 in Bozeman is all set to go and it looks like it will be another winner. Margie Kankrik and Marilyn Murdock have done a tremendous job in putting it together, along with some exciting guest speakers that are sure to inform and entertain you. Next year it is Darian Halden's turn to put a convention together. I can assure you, from past experience, it is not an easy task.

In this issue of the newsletter, we welcome back Rachel Phillips who has written an article about the Bozeman Hot Springs, which is not as well-known as those hot springs between Butte and Anaconda, but nevertheless, sports just as interesting a history. Your Vice-President, Brad O'Grosky has written an article about the history of bridges in Montana. Although they do not have the romance of ghost towns, they were just as important to the development of Montana and as such their history should be maintained. Finally, as Chuck Flood is incapacitated following surgery to his knee and was unable to submit a 'Forgotten Ghost Town' article, I have stood in (I hope) and written an article on the forgotten ghost town of Hoover, which is somewhere in the Little Belt Mountains. We wish Chuck a speedy and full recovery, as we miss his well-crafted articles.

Membership Chairperson, Sally has indicated that there are 26 members that have still not paid their 2016 dues, despite numerous reminders. If you are one of those, who has kept on putting off writing a dues payment check,( \$15.00 single or \$20.00 family) then be warned:

THIS IS THE LAST COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER  
YOU WILL RECEIVE.

At convention 2009, in West Yellowstone, you were kind enough to elect me as President. I assumed the office with some trepidation as I had the job of filling the shoes of John Ellingsen. At this year's convention, I will again be following John as I replace him on the masthead as 'Immediate Past President'. It has been an honor to serve as President, with all the problems, successes, failures, highs and lows. I hope I have lived up to your expectations of what a President should do and I know the Society is in the good hands of my successor Brad O'Grosky and a competent board of directors. Why don't you join the board? You may find that you have hidden talents and can contribute to our success and at the same time experience a lot of self-satisfaction.

I will not be leaving you completely as I am still in the ramrod chair running this rag – and still looking for articles to include in it.

Adios, for now.

Terry

## New Members

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

Bruce & Carol Kron – Livingston, MT

John & Renee Loehr – Ronan, MT

Bill Sosnowki – Fairfax Stn. VA

M.G.T.P.S. BOARD MEETING  
July 15, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 1:05PM by President Terry Halden. Also present were Vice President Brad O'Grosky, Secretary/Treasurer Sally Griffin, Board Members Connie Griffin and Cindy Shearer, and a guest Marilyn Murdock who is Co-Chairperson of the 2017 Convention.

A motion was made by Brad to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2017, Board Meeting as printed in the newsletter. Connie seconded. Motion passed.

Sally gave the Treasurer's Report. For the fiscal year July, 2016, – June, 2017, we had income of \$6,805.00, and Expenses of \$12,161.50, for a net loss of \$5,356.50. This loss was attributed to the fact that the previous year we had received a grant of \$5,000 which was not spent until this fiscal year. Cash Balances were Petty Cash, \$60.20; Checking Account, \$4,203.90; Savings Account, \$13,408.47; and no CD's for a total of \$17,672.57. Brad moved that we accept the Treasurer's Report and Connie seconded. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report: An email from Board Member Larry Hoffman was read. He is resigning from the Board because of his many volunteer activities in Butte do not leave him enough time to participate on the Ghost Town Board. The email from Terry in reply accepting his resignation was read. Terry has received word from former Board Member Don Black that he will be rejoining the Board at the next meeting. We also received several newsletters from other organizations, and there was a letter from the Carbon County Historical Society's new Executive Director Sarah Russell in which she outlined plans and activities she would like us to know about. She also sent an application for us to become members. Cindy moved and Brad seconded that we become "Individual" members. Brad asked to know how many similar organizations our group a member of. Sally said perhaps 3. Brad suggested that we do more in this area. It was then moved by Brad and seconded by Connie that we become members of the Headwaters Historical Society in Three Forks. We have donated to support their depot renovation project. The motion passed.

Membership Report: Sally said that we now have 219 members. Of those, 26 have not paid their 2016 and 2017 dues. An additional 25 have not paid their 2017 dues. It was decided to drop those members who have not paid 2016 and 2017 dues after the July newsletter goes out. Terry is printing a notice about this in the newsletter, and Sally will insert a note to these members also.

Projects: The Alta Headframe project may not be possible to complete due to the missing numbers on the timbers. Cindy suggested that money is needed to help complete expanding the Fort Ellis Exhibit at the Gallatin County Museum. She will present budget figures to show that this is needed. Marilyn suggested the Fort Shaw Military Cemetery. No action was taken on these suggestions.

Newsletter: Terry reported that the July edition is ready to print as soon as he receives the meeting minutes and the mailing list.

Old Business: Marilyn passed out the completed schedule and reservation form for the 2017 Convention in Bozeman.

Darian could not be at the meeting so there was no report on the 2018 Convention in Sidney.

Terry said that only 2 people have submitted information for the personal business cards we had decided to do. If Terry does not receive more, he may not go ahead with the project.

New Business: 2019 Convention – where shall we hold it? Suggestions were made for Lincoln and White Sulphur Springs but other locations could be considered. We are supposed to name the location at the General Meeting at the convention this fall.

Montana Historical Society Convention 2017 – Terry will not be attending this year and no one else showed an interest in going.

CBS Bozeman Ghost Towns Show – Brad has not been able to meet with anyone from the group that is working on this.

The idea of putting a 2019 calendar together was discussed and rejected.

Terry announced that he will be retiring as President effective at the convention. Brad has agreed to become President. Terry will continue to be the Newsletter Chairman. We will need a new Vice President.

There being no further business, Cindy moved and Sally seconded that the meeting be adjourned. It was 2:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

SALLY GRIFFIN



# A HISTORY OF BOZEMAN HOT SPRINGS

by *RACHEL PHILLIPS*

On January 16, 1865, Paradise Valley miner John S. Hackney wrote in his diary: *"I went out to the hot springs and washed my dirty 'duds.'"* Hackney did his dirty laundry in what is now Chico Hot Springs, just south of Livingston, Montana. Fortunately for miners like John, natural hot springs dotted the western Montana landscape and provided convenient places for washing off the sweat and grime that came with mining.

Long before miners arrived, native people frequented Montana's hot springs to bathe and rest. As white settlers came in force in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some hot springs were made into health resorts. According to promotions of the day, warm mineral water could cure a variety of physical ailments, like rheumatism, digestive diseases, and skin irritations. Hunter's Hot Springs (near Springdale, Montana) was established as a health resort and sanitarium by Dr. Andrew Jackson Hunter in the 1870s. Other hot springs developers, like Bill and Percie Knowles at Chico in the 1890s, focused more on recreation. Miner John Hackney would not have recognized his former laundromat, had he returned to Chico Hot Springs in 1900. In June of that year, the Chico Warm Springs Hotel celebrated its grand opening. Guests enjoyed a circular plunge, private baths, a ball, and free transportation to the train station at Fridley, Montana.

Like many natural hot springs, Bozeman Hot Springs in the Gallatin Valley began as a "cure-all" health spa in the 1870s. Through the years, the resort changed names several times, hosted rodeos and picnics, and provided guests with upscale hotel accommodations. Like its two famous neighbors to the east, Chico and Hunter's, Bozeman Hot Springs has a rich history as one of Montana's early tourist destinations.

Before the 1870s, the natural hot springs located just west of Bozeman were likely used by passing American Indian tribes and cattlemen during spring livestock roundups. The first commercial use of the area for health and recreation came in the mid-1870s when Francis Albert Lund marketed the springs as a cure for various ailments. F. A. Lund was a Swedish immigrant who came to Montana Territory during the gold rush, but it is unclear when he first acquired the hot springs property. According to an article in Bozeman's *Avant Courier* newspaper in 1877, besides the beneficial properties of Lund's Springs, *"The ride from town is a very pleasant one, and the accommodations for parties are, we are assured, very good."* At a distance of about eight miles from Bozeman, a trip to the Lund Springs and back would have taken several days (including travel and relaxation time at the springs). Lund owned the hot springs for a few years before moving to California and then to Idaho, where he passed away in 1904.

In 1879, Lund sold the hot springs to Jeremiah and Mary Matthews, who were both natives of Kentucky. Jeremiah was a carpenter by trade and had experience building wagons and carriages. These skills served him well at Matthew's Hot Springs. Over the next ten years, the hot springs expanded to include a large bath house with dressing rooms and a swimming pool. The *Avant Courier* newspaper reported in October, 1879, that the water temperature of the pool could be adjusted hotter or colder, depending on a patron's wishes. Eventually, Jeremiah's health began to decline. The couple sold the hot springs and moved into Bozeman, where Jeremiah "Jerry" Matthews died in 1891.

When E. Myron Ferris purchased the property for \$25,000 in 1890, it included hundreds of acres of surrounding farmland, a two-story residence, and a fourteen-foot by eighteen-foot plunge bath. Born in New York, E. Myron Ferris moved west as a young man and spent time in Wisconsin and Iowa. He married Fannie Allison in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1885, and the couple settled in Bozeman. Eddy Franklin Ferris, Myron's brother, was already established in Bozeman as a banker, builder, and hardware dealer. Myron planned to run the hardware store but when the business fell through, his interests pivoted to the hot springs resort west of town.



Ferris children playing in the garden in front of the Hot Springs hotel. GALLATIN MUSEUM photo

limits in 1892, but more than fifteen years passed before a passenger rail system connected Bozeman with other communities in the Gallatin Valley. In 1909, the Gallatin Valley Electric Railway completed track for the interurban line, which provided passenger service from East Main Street in Bozeman to Salesville (Gallatin Gateway), Ferris Hot Springs, and beyond.

After owning the hot springs for nearly twenty years, E. M. Ferris decided to sell the property to the O. E. Meyers Realty Company of Bozeman. The plan was to parcel the property into lots of various sizes and sell them outright in a raffle for \$150.00 each, or \$10.00 per month after a \$10.00 down payment. To add some excitement, one lucky buyer would receive a 10-acre parcel that included the hot springs and Ferris's grand hotel. In order to push land sales in this early-day subdivision, the O. E. Meyers Realty Company produced a promotional booklet in 1911 titled *Rainbow Land*, which outlined the area's many virtues. The name *Rainbow Land* likely originated from the abundance of rainbow trout in the nearby West Gallatin River, which was (and is) a popular fishing mecca for locals and tourists alike. In addition, the name undoubtedly was meant to conjure up images of a happy, idyllic lifestyle.

Of course, the most important feature of the proposed *Rainbow Land* was the hot springs. An analysis of the water conducted in the 1880s showed a mix of minerals, including silica, sodium silicate, calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate, sodium carbonate, potassium chloride, sodium chloride, and sodium sulfate. The results of the analysis were good news. According to the promotional book, this beneficial ratio of minerals closely matched the



Ferris family on the porch of the Hot Springs hotel. GALLATIN MUSEUM photo.

In 1891, in order to attract tourists, Ferris constructed a large hotel which featured parlors, a large dining room, and plenty of porches and balconies for guests to relax outdoors. Elizabeth Purdum, one of E. Myron Ferris's daughters, described the resort in an oral history interview in 1975:

*"Well my father was ahead of his time and built a small, well you'd call it a motel now, but it was a two-story building. Oh, I think maybe we had 20 rooms and we would take people overnight or for meals and we had a Chinese cook...there was a plunge, a wooden plunge that was there when my father bought the place...and then there was another part of the bath house where there were a couple of wooden tubes, they were where hot water was piped in and people with rheumatism and things would come and bathe in the tubs. But the other end in the plunge—why that was recreational."*

Unfortunately, travel to Ferris Hot Springs was still an issue, so Myron also operated a stage that transported guests between Bozeman and the resort. Streetcars had begun operation within Bozeman city

mineral ratio found at Europe's Carlsbad springs, a very popular destination resort. *Rainbow Land* boasted: "The experience of hundreds has proven that these waters are excellent remedial agents in cases of gout and rheumatism, and that kidney and liver and other troubles readily yield to their curative properties." Another plus, according to the *Rainbow Land* book, was that the mineral water was so cleansing that no soap was needed. "On skin diseases their effect is magical, a short series of baths leaving the skin clear and white as alabaster."

The grand prize winner of the parcel of land that included the hot springs and hotel was a Mr. Charles Greene from Fort Benton, who apparently ran out of money soon after acquiring the property. Ownership then passed to the Collett family. While reminiscing in 1975, Gerald Collett remembered hosting rodeos at the springs in the 1920s and 1930s—using a grandstand reconstructed from material taken from the old Bozeman Roundup stadium: "We opened on the same night that they had the Jack Dempsey-Tommy Gibbons fight up in Shelby; there were more people at the springs than at the fight in Shelby." This claim could be a slight exaggeration, but there is no doubt that the resort was an active place under the Collette's ownership. With the increase in automobile

use in the 1910s and 1920s, families could more easily visit the hot springs. Day trips for picnics, swimming, and special events were common, and people viewed the hot springs more as a recreational destination than as a place to cure physical ailments.

The Collett family made several changes and additions to the resort. They moved the swimming pool, constructed a dance hall, and created a baseball field and rifle range. The dance hall burned down several years later but was rebuilt and used for decades. In the 1940s, it was repurposed, converted into a roller rink, and enjoyed anew by scores of children. Many Gallatin Valley residents remember the iconic, elevated bus at the resort's entrance on US Highway 191, which, for years, served as a signal to impatient children that the fun was about to begin.

Bozeman Hot Springs has passed through several owners over the last seventy years, but continues to expand and delight visitors of all ages. The *Avant Courier* newspaper predicted in May, 1883, that "on its own intrinsic merits," the hot springs would become a popular resort destination, "especially to the people of Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley." It certainly has done just that.

## BOZEMAN HOT SPRINGS, Ca 1950

GALLATIN MUSEUM photo



# The BRIDGES

# of MONTANA

Imagine it is the 1860s and you are arriving in Montana after crossing mountains, prairies, hostile 'Indians' and other obstacles. But now you are here, there are more obstacles to cross...rivers. Some of these can be waded at shallow crossings, but some are too deep. Log rafts were built, but they were unsteady, so ferries were built which required a toll. As more people joined you, log bridges were built. John Mullan constructed nearly 50 of them on what came to be known as the Mullan Road, between Fort Benton and Walla Walla, but spring floods took their toll. Although most of the ferries were replaced by bridges, there are still three ferries in the state crossing the Missouri River at remote locations. One, at Carter was built in 1917. The Virgelle ferry, built in 1913, is near CoalBanks, where steamboats took on fuel for their journey on the Missouri. The third is the McClelland ferry at the Missouri Breaks twenty miles north of Winifred and was built in 1940.

Bridges had been built in the east and for thousands of years in the Old World, but this was still wilderness. As the railroads were developed and moved west, steel truss bridges were designed. Three designs that were primarily used for the steel truss bridges, were the Pratt, Pony and Warren. The Pratt designed in the 1840s was the first design to use scientific methods. Two similar designs, the Parker and Pennsylvania, also used the diagonal supports above the travel way to form triangles however these designs used more steel than the Pratt. The Pony design had its supporting members under the travel way instead of being above. This design was used in shorter span applications. The Warren design had its

by BRAD O'GROSKY

supporting members above the travel way forming a W.

At Fort Benton, goods were brought to the territory by steamboats coming up the Missouri River resulting in it becoming a commercial hub. But in 1883, with the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, much of the steamboat traffic stopped which also curtailed much of the business in Fort Benton. Completion of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad in 1887 near Fort Benton opened the possibility of new trade if the agricultural products and cattle from the Judith Basin south of the river could be accessed. That meant a bridge was needed across the Missouri. Local businessmen formed the Benton Bridge Company to have it built. One obstacle was the requirement by the U.S. Military and approval by the Congress to allow the Missouri to remain navigable, so a portion of the bridge had to open for boat traffic. At a cost of between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a contract was awarded to the firm of Haney and Ryan for the piers and to the Milwaukee Bridge and Iron Company for the steel structure. In 1888, twenty seven car loads of steel arrived and the bridge became the first steel bridge in the territory and the first steel bridge across the Missouri River.

The center swing span, to allow for steamboat traffic, was so perfectly balanced that only one man was needed to operate it. In 1908, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was opened to allow a steamboat to pass, but on its trip downstream, the current caught it and demolished

the upper deck, but leaving the bridge undamaged. Only four days later, the bridge did not fare as well as the worst flood in the river's history occurred. Between the debris carried by the flood waters and the river's greater current, the iron ice fender on the swing span pier support failed causing the swing span to tumble into the river.



The Fort Benton bridge after the 'Big' flood.  
Photo courtesy AUTHOR

To allow the bridge to reopen, a timber structure replaced the steel span. This was used until 1925 when a steel span from the First Avenue North Bridge in Great Falls replaced it. The bridge functioned until 1962 when it was replaced by a new bridge. But since it was on the National Register of Historic Places and through the dedication and foresight of Fort Benton residents, the bridge was saved from destruction and is now used as a popular pedestrian bridge and the first steel bridge across the Missouri River remains as a treasured, historic landmark.

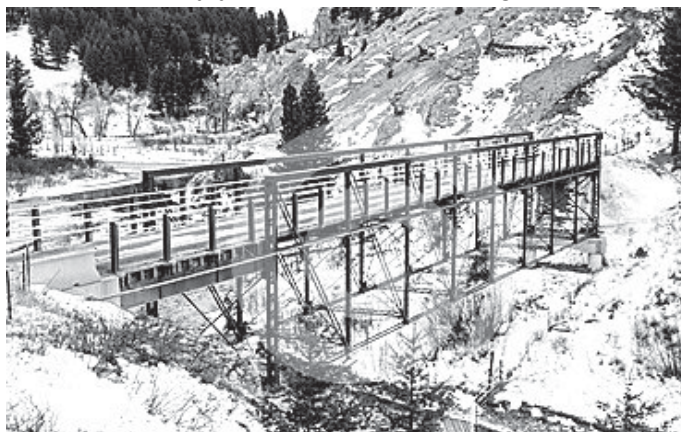
Crossing a narrow canyon cut by the Dearborn River is the Dearborn River High Bridge on Montana Secondary 434 southwest of Augusta. This bridge helped to open up this area that remained fairly remote in the late 1800s and was part of the farm to market road system that became known as the Good Roads. In 1910 this became the Good Roads National Movement which encouraged good roads and bridges for getting agricultural products to market. Bids were taken by the county for the bridge, but the \$10,000 to \$11,000 cost was felt too high, so bidders were asked to resubmit. The final bid by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio was for \$9,000. The design is a Pratt half deck where the travel way is midway between the top and bottom of the super structure instead of being

at the top or bottom of the structure. The bridge used pinned connections instead of riveted ones so the bridge was built, assembled, and then disassembled at the factory before being shipped to the site. In this case, it went to Wolf Creek by rail and then by wagon for the remaining 30 miles. This design makes the bridge very unique and possibly the only one remaining in the United States. Since it was built in the horse and buggy day, its weight limit was 6 ton and is sixteen feet wide. Given its unique and historic significance, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Because of their uniqueness or historic importance, eleven other bridges in Montana have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a significant designation as it helps to protect them from destruction. As you travel the state you may want to visit the following eleven other important parts of Montana's history:

The Big Horn River Bridge crosses the Big Horn River near Custer. It is a Pennsylvania truss that was completed in 1933 by the Highway Department after the original contractor defaulted. It was part of the main east - west route on Highway 10 until I - 94 replaced it in the 1970s..

The Fred Robinson Bridge crosses the Missouri River between Malta and Lewistown. It was proposed to start construction in 1920 as there were only six ferries between Fort Benton and Fort Peck allowing access across the Missouri which kept the two areas fairly isolated from each other. It was not until 1959 that the bridge was completed, 39 years after its original conception. Its name is from the state senator who worked for many years to have the bridge built.



The Pratt half-deck bridge over the Dearborn River  
Photo courtesy AUTHOR



Built in 1931, the Hardy Bridge is a Warren design crossing the Missouri River near Cascade.

At Wolf Point is the Lewis and Clark Bridge crossing the Missouri River which is a Pennsylvania design built in 1930.

Near Miles City is the Locate Creek Bridge built in 1902. It is the oldest steel stringer bridge in the state.

A very unique Warren truss design is the Natural Pier Bridge at Alberton. It was built across the Clark Fork River in 1917 and uses a rock formation in the middle of the river as its center support. The Yellowstone Trail crossed the Clark Fork on this bridge and was the main route in this area until the 1930s when a new route was created following I - 90s present route.



The bridge over Clark Fork river.

Photo courtesy AUTHOR

The Powder River Bridge near Terry was built in 1946 and crosses the Powder River. It is the last steel truss bridge built by the Montana Highway Department.

In 1913, the Snowden Bridge was built across the Missouri River near Fairview. It is a vertical lift bridge to allow boats to move up the Missouri. Originally built for the Great Northern Railway, it became a vehicular/pedestrian bridge but has now reverted to BNSF train traffic only. When it was completed in 1913, it was the longest vertical lift bridge in the world. A 175 ton concrete block located in each of the towers is used to raise the 295 foot lift span.

The Tenth Street Bridge in Great Falls is a concrete arch design built in 1920 crossing the Missouri River.

Near Troy is the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge crossing the Kootenai River.

The Totson Bridge crosses the Missouri River on the old highway at Totson. It is a Warren truss bridge built in 1920. The community fought to have it preserved to avoid isolation by a new road.

Last, but not least, is the Yellowstone River Bridge crossing the Yellowstone River at Fallon. It is a Warren truss design originally built in 1914 but it was destroyed by a flood in 1943 when all three concrete piers were sheared off and the entire bridge fell into the river. It was rebuilt in 1944 and is the longest continuous span, steel truss bridge in Montana at 1142 feet.

Some communities and counties, with the assistance of the state, have helped to preserve historic bridges when they were replaced and doomed for destruction, thereby saving an important part of history. Examples of this preservation dedication are the Wolf Point Bridge at Wolf Point, the Tenth Street Bridge in Great Falls, the Yellowstone River or Bundy Bridge at Pompey's pillar, the Bell Street Bridge in Glendive, and the Van Buren Street Bridge in Missoula.

Although these and other historic bridges have been saved from destruction, many are still threatened. One present example is the Nixon Bridge over the Gallatin River near Manhattan. This steel truss bridge was built in 1893, making it one of the oldest in the state. It was originally located over the Gallatin River at Central Park, a community between Belgrade and Manhattan that no longer exists. It was moved to its present location in the early 1900s and is named for James Nixon who built one of the first structures in Gallatin County near this location. The Nixon Bridge is the location of the first of four murders in Gallatin County committed by David Meirhofer in 1967 when a young boy was shot and killed while playing on the bridge. It was also the first case the FBI used offender profiling to detect the culprit. Unfortunately, even though it is an important part of the history of Gallatin County, the County Commissioners have judged it should be destroyed. There are several other historic steel truss bridges in Gallatin County that could be threatened with a similar and untimely fate. These historic and important structures must be preserved just like the ghost towns, for once they are gone, they are gone forever.

# The FORGOTTEN GHOST TOWN of HOOVER

by TERRY HALDEN

A few placer miners ventured onto the east slopes of the Little Belt Mountains, as early as the 1860s, but the local Indian population took a dim view of it, and had methods of dissuading prospectors who had any idea of making a career of mining in the area. Besides, the amount of gold that was found was minor, and as a result, the area remained dormant for over a decade.

Frank Hobson and Jake Hoover are generally credited with being the first placer miners to venture into what became known as the Yogo Mining District, and locate any gold that was worthwhile mining. Their discovery set off a stampede to the area in the fall of 1879 as confirmed by the Rocky Mountain Husbandman in its issue of January 29, 1880: "*The rich and extensive mines of the Judith, discovered late in the fall of last year, are located in Yogo Gulch (which) with its tributaries, Bear, Skunk, Cataract, Galena and Mineral Gulches provide eighteen miles for placer mining purposes. The bars along on both sides of the main gulch for eight miles show paying prospects, sufficient to engage five hundred men for a number of years. A dozen or more drain ditches have been started and are now running to reach bed-rock.*"



Jake Hoover, at age 45.

Photo BRENNER STUDIO

Initially the area was referred to as the 'Kan-Kan' district, Hoover was elected as district recorder, and the camp that sprang up was named Hoover City in his honor. In October 1879, the camp sported a general store, the usual number of gin mills, a dozen or more cabins and was big enough to be granted a post office. The post office with William Buchanan as post master was in operation from October 29, 1879 to November 10, 1880. As fast as it came into existence though, it died. The placer ground was not as rich as first thought; the majority of the placer holes turned out to be barren; and those that did yield a little gold, were being worked by only one or two men. Word of the strikes in the Maiden District to the northeast, in 1880, added to the drainage of population. By 1883, Hoover City was a virtual ghost town, with only a few miners remaining in the district.

But where was Hoover City located? According to various descriptions it was on Skunk Gulch, one and a quarter mile northwest of Yogo Creek. But was it? Skunk Gulch doesn't have many wide level places for a town to be established, the only level ground is where Skunk Gulch empties into Yogo Creek.

With the advent of lode mining, there was a minor surge in the population in the late 1880's. The 1889 State Report on Mines indicates "*A great many quartz discoveries have been located in this district, and some have been developed as to prove good mines. The 'Gold Belt', 'Golden Slipper', 'Allen', 'Quaker City', and 'My Choice' are on Skunk Gulch; the 'Blue Dick' is on Elk Gulch, and the 'T. C. Power' and other mines show considerable bodies of good ore on the mountains above Yogo. A very large part of the ore developed is free milling gold and is easily worked by amalgamation in common quartz mills and arrastras. Mr. C. W. Gardiner has a small mill on Skunk Gulch that consists of a Blake crusher, a Hunter oscillator and a Frue-Vanner concentrator. The mill is working from six to fifteen tons of ore from the 'Gold Belt', per day, and yielding about \$15.00 per ton. Two men take out the ore and run it to the mill while two others run the mill. Mr. Elias Shelby has an excellent arrastra at Yogo, running ore from the 'T. C. Power' mine. The arrastra*

has two tubs which are run by an overshot water wheel." In addition, the report indicated that new placer ground was being opened up, downstream from Yogo.

Yogo town was established in 1889 and by the following year had obtained a post office.

Since the second surge in prospectors occurred less than ten years after the first stampede (Hoover still lived in one of the cabins and mined in the area), it is reasonable to assume the newcomers used the available deserted cabins in Hoover City rather than build new ones, and therefore Hoover City was merely renamed Yogo by the second bunch.

Over the next five years, as production from the mines surged and waned, so the population of the district fluctuated. This was evidenced by Yogo, itself, that lost its post office in 1892, only to regain it for a year in 1894. By 1895, the district was on a general decline, as mines played out. A few die hard prospectors were still scouring the hills and gulches for the elusive metal, and two of them were Hobson and Hoover, the original locators.

Downstream from Yogo, the pair started encountering 'pesky blue stones', and according to a colorful story in the Great Falls Tribune, in response to a request from a lady friend in Maine, who was a teacher, Hobson sent her a phial of gold bearing ore, to display to her pupils. In it he included some of the blue stones he and his partner had found. She wrote back, thanking him for the sapphires, to which Hoover is alleged to have retorted "What the Hell is a sapphire?" The story is a little far-fetched, as it is hard to believe that two

experienced miners didn't recognize the various minerals they were unearthing. A more likely story is that the pair, having sent an example to a jeweler in Great Falls for confirmation, was aware of the stones' value, and in prospecting for the source, discovered it was on the property owned by John Ettein, a local sheepherder. Through a deal negotiated by a disinterested party, the two miners bought Ettein's land for \$2,450. In short order, a cigar box full of the rough sapphires was sent to Tiffany & Co. in New York, which netted the two, \$1,800.

News spread across the Atlantic, and in 1897, an English company started buying up claims in the area, including Hoover and Hobson. With his share, Jake Hoover moved to the new mining frontier of Alaska, while Hobson faded from history. The New Mine Sapphire Company started mining the sapphires in earnest. Meantime, John Burke and Pat Sweeney had located an extension of the vein to the west, and started mining operations. They sold out to the American Sapphire Co, and after various owners, the property was purchased by the English company in 1914, and immediately closed down. The New Sapphire Syndicate wanted to control the output of the stones onto the world market. Sapphires have a tendency to not reflect artificial light, but Yogo sapphires do, making them more desirable than their counterparts mined elsewhere in the world. By 1929, a combination of a double taxation system, and a severe flood that destroyed a lot of mine machinery finally caused the English company to close down.

Sapphire mining continues in Yogo Creek to a small extent today, but the gold mining business which has had its little spurts, as the price of gold perked has faded away. Today, there is little evidence remaining, with the site of Yogo town, and possibly Hoover city, being marked by a lonely, desolate signpost.



LEFT: YOGO town 1916.

Photo, BRENNER STUDIO

ABOVE: The site today.

Photo TERRY HALDEN



P.O. BOX 1861, BOZEMAN, MT, 59771-1861

## REVIEW

### Life and Death at the Mouth of the Musselshell 1868 - 1872 the diary of C. M. LEE

*Life and Death at the Mouth  
of the Musselshell*  
• Montana Territory – 1868-1872 •  
FEATURING THE DIARY OF C.M. LEE  
GUNSMITH, MERCHANT  
Edited by H. Duane Hampton



Edited by H. DUANE HAMPTON

In October 1865 Cornelius M. Lee arrived at Virginia City to try his hand at prospecting. He was one of the many that were either too late or not good at it and although he followed the rush to other locations, his luck never changed. By January 1868 he was in Diamond City, Confederate Gulch and making a living by his trade of gunsmith. Even so, the wanderlust in him urged him to try the 'City of the Future' that was being proposed at the confluence of the Musselshell and Missouri rivers. It was at this time he started to keep a diary which he, almost without failure, wrote every day. Some of the entries are nothing more than the weather, but others describe Indian raids, running fights or narrow escapes from death. At first encounter with the Indians it was a guessing game as to was it trade or a fight.

H. Duane Hampton is to be commended for locating this diary and bringing it to light. The diary itself is written in legible intelligent style and not only is it easy to read but comprises an excellent story of a 'city' that was doomed to failure. The author also includes notes and biographical sketches of most of the people that Lee mentions in his diary.

The Appendix includes 'Life at the Muscleshell (note spelling) in 1869 and 1870' by Peter Koch along with 'Account of the attempts to build a town at the mouth of the Musselshell River' by Lieut. James H. Bradley

Recommended reading for anyone interested in the early life of Montana pioneers

Terry Halden