



MONTANA
GHOST TOWN
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

preserving history for the next generation

VOLUME 48

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2019



The ruins of the mining complex known over the years as 'Broadway', 'Bowery' and finally 'Victoria'. It is located west of the hamlet of Silver Star in the eastern foothills of the Highland Mountains. Complete story, see page 4.

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.

SPRING 2019

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Newsletter Editor: Terry Halden
2019 Convention: Don Black
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The Prez Sez

BRAD O'GROSKY

Greetings everyone and hope you are well after this bad cold and flu season. It has been a hard winter, except for those who went south for the winter. There is still plenty of snow left in Bozeman and as many of you know, there have been four large roof collapses. Two of these were the gym roofs on the MSU campus in Bozeman. This makes me wonder how the structures in our ghost towns survived. This was probably a very hard winter on them as well, although if there were roof boards missing, maybe the snow didn't build up. Time will tell as you visit them this year. We would be interested to hear about what you have found.

On another note, your Society averages about 225 memberships annually. The more people we can get as members, the more interest in preservation is gained. So here's a suggestion for everyone. Tell your friends and family about us and consider giving them a year's membership so they can become more interested and informed. The more informed members we have the more the ghost towns can be preserved and protected. The membership dues are a real bargain when you consider the great newsletters that Terry puts out quarterly.

Don Black has done a wonderful job of gathering great speakers and interesting sites for the convention in Red Lodge. It would be a good place for new members to start. Stay well and enjoy spring, when it arrives,

Brad

AS I SEE IT

from the Ramrod's chair

In this issue of the newsletter we welcome back two past contributors: On page 6, Linda Dutcher relates the story of the dispute between Bearcreek and Red Lodge that lasted for decades and on page 9, Chuck Flood gives us the history of the little known ghost town of Floweree. My effort, this time round, is a short history of the mining district of Silver Star. Next issue we welcome back another historian, Jerry Hanley. Don't miss it, and if you are one of the delinquent members, that got a reminder in this issue – please write that check – we'd hate to lose you!
Terry

MGTPS 2019 Red Lodge Convention September 6,7,8

ACCOMMODATIONS ALERT.

POLLARD HOTEL, (406) 446-0001 2 North Broadway, Red Lodge. Block of 20 rooms, 20% discount off regular prices. Blocked until 7/26

LUPINE INN (406) 455-3301. 702 S. Hauser Ave., North Red Lodge. Breakfast and pool. \$89 Blocked until 8/5

YODELER MOTEL (406) 446-1435. 601 S. Broadway, Red Lodge. \$89. Blocked until 8/4

CHATEAU ROUGE (406) 446-1601 1505 S. Broadway Ave., Red Lodge 8 Condos @ \$120, Blocked until 8/4

We suggest you book your accomodation BEFORE the dates listed as Red Lodge is a very popular destination this season

New Members

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

Jack Keeney Great Falls, MT

Jill Weiser Kalispell, MT

Emily Vance Yellowstone National Park, WY

M.G.T.P.S. Board Meeting
February 23, 2019

President Brad O’Grosky called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. Board Members attending were Terry Halden, Darian Halden, Don Black, Cindy Shearer, Sally Griffin, and Connie Griffin

Connie read the Treasurer’s Report. From the Fiscal Year of July 1, 2018 to June 31, 2019 as of February 22, 2019 MGTPS had an Income of \$14,520.00, Expenses of \$8,559.62, for a Net Income of \$5,960.38. The Cash Balances are Petty Cash \$60.20, Checking Account has \$14,775.70, and the Savings Account has \$10,423.30.

Sally motioned to accept the Treasure’s Report, Cindy seconded, and the motion passed.

Sally motioned to accept the November 17, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes as printed in the Winter 2019 Newsletter. Don seconded the motion, the motion passed.

Membership:

Connie Reported that MGTPS has one new member in 2019.

In order to keep as many valued MGTPS members as possible, the Board members agreed to extend the length of time to renew dues from was printed in the Winter 2019 newsletter. There were several suggestions for alerting past due members on the newsletter labels. Connie will do this for the next newsletter mailing. MGTPS will also contact past due members via email using mailchimp. There will be an opt out option in the email for members that do not want to receive reminders by email. Mailchimp may also be used for up to date MGTPS and Convention information.

Facebook:

Please contact Darian with any new posts or ideas for the facebook page.

Webmaster:

Cindy will be using a new website template from Squarespace for MGTPS’s website. This will make changes and updating the website much easier.

Projects:

The Morris State Bank and IM General Store in Pony, MT projects will have more information this summer.

MGTPS is looking into supporting a digital biographical history of the Springhill, MT Cemetery. Bill Wright of Springhill and Rachel Phillips of the Gallatin Historical Museum are working on a computer program and compiling the names and lives of the people buried there. The computer program could be used by other groups for preserving the information of community and ghost town cemeteries everywhere. When finished, it will also aid people researching the history of the area.

Newsletter

Terry is looking for articles and people’s ideas for the newsletter.

Old Business:

MGTPS would like to thank Linda Dutcher for all her hard work towards the 2019 Red Lodge Convention.

Don Black has convention speakers confirmed and is working on a terrific schedule including a Sunday field trip to Lake Camp, Mouat Mine Complex with Linda Dutcher. There will be a car pool from Columbus to the Mouat Mine Complex. Don has blocks of rooms reserved in Red Lodge. He says they will fill up fast because Red Lodge is a popular destination.

He urges all attending members to make reservations as soon as possible.

Rooms are available at: Lupine Inn; Yodeler Motel (Lupine Inn and Yodeler Motel are across the street from each other) Pollard Hotel; and the Alpine Lodge

Mention MGTPS when reserving the room.

This year the convention price will be \$100.00 per attending member.

Nixon Bridge: Brad says the Nixon Bridge may not be saved.

New Business:

There are no updates on the 2020 Kalispell convention.

Sally motioned to give speakers and people that provide help for the conventions one year complimentary MGTPS memberships and the convention chairperson will provide the contact information to the membership chairperson. Cindy seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:19p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Connie Griffin

Secretary/Treasurer

The SILVER STAR Mining District & a mine named 'Broadway'/'Bowery'/'Victoria'

by TERRY HALDEN



The mill at the 'Victoria' mine complex. All Photos: AUTHOR

As you drive south from Whitehall on Montana State Hwy. 41 and you pass through the sleepy hamlet of Silver Star, you are, no doubt, unaware that in the 1860's, and 70's next to Virginia City, this was the second busiest and populous community in Madison County. In 1866, a prospector by the name of Green Campbell, was looking into the eastern Highland Mountains foothills, west of the Jefferson River, when he located an outcropping of gold. He named his mine after himself, the 'Green Campbell'. Eventually, when it was patented, it bore the mine patent number one for the County of Madison. In 1867, Campbell sold his mine to the Cleveland investors, Salisbury and Everett, who built a small concentrating mill in the Jefferson River valley, a mile and a half to the east. Other

prospectors were attracted to the area and within the year several other mines had been established, although many of them were little more than prospect holes in the ground. In the valley, next to the mill a settlement took shape, which, the Montana Post, in its edition of October 2, 1868 described as: "*In the vicinity of Everett's mill a snug little town, as yet without a name, is being built. Two saloons, a store, a commodious and well-built hotel to be run by Mr. George Harris, a few residences and a blacksmith shop complete the hamlet.*" It soon thereafter got the name of Silver Star, after one of the other mines located in the area to the west. It secured a post office in 1869, which it still has today.



Cabins used by the mine and mill employees of the 'Victoria' mine complex.

A March 5, 1869 edition of the Montana Post ran a story that illustrated the wealth of the 'Green Campbell' mine; "Seven bars of gold, aggregating 310 ounces at the current value of which is \$10,000 in currency, was brought into Virginia City as being the result of about two weeks run on selected rock from the Green Campbell lode". The early 1870's saw a setback for the area mines in that as they increased in depth, so the ore they were mining changed from the near surface oxidized ore to lower depth sulphide ore which the local mills could not handle. In addition the mines were encountering an increasing volume of ground water. By 1876, it was estimated that there were only fifty men engaged in mining in the entire district. In 1877 William Morris & Co of Virginia City (and Pony) purchased the 'Green Campbell', refitted the mill, to handle the new type of ore, installed adequate pumps to take care of the water problem and the mine was again in operation. As a result the town of Silver Star flourished, even adding a brewery, the Silver Star Brewery that supplied the thirsty miners

A little to the northeast of the 'Green Campbell' another early mine, the 'Broadway' was established. It had an early history similar to the 'Green Campbell' but when the problem of the oxidized ore ran out, the owners chose to sell out to an English outfit, the Broadway Gold Mining Company. They installed an aerial tramway connecting the mine to a new forty-ton mill located in the valley, which utilized a new British process for recovering gold from the sulphide ore. With much fanfare it went into operation, but in three months was declared a total failure.

Whilst the English company was trying to decide its next move, using a little known clause in the mining laws barring foreign ownership that had been written to prevent the early 'Celestial Threat', F.R. Merk managed to wrest ownership of mine away from them. He renamed the mine the 'Bowery'. In 1900, when his son W.W. Merk was running the organization,



ABOVE: The 'gallows' at the 'Victoria' mine complex.

BELOW: The old 'Broadway'/'Bowery'/'Victoria' mine shaft below the 'gallows'.



they had twenty men working and had two mills in operation, a twenty stamp mill on Cherry Creek to the northeast and a cyanide mill for the lower grade ore that was located south of Silver Star.

Both the 'Green Campbell' and the 'Bowery', with various owners and lessees continued operation on and off up until the W.W.II ban on explosives and non-essential mining operations.

But the history of the old 'Broadway/Bowery' mine continues. After the war it reopened with a new name, the 'Victoria' in 1949, although it's operation was short lived. In 2018, learning that the Broadway Gold Mining Ltd. was again drilling in the area, and fearing the old mine structures were being demolished in the process, I investigated. I found that the new operation has from the valley to the north, tunneled under the old mine location to reach the ore seams at a greater depth than was before mined, leaving the old mine structures to peacefully melt away.

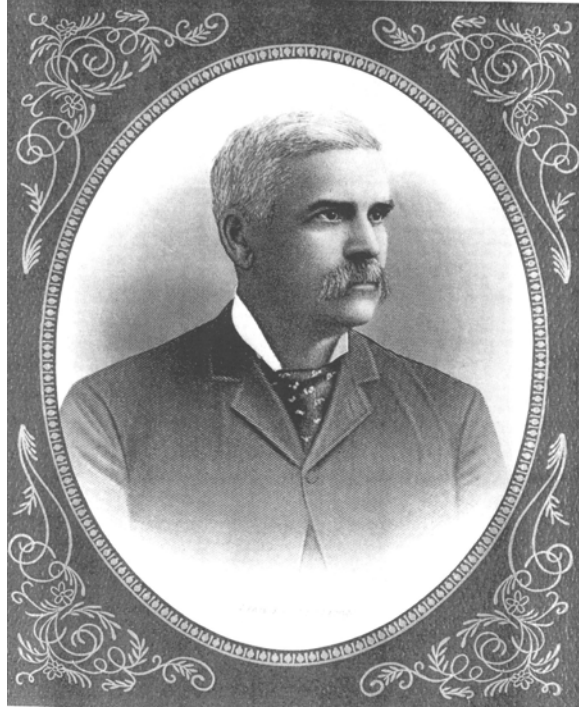


An aerial photo of the old 'Victoria' mine and mill complex, showing where Broadway Gold Mining Ltd have their new tunnel. (Lower Center)

THE 50-YEAR COMMERCIAL RIVALRY BETWEEN RED LODGE AND BEARCREEK

by LINDA DUTCHER

According to William L. Hamilton's story, during an 1861 trapping expedition along the Rocky Fork of the Clarks Fork River, "We found the bodies of two white men striped and scalped. They had been dead for some time. We had no tools with which to dig a grave—so we dragged the bodies over to a steep perpendicular bluff near a cut bank coolie." The trappers then went on top the bluff and shoved down a "large quantity of loose earth completely covering the bodies to considerable depth and then left there." In his memoir, Bozeman gunsmith and civic leader Walter Cooper confessed his doubts at first, that Hamilton's story was true about the high bluff, now in the city of Red Lodge, where Cooper had camped and examined coal outcrops on a hunting trip on the Crow Indian Reservation.



WALTER COOPER

AUTHOR'S Photo

However, shortly after April 1882, when this area was ceded back to the United States by the Crow, Cooper "*Fitted out a party and went over to the Clarks Fork country for the purpose of locating these coal measures if not already taken up.*" What he found was 640 acres of what he considered the best coal land already claimed by James "Yankee Jim" George and three others, (160 acres was the maximum amount claimable by any single individual). Cooper's party then located other claims.

Cooper "*proceeded at once to establish a permanent camp and started a tunnel on a very prominent and fine looking vein seven feet thick of good clean coal.*" Cooper recalled that while dirt was being hauled from a steep bluff above a cut bank, a workman "*called to me in an excited manner holding in his hand a well preserved human skull. We at once became much interested. —We found two of these skulls, together with many of the larger bones. I felt positive that we had discovered the gruesome and lonely grave described by the grand old pioneer—William L. Hamilton.*"

Geologist John Elliot Wolff, making a reconnaissance in 1883 for the Northern Pacific's Northern Transcontinental Survey, found the Yankee Jim claim "partially opened about 80 feet above the creek, but the other seams we ourselves discovered and opened in the bluff lower down."

By June 1884, 1600 surrounding acres had been claimed, but mining was on a small scale. Fanny Torreyson in her remembrances written in the 1930's (on file at the Carbon County Historical Society), described Cooper's mine on her 1885 visit, as "just a prospect hole 60 ft. back in the hill", about 12 ft. high and 8 or 10 ft. wide with "a flat piece of timber to walk on, wide enough to put a wheelbarrow on. According to Torreyson, Cooper also had claims four miles east over a high gravelly divide above Rock Creek where Bearcreek is now located.

Red Lodge Postmaster, surveyor and caretaker of Cooper's interests, Ezra L. Benton told land speculator John T. Blake about an error in a survey at Bearcreek. Blake then formed a company of Billings businessmen who "jumped the claim", sending George Lamport to Bearcreek as their foreman. Cooper fired Benton calling him a traitor and sent Frank O'Connor to look after his interests. With Benton reportedly occupying the only house in Red Lodge, the rival caretakers arrived within hours of each other at the Torreyson cabin 5 miles north of Red Lodge. Both were seeking lodging and food for themselves and their horses, O'Connor bearing a letter of introduction and instructions from Walter Cooper. Torreyson described the incident as follows: "Now here was a problem. These two men were undoubtedly rivals or working for rival companies. I had but one extra bed, so I told them they would have to occupy the same bed and could not fight in my house. Mr. O'Connor said if you will let me stay, I will be good. Mr. Lamport gave his word of honor there would be no fighting, so they played whist all evening and informed us of what was going on in the world".

In 1887, Cooper and the Iowa interests created a partnership to carry out his ambition of building the Rocky Fork & Cooke City Railroad from Red Lodge on through Rock Creek canyon to serve both the coal mines and booming gold camp.

Meantime, the needs of the Northern Pacific Railway Company fueled the Red Lodge-Bearcreek rivalry. Before the

decision was made in January 1889 to form the Rocky Fork Railway and Coal Trust to take over the ill-fated attempts of Cooper et al, a professional assessment was made of the commercial potential of the coals in both areas. J. B. Alexander of the Engineer's Office of the Northern Pacific in St. Paul supplied banker Samuel T. Hauser with an eight-page report dated October 19, 1888. Alexander had visited the fledgling entries of two unspecified mines in Red Lodge and three in the Bearcreek area including the Simms mines and those supervised by George Lamport. His recommendations are cited here (the Minnesota History Center houses the NP papers): Alexander reported he was not deceived by the "very puerile" arguments of the 28 claimants of the Simms mines that the thicker seams of the Rocky Fork Company were "too big to be managed", but their seams on the Bearcreek side were "of a good manageable thickness for working and more easily handled on account of their more nearly level position". Despite Bearcreek owner's claims that their seams with less overburden were less dense, thus better coals, Alexander noted, "that there is no difference in the quality or character of the coals in the two fields; or rather in the two parts of the same field as I think they must be considered".

He deemed the Rocky Fork properties best in other aspects, including for the incomplete branch line. They were considered "extremely favorable for operations on a large and profitable scale". Alexander contrasted opportunities for mining and handling coals at the two sites. "At Bear Creek the mines are approached by running up steep and narrow gulches which afford but very cramped quarters for the creeks and the necessary tracks and in which for a long time the operations must be of a limited nature and the railroad track service expensive. At Rocky Fork, on the other hand, the quantity of coal readily accessible is enormous and the wide flat valley affords ample room for tracks, and opportunity for getting it away cheaply, no matter how much is mined. The dumping platform is at the level of the entries here and is about 25 feet above the flat of the valley, thus requiring no power to get the coal to the dump". By early 1889, Hauser had consolidated and transferred over 2,000 acres of claims when he and two others incorporated the Rocky Fork Coal Company in Helena.



On the upper left is one of the two mining structures remaining of the chromite mill from W.W.II

The Trust raised \$2,000,000 from Villard, mine investor James B. Haggin, John D. Rockefeller, Hauser, Missoula banker A. B. Hammond, Frederick Billings, and dozens of other mostly east-coast capitalists and investment firms. In 1894, this trust was part of the sensational inquiry conducted in both Milwaukee and New York, closely followed by the New York Times, as to whether any interlocking directors made unlawful gains by the acquisition. This part of the lawsuit against the previous management by stockholders and the new board of the railroad brought a verdict of not guilty.

As forecast by Alexander, large-scale mining at Bearcreek and Washoe awaited a railroad. The Yellowstone Park Railroad (later the Montana, Wyoming and Southern) arrived from an easterly direction in 1906, eventually extending to the Brophy and International Mines just over the divide from Red Lodge.



The mine at Bearcreek. Photo courtesy Thomas L. Eugene, Forrest Flashman photography

In 1914-1915, years of peak production, a major episode occurred in the rivalry. From 1912 to 1914, shipments from Bearcreek to Montana points decreased from a high of 315,844 to 286,034 tons, while shipments from Red Lodge increased from 67,644 to 91,576 tons. These numbers do not reflect the total production of the Red Lodge mines, but rather the fact that nearly all Bearcreek shipments went to commercial customers, while most of Red Lodge production went to captive use by the NP. Bearcreek mine owners wanted to capture the commercial part of the Red Lodge business to increase their tonnage. To this end, a former clerk of the Montana Railroad Commission Mr. O. W. Tong, proposed a campaign to the Bearcreek owners in which he would try to convince the Railroad Commission to reduce Bearcreek freight rates, increase the price of Red Lodge coal to dealers and consumers, or force Red Lodge coal out of the commercial market entirely. Mr. Tong was to receive \$1,000 if he successfully accomplished this, or \$500 for the attempt. The secret plan was exposed when General Agent Spurling of the NP secured a copy and turned it over to the Coal Department of the railroad in Tacoma, Washington now called

the Northwestern Improvement Company, partly created to promote commercial sales. It had acquired the Rocky Fork Coal Company in 1903, renaming it the Northwest Improvement Company (NWI). NWI internal correspondence noted that the recently appointed commissioner might go along with such a “stunt”, getting some bill before the Montana Legislature to put the NWI out of the commercial coal business which might not pass but could be an embarrassment to them. Since the remaining commercial mines would be of limited capacity, they were also concerned that a very cold winter would cause a “coal famine” in which consumers would have to pay much more for home heating etc. Most seriously, it would probably result in “the closing of at least one mine and a large reduction in the working forces” in Red Lodge

Early in 1915, General Manager C.C. Anderson contacted former Carbon County Sheriff, M.W. Potter proposing a secret agreement to send him to Helena for 10 days to lobby against any legislative proposal that might come up to shut the NWI out of the commercial coal market. Potter would be paid “a reasonable salary as well as his expenses”. He had established his loyalty as a member of the WW I Liberty Committee which “terrorized” those who opposed company policy, plus he was “well acquainted with the majority of the Legislature”.

It appears Mr. Potter’s services were never needed. Both districts waged an intensive propaganda campaign after testifying before Montana Railroad Commission hearings in Billings. As part of their case, the NWI representative testified he was “under the impression” that the “Northwestern Improvement Company was not materially increasing commercial sales”, a fact that the company privately expressed could not be substantiated based on three months



The remains of the ‘Yankee Jim’ claim above the Rocky Fork Creek. The chromite mill remains are on the left. AUTHOR’S Photo.

figures supplied by Thomas Cooper”, their Vice-President. The Bearcreek operators published a circular offering to absorb 10 to 30 cents per ton cost, claiming that this was forced upon them by the NP publishing in their circulars the difference in rates in favor of Red Lodge coal. In the end, NWI decided to “raise cost of production at Red Lodge a little [rather] than to take chances of getting our freight rates badly pared or getting a court decision as to our right to participate in commercial businesses”.

The rivalry was ended with the final closing of the Red Lodge mines June 30, 1932. According to C.R. Powe, Chief Geologist of the Northern Pacific Railway Company in 1954, the NWI mines, with 900 employees during peak years, produced 11,000,000 tons of which 8,500,000 was used by the railroad. Reduced coal production continued in the Bearcreek area for at least ten years after the Smith Mine disaster of 1943. In 1953, most coal production stopped when the tracks of the MW & S RR were torn out. Correspondence shows that a Brophy surface mine continued into the 1960’s, signing a new contract as late as 1965. Portland General Electric abandoned an investigation to reopen the Brophy mine in the mid-1970’s.

Surface workings of the Smith mine, looking west
AUTHOR’S Photo



The Forgotten Ghost Town Of **FLOWEREE**

by **CHUCK FLOOD**

It's quiet in Floweree these days. Half a dozen families still live around town; trains occasionally rumble through on their way between Great Falls and the grain elevators at Fort Benton; ranchers pass by on their way to Highway 87 two miles north. Mostly, though, it's chirping birds and far-off highway noise that break the silence. A few decrepit business buildings remain along main street, but Floweree's glory days are long past.

In the 1870s and 80s this was cattle country. Dan Floweree (sometimes spelled "Fleury" and pronounced "flurry") drove a herd of cattle into the area from Missouri in 1865. He had arrived in Montana the previous year, opening a saloon and gambling hall called the Exchange in Helena. Floweree invested his profits in ranching, establishing his headquarters on the Sun River west of Great Falls. Within a decade he was described as "one of the principal stock owners of Montana."

In those early days, when Great Falls wasn't yet a gleam in Paris Gibson's eye, Floweree cattle were trailed through nearly 200 miles of wide-open, unfenced rangeland to the railroad at Billings for shipment to eastern markets. But after Great Falls was founded in 1883 and a railroad - a branch line constructed south from Havre by the Montana Central Railway - arrived in 1886, the country west and north of Great Falls began to feel the winds of change.

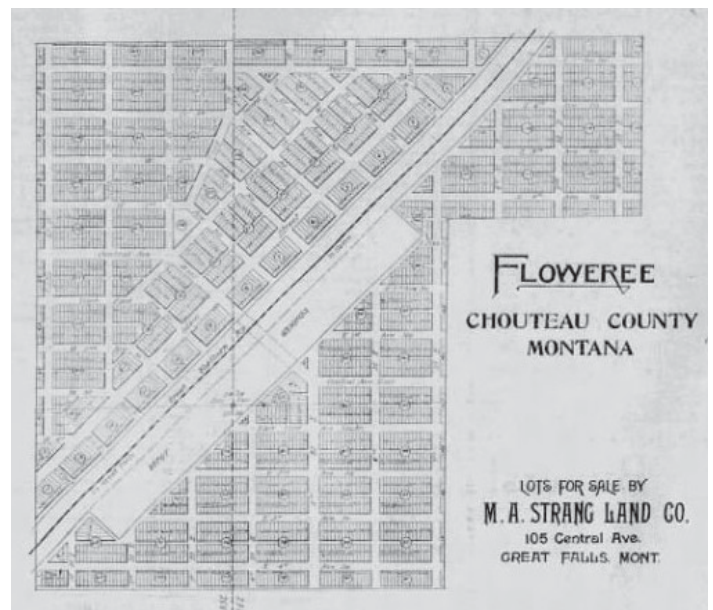
Homesteaders began arriving in the 1890s. Just a trickle at first, drawn by the prospect of nearly-free land and the glowing promises of railroad advertising, the number of settlers had dramatically increased a decade later. Two critical things had happened: in 1909 Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act, raising the amount of land a homesteader could claim from 160 to 320 acres; and Montana saw the beginning of one of its periodic, though rare, wet-weather cycles.

By 1910 the Floweree Prairie, as it was called, was dotted with homesteaders trying to make a go of ranching and dry-land farming. The newcomers needed goods and service, but for many of them, Great Falls was too far away for an easy day's journey. Towns sprang up closer to where they were needed to serve the influx of settlers.

M.A. Strang, a land promoter and homestead locator based in Great Falls, seized the opportunity and acquired land along the railroad 20 miles north of Great Falls (about halfway to Fort Benton). With three business partners, Strang incorporated the Floweree Townsite Company in January,

1910 and promptly went to work promoting and developing his new town. The Great Falls Daily Tribune carried the announcement: *ANOTHER NEW TOWN BEING BUILT UP Floweree, About Twenty-Five Miles Northeast of Great Falls Has Been Platted, and Already Buildings Are Going Up and Business Houses Established.*

In this issue appears the first announcement of an extensive advertising campaign which is to give wide publicity to the new town of Floweree. ... Floweree is situated about 25 miles northeast of Great Falls on the Havre branch of the Great Northern. It is in the center of a great prairie, which was thrown open for homestead entry by the government some time ago. The land for a radius of from 10 to 15 miles from the site of the new town has all been filed on, and it is said that every quarter section within 25 miles of Floweree will be taken up by the first of May. Already the prairie is dotted with the new built homes of the homesteaders. ... The townsite is very beautifully laid out, and the buildings and improvements that are planned will make it one of the prettiest towns in the state. Work upon the grading of the streets will be started soon. A hotel has been erected which will give accommodations to 40 guests and another hotel is expected to be begun within the next few days. The Floweree Lumber and Fuel Company have established a lumber and coal yard and is doing a good business. They have about 300,000 feet of lumber in the yard at present, and twice as much to come. A mercantile building is now being erected, and work upon a livery and feed stable, and the offices of the Townsite company is being rushed as rapidly as possible. (Great Falls Daily Tribune, March 20, 1910)



Strang and his cohorts aggressively marketed their new town. Half-page newspaper ads touted the benefits of locating at Floweree - "There's Money for You at Floweree!" screamed one ad. Accompanying it was a plat diagram of the town.

It shows the railroad running diagonally southwest-northeast through the townsite, a Main Street lined with business blocks parallel to and north of the tracks, and nearly 90 blocks of residential lots, each with about 12 lots, straddling the railroad. Central Avenue ran east-west, and eight streets were laid out north of Central - four to the north, and four to the south. Clearly, the townsite company had big ambitions for Floweree.

By May, Floweree could boast of a variety of businesses: two hotels, with another and larger hotel under construction; a general merchandise store, run by B.E. Ainsley; two lumber yards; a coal and wood yard; a cafe and lunch room operated by John Brant; a feed and sales stable; an implements store; Lene & Belding's blacksmith shop. Also being built were an ice cream parlor and confectionery store, a hardware store, and several residences. A post office was in operation, with Arthur P. Martin as postmaster. The townsite company drilled a well and struck crystal-clear water at 92 feet.

Floweree continued to grow that spring of 1910. Nearly every issue of the Daily Tribune carried a reminder to its readers to "Buy a Lot at Floweree." Lots were selling fast, though "some very desirable 160-acre homesteads" still remained; the message was clear: act fast before they are gone. Homesteaders arrived daily by train; the railroad siding was full of cars holding their belongings. The prairie around Floweree was dotted with the tents of those who had not yet been able to build houses - the lumber yards and hardware stores couldn't keep up with the demand.

By June Blanchard's bakery and meat market had opened along with a saloon presided over by a Mr. Patrick. The Bell Telephone Company was "pushing through to completion their long distance line which is to connect with the hotel, store, and Town-site company's offices." 1911 saw plans for another lumber yard and a farm implements store; in 1912 a second general store, the Western Mercantile Company, opened along with another blacksmith shop. Plans were announced for electricity coming to town from a dam proposed in the Sun River canyon.

Floweree's promoters emphasized how good the area was for farming, noting the richness of soil and the abundant (at the time) annual rainfall. The region was favorably compared to the Palouse Country of Washington, famous for wheat; it was claimed many of the new settlers came from there. The district around Floweree was not irrigated and all crops grown were dependent on rainfall, but wheat, flax and other crops seemed to thrive - one farmer using only dry farming techniques was able to grow five tons of potatoes per acre.

A Methodist Episcopal church was organized within a few months of Floweree's founding; the building was completed that October. It was a few more years before Floweree had a school building. The Floweree Commercial Club ("See Floweree farms first ... Good hotel facilities and people to show you the lands") kept up the drumbeat of boosterism. Dances - particularly in winter - were a major social event.

For the first couple of years a regular correspondent to the Daily Tribune fed news of Floweree to the outside world. In 1912, the town got its own newspaper when D.F. Swenson purchased an "up-to-date newspaper plant" and shipped it to Floweree. The first edition of the newspaper, aptly titled The Floweree, appeared on June 21, 1912. No copies of the paper are known to exist.



Floweree today

AUTHOR'S Photo

Crime didn't seem to be an issue at Floweree. In 1911 W.E. Stanford, in dispute with the Floweree Lumber & Fuel company, sawed his town house in half and moved it out to his farm. The company didn't see the humor and filed charges. The post office and the store of the Floweree Ranch Company were robbed in March, 1915; the robbers got away with \$10 and a few articles of clothing from the store and \$4 from the post office.

The biggest legal issue in Floweree's history was a fight over a saloon license. Typical of western towns, a saloon opened soon after Floweree came into existence. When the license came up for renewal in 1913, many residents signed a petition in opposition - there was a strong contingent in town that thought a saloon wasn't needed. The county commissioners overruled them and granted the renewal. A year later the matter ended up in the state supreme court which, on a technicality, referred the matter back to a lower court. The opponents argued their case in district court and were again unsuccessful; the renewal was upheld. But the "drys" weren't giving up, and eventually the county commissioners yielded to the pressure and revoked the license. In the meantime John Hackshaw, who owned the saloon when the uproar started, had sold out to L. W. White. He must have seen the handwriting on the wall because in May, 1915 - three months before the final decision - he put the saloon up for sale again. There probably weren't any takers.

By 1916 it was evident that Floweree wasn't going to become the major commercial center its founders had hoped for. Floweree still boasted a hotel, a restaurant, two general stores, a lumber yard, a barber, and several blacksmith shops and liverys. M.A. Strang, town founder, who bought out his associates and was now full owner of the townsite, had relocated to Floweree, but even his on-site presence couldn't prevent Floweree from slipping into a comfortable existence as a small country village.

Floweree was facing several new challenges by then. First was the automobile. In its early days Floweree, like so many other towns, was dependent on the railroad for freight and passenger service - apparently a depot existed at the townsite even before the town itself. A road paralleled the



With a prevailing west wind, guess where north is!
AUTHOR'S Photo

railroad all the way from Great Falls to Fort Benton, but its early use was as a farm-to-market road rather than a thoroughfare. By 1915 the first auto - a harbinger of change - had appeared in Floweree. The next year C.O. Belding, hotel owner, opened a garage and sold Magic Motor Gas to motorists. Vehicle traffic through town was increasing, and people, produce and freight were able to travel more easily to the nearby big towns.

The town began to feel the impact of lost business. The long-established general store of the Western Mercantile Company was put up for sale. The railroad moved to close the depot at Floweree, citing financial conditions; the state denied their petition, but they tried again in 1923. By then it was obvious that Floweree was on the decline. The other big factor was increasing crop failure. Most of the nearby farms depended on rainfall, and the wet-weather cycle which had begun in about 1909 was coming to an end. Without rain, the land turned to dust; crops couldn't survive. People began moving away. It is stated that three-quarters of the homesteads that existed in Montana in 1910 had been abandoned by the late 1920s.

Probably the final blow to Floweree occurred in the 1930s when a major paved highway - now labeled US 87 - was built several miles to the north, bypassing the town. With no business to keep it alive, Floweree faded away. The post office hung on for a number of years; it finally closed in 2004, though Floweree still has its ZIP Code - 59440. Today, not much remains to show what a lively town Floweree must have been in its prime. The town is easily reached off US 87 - take Floweree Road south for two miles. Several commercial buildings still stand in ruins on Main Street.



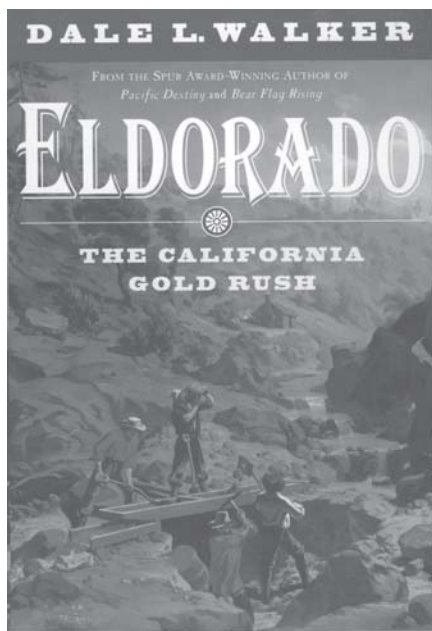


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REVIEW:

'ELDORADO'

by DALE L. WALKER



When discussing the Montana gold rush and the hundreds of ghost towns it spawned do you ever think of the granddaddy of gold rushes that was, in a way, responsible for the subsequent interest in our state? If you do, then 'Eldorado' by Dale L. Walker, a noted historian and journalist is the book for you.

In his book, Walker divides the text into five sections and gives detailed research and well readable accounts into (1) 'Empresario', 3 chapters on the life history of John Augustus Sutter and his 'fort'; (2) 'Discovery', 4 chapters on the discovery of gold in January 1848 and the subsequent news leaking out to the world; (3) 'Journeys', 4 chapters, each detailing the various routes to California and those that took each; (4) 'Eldorado', 4 chapters on the development of various sectors of the gold fields; (5) 'Departures', 3 chapters on various 'main' characters that operated in the gold field and the final history of all the players mentioned in the book.

This along with three maps (one showing the location of every little gold camp), an epilogue, an index and sources (which includes Granville Stuart's 'Prospecting for gold from Dogtown to Virginia City 1852 -1864', make the book the best history of the California gold rush that is still available.

Highly recommended.

TERRY HALDEN