



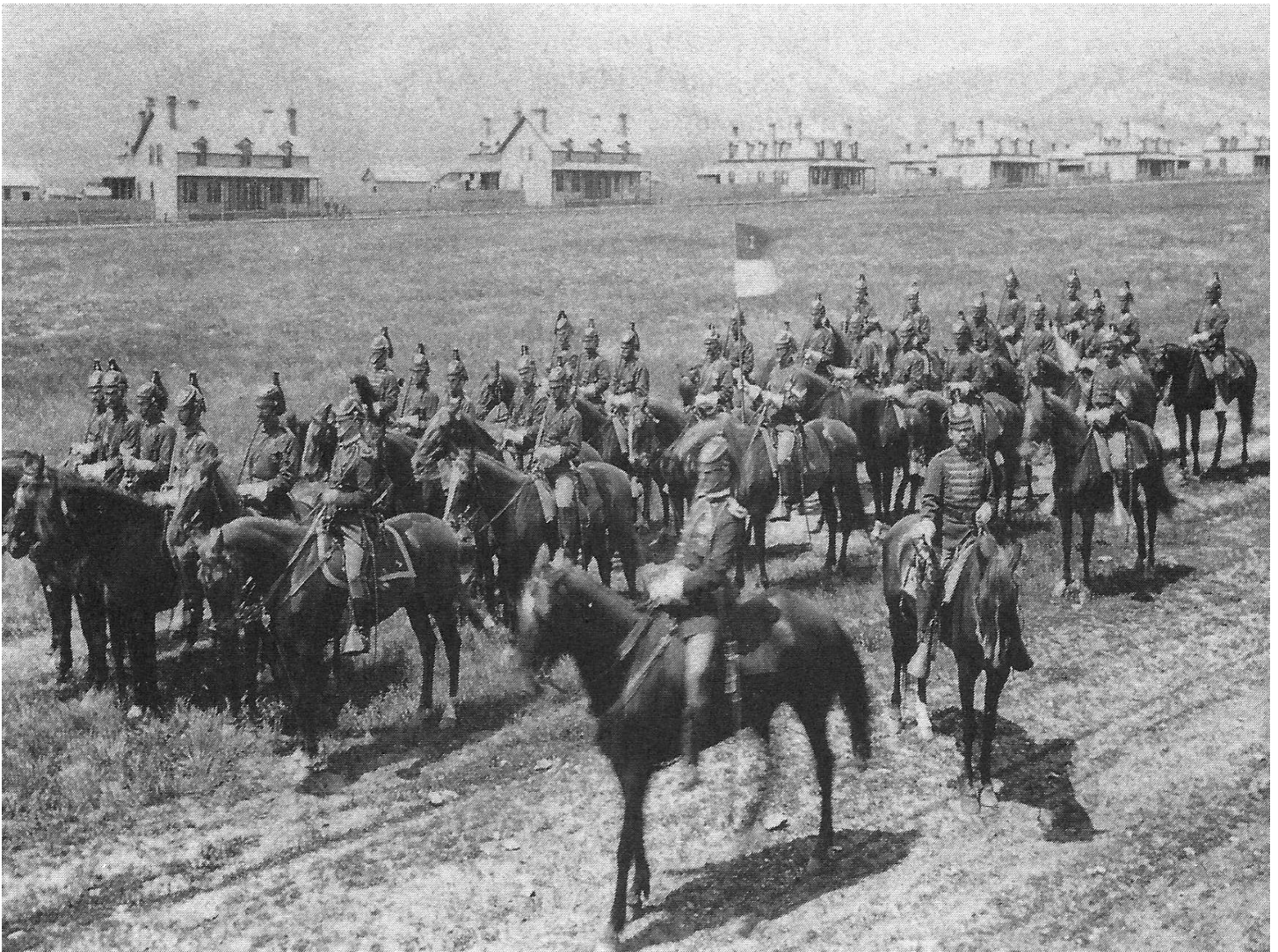
MONTANA  
**GHOST TOWN**  
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

preserving history for the next generation

VOLUME 49

**NEWSLETTER**

SPRING 2020



Fort Maginnis. Cavalry troops on parade grounds, 1886.

Photo: W. H. CULVER

Fort Maginnis (1880 - 1890) was the fifth army post to be established in Montana following Custer's wipe out in 1876, and the 'Indian scare' that followed.

For complete story, see page four.

# 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 © 2020 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.

## SPRING 2020

**President:** Brad O’Grosky  
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**Membership:** Connie Griffin  
**Newsletter Editor:** Terry Halden  
**2020 Convention: Steindorf Family**  
**Director:** Aimee Haran  
**Immediate Past President:** Terry Halden

# The Prez Sez

BRAD O’GROSKY

“Nothing is more constant than change.” I don’t know who first said it, but it certainly is true today as how our world has changed. It makes me think of 1893 when the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 was repealed. mining towns in Montana went from boom to bust overnight. But it gave us many ghost towns. On a personnel note, my Grandfather died of the Spanish flu when my Dad was a year and a half. Dee and I have had to cancel our cruise on the Nile so I’m sure it has affected everyone, but avoiding crowds gives one a chance to visit the many ghost towns.

While you have time on your hands, please consider running the convention for 2021. We have proposed White Sulphur Springs to be the base, with Castle, Lennup, Ringling and other sites to be included. This year’s convention in Kalispell is just around the corner and hopefully won’t be affected by the virus. Stay tuned for any changes which will be in the next newsletter.

We are always looking for preservation projects, so let us know if you have any ideas. We are in contact with the owner of the general store in Maudlow to consider assisting in its preservation. Maudlow was a railroad town for the electric railroad that ran from Harlowton to Idaho through Sixteen Mile Canyon. In 1925, an earthquake blocked the tracks for many days requiring temporary tracks to be built around the tremendous rock fall.

We hope you enjoy this great newsletter that Terry has created. Stay well, enjoy the ghost towns and let us know if you can help with convention 2021.  
BRAD

# AS I SEE IT

## from the RAMROD & CHAIR

As we all sit at home in quarantine, I figured I should get this newsletter out a little early and take advantage of a captive audience while I can. In this issue, you will find the lead story from Jerry Hanley, about why and where Fort Maginnis was established. It will be followed in subsequent editions with ALL the known archival photos of the fort, along with detailed captions supplied by Jerry, to conclude with the reasons for closing the fort and what happened to all the buildings etc.

Since the confluence of the Musselshell and Missouri rivers crops up a lot in early Montana history I’ve included a newspaper article from the Harlem, MT ‘Enterprise’ (November30, 1916) detailing the history of the attempts to establish a town there.

Finally on page 9 you will find the exciting preliminary schedule for the upcoming ’20 convention in Kalispell. The Steindorf family (who ran the successful convention in Polson, ten years ago) have done a tremendous job in putting this together, and I urge you to attend what is shaping up to be ‘good one’.  
TERRY

### New Members

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

**Dale Carlson, Dillon, MT**

**Ted & Bev Murray Lewistown, MT**

**John & Linda Story Belgrade, MT**

M.G.T.P.S. Board Meeting  
January 25th 2020

**President Brad O’Grosky called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Board Members attending were Terry Halden, Don Black, Cindy Shearer, Mark Hufstetler and Connie Griffin**

**Mark motioned to accept the October 19, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes. Terry seconded the motion, the motion passed.**

**Treasurer’s Report:**

**From the Fiscal Year of July 1, 2019 to June 31, 2020 as of January 25, 2020, M.G.T.P.S. had and Income of \$14,411.00 and Expenses of \$9,818.89 for a Net Income of \$4,592.11. The Cash Balances are Petty Cash \$60.20; Checking Account \$16,575.84; and Savings Account \$10,425.06.**

**Membership:**

**Connie reported the M.G.T.P.S. has 231 members, 85 are not current with their dues. There were 21 new members in 2019 and 1 in January 2020. There will be reminder postcards sent out for members that have not renewed their dues.**

**Correspondence:**

**A note was sent to M.G.T.P.S. asking if the email addresses of members were shared or sold. It was suggested that “M.G.T.P.S. does not share without permission or sell the email addresses of members” be written in a newsletter.**

**Facebook and Webmaster:**

**Cindy said that it has been difficult transferring the domain name of the M.G.T.P.S. website from Go Daddy to Square Space. She will be designing the new website and changing the web address to montanaghosttownpreservation.org.**

**Don motioned that Cindy moves forward toward making the new M.G.T.P.S. website for up to \$300.00. Terry seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**The possibility of including older newsletter articles on the new website was mentioned.**

**Old Business:**

**The Morris State Bank in Pony, MT has had a window replaced this fall. The owner of the building is having**

**more installed in the spring of 2020.**

**There are no updates on the IM Store.**

**The Nixon Bridge near Manhattan, MT cannot be saved.**

**New Business:**

**For the 2020 Convention in Kalispell, the Steindorf’s have reserved a block of rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn in Kalispell for \$79 (plus taxes) a night. The Hilton Garden Inn will be the main location for convention events. Paul Strong will be the Guest Speaker. He is the author of a book titled “Before Kalispell”.**

**New Projects:**

**Mark will contact a group that is interested in restoring the Reese Creek Schoolhouse and is inquiring about interest in restoring some buildings in Lennop.**

**Cindy mentioned reprinting of a few past publications that are no longer being printed and can legally be copied and printed again. The history of Montana in the publications may be lost as they are scarce and hard to find. The publications would be scanned and included on the website or print on demand through Amazon.com.**

**Cindy is interested in replacing damaged and incorrect historical signs around the Gallatin County.**

**Terry is working towards starting Reflections vol. 2.**

**2021 Convention:**

**White Sulphur Springs has several places of interest nearby including the ghost towns of Castle and Copperopolis. There is no chairperson for the 2021 convention.**

**Brad mentioned that M.G.T.P.S. has been without a Vice President for a while. Terry motioned that Mark Hufstetler be the new Vice President. Cindy seconded the motion and the motion passed.**

**Terry motioned that the meeting be adjourned. Mark seconded the motion. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.**

**Respectfully Submitted**

**Connie Griffin**

**Secretary/Treasurer**

# FORT MAGINNIS

## PART 1 – The establishment of the fort.

By Jerry Hanley

This is the first of a series of articles regarding central Montana's, Fort Maginnis. More will appear in future newsletters along with all the available photos of the fort. This article presents an accounting of the background and players leading up to the location and designation of the fort.

In the early 1870s Montana pioneers and politicians were pressing the government for protection from Indians and also desired the obvious economic and social benefits that would come with an increased military presence and forts. Areas where forts had been established were enjoying such benefits and increasing population. Remote areas, such as central Montana, suffered from Indian problems and slow growth due to a lack of military presence. (A small military presence temporarily did exist in central Montana in the mid-1870s when the Carroll Trail was in operation.)

In early 1876 settlers, politicians, and importantly, stock growing interests were pushing for a fort in the Musselshell and Judith Basin areas. They were quick to point out that Fort Logan (earlier called Camp Baker) (1869 – 1880) near White Sulphur Springs had outlived its usefulness and should be relocated to the afore mentioned areas. Naturally, the population in the White Sulphur Springs area did not agree with that assessment.

Martin Maginnis, Montana's territorial delegate to Congress from 1873 to 1885, introduced a bill in February 1876 for the construction of two forts – one on the Yellowstone and one on the Musselshell. Little happened until four months later when the Custer disaster on the Little Big Horn occurred. This event drastically changed congressional attitudes as well as the entire country. Maginnis's bill passed both houses in July along with an appropriation of \$200,000. Ultimately, five modern forts were to be built in Montana.

Martin Maginnis



General Philip Sheridan

All Photos courtesy Author

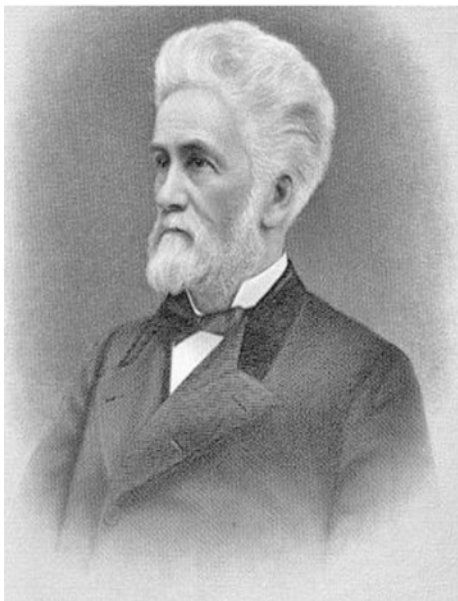
General Philip Sheridan requested and got two forts built immediately in the Yellowstone drainage – Fort Keogh (near present day Miles City) and Post # 5, that was renamed Fort Custer (at the confluence of the Little Big Horn and Big Horn rivers). The Flathead Indian nation was in the process of being moved north from the Stevensville (Fort Owen) area and anticipating possible trouble, Fort Missoula was also built in this 1877 phase. Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce spent the summer of 1877 avoiding capture by the army until October when he surrendered near the Bear Paws Mountains. With Custer's defeat still very fresh in the minds of Montanans and the nation, the Nez Perce campaign stirred up more demands for military intervention and forts. In 1878 General Miles pushed for a fourth fort at the mouth of the Musselshell, on the Missouri River or at Peoples Creek, on the Milk River. As a result, Fort Assiniboine (near Havre) was built in 1879 to the east of General Miles proposed sites and 38 miles from the Canadian border.

This brings us to the completion of four of the five promised new forts.

A fort on the Musselshell or Judith Basin had been left out — much to the chagrin of the populous. Officials in Meagher County petitioned for a fort on the Musselshell. Settlers and businessmen continued clamoring for protection and the economic gains derived from a fort located in the lush pastoral lands of the Musselshell or Judith Basin. Delegate Maginnis continued to feverishly work Congress and the military to get it done.

The D H S cattle outfit, owned by Andrew Davis, Erwin Davis, Samuel Hauser, and Granville Stuart, based in the Helena and Deer Lodge areas, enters the picture in early 1880. They, predominately Stuart and Hauser, played a large part in the final location of the promised fifth fort. These Montana pioneers and businessmen were associates and old friends of that aforementioned businessman and territorial delegate, Martin Maginnis.

Throughout all this time Granville had been communicating with Hauser, and Hauser, in-turn, to his old friend Martin Maginnis imploring on him to establish the last of the five forts in the Musselshell country. Obviously, this would be of great benefit to the D H S. Accordingly, Maginnis was busy communicating with Congress and Generals Terry and Sherman to have Fort Logan abandoned and establish a new fort in the Musselshell drainage. They obliged and recommended



Andrew Davis



Samuel T. Hauser



Granville Stuart

Granville Stuart set out from Helena, first in April 1880, on several reconnaissance trips through the Yellowstone and Musselshell valleys and their associated tributaries to find an ideal place to locate a large open-range spread suitable for the D H S operations. Some potentially good locations were too close to Indian Reservations to suit him. He eventually investigated Flatwillow and McDonald creeks (the Musselshell drainage) and even viewed the Judith River Basin from the divide between the Judith and Snowy mountains.

In late May 1880 Stuart returned to Helena and instructed crews to start driving the assembled herds towards the Flatwillow and McDonald creek ranges. Stuart still needed to locate a home place and headquarters for the D H S. In June he returned to McDonald Creek and while at the 'Chamberlin's place,' a ranch and stopping place a few miles north of where Grass Range, MT would eventually be born, he met some Metis (then known as Red River half-breeds who were the earliest settlers in the soon to become Lewistown area). They told him of an ideal location on Fords Creek near the plains directly east of the Judith Mountains and some ten miles to the west. Hiring one of the Metis as a guide, Granville located the "ideal place" on June 29 and immediately went to work building his ranch house while he waited for the cattle to arrive.

a Congressional appropriation of \$50,000 for the construction. In early July a site was selected for the fort on Fords Creek just a few miles above Stuart's newly selected home place and D H S headquarters. The Post, as the fort was most often called, was built and ready for troops later that fall with more construction to follow in 1881 and 1882.

Although it was rare for a fort to be named for a civilian, much less a living one, General Sherman saw to it that the fort was named for the Honorable Martin Maginnis. (Maginnis did serve in the Civil War attaining the rank of major and was often referred to a Major Maginnis.) (As a side note - the Maginnis Mine near Maiden, [now owned by your writer] was originally called the Montana Mine, but was renamed by its new owners Samuel Hauser and Anton Holter, in 1882, in honor of their friend Martin Maginnis.)

Coincidental to all this activity gold had been discovered in the Judith Mountains near the head of Warm Spring Creek in the fall of 1879. This discovery was about four miles west of the future D H S and Fort Maginnis sites. The three discoverers, having escaped an early snowstorm, wintered in Junction City on the Yellowstone River. They quietly added seven others to their party during the winter

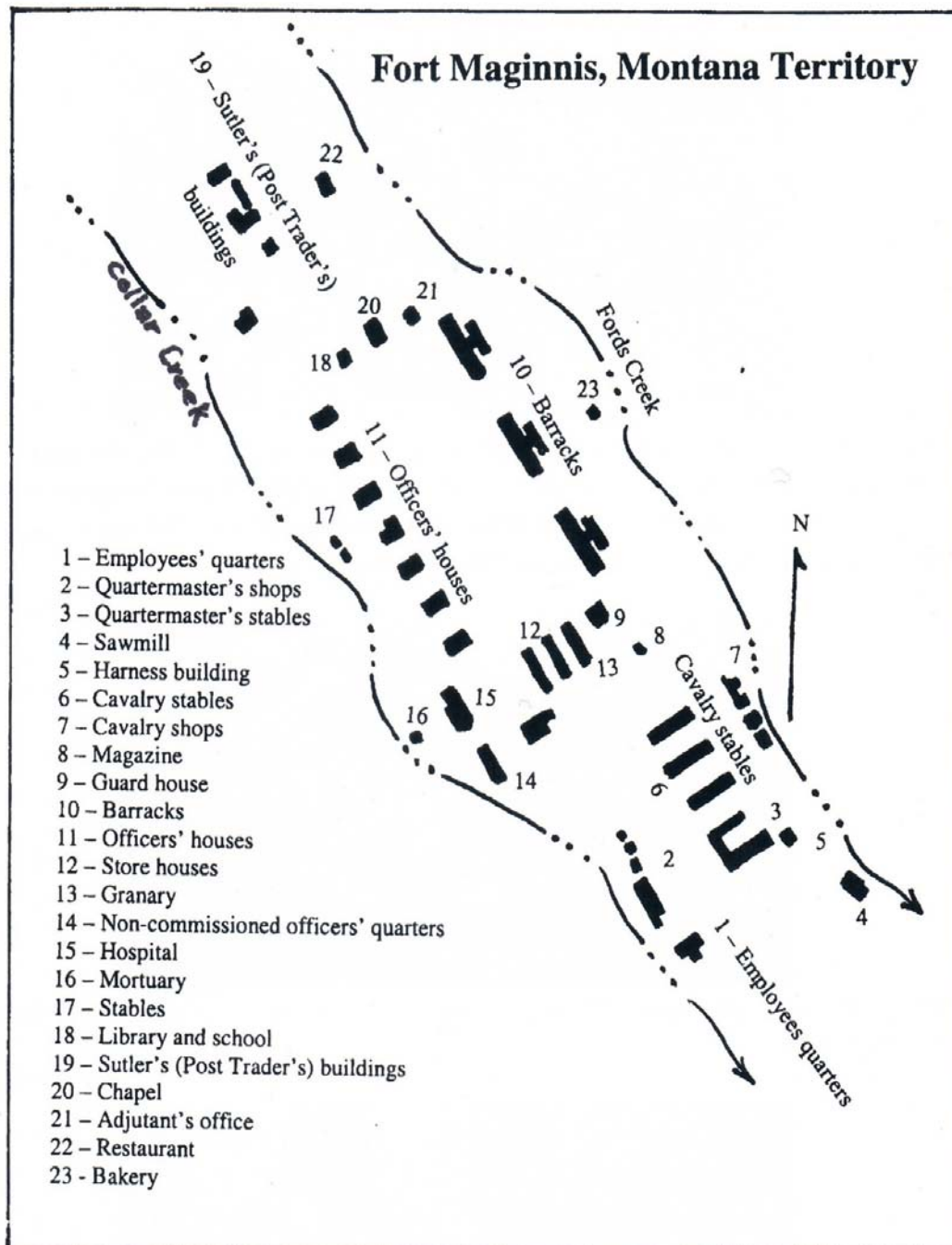
stay and quietly returned to the new Eldorado early in 1880. Interestingly, they were forced out of the mountains onto the plains for a short spell due to deep spring snows whereupon they camped and foraged their horses near the very area the D H S and Fort Maginnis would soon be located on. The word of the gold discovery soon got out and a rush to the Judiths ensued. In June of 1881 a tent camp located near the original discovery celebrated the first log structure to be built by none other than Pike Landusky. The camp was soon christened Maidenville – shortly thereafter, shortened to Maiden.

The D H S, Fort Maginnis, Maiden, and a half-dozen other short-lived camps would grow up together. However, they would not do so in total harmony as the fort with its

attending bureaucracy brought many frustrations to the civilian population, Granville Stuart, and the town of Maiden. Nonetheless, everyone enjoyed the many benefits and financial gains that came with a military presence and modern fort in their midst for the next ten years.

Fort Maginnis was the final chapter in frontier forts located in Montana Territory and of about a dozen forts (aka posts or garrisons) in Montana the two that reigned near the Judith Mountains in central Montana, Camp Cooke (1866 – 1870), the first post in Montana, had been located 45 miles to the northwest of the future Fort Maginnis at the mouth of the Judith River.

To be continued next newsletter



# The forgotten ghost town of Kerchival

From the Harlem, MT 'Enterprise', November 30, 1916.....

## **GHOST CITY BOOMED AS FORT BENTON RIVAL**

In these days when fortunes are being made through the appreciation of farm lands in Montana there are probably few who know that the first great realty project initiated in the state was a failure. This was the effort to establish at the mouth of the Musselshell river a town and trading center which, its sponsors fondly believed, would eventually become the metropolis of Montana, probably of all the northwest.

This settlement, founded in 1866 as Kerchival City, was washed away by the river in 1868, to be re-created the same year as the town of Musselshell. Two years later, this town was also abandoned, but until 1874 a trading post lingered on the site.

Even the members of the territorial legislature had unbounded faith in the glorious future of the town and in 1866 the county of 'Muscelshell' was created and the county seat fixed at Kerchival City. As the Missouri had carried the county seat all the way through the Dakotas by the time the next legislature met, the county seat was established at Smithson, another ghost town, while the county itself was changed to Vivion. As congress annulled the laws of this session, the county became a memory. The present county of Musselshell owes its existence to an act of the legislative assembly of 1911 and the site of Kerchival City is not within its boundaries.

### **Founders Expected it to Displace Fort Benton**

The founders of Kerchival City expected it to displace Fort Benton as the head of navigation because of the swift current and numerous rapids, as well as the periodic recurrence of low water, in the Missouri above its junction with the Musselshell, while little difficulty was experienced in ascending to this point. Furthermore the Missouri described a wide circle to the north-west above the confluence of the two rivers, whereas the overland wagon road which these boomers built offered a direct cut-off to Helena through the fertile Judith basin. The abundant timber in the region, at the time when all steamboats burned wood, was an additional argument in favor of the site. Many also believed gold would be found in the surrounding

mountains, which had never been thoroughly prospected.

Influenced by all these considerations, a number of persons associated themselves as the Rocky Mountain Road Company, opened the rout from the Missouri across the mountains and located the town site. The place was named Kerchival City in honor of an old steamboat captain who had been among the first to advocate the route. The 'city' under his name refused to expand beyond a log cabin or two, occupied by the employees of the company, but in 1868, after the river had swept away the cabins, the attempt to create a town, this time under the name of Musselshell, was renewed under the auspices of the Montana Hide and Fur Company of Helena, which sent ten men to establish a post and build a warehouse. They were joined by Colonel Clendenn Clendennin, his brother Richard and James Maginnis, who had opened a wood yard at Grand Island while awaiting developments respecting the new location.

### **Company of Soldiers Established Nearby**

In the summer of that year the population was increased by additions from the mountains and from up and down the river. Soon there were more than fifty settlers and a dozen cabins fronting the river. A company of soldiers came down from Camp Cooke and established themselves just below the town, erecting a stockade with bastions, which was christened Camp Reeve. The friendly Gros Ventres and Crow came in great numbers to trade and the hopes of the new founders loomed large. If so much had been accomplished in one summer, what might not reasonably be expected in succeeding years? The prosperity of the town, however, attracted the attention of the Sioux, and this nation was the nemesis of the settlement.

In the fall of the year the Sioux made their first attack, capturing the grazing herds of the townsfolk and killing two soldiers. Almost immediately the soldiers were withdrawn. Early in 1869, nearly a hundred Indians laid an ambush near the town. This

time a general alarm was given and as there were about fifty men at the post, the settlers determined to teach the Indians a lesson. They advanced swiftly and trapped a large party in a ravine that opened into the Musselshell. While the main body of the whites guarded the paths that led to the ravine, three or four of the settlers crossed the Musselshell and under cover of a grove of willows opened a flank fire with repeating rifles upon the Sioux who were crouching in the coulee

As the rain had soaked the bow-strings and the pans of the flint-locks with which the Sioux were armed, their resistance was feeble. Some tried to dig shelters in the banks with their butcher knives, but one by one they fell before the bullets from the unseen rifles. A dash for life was determined, and some clambered up the far bank others undertook to tread their way from rock to rock in the coulee to swim to safety.

### **Whites Open Fire Upon Comrades**

In the excitement some of the whites came under the fire of their comrades, and it was due to this the Sioux escaped annihilation. According to the story told by the Indian survivors who reached the agency at Fort Peck, 33 of the 98 who took part in the fight were killed outright or died from their wounds. Only two escaped without any wound. The Indians thereafter were emphatic in their declarations that Musselshell was 'Bad Medicine' as its defenders could fire their guns without reloading or even taking them from their shoulders. The settlers lost one man. The whites cleaned the skulls of ten "Good Indians" and set them on stakes at the steamboat landing.

**[Editor's note: It was during this Indian fight that frontiersman John Johnson got his sobriquet of 'Liver Eating' Johnson – but that is another story]**

### **Sioux Renew Attacks With Larger Force**

The Sioux, however, vowed vengeance on the town and they renewed their attacks with larger forces every few weeks during the spring and summer. A three inch smooth-bore iron cannon was lent to the settlers by General Hancock, who furnished them with a large supply of solid shot, shell and canister. With this they were able to disperse the Indians from the hills whence they signaled their defiance to the town.

Later in this year an eccentric Frenchman, who became known as "the man with 90 lives" added another sensation to Musselshell's brief annals. This

man arrived from Helena with the intention of taking passage down river by the first boat but was told the boats had come and gone. In disregard of the warning of the townsfolk, he made up his mind to go back to Helena by the 'Benton Trail'. Immediately after his departure, an alarm of 'Indians' was raised and the inhabitants of the town turned out, under arms. The Indians were seen making their way through the timber at the top of the hill by which the Benton Trail ascended from the valley. The Frenchman, unconscious of his peril, began to climb the hill. The townsmen exhausted every possible means in their efforts to attract his attention, but he kept on going. As he neared the summit where the Indians were in waiting in ambush, the settlers leveled their guns and opened fire – not at the Indians, for they were out of range, but upon the Frenchman. His death seemed inevitable, so they determined to cheat the Indians of their prey.

The bullets rattled around the Frenchman, but he seemed to have a charmed life. Rounding the top he found himself face to face with the Indians. They withheld their fire to count coup. In a moment he was surrounded. The leading Indian counted his coup by dealing the Frenchman a blow across his face with the flat of his tomahawk. This seemed to rouse the traveler for with a bound he cleared the ring of Indians and dashed down the hill. There were witnesses who were ready to swear that his feet touched the ground only two or three times on his way down. Not one of the Indians dared to urge his horse downhill at a pace sufficient to overtake him. The Frenchman got back safe and decided to await the next boat.

**[As mentioned above, in 1870, the town was abandoned]**



The only known photo of MUSSELLSHELL,  
Photo: JAMES S. BRUST



CONVENTION: Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2020

KALISPELL, MT

PRICE, PER PERSON \$90.00

BASE HOTEL: HILTON GARDEN, 1840, HWY 93 SOUTH, KALISPELL. (406) 756-4500

Rooms have been reserved at \$79.00/night includes a buffet breakfast

Please mention M.G.T.P.S. when booking to get the discounted rate!

## PROGRAM

Friday, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>. at **NORTHWEST MONTANA HISTORY MUSEUM, 124, Second Ave, East**

4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Registration **and self guided tours of the museum**

6:00 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres

7:00 p.m. Paul Strong, guest speaker, author & historian: 'Demersville and other ghost towns'

Saturday, Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>

9:00 a.m. Guided tour of Charles E. Conrad's Mansion and grounds

Lunch provided

1:30 p.m. Guided Bus trip to the town site of Demersville, and cemetery & other ghost towns.

6:00 p.m. HILTON GARDEN

No Host Bar

Banquet

Annual General Meeting

Guest Speaker

Entertainment

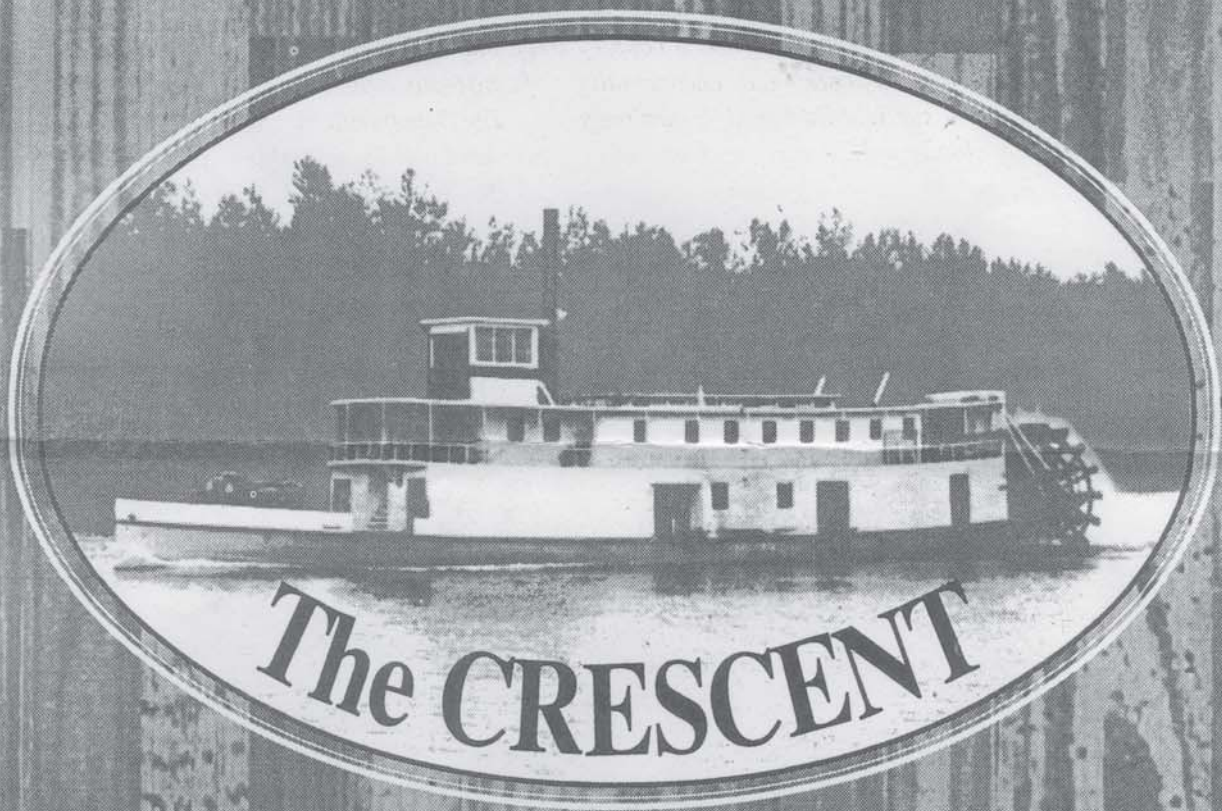
Sunday, Sept. 8

9:a.m Details being finalized.

# BEFORE KALISPELL

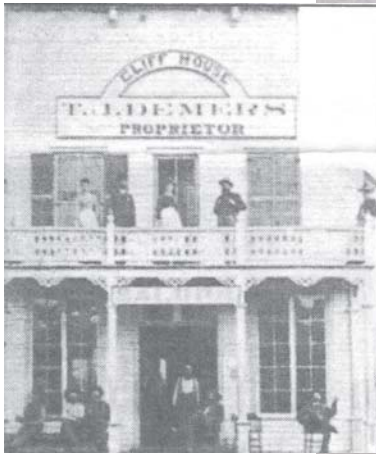
Demersville, Ashley, Egan, Half Moon, Salish

*by Paul Strong*





All photos of Demersville, 1890 (and immediately below Salish post office) courtesy of Montana Historical Society

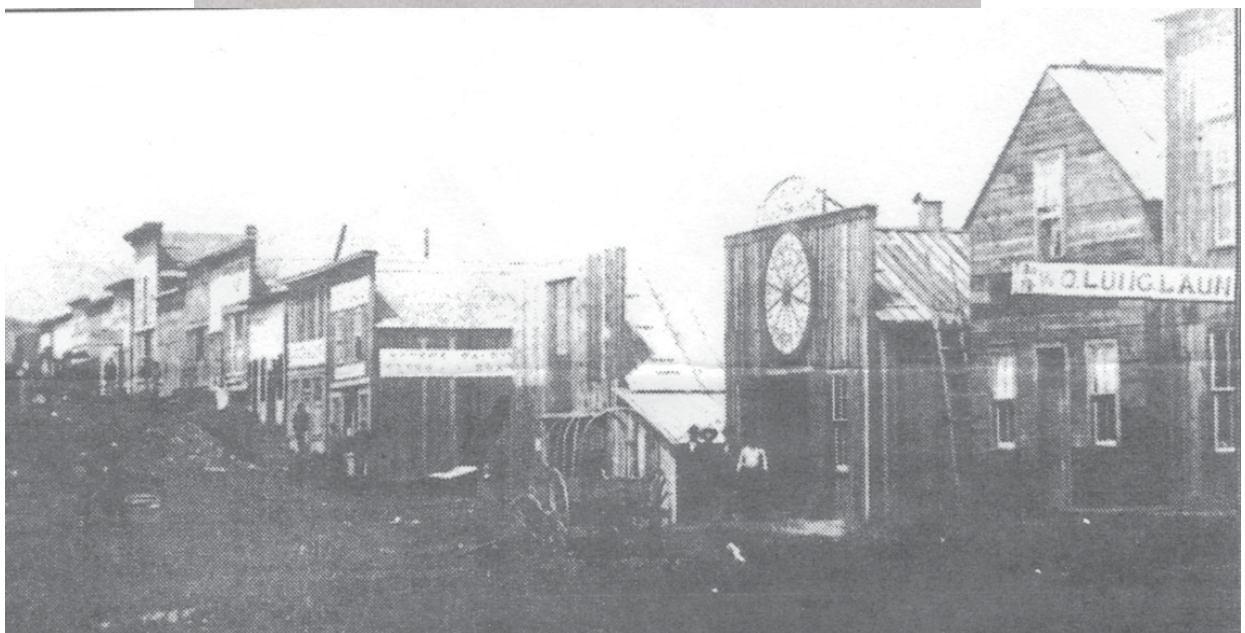


## OUR STORY...

Montana became a state in 1889. At that time, Demersville was Queen City of the Flathead Valley. Other towns in the valley included Ashly, Egan, Half Moon and Yenville. All of these towns are gone now, but in 1889 they were the centers of commerce. Today there are several towns in the Valley but none of them were here when Montana became a state.

This is the story of the development of the Flathead Valley. It starts with some of the geological history since the topography determined the pattern of early settlement. Once people discovered this beautiful valley, they soon developed the land and built their towns. Demersville went from a trading post in 1887 to the major town in the valley within two years. When it was consolidated in 1891 there were seventy-two licensed saloons. It also had churches, stores, banks, a school and many residences. Two years after that it was gone.

What caused the boom? What caused the crash? There are no simple answers. It is a story of ambitious men and grand plans. It is a story of hope and disappointment. If we can better understand our past we can better plan for our future.





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

## REVIEW

### ROSEBUD, JUNE 17, 1876 Prelude to the LITTLE BIG HORN

by PAUL L. HEDREN



Paul L. Hedren, a retired Park Service historian is recognized as an authority on military history and the Sioux Wars. Having written or edited several books he has finally turned his researching skills to the General Crook arm of the three pronged army assault on the hostile Sioux and Cheyenne nations in 1876 and has written the ultimate book on the subject that is both informative and easy to read. He manages to portray both the army and hostiles moves before and during the battle that lasted almost the entire day with intimate detail.

It has long been the conclusion of historians that had General Crook and his thousand man fighting force continued to battle the hostiles, instead of leaving the field and returning to his base camp in Wyoming, the Custer defeat at the Little Big Horn eight days later might have been different. Not so, maintains Hedren.

First, Crook's scout information that Sitting Bull's camp was on the Rosebud was correct, but it was two days old when he got to the stream, and the Indians had already moved over the ridge toward the Little Big Horn. While he camped and sent out his Crow scouts to locate the exact location of the camp, the hostiles attacked and Crook was caught napping, literally. After the day long fight which ebbed and flowed because of the terrain (ridges and gullies) the hostiles, who had had no food all day broke off the fight, Crook wanted to pursue them, but his Indian fighting force (Crows and Shoshones) quit (as they were fearful their own villages were in danger) thereby robbing Crook of his eyes and as had dead to bury and wounded to take care of, he reluctantly returned to his base camp. In the meantime the hostile camp was further enlarged by more defectors from the reservations prior to Custer's plunder. The book is available in most bookstores and at Amazon.com Terry Halden