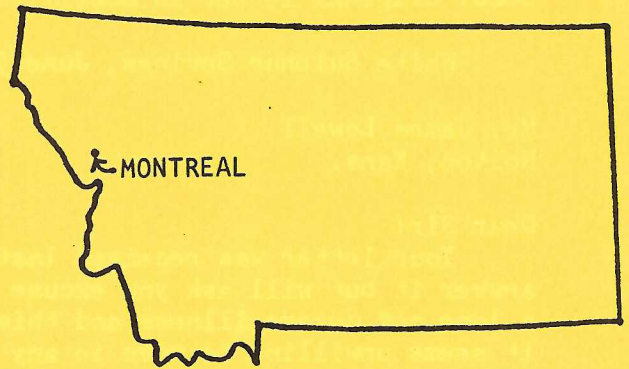


GHOST TOWN PROFILE

MONTREAL, MONTANA.....



In the early 1850's, the U.S. Army ordered Captain John Mullan to build a wagon road between Fort Benton, Montana Territory and Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory. From 1853-54, he surveyed the route and construction began in the summer of 1859. By September of that year, Mullan had reached the Bitterroot Valley, where in 1855, the U.S. Government had signed a treaty with the Flathead, Kalispell, Pend d' Oreille and Kootenai Indians, opening the land for white settlers. The new road rapidly found more usage from the public than it did by the military, bringing hundreds of miners and settlers into the region.

In 1859, two trappers, Baptiste Bucharme and Louis Brown settled in what would later be called the Frenchtown Valley, 18 miles northwest of Missoula. They were followed by other French-Canadian farmers from New Brunswick and Ontario, and the townsite of Frenchtown was laid out in 1864 along the banks of the Clark Fork River. Being situated on the Mullan Road, Frenchtown rapidly became a shipping point and area farmers would bring their grain there to be sold. Others came into the area with the Cedar Creek gold rush of 1869, near present-day Superior.

Northwest of Frenchtown lies the peaceful, tree-filled Ninemile Valley. During the early 1860's, miners followed up Ninemile Creek on their way into the Kootenai drainage and the gold strike on Wild Horse Creek in British Columbia. They found some gold along Ninemile Creek, but nothing worth staying to explore in more detail. In 1869, Louis Barrette explored the Ninemile Valley and found enough gold to warrant further mining. He had been instrumental in finding gold and creating the rush to Cedar Creek earlier.

Barrette and his brother Eustache started prospecting the Ninemile Valley and by November of 1869, established the mining districts of St. Louis, Eustache and Boucher. Additional claims were staked by other Frenchtown residents, and by the spring of 1875, several businesses began to spring up to supply the miners needs. At the junction of St. Louis and Eustache Gulches, the main forks of Ninemile, was the mining camp of Montreal.

Located 35 miles from Frenchtown, it contained a hotel, four saloons, store, two butcher shops, two blacksmith shops, bakery and two Chinese wash houses. In 1870, the Chinese miners were estimated at 2 to 1 over whites in the area. An 1880 census recorded 113 Chinese, 41 white men, 3 women and 8 children in the Ninemile area.

1875 was the peak year for mining in the area. As the easier gold was mined out, miners left the district for other areas and mining companies began to buy up the mining claims. By 1880-81, most businesses in Montreal had returned to Frenchtown. The Ninemile mine was opened in the late 1880's and was operated by the Ninemile Mining Company until around 1905, when it was leased to other miners. Mining in the Ninemile District came to a virtual end by 1915 and little activity has occurred in the area since.