



WALLS

“IF THESE
COULD TALK”

THE HISTORY

of the

BUILDINGS

VIRGINIA
CITY

MONTANA

by

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IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK
The History of the Buildings of Virginia City

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"IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK"

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VIRGINIA CITY
A Unique Historic Place

by John D. Ellingsen

Virginia City, Montana stands unique among the historic places of the American West. Even in the great volume of fictional writing and movie making which Western History has inspired, there can be found no plots so intriguing, no characters so evil or heroic, nothing so fascinating as the true history of Virginia City.

Virginia City saw the biggest, placer gold discovery in Montana, and some say the largest the world has ever known -- yielding over 100 million in \$16.00 an ounce gold (or in excess of a billion dollars today's money.) The second major strike in Montana, it was discovered by Bill Fairweather, Henry Edgar and party. The first laws of the area were the result of a miners' meeting arising from the strike. By June 16, 1863, Virginia City had been organized. It is remarkable it was planned as a permanent city from the beginning with straight streets and square corners. The first building still stands today!

By fall, an estimated 10,000 people were living in Virginia City proper and the whole district, which included the towns of Summit, Highland, Pine Grove, Virginia, Central City, Nevada City, Adobetown, and Junction, is said to have contained 35,000 (about the present population of Missoula!). A continuous string town of tents and crude cabins lined the gulch for fourteen miles and as much as half a mile deep.

The era of the Plummer gang and its extermination by the Vigilantes is an episode unsurpassed in Western History. Over 100 murders in the course of a few months made the period one of the worst reigns of terror ever experienced in the U.S.A.

The swift, fair trials of the Vigilantes, who acted in lieu of regular legal, government courts, was a triumph of law and order over hideous crime.

As if these things were not enough, other significant events belong to Virginia City: Territorial Capital from 1865 to 1876, County Seat of one of Montana's first counties, the first incorporated city in Montana, and the first public schools and many others. Montana Territory was created May 26, 1864, exactly one year after Fairweather's discovery, and mainly because of it.

Yet, perhaps, THE unique thing that sets Virginia City apart and gives it significance above other historic towns today is none of the above. The thing which makes Virginia City most special is that, due to a series of rare circumstances, it still has most of its original, first-construction buildings remaining in its oldest business district -- a set of structures comprising the largest historic architectural group of its kind in Montana and, perhaps, in the entire West.

A unique combination of conditions is responsible for the outstanding preservation of Virginia City. First, there is the climate -- dry, not enough snow to cave in roofs, and too cold for termites. Secondly, there has luckily (knock on wood) never been a fire in the old part of town. Most mining towns, with their wood stoves, improperly installed stove pipe chimneys run through board walls, kerosene lamps, muslin linings in houses, and no water systems, were veritable tinder. Virginia City has had its share, however, as open spaces in the upper end of town testify.

Most towns with ambition to become cities, even many of the present ghost towns, had big building sprees a few years after they were founded, replacing crude original buildings with more elegant brick and stone as soon as possible. Thus, very few of the first buildings survived the first five years. Virginia City's greatest era was right at the start and it didn't even have to "dress up" to grab the capital of the Territory. When it lost the capital to Helena, there was evidently no reason to "keep up with the Joneses" and hardly any new buildings have been built since 1876.

Finally, the Boveys came along just at the right time to save Virginia City from self-destruction. Historic preservation was not yet popular in the late 1930's when they began -- not so much that it was opposed, it simply was not done. The old buildings of our abandoned ghost towns were too close to our own memory to be "historic". Furthermore, they were sort of "hush hush" for fear future investors might be frightened away if they saw the failure of the past -- and everyone in that pre-ecology era knew that only by industrializing every square mile of Montana could we ever achieve the population and "progress" of California or Ohio.

Somehow, the Boveys, however, saw the need for some tangible evidence of our history, something which could be seen and touched. It is one thing to read history in a book but quite another to experience it walking the same streets and looking into the same rooms where it was made.

Fortunately, the Boveys were not content just to buy old buildings and keep them from being torn down. They decided to furnish them with authentic merchandise. There were no "antiques" for many years yet, and dry goods and hardware stores were only too happy to find a buyer for their obsolete inventories. Thus a collection of artifacts that would be impossible to replace today was formed.

With extraordinary feeling for the past and a responsibility for preserving every detail of a fast-vanishing period of American life, the Boveys began repairing the buildings of Virginia City. They were not so old then -- only about 80 years or the age of 1900-built structures today. Now, almost one-third of the history of Virginia City has been involved with preservation -- nearly forty years. Virginia City can add another "first" to its already impressive list -- first to be preserved.

The history of Virginia City has been recorded in many ways: chronologically, by events, and by peoples names. All are excellent methods. This study, however, takes a different approach . . . that of revealing what we have been able to learn about each individual building, itself, and letting the reader form a composite picture of the old town which played such a vital role in our Western heritage. Among the sources consulted were: deed records in the Court-house, ads in newspapers (which sometimes mentioned so-and-so was "four doors below the Post Office," or "at the Old Stand of . . ."), Sanborn fire insurance maps, letterheads, photographs, and personal interviews.

SOUTH SIDE OF WALLACE STREET

Beginning on West end of Town

DEPOT AND AREA

This area was originally the site of many small Chinese dwellings. In the early 1870's, a dam was built here, flooding the present players village area and supplying the hydraulic mining operations down the gulch with water. It can be seen on the 1875 perspective map of Virginia City. Later, the dam was lowered and the present dam built about 1935 by Humphrey's Dredging Company. The dredges never came any farther up the gulch than to the rear of the depot.

The depot was built in about 1890 by the Northern Pacific Railroad in Harrison, Montana, north of Ennis. The railroad did not reach Virginia City until 1964 when Charles Bovey's Alder Gulch Short Line narrow gauge railroad connected it with Nevada City about a mile and a half below. There has never been a rail connection between Virginia City and the main lines. In 1900 when dredging was underway, most supplies for the dredges were brought to Alder. Here the large boats were assembled. There was no practical reason for them to reach Virginia City as the town was already beginning to reach the dying stage. In any event, the dredges would have torn up the road bed in the canyon between Alder and Virginia City had a railroad connection been needed.

The depot was moved from Harrison to Virginia City by the Zion Housemoving Company in 1964 when the narrow gauge railroad came. As an old timer once put it, "I have often gone down to the depot to watch a train pull in but this is the first time I ever went to the train and watched the depot pull in".

HOUSES OF ILL REPUTE

These two log houses are original buildings and were operated as "sporting houses" for many years. They probably date back to 1880 but may be even older. The "Green Front" was the name of one run for years by Myrtle Butler and Pearl McGinnis. They represent a boarding house and cafe today.

STONEWALL - Site of Julius Kohl's Lumber Yard

This area was occupied by Julius Kohl's lumber yard. A group of wooden sheds stood against the outside walls. The flat area, in the center, was used as a rodeo grounds for "buckin' contests" in the 1920's. No lumber was kept here after 1910.

OPERA HOUSE - (Smith and Boyd Livery Stable, Richard T. Cooke Livery Stable)

Until about the mid-1880's, or possibly later, a two story log livery stable stood on this site. Later, by 1900, the present stone structure had been built. The construction may have been prior as restoration has been done on both the front and sides of the building.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

When the Virginia City Players first were formed in 1946, they performed on the tiny stage (shared with a square grand piano) in the Bale of Hay Saloon. In 1947, they moved into the present Opera House, at first called the "Old Stone Barn Playhouse". The theatre was constructed in this location "temporarily", and the "balcony" was simply set on counters which had come from a Deer Lodge drug store and were in storage. Now, over a quarter-century later, the balcony is still resting on the original counters and the Opera House going strong. The sheet metal at the rear was added in 1947 and the porch in front is from the famous Morgan Evans mansion near Anaconda.

WEST WING OF THE BALE OF HAY SALOON

The log addition was built by the Bovey's in 1947 to provide space for the Virginia City Player's stage as they had quickly outgrown the tiny stage in the main front room of the Bale of Hay. It now serves to connect the Saloon and the Opera House. A log building of similar appearance stood here in the 1860's.

BALE OF HAY SALOON

J. F. Stoer, a dealer in groceries and liquor, occupied this building from 1869 to about 1890. Smith and Boyd then made the building into a saloon, calling it the "Bale of Hay". The front was remodeled slightly at that time. Smith and Boyd continued until 1908. The "Bale" then stood empty until 1945 when the Bovey's restored it as a saloon. The main part of the Bale of Hay is exactly the way the Bovey's found it, except for the ornate 1880's bar and back bar which came from Benchland, Montana.

MECHANICAL BAKERY

This log house was the FIRST BUILDING in Virginia City, a fact confirmed by Dimsdale when he wrote his Vigilantes of Montana in 1865, only two years after the town was started. Numerous other early authorities have since referred to it as the first building built, including C. Hedges in his historical address on the dedication of the new Courthouse on July 4, 1876 (Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana, Vol. II, p. 83); the 1885 History of Montana p. 1,142; and Stout's History of Montana p. 218. The Mechanical Bakery was built in early June, 1863 by T. C. Luce, who had previously operated a cracker bakery in Denver. His ambition of installing machinery in his Virginia City establishment was never realized, and Luce evidently later moved to Cover Street. The building became a dwelling house and remained so until the Bovey's bought it. Not, at first, recognizing its historical significance, they removed the newer siding front and rebuilt it in line with street adding the present front room which connects with the Bale of Hay Saloon. The log walls of the Mechanical Bakery remain, however, essentially unaltered.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

VACANT LOT

The yard of the Saurbeir Blacksmith shop has been vacant since at least 1875. About 1950, the Bovey's built a stage coach shed across the back and placed concrete in the lot to use for a dance floor. Square dancing soon became rowdy and the entertainment was discontinued. In 1972, a log and frame addition to the Bale of Hay Saloon was built on the back of the lot.

SAURBIER BLACKSMITH SHOP

A saloon and dance hall were supposed to have been the original occupants of this 1863 vintage building. By the late 1860's, however, it had been converted into a blacksmith shop. The hand-crafted French doors with their transoms, and the remnants of a few "dentils" still clinging to the cornice recall its dance hall era. Inside, one can note a still older cabin in the rear, probably one of the first crude shelters built in June of 1863. Various additions have been made over the years, writing the structure's history in boards, nails, and labor.

The interior and exterior have not changed since the Bovey's bought the shop from the Sauerbier family, who operated it from 1882 until the 1930's. The original equipment, including the forge, anvil, tire shrinker, bellows, drill press, and unique skylight are still in place as they were left on the last day of business.

Charles F. Sauerbier moved to Virginia City in 1882 after two years in Adobetown (just below Nevada City). He worked on stage coaches and shod ox teams that brought goods into this region by way of Corinne, Utah or Fort Benton. Charles Sauerbier was succeeded by his son Karl, who was born in Virginia City in 1889 and lived there all his life. He built a home, which still stands behind the shop, from the logs of the first jail in Virginia City (see description of Jail on pp. 44).

FRANK PRASCH BLACKSMITH SHOP

This building, which also dates to Virginia City's earliest days, has been a blacksmith shop for over a century. It was, however, possibly a saloon before 1866, as it was owned by John Trollman, a "retail liquor dealer". Like the Sauerbier shop next door, it has had many additions over the years. A very early picture of Wallace Street shows it was once called the "Sacramento Blacksmith Shop".

Frank J. Prasch and Fred T. Kohls operated this shop in the late 1870's, and Prasch operated it by himself later in the 1880's, continuing until about 1914. He then sold the business to Louis Romey who owned it until 1946.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

About half of the front was missing when it was acquired by the Historic Landmark Society in 1946. It required extensive replacement with similar siding from an old house. Inside, the original brick forges and other blacksmithing equipment are still in place. For years, a sign identified this building as a Chinese store. The sign was more a monument to the Chinese than a historic truth, and has been removed to Chinatown in Nevada City.

"OFFICE"

A reconstruction built by the Bovey's about 1950, this building is now used for storage. In the early 1900's, Charlie Buck, a dentist, had his office here, and there is some indication that a clothing store was located on the site. The original structure was used for a residence later and torn down in the 1930's.

BARBER SHOP

An original building, the exterior of this narrow store is essentially unchanged from when they acquired it. Lyons and White operated a "Shaving Saloon" on the south side of Wallace Street in 1865 and it is from their ad the barber shop is derived. Actually Lyons and White's shop may have been where our Assay Office is located. Among early owners were S.L. Simpson, a merchant; and John G. Vetter, a shoemaker. The building was used for years as a residence.

VACANT LOT

This area was occupied by dwellings according to the 1878 and 1884 Fire Insurance maps. It has been vacant since the early 1900's.

PHOTO SHOP

This is an original building, dating to 1863 or 1864. Originally a store, a saddler was here in 1878, and it later contained a restaurant. It was sold to Jacob Dick, a painter, in 1883; and Dick continued to use it in 1927, as his carpenter shop. The original location of the Montana Picture Gallery, which has been in this building since Bovey's have owned it, was at No. 3 Jackson Street on the second floor of a building torn down in 1925.

BOOTS AND SHOES

This area contained a very narrow building in 1878, which had, by 1884, been removed. The present building, reconstructed by the Bovey's in about 1950, represents a shoe shop.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

BUILDING WEST OF ELLING STORE

Originally owned by George B. Parker, this building was purchased by I.H. Kastor and Julius Berry in 1864, and continued to be owned by this company until Henry Elling bought it in 1870. Kastor and Berry previously had an interest in the present McGovern Store before G. Goldberg moved there in 1865. Later it was evidently used by J.W. Morris, a grocer whose store was in the former Elling Store, as a residence. This building was evidently torn down in 1886 to build the brick Buford Block. The site is now the location of our reconstruction of the Elling Store. (See description of McGovern's Dry Goods Store, pp. 27).

ELLING CLOTHING STORE

Probably built in the fall of 1863, the Elling Store was a bit more "architectural" than some of its neighbors: a set of bay-window style display windows graced its facade. Perhaps this bit of showmanship was added by the building's second owner John Morris and Bro. who purchased it from W.W. Kaster and Co., August 1, 1864, for \$1,000.00. Morris, who was in partnership with Goldberg for a short time, moved to Helena in 1865 where he joined his brother Moses in the dry goods business. In Helena, the Morris Bros. built the St. Louis Block, called the "first fine building in the city", importing its plate glass windows and iron cornice at great expense from St. Louis. (1895 History of Montana, p. 202.) Remarkably, this building still stands, despite Urban Renewal, at 21 South Last Chance Gulch, better known today as "Big Dorothy's".

After Morris left, Goldberg moved across the street to the present McGovern Store, and this building was occupied by Hellman, Kuhn & Co., from April, 1865 until Elling moved in.

Henry Elling, who became one of Virginia City's best known citizens, arrived in Virginia City in October, 1864, with a stock of goods. He did well, and returned to the East, where he tried selling goods at Nebraska City, then a departure point for the West. About then, however, Omaha became the outfitting point, and Elling found himself in financial difficulty. He obtained permission to move the goods to Virginia City where he realized a tremendous profit from them.

It was upon his return that Elling began business in the building. He purchased the store in 1867 and continued there until 1872 when he moved to Content's Corner, the most prestigious location in town. Elling became involved in buying and selling gold, and entered the banking business in 1873, locating in the former Nowlan and Weary Building.

The Madisonian, now Montana's oldest weekly newspaper, was founded November 15, 1873 in the former Elling store, and was published there until March 11, 1876 when it moved to its present location.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

The Elling store was then occupied by J.W. Morris as a grocery, until 1886, when it was torn down by S.R. Buford to build the west part of the brick Buford Store, now used as a dining room of the Wells Fargo Coffee House. The present Elling Store, through a reconstruction built by the Bovey's in 1950, is an exact copy of the original facade.

BUILDING EAST OF THE ORIGINAL ELLING STORE

This 10'8" wide store was originally occupied by T.H. Clark as the "Great Western Clothing Co." Later tenants are unknown at present. It was torn down in 1886 to build the west part of the brick Buford Block.

S.R. BUFORD & COMPANY STEEL STORAGE WAREHOUSE (Now Wells Fargo Coffee House Dining Room)

This fine brick structure, with its French doors and iron fire shutters, looks today much as it did in 1886 when new. The Elling Clothing Store and a small building belonging to T.H. Clark were torn down to make way for its construction. Used by the S.R. Buford Co. for the storage of steel and heavy hardware, a cart on rails was operated to transport the materials from racks to the side walk. At the rear, was a balcony where Buford stowed his old letters and bills. These old boxes of papers were saved by Charles Bovey when he cleaned out the building to make the Wells Fargo Coffee House Dining Room about 1948. They were the source of most of the labels in our reconstruction of the original S.R. Buford Grocery Store. They have also supplied letters from which much research is derived. The interior of the store was never finished. When it became the coffee house, the brick was painted white and a tin ceiling which came from the "Blue Anchor" restaurant in Twin Bridges installed.

WELLS FARGO & CO. EXPRESS OFFICE (Center part of Buford Store)

Ben Holiday's Overland Stage Line reached Virginia City in August, 1864. From that time until 1899, their express office occupied the old frame building which stood on this site. From this office, taken over by Wells, Fargo & Co. when they bought out Ben Holiday in 1866, stages made connections with all the West and "the States". Those arriving in Virginia City came first to this building, and those departing said good-bye from here. Fortunes in gold crossed its desk, and the telegraph office was here as well.

In 1899, the Wells Fargo Office evidently moved into the building where it is located as a display today. S.R. Buford purchased the lot where the original building stood. He had the old Wells Fargo Office torn down and roofed between his 1875 and 1866 brick stores to produce a new grocery department. The new structure, called the Buford Block, was center of merchandising in this part of Montana for the next quarter century. S.R. Buford died in 1905, but his business was carried on by his sons Charles, Walter and Luther until 1926.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

In 1932, Kenneth Baker opened a mortuary in the center part of the Buford Block. The shelving, counters and even a hand-operated elevator were removed and stored in the large, tin shed across the alley where Buford had kept agricultural implements. They were still there when Boveys found them. Charles Raper bought the mortuary in 1935 and moved it up the street to Creighton's Stone Block in 1940. The Buford Block then stood empty until Charles Bovey purchased it from the Elling Estates in 1947. They opened the Wells Fargo Coffee House the same year. The name, of course, is derived from the old Wells Fargo Building which previously occupied the site.

In changing the Buford Block into the Coffee House, the side buildings remained nearly unaltered. The center, however, was somewhat remodeled. The middle part, when completed in 1900, had big plate glass windows and a reverse bay door entry, while the brick above was capped with a metal cornice. The plate glass windows were replaced with small-paned windows patterned after the original Wells Fargo Building. A porch was added and the old Wells Fargo sign duplicated on wood siding over the brick facade.

Inside, the balcony, at the rear, is still there, now serving as an apartment for the cook. A partition was added and modern kitchen equipment installed; otherwise, the building remains unchanged. The original tin ceiling, a true example of the art, is intact.

S.R. BUFORD GROCERY STORY

E. J. Walter, a clothing merchant, built the first brick building in Virginia City during the summer of 1875 on the site of his frame "Overland Clothing Store", directly east of the Wells Fargo Office. It may be the oldest standing brick building in the State. Many brick structures built in 1876 are still in existence, including the Madison County Courthouse, the Virginia City School, the Bannack Courthouse, several Fort Benton buildings and Fort Assiniboine. However, this pre-dates them all by one year.

E. J. Walter used the store just three years. In 1878, he sold out to S. R. Buford who had been in Virginia City several years as a freighter prior to entering the grocery business. Buford, a partner of Henry Elling, had rare talent for the business and soon owned the largest store in the area. Beside his retail store, he soon expanded into hardware, heavy steel, agricultural implements, wagons, and mining supplies. In 1886 he built the matching west section of his store, and in 1899 tore down the old Wells Fargo Office between the two parts, roofing between his two buildings to provide the most modern in grocery departments. The original store then became the hardware department.

When the Boveys acquired the building in 1947, a gift shop was placed in the east section. A few years later, when other gift shops were opened up the street, it was no longer necessary for the Boveys to have a gift shop in connection with the restoration. Instead, the

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

original S. R. Buford grocery store was reconstructed in 1975, using Buford's original fixtures and even some of his stock. The labels on the canned goods are those Buford received in the mail and carefully filed away.

ASSAY OFFICE

A reconstruction of the original building on this site, this was actually the location of Lyons and White's Barber Shop in the 1860's.

WELLS FARGO DISPLAY

Numerous stores have used this original structure, built in 1863, which has had little restoration other than new glass in the windows and doors. Even the paint is original. About 1875 "Ten Pin Alley" occupied this building and in 1878 it was the U.S. Post Office. Evidently, the Wells Fargo office moved here when the center section of the Buford Block was built in 1899. It was vacant for many years before the Boveys began restoration.

E. L. SMITH GENERAL STORE

This original building, built in late 1863 or early '64, may have originally contained the Star Billiard Hall. Gurney and Company, shoe dealers, are among the earliest tenants. There must have been a sizable shoe business to warrant this large store. Later, about 1876, the store sported a large canvas sign proclaiming "New York One Price Clothing House".

E. L. Smith arrived here to mine in 1864. He returned to Chicago and came back in 1880 to operate the "Chicago Cheap Cash Store" in this building. The window shades still used in our windows are from this store. E. L. Smith ran a store for a short time in Twin Bridges, returning to Virginia City to operate another store in the F. R. Merk Building up the street where the Pioneer Bar is today.

Tenants after 1900 included the Alder Gulch Times, which may have put in the skylight and S. R. Buford, who built the extensive ice houses and cold storage facilities at the rear about the turn of the century. When the automotive age came, the doors were widened and the old store became a garage.

Restoration of this building included rebuilding the unique bay windows from remains which were intact in 1947 and lining the interior with heavy canvas. Most of these buildings had interiors lined with muslin in imitation of smooth lath and plaster. This was the first of four complete general stores which the Boveys have refurnished and has many early Virginia City items.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

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Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

VARIETY STORE

This building is a reconstruction of the original. The front is an exact duplicate, while the structure is of concrete block. The first occupant of the building was a Mr. Cook who used it as an auction store. Auctions were an important part and frequently discussed part of early life in Alder Gulch. In November 1866, a Novelty Store opened at the old stand of Mr. Cook. O. P. Raymond advertised a few days later that he had apples, etc. at the Novelty Store, the "Blue Front". William Douglas bought the Variety Store in 1872, later selling to William A. Buttermore, who ran it until his death about 1910. The original structure was removed in the 1920's. Our reconstruction houses a penny arcade of the 1910 era.

FIRE STATION

Reconstructed at the same time as the Variety Store, about 1948, this is also a twin to the original which was removed before 1900. John G. Vetter's Boots and Shoes may have occupied it in the 1860's. After Vetter moved to Jackson Street, another shoemaker was located here in 1878. Tenants since then are unknown, at present. The fire station, which it represents today, holds the city's first chemical wagon.

CONTENT'S CORNER

Content's Corner is of true historic significance. When finished by Sol. Content in September 1864, it was undoubtedly the city's most impressive business block, and its gothic arches, indeed, lent a civilized dignity to the otherwise rough town. They seemed to say, "Now you, too, should get rid of your old log stores and build a really permanent stone city." Content's Corner may have been the starting point for the survey of the town. While Virginia City was Territorial Capital from 1865 - 1875, it was home for the offices of the Territory at various times. (However, the legislature met in numerous other locations.) Robert Vickers and his grandson Bob Gohn have occupied the building for nearly a century.

John S. Rockfellow and William Dennee, grocers, were the first occupants of newly completed Content's Corner, while their own frame store on Jackson Street was being built. Herman, Schwab, and Loeb, grocers, were next, until 1866 when Sol. Content operated a clothing business in his building for a brief time. Later in 1866, Seigel Bros. took over Content's stock and continued until 1872. Elling moved at that time from his old store below the Buford Block to Content's Corner. Armstrong and Johnson took over Elling's in 1873 when he entered the banking business. They continued ten years, selling to Robert Vickers in 1883. The store has remained in the same family nearly a century. Vickers managed his clothing store here until his death in 1923. It was continued by Martha Sutenberg Castle, his

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

daughter, until 1936. A grocery was in the building briefly and in 1943, Robert Gohn, grandson of Robert Vickers, moved in to start his famous "Bob's Place" combination bar, grocery and hardware store which he still operates. Bob Gohn, blinded in a mine explosion since he was a small boy, is a truly remarkable person in his ability to operate and manage his retail business.

On the second floor of Content's Corner, the Governor and Secretary of Montana Territory had their offices at various times. (They had offices near the Elling Bank and in other places, as well, over the years.) After the Territorial Offices were moved to Helena in 1875, lawyers, surveyors, and other professionals had their office here.

Although eclipsed manytimes by grander structures -- the stately business blocks of Helena built in the 1889 era and the enduring fire-proof buildings of the 1914 period, for instance, Content's Corner still holds a place of honor in Montana's history tho many of the far more notable buildings are long since gone.

The major change in Content's Corner took place about 1895 when the gothic front arch windows were removed and a "modern" plate glass store front, with a brick facade above, were installed...changes which were unfortunate (from an artistic point of view) but in keeping with what was considered up-to-date at that time. The Bovey Restoration is, at present, buying the building and plans to restore the gothic arches.

JACKSON STREET INTERSECTS WALLACE

PONY SALOON

One of the first stores built in Virginia City was the frame building at the corner of Jackson and Wallace. John H. Ming, who is said to have started the first store in Denver, arrived in Alder Gulch in 1863 and opened a stationery business in this store. He was unusually successful and the following year started a similar business in Helena. There he promoted the "West Side", which became the setting for hundreds of mansions in the 1880's. Ming built a truly Grand Opera House in Helena in the early '80's, one of the showplaces of the West (it still stands as the Shrine Consistory Temple). His own Helena mansion was one of the most elegant Montana has ever seen, but unfortunately, torn down in the 1930's. Mr. Ming died in 1887.

In Ming's store was the Hershfield Bank. L. H. Hershfield arrived here in 1864 with a train of goods which he sold. He then gave his attention to dealing in gold dust and established his Virginia City Bank in 1865. He started a bank in Helena shortly afterward and moved there in 1868. There, he went on to build the Merchant's National Bank, which raised a magnificent four-story, stone and brick building, later occupied by the Union Bank. It was recently demolished by Urban Renewal.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

For a half century, beginning in 1870, the building on the southeast corner of Wallace and Jackson was home of the famous "Pony Saloon". Founded by John Mahan & Co., "at the old stand of John Ming", it was later operated by O. Baker in 1876, and then J. Wimmer. Most famous proprietor of the Pony was Eugene Stark, a watchmaker by trade, who had tried his hand at every type of adventurous activity -- prospecting, real estate (building cheap, hastily constructed log cabins to sell to the miners) and followed the different gold rushes in the Territory. He thus built a rare collection of "tall tales" which later no doubt aided in attracting customers to his busy bar. Taking over the Pony in 1878, he ran it until 1893. George W. Feif was one of the last owners.

In 1925, Lewis Dudley, who renovated the Stonewall Hall next door for a garage in 1915, pulled down the famed Pony Saloon and built a concrete building. The Dudley Garage continued to operate until 1962 when the Boveys bought the property. It is at present, our antique automobile museum, unchanged from when it was as a garage.

STONEWALL HALL

The Gem Saloon, operated by Hynsom and Harper, stood on this site in 1863-64. On October 1, 1864, excavations were begun behind the Gem for a new building to be called "Stonewall Hall". Evidently, the Gem's business was so good, it continued in operation while the rear walls were raised and was then removed so the front part could be built. Opening on December 24, 1864, the impressive new, stone, two-story building was 26 x 75 feet. The "Stonewall House Saloon" was the first downstairs tenant. On January 14, 1865, the Virginia City Lyceum was established on the second floor. There, young men could read the latest newspapers and had use of a small library for a membership fee of \$5.00 per month. The Lyceum was the pride of Virginia City -- no one should think it was actually as rough a town as it appeared on the surface. True, the streets were knee deep in mud, be-whiskered prospectors and ox teams were everywhere, auctions, saloons, and hurdy-gurdy houses were "going strong" day and night and on Sundays, as well. Everything appeared uncivilized. Then, however, we must always remember there was the "Lyceum" with its genuine, grained woodwork and even plans for a fresco ceiling.

On August 26, 1865, Star, Openheimer & Co. opened a dry goods, grocery, and liquor store on the first floor of the Stonewall. Poznanski, Behm & Co. bought them out in October, 1865.

When Virginia City was made Territorial Capital in 1865, the second floor of the Stonewall was chosen as one of the legislative meeting places. Both the Council and the House met here at various times (other places included the second floor of Rockfellow Store, adjoining, the Idaho Hotel, and the Theatre. Territorial offices were over Content's Corner, at times.) Since all the other early meeting places of the legislature have disappeared, this is the oldest remaining "Capitol Building" in Montana.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

Greenhood, Bohn & Co., clothing dealers, were tenants from 1866 until succeeded by R. O. Hickman (a member of the firm) in 1882. Their sign can still be read on the side of the building. G. B. & Co. were a national organization having stores in New York, San Francisco, Helena and Virginia City. Their traveling salesmen Leo A. Guiterman and John G. Hammer, traversed Montana by stage and their daily reports reveal many details of life in the small towns they visited. G. B. & Co. continued in Helena until 1892.

When R. O. Hickman arrived in Alder Gulch in 1864, he was already an old hand at Western life, having gone to California in 1852. He engaged in the dairy business in Virginia City and was appointed Territorial Treasurer in 1871, resigning when the Capital was moved to Helena in 1875. Hickman became associated with Greenhood, Bohm and Co. about 1878 and when they left Virginia City in 1882, he took over the business. He continued in the Stonewall Hall until 1895 when he sold out to Jacob Albright, his clerk since 1884. The store had actually been under the management of Albright since 1889 when Hickman moved to Helena.

Hickman married Maggie Perrill in 1872. Their daughter, Gertrude married William Boyce Thompson, son of William Thompson who built many of the buildings in this city. William Boyce Thompson became prosperous in the East and contributed the money to build the Thompson-Hickman Memorial Museum and Library in 1918.

Jacob Albright, who succeeded Hickman, continued in the clothing business in the Stonewall Hall until about 1914 when he moved to the building constructed by the Masons next to Rank's Drug.

With the coming of the automotive age, the blacksmith shops and livery stables of every town gave way to gas stations and automobile repair shops. Recognizing the future in this business, Lewis Dudley and Mr. Kohls converted the Stonewall Hall into a garage about 1914. The metamorphosis took place by simply removing one of the plate glass windows (which had replaced graceful French doors in stone arches about 1895) and pouring a concrete floor. In 1925 they tore down the old Pony Saloon and built a concrete addition. Called the "Virginia City Garage", the establishment was one of the old-line garages which could handle anything from a car wash to a major overhaul involving lathe work. The Dudley Garage continued to operate until 1962 when it was purchased by the Boveys. Our 1918-era antique car exhibit occupies the Stonewall Hall and site of the "Pony" today.

AREA BETWEEN DUDLEY GARAGE AND F. R. MERK BUILDING

This area contained six small, one-story frame buildings. One was the famous Eureka Saloon in the late 1860's. Another, was well known as the "City Restaurant". A serious fire in 1915 destroyed the area which remained vacant until 1960 when the Vigilance Club moved the old Adobetown school here for use as information center. At present, the log school, built in 1872, is rented as a gift shop.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

MINER'S CAFE

This narrow, two-story brick building was built by E. M. Smith after the 1915 fire. Charles Godsmith, jeweler, occupied it when new. It is owned by the Eagles Lodge.

F. R. MERK BUILDING (Pioneer Bar)

In a very early picture of Virginia City, there is a wood building on this site identified as "OAK Hall". On August 4, 1866, F. R. Merk had moved from Jackson Street to this fine, cut stone, "fire-proof" building formerly occupied by Hanauer & Co. Merk had several impressive pictures taken of his store. Unfortunately, Merk must not have been the businessman his sign purported and he went back to mining. In the early 1870's, the building was sold to Harrington, Baker and Co., a large shoe store. They continued here until about 1888, when E. L. Smith moved here from his frame store down the street. A department store called "Teristies" occupied the building until 1908.

The "Little Club" Saloon was started here about 1918, and sold soft drinks during prohibition. After booze returned, Bob Gohn ran it until 1943 when he moved to his present location.

Fay Widner started the "Pioneer Bar" here in 1947. A man named Rice owned it next and sold it to Harvey Romey, son of one of Virginia City's pioneers, in 1954. He operated it until 1966. The building is owned by the Eagles, who have their lodge upstairs.

MILAND'S SHOE STORE

This stone building which still retains its original gothic window sash, must have been built in the late 1860's or early '70's. From 1880 to 1900 or, thereafter, Miland's Shoe Store were owners. It was the county welfare office during the 1930's. The W.P.A. (or another government agency) concreted the front but left the gothic window sash. For many years it was a gift and photography shop but has recently been refurnished in harmony with the period by Jeanie Jasmine and is now the office of the American Land Title Co.

BARTLETT'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

A log, blacksmith shop stood on this site until about the 1920's when the present brick structure was built. It is now the Indian Trading Post Gift Shop.

O.K. LIVERY STABLE

"Yes, Virginia City had one, too." Originally, a hotel called the Jefferson House stood here. By winter of 1863-64, the name had been changed to the Virginia Hotel and it was on this site that the Vigilantes held a trial for the five outlaws they executed in the Hangman's Building

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

across the street on January 14, 1864. Within a few years, the hotel had been converted into a 200 foot long, log barn about 25 feet wide, which stretched from Wallace to Idaho Street. It was operated in conjunction with the Madison House for many years. Although still standing in the early 1940's, it had been torn down before Charles Bovey began saving the old buildings of Virginia City.

VAN BUREN STREET INTERSECTS WALLACE STREET

CREIGHTON'S STONE BLOCK (Corner Section)

Built in July, 1864 by Thompson and Griffith, this building was the first to be built of stone from the local quarry. The quarry furnished material for most of the buildings in Virginia City.

Edward Creighton, of the same family for whom the University is named, was a prominent freighting and business man. He built the first telegraph from Virginia City. Started July 17, 1866 with a pole planted on the corner by this store, the telegraph reached Salt Lake City in November, 1866. This event was of immense importance to the isolated population of Virginia City, bringing it weeks closer to the outside world.

E. Creighton, Creighton and Ohle, and McCormick, Ohle and Co. all occupied the corner section of this three part building in the very early days. These firms were succeeded in the early 1870's by Raymond Brothers, wholesale grocers. William Hillhouse and Wintrop Raymond arrived in Montana in 1865, bringing with them a team of horses and two yokes of oxen. They hauled stone for the Virginia City Masonic Temple. In August, 1868, they went to Salt Lake City and freighted from there to the terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1869-70 they hauled from Corinne, Utah to Virginia City, and then in 1870 bought the grocery store in the Creighton Block.

Raymond Bros. continued in this location until 1879 when they formed the Raymond, Harrington & Co. Bank, which was located in the stone building just east of the present Madisonian. In 1874, Raymond Bros. drove a thousand head of cattle from Montana to Omaha, the first such drive in history. They located their fine ranch in the Upper Ruby in 1868. In 1876 it was noted as one of the best horse ranches in the United States.

Patrick Largey probably also occupied the corner part of the Creighton Block for several years, in the 1870's. In the 1880's, the corner was the dry goods store of Mrs. O. D. French. She was succeeded upon her death about 1908 by Hanna and Mary McGovern. The McGovern sisters moved the business and its stock to lower Wallace Street about 1914. There it remains today, exactly as they left it on their last day of business sometime in the 1930's -- all of the stock still on the shelves, untouched.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

CREIGHTON'S STONE BLOCK (Middle Section)

Built at the same time as the corner part, this may have been E. Creighton's store at first. Soon afterward it became D. D. Maxham's Grocery and Liquor Store, and later Maxham and Vinter. E. U. Driggs, tinsmith, was also there about 1873.

Patrick A. Largey, a noted Montana businessman, operated a hardware store in the Creighton Block (probably in the middle section) from 1872 to 1880. Largey arrived in Virginia City in 1865 in charge of a train of 60 wagons for E. Creighton, which he brought through from the East without mishap, save the death of one man by Indians. It was considered a remarkably safe trip for the time. In 1866, P. A. Largey opened a grocery store in Helena, but sold that fall and freighted to Salt Lake City. He then had a grocery house in Virginia City, but sold it in 1868 and accepted a position in the firm of E. Creighton and Co.

After serving four years with E. Creighton & Co., he opened his own hardware store in 1872 in the Creighton Stone Block. He carried on this business with success for eight years, selling out to Elling and Knight in January, 1881. His stock formed the nucleus of their long and profitable business.

E. Creighton, pioneer in bringing the telegraph to Montana, had P. A. Largey direct the building of several of his early lines. Largey was in charge of running the first line to Helena in 1867; in 1868 from Helena to Fort Benton; in 1869 from Helena to Deer Lodge; in 1870 from Helena to Bozeman; and in 1879, from Deer Lodge to Butte.

Going to Butte in 1881, P. A. Largey established the Butte Hardware Co. He also had extensive mining interests in Butte, Virginia City, and elsewhere in Montana. He established the Butte Electric Light Plant, the Intermountain newspaper, and the Butte Savings Bank. It was in the latter that he met his tragic death, shot by an insane miner with a personal grudge, in 1898.

O. D. French & Co., grocers, occupied the center part of Creighton's Stone Block for more than 20 years. O. D. French, operator of one of the oldest mercantile firms in the gulch, had an exciting career. Born in 1824, he went to sea at age 16. A couple of voyages convinced him there were easier ways to make a fortune, and he ran a grocery store in New York for a short time, then traveling to Milwaukee. In 1859 he joined the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, and eventually wound up in Virginia City in November, 1863.

After a short but profitable experience in placer mining (he sold his claim for \$4,000) he freighted flour. In 1866 he met his partner J. D. Thomas, and they opened a grocery store in the old Golden Gate Saloon in Nevada City, where George Ives had been hanged.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

In 1869, French and Thomas moved into the Montana Billard Hall (immediately to the west of the present Fairweather Inn) in Virginia City. This large frame building housed his grocery store until 1878 when he moved to the middle part of Creighton's Stone Block.

J. D. Thomas left in 1879, and the firm reorganized into O. D. French and Co. with E. F. Johnson as the "Co.". Mr. French continued until 1901, when he retired.

O. D. French married Anna Dow in 1870. She died in 1878, and he remarried, this time to Miss Amanda E. Robinson, in 1880. The new Mrs. French was already an experienced businesswoman, having opened a dry goods and notion store a year before her marriage to Mr. French, in 1879. She conducted it for over twenty years in the corner section of Creighton's Block, passing it to Hanna and Marry McGovern after her death.

When the highway was built over the hill to Ennis in the late 1930's, the county bought the building to use to store its snow plow. It was called the "County Shop" until recently when the snow plow was relocated in Ennis. In 1975 the Madisionian established a print shop museum in the center part of Creighton's Stone Block.

CREIGHTON'S STONE BLOCK (East Section) -- Madisionian

Built to match the other divisions of Creighton's, the east part may have been built under a separate contract for a different party. It is the only part retaining it's original appearance. (The "county shop" had a large garage door now replaced by a contemporary "board and batten" wall; and the corner section was remodeled in the 1960's with an imitation cobblestone look and two large picture windows.) Davis, Housel and Co. may have been located in a log building on this site, in 1865 and early 1866. By summer of 1866, however, Housel and Andrews were in the stone building which still stands.

The Montana Capital Times, the third newspaper to be published in Virginia City, started in October, 1869 under the direction of Joseph Magee, S. P. Bassett, and I. H. Morrison. Its sign can be seen over the present quarters of the Madisionian in a picture taken in 1869. The Capital Times lasted only a short time and was succeeded by the Capital Fact in November, 1869, by the same publishers and probably in the same location.

The Madisionian, now the oldest weekly newspaper still published in Montana, started November 15, 1873 -- "Two doors west of the Overland Stage Office" (which would be in Elling's Store). In March 1876, the Madisionian bought out the Montanian, which had been published in the Montana Post Building and moved the new paper to the east third of the Creighton Stone Block, where it has now been for 101 years.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

The history of the Madisonian could be written in a whole book by itself. There were many different editors and several mergers. (For a detailed account see the Madisonian of March 11, 1975, the 100th Anniversary issue.) In 1949, the Editor's name was Robert Julian. He recognized the historic value of the building where the paper had so long been published, and since the front of the building was in bad condition, he began a major rebuilding job. The front had to be entirely reconstructed and was, using the same stones and window sash. The present day front is exactly like the original, except the two west windows which once were full length doors. The paper was sold in April, 1970 to Daryl and Carolyn Tichenor, the present publishers.

HUSSEY, DAHLER AND CO. BANK BUILDING

This stone building, built in 1864, was originally occupied by Allen and Millard, bankers. It is the oldest permanent bank in Montana according to a book written by the Montana Federal Reserve Banks in the 1940's. There were a few "banks" previously but they were actually express companies which did some gold exchange on the side. B. F. Allen started the bank and J. H. Millard soon joined him. They continued until July, 1866 when they were succeeded by Hussey, Dahler & Co. They continued through the 1870's. It became Raymond, Harrington & Co., and when Raymond and Harrington sold out, Mr. A. J. Bennett, one of the members of the firm, moved up into the top position. The Bank was known as Hall and Bennett for many years in the 1890's and early 1900's. It became the Madison State Bank in the teens and must have gone out of business sometime in the 1920's or 30's.

After Hall and Bennett moved, the building was occupied, as it still is, by a law office. Frank Flair, at present, the District Judge of Madison County, was there for many years. Today, it is the law office of R. Thomas Garrison.

The building looks the same today as when built. It is in excellent condition; the original cornice, stone work, and window caps are still in place.

HERNDON & DONALDSON FURNITURE STORE

The present Tavern Saloon is in an old building, probably built about 1873. For about 60 years it housed the Herndon Furniture Store. In 1865, the "Mountain Bowling Saloon" occupied the site, operated by Johnson & Schuylee. Another early tenant in this vicinity was Martin & Co., real estate agents. Next door, east, stood, in 1864, the Tremont House, later called the Delevan House. They advertised they had "accommodations for 150 boarders" at \$16.00 per week. Since they only had a few small rooms -- it must have been slightly crowded!

William Thompson, the builder, who constructed many of the early Virginia City buildings and whose son gave the Thompson-Hickman Memorial Museum, had a lumber yard on the present site of the Court House in the 1860's. About 1873, he moved into a building with Herndon &

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

Donaldson, who sold furniture, doors, sash, etc. J. M. Herndon was a 1863 arrival, a carpenter until he entered the furniture business. Thompson continued in the building until about 1880 and Donaldson until about 1888. J. M. Herndon ran the store until about 1910 and added undertaking to his business. In 1915, the firm was called Carey & Herndon, Furniture and Undertaking. Herndon left about 1918, after which the Women's Club library was there for a short time. Then the building became a bootleg joint during Prohibition. It was run by Ben Feyle. It was converted to the Tavern Saloon in 1947 by a Mr. Johnson and has been recently operated by Guy and Helen Hulse.

An event which was to change the destiny of Virginia City took place in the Tavern. Charles Bovey, a Great Falls wheat rancher, on a visit to the old town, met a man who had a house for sale. He was having trouble selling it and when Mr. Bovey asked the price, he was told \$100.00. Bovey bought it without even looking at it. It turned out to be the Judge Blake House on Idaho Street, across from the Episcopal Church and was Charles Bovey's first real estate purchase in Virginia City.

CITY HALL

The City Hall is a new building for Virginia City, built in 1897. The site was previously occupied by a carpenter shop and a stone cellar built in the 1860's era.

The City Hall, erected at a cost of \$12,000.00, was the pride of the City when first built. Of brick, with an imposing tower, the inside was fitted with a magnificent oak staircase, a large auditorium with hammer beam trusses supporting the second floor and a lodge room in addition to a number of offices. It was here most of the lawyers, including W. A. Clark (no relation to Butte's W. A. Clark), S. V. Stewart and M. M. Duncan, had their offices. The Odd Fellows maintained their lodge upstairs.

The Elk's Lodge bought the City Hall in the 1950's when the City felt it too expensive to maintain. The tower, which was built of soft brick, deteriorated and had to be removed and a coat of stucco was added to stop weathering.

MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

After 100 years, Madison County's proudest and most beautiful building is it's Courthouse. Built in 1875-76, and restored after a destructive fire in 1972, it functions as well today as when it was built.

Eggers and Ludlow, successors to Gamble, Walker and Co., ran a lumber yard on the site of the Courthouse in 1865 and William Thompson ran the yard later. The Courthouse was located in a variety of places, and in the 1860's permanently established in what is now the Bonanza Inn on Idaho Street.

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

The present Courthouse was built specifically for that purpose (not for Capitol) in 1875-76. The Commissioners decided to build on March 20, 1875. L. B. Olds, who also designed the Courthouse in Bannack, drew the plans. The lot for the building was purchased from W. W. Morris for \$60.00 on June 9, 1875. Work was begun on June 6, 1875 by Daniel Steele, who contracted to build it for \$33,000.00. It was dedicated on the Centennial of the United States, July 4, 1876.

A devastating fire, started by a prisoner in the jail in the basement in June 1972, nearly destroyed the historic building. Restored in 1972-74, the Courthouse continues in the role for which it was built.

For a more detailed history of the Courthouse, see the article by John N. DeHaas in this book.

PANKEY HOUSE

This house, also known as the Tom Duncan home, was built in the early 1870's. Only the front part was constructed at first with the rear wings added later -- perhaps around 1895. John H. Panky came to Butte with his family in the 1870's and moved to Virginia City in 1891. He set up the "Easton Mill", the foundations of which still stand near Junction. He was superintendent of other mills and mining operations owned by Henry Elling. He also started the project which was to bring electricity to Virginia City.

McKAY - McNULTY HOUSE

Alex McKay arrived in Virginia City in July of 1863 and engaged in mining. His daughter, Flora McKay McNulty, was one of the first women doctors in Montana and was married to a dentist. She was active in many organizations and a true historian. Her collections form a large part of the Bovey archives. This house, where she lived until 1920, was made into one residence, probably in the late 1860's by joining two older log cabins with a central room.

GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Benjamin F. Potts, Governor of the Montana Territory from 1870 to 1873, lived in this modest dwelling while serving his office in Virginia City. The house is, therefore, Montana's oldest standing "Governor's Mansion". It probably dates from the 1860's. The Cordell family lived here after 1900. Charlie Cordell lost his arm while working on the dredge and was for many years the janitor at City Hall, shoveling the street crossings in winter and maintaining the street lights of Virginia City.

GEORGE GOHN HOUSE

George Gohn arrive in Alder Gulch with the first crowd from Bannack. He was on a stage coach robbed by Plummer's gang before he joined the Vigilantes. He soon entered the meat market business and operated markets

Wallace Street, South Side (continued)

in partnership with Conrad Kohrs and later Chris Kibler. His first meat market, the "Bull's Head" was a log building on the same site as his later "Metropolitan", which is now the Western Gift Shop. He also operated a meat market in the present Fairweather Inn, at one time. His grandson, Robert, runs "Bob's Place" today.

THOMPSON - HICKMAN MEMORIAL MUSEUM

William Boyce Thompson provided the money for this fine, fireproof building built in 1916-1921 as a memorial to his father and his wife's father, Richard O. Hickman. His father, William Thompson, built many of the original buildings in Alder Gulch. William Boyce Thompson was born in the white house preserved behind the present museum building. The library, housed in a beautiful room upstairs, was started by Mrs. McNulty and the Virginia City Women's Club in the early 1900's. The collection of artifacts in the museum was begun in 1920 by Jim Elmsie, a carpenter. It is now maintained by the Vigilance Club of Virginia City, founded in 1938 when there was a movement to split up Madison County and give half to Beaverhead and half to Gallatin.

NORTH SIDE OF WALLACE STREET

Beginning on West End

CHINESE MASONIC TEMPLE

From the 1860's until the late 1930's, there was a large Chinese population in Virginia City. Originally brought in by the Central Pacific Railroad as cheap labor, the Chinese were common throughout Western mining towns. They were hardworking, could often make a fair living from placer ground white miners thought worthless and did not squander their hard earned money in the saloons. They were subjected to discrimination and abuse. School children throwing rocks at them was a common practice. There were 298 Chinese in Virginia City in 1880, according to the U.S. Census. The heart of Chinatown was located where the Virginia City depot now stands, and consisted of numerous log cabins and sheds. A number of buildings in the Bovey Restoration end of town were owned, at one time or another, by Chinese.

The Chinese Masonic Temple was probably built in the 1860's but the 1875 perspective map shows it as a one story building. The second floor and distinctive porch, with its unusual curved roof must have been added in the mid-1870's. The building was torn down in the late 1930's to make way for the highway. It once stood where the highway to Nevada City leaves town.

CHINESE CABINS

Several Chinese cabins stood next to the Temple on the east. One was a Chinese grocery and general store, one a laundry, and several were operated as houses of ill repute. One of these cabins had been the store of Fred Root and Nat. J. Davis -- the first store in Virginia City -- June, 1863.

LEVIATHAN HALL - JULIUS KOHL'S CARPENTER SHOP

One of the most outstanding buildings in Virginia City's history is Leviathan Hall, owned by John A. Nelson. The name of the building was appropriate as it was enormous -- measuring 28 x 100 feet. It is mentioned several times in Montana History. It was to this building the flour was taken for storage during the famous "Flour Riot" in April of 1865 when the flour supply in the isolated town dropped dangerously low. The other famous event to take place in Leviathan Hall was the Con Orem-Hugh O'Neal Fight of January 2, 1865. (See the detailed article by Tony Dalich in this book.)

Exactly where Leviathan Hall stood is still unknown. Tony Dalich, who has done intensive research on the fight, claims it stood on the site of the Olinghouse Block. This is possible, since construction of the Olinghouse Block did not begin until April, 1865. However, since John A. Nelson sold Leviathan Hall to William A. Mitchell on February 9, 1865 for \$7,000.00 (an enormous amount in that day), it is unlikely that

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

Mr. Olinghouse would demolish such an expensive building when other good lots were available for as little as \$200.00.

Several early pictures, taken in the 1866 period, appear to indicate a large, oblong, log building was located on the site, later occupied by Julius Kohls's Carpenter Shop. The building pictured is two stories high and seems to have few boards on the roof, as if it were in the process of being built or torn down. By 1875, a small one story building occupied the site and the larger one is gone. It is my thought that this unusual building was Leviathan Hall and that it may have been torn down due to structural weakness.

Julius Kohls occupied the latter, small building as a carpenter shop from about 1875 until 1926. It was later torn down and is now a parking area.

AUNT JULIA'S HOUSE

Julius Kohls, who ran the lumber yard, enclosed by the large stone wall below the present Opera House, and the carpenter shop next door, built this log house in about 1875. It is shown on the 1878 Fire Insurance map. Kohls lived here until around 1920. The house was then rented for several years. "Aunt" Julia Elledge, daughter of Lucien Romey, a Virginia City pioneer, lived here until the mid 1950's.

DANCE AND STUART STORE

This building, which represents a complete general store of the late 19th Century in its present furnishings, is built on the site of the Dance and Stuart Store, one of the finest and most complete mercantile establishments of early Virginia City.

The building was first occupied by Nick Kessler, who operated a Brewery and Bakery here in 1863. Kessler later moved to Helena where his brewery became famous, and where he also manufactured the renowned Kessler bricks.

By the fall of 1863, however, Dance and Stuart had moved in the building, which they rented from William Reuman. The partnership of Walter B. Dance and James Stuart involved two of Montana's oldest pioneers. Dance, born in Delaware in 1820, arrived at Gold Creek, Montana, in 1862. He was second postmaster of Virginia City, serving from May 9, 1864 to November 4, 1864, during which time the Post Office was undoubtedly located in this store. He served in the Territorial Council prior to his death in 1878. James Stuart and his brother, Granville, arrived in Montana in 1857 from Iowa. They set up the first sluice boxes in the Northern Rockies, and together, took part in every facet of Montana's development.

Clubfoot George Lane was arrested in this store by the Vigilantes. But of far greater importance to Montana history, the MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY was formed at a meeting held here on February 25, 1865. Montana is extremely fortunate to have a Historical Society and records dating back to such an early time.



DANCE AND STUARTS STORE

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

In 1865, Dance and Stuart moved their store to Deer Lodge, and the partnership continued there until 1870.

In 1867, with George Thexton, the blacksmith who converted the Vigilante Barn up the street into a livery stable, they purchased the building and continued to own it until 1891. During this time it was used as a dwelling, and eventually became a Chinese house. One of the last residents was a Mrs. Parker, about 1900. The original structure was evidently torn down about 1925.

The present building, though a reconstruction built by the Boveys in the mid-1950's, is an exact copy of the original in every detail. The logs for it came from the Kearsarge mine buildings at Summit.

"TELEPHONE OFFICE"

This small building is quite recent, having been built as an office for a gas station, probably in the 1930's. The site had previously been vacant since the 1870's. The actual telephone office was in what is now the hamburger stand in the next block. This is another possible site of the Leviathan Hall.

"CABBAGE PATCH" (or Red Light District)

These structures were in fact sheds and barns but have been furnished to represent the age-old profession, typical of the mining frontier days.

E. U. DRIGGS TIN SHOP (Now a vacant lot)

The lot directly adjoining the present dress shop on the west, was a Chinese wash-house in 1878 and next door was a tin shop. By 1884 the wash-house had been torn down and the log, tin shop no doubt disappeared soon afterward.

DRESS SHOP

It is apparent that this little building is an original -- dating from 1863. The log walls were later covered with board and batten (perhaps when the Chinese laundry (next door) was torn down in approximately 1880). The original roof was of poles and dirt and can still be seen today. Some of the early owners were: Jacob Simpson, S. L. Simpson and Augustus Griffith. All were blacksmiths by trade but the building has long been a residence. The interesting bay window dates from this earlier time.

The dress shop, displayed inside, represents a typical occupation for women in the nineteenth century and could well have been practiced by one of the blacksmith's wives. Few people owned sewing machines before 1890 and since store purchased dresses were almost unknown, most ladies depended upon the local dressmaker for their apparel.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

From about 1870 to 1900 and shortly afterward, Julius Kramer and, later, Fredrick Kramer operated a saddlery in this location and probably had their living quarters in the rear.

When Charles Bovey first came to Virginia City, a carpenter named Fred Weingart was living here. One day Charlie was trying to get some new windows made for another building and Fred asked if he would also get a certain size picture window made for him. Charles asked what it was for and Fred explained how he intended to replace the old bay window in the front of his house. Charlie, in order to preserve this unique feature of the old house, traded Fred a house with a bathroom (one of the few in town) for this building and others in the area. Fred said later, "I sure got the best of you in that trade". Charlie replied, "It's a wonderful thing, when two people can make a trade and each thinks he got the best of the deal".

McGOVERN'S DRY GOODS STORE

The store occupies a unique place in historic restoration. It is not only an original building but it's interior furnishings and stock are exactly as they were left by the last owners, Hanna and Mary McGovern, when they hung up the "Out to Lunch" sign never to take it down.

James Sheehan sold this building in June, 1864, to William Kastor, B. Berry, S. H. Bowman, and G. Goldberg. Kastor operated it until early 1865 under the name "Pioneer Store", selling clothing. By April of 1865, he had moved across the street and G. Goldberg was running the store. If you study the front of the building very closely, you can still make out the lettering "G. GOLDBERG" above the French doors.

It was converted into a residence about 1866. The single door to the west of the store front (where we have a dentist's office) was, at the time, called the "Weston Hotel". The "Hotel" consisted of no more than four tiny rooms about 6 x 12 feet each and one had to pass through one room to get to the next. There was also a large living room with a skylight in the center of the store and a kitchen in the rear.

Thomas Deyarmon, founder of the Madisonian bought the building in 1876, apparently for a residence for rental.

Hanna and Mary McGovern, whose parents lived in the Star Bakery Building in Nevada City, took over Mrs. O. D. French's Dry Goods and Millinery Store, then located in the corner of Creighton's Stone Block, upon Mrs. French's death. About 1910, they moved the shop to its present location, where they continued into the 1930's. Their shop, with its friendly bell on the door, was a favorite gathering place for the ladies of the town for many years.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

allowed to deteriorate and by 1900, the roof was gone and only part of the stone front wall remained. The Bovey's rebuilt it in 1948 and Harvey Romey ran a liquor store and barber shop in this location until 1952.

WM. KISKADDEN & CO. (VIGILANTE BARN)

This was the first stone building constructed in Virginia City, in the summer of 1863. It's popular name -- "Vigilante Barn", reflects its most prominent role, historically, as the place where the Vigilantes signed their oath. These courageous men met on the night of December 23, 1863, immediately after the trial of George Ives in Nevada City, to form the Vigilantes, the organization which finally freed the area from the grip of the notorious Plummer gang.

The store was occupied, at this time, by William Kiskadden & Co. The sign has been retouched but is traced over the original which was still visible. The building at first was divided into three stores with French doors opening onto the street.

Baum, Angevine and Merry occupied the eastern two-thirds of the building from September 5, 1864 to March 18, 1865, and Taylor, Thompson and Co. occupied the western third. Gorham & Patton, grocers, moved into the east section in March of 1865 when the west side of the building was still the "San Francisco Meat Market".

George Thexton, a blacksmith, purchased the block in 1871. He remodeled the above building, removing the floors and dividing walls and fitted it with the stalls remaining today. Thus revised, it was opened as the Star Stables in January 1874.

Thexton sold the building to Elling, Buford and Co. in 1880. S. R. Buford, who operated the store where the Wells Fargo Coffee House is today, operated the barn for many years, into the 1920's, after which, it was allowed to deteriorate. The Vigilance Club of Virginia City bought the barn from the Elling Estate in 1944 in order to preserve it, and gave it to the Historic Landmark Society of Montana in 1947. With the help of donations from Charles Bovey, the Historic Landmark Society was able to add a new roof and repair the stone work.

There is some confusion as to whether or not the Vigilantes actually met here or elsewhere. Several locations would like to claim the honor. There were, no doubt, several meetings and all were a well guarded secret. They will, perhaps, always remain a mystery. Popular legend has long assigned the historic meeting to this building. When one stands and studies the old timbers which have withstood their 110 years of existence and realizes the vast changes in our society since those eventful days on the Western Frontier, he is reminded of those crucial events which took place underneath this roof.

MONTANA BILLIARD HALL

The Montana Billiard Hall contained a large dance hall, upstairs, which was the site of the first Masonic meetings in Virginia City.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

BRINDLINGER'S TOBACCO SHOP

The first issues of the Montana Post, Montana's first newspaper, carried extensive ads for H. J. Brindlinger & Co.'s Tobacco Store. Three doors below Kisskadden's Stone Block (the Vigilante Barn), this building represents the Brindlinger shop. It was next door below J. B. LaBeau's Jewelry from 1864 to 1870. Actually, the Brindlinger shop was in the site of the present vacant lot just east of here, and the J. B. LaBeau Jewelry was in the present toy shop. However, there is also some evidence in deeds to suggest this was used as a tobacco shop for a period around 1868. Behind the double French doors on the front of this "hole-in-the-wall" store (or perhaps hotel entrance) we do know lies much human history in its over a century's existence.

JEWELRY SHOP

Isador Strasburger's "Colorado Store" occupied this impressive 1863 or 1864 building from 1865 to the mid-1870's. Although we cannot document any jewelers having used the building, it is reasonable to assume they would have been privileged to do so. Virginia City was well supplied with jewelers and watchmakers; among them were John Meeks, Roath and Co., Lewis Hale and Company (Jackson St.), J. B. LaBeau (in our toy store), J. N. Merkle, H. A. Pease (Madison House area) and Charles Goldsmith (Olinghouse Block). The "Jewelry Store" was used as a residence from the mid-1870's to 1948.

VACANT LOT

The definite site of Brindlinger's Tobacco Shop. (See above.) After Brindlinger left around 1870, it became a Chinese wash-house. Later, the 1884 fire insurance map showed it as a vacant log building. Buford bought it in 1887 and may have torn the building down at that time. The plaque designating Virginia City as a National Historic Place now occupies the lot.

TOY STORE OR DOCTOR I. C. SMITH'S OFFICE

A small building was built in 1863 or early 1864 by Robinson, Ford and Clark. J. B. LaBeau bought it for \$500.00 in 1865 and continued his jewelry business until 1870 when Dr. Ira C. Smith, a pioneer physician, purchased the building and had his office on this location until 1885. The building was later known as the Anaconda Hotel Annex (the Anaconda Hotel is now the Fairweather Inn), and it continued to be used as rental property until purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Bovey in 1948.

CITY BAKERY

Probably built about the same time as the Vigilante Barn, next door, this stone building dates from 1863. Known, at first, as Oliver and Gauthur's City Bakery, it was sold by the Sheriff on May 4, 1868 to B. D. Maxham, a grocer. In 1878, it was a tailor shop, according to the fire insurance map, and in 1884 it became a Chinese wash-house. It was



KISKADDEN STONE BLOCK

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

The Billiard Hall, on the first floor, was operated by Sam Schwab, H. Pozainski and R. Sobolski. It was sometimes referred to as the "Armory". Before the People's Theatre on Jackson Street was completed, at least one performance was given here but the building was, perhaps, too unstable to accommodate the large crowd and a more suitable place was found.

O. D. French and John Thomas, grocers, who had begun business in the old Golden Gate Dance Hall in Nevada City (where George Ives was hung) moved to this building in 1869 and continued until 1878. The building was vacant in 1884 and must have been torn down in the late 1880's.

FAIRWEATHER INN

One of the first preemptions of land in Virginia City; this lot was deeded from the Virginia Town Co., Henry Edgar, Vice-President, to J. D. Lomax and John Pitilla on September 16, 1863 for \$150.00. As soon as the Montana Post began publication, it ran an ad for the "Young American Eating House", next door -- east of the Montana Billiard Hall. The building was evidently large and sold for \$2,500 in 1866. At this time, it was occupied by Rosenbaum & Shoumaker, butchers, and known as "The Metropolitan Meat Market". In 1873, George Gohn and Chris Kibler were partners in the same market. When sold in 1880, the building included a slaughter house in the northwest part of the city and an ice pond one-half mile north.

The building was possibly converted from a meat market to a hotel and saloon in the 1880's. When Frank McKeen bought it in 1896, it was called a "saloon and fittings". McKeen, a colorful personality, was prepared for all eventualities by keeping a casket in the basement. He named his building "Anaconda Hotel", and operated a dining room, as well as, a bar. The Anaconda was last managed by Bob Gohn, before being sold to Humphrey's Gold Corporation in 1935.

Humphrey's, who worked the last dredge to mine Alder Gulch, demolished the small buildings east of the Anaconda Hotel to build a dormitory and offices. The Boveys bought the building from them in 1946.

The Anaconda was an unappealing structure with about a 16 foot ceiling and large, plate glass windows in the front, probably added about 1890. In order to make it more attractive to visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Bovey decided to remodel it -- copying Montana's first hotel in Bannack. The original hotel in Bannack called "Goodrich House" was in ruins in 1947. It was torn down afterward and the logs used by a local resident to build a chicken house. Mr. Bovey did not move the old hotel to Virginia City but, instead, tried to preserve it in Bannack but was unsuccessful. Seven of the porch posts at the Fairweather Inn, and about a dozen spindles of the railing are from Bannack, however.

In the remodeling, the ceiling was lowered from 16 feet to about 9 and the roof on the west side was raised slightly to form a second floor. The stairway and partitions were also changed. The Dormitory built by

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

Humphrey's Gold Corporation, east of the hotel, was covered by a "new" old front. The Fairweather Inn is, of course, named after Bill Fairweather, discoverer of gold in Alder Gulch.

BARBER SHOP and other small buildings east of the Fairweather Inn.

Not all of the names of these tenants in the small buildings are known. A. Lacroix operated a shoe store in the one next to the present Fairweather Inn in 1873 and Thomas White had a barber shop in the east building, at the same time. E. T. Yager, M.D., was in the east building for many years in the 1870's-80's. In 1903, John Chambers ran a barber shop in the same location. The two buildings were torn down sometime in the 1920's and the dormitory built for the Humphrey's Gold Corporation, which became part of the Fairweather Inn in 1935.

OLINGHOUSE BLOCK - 1865

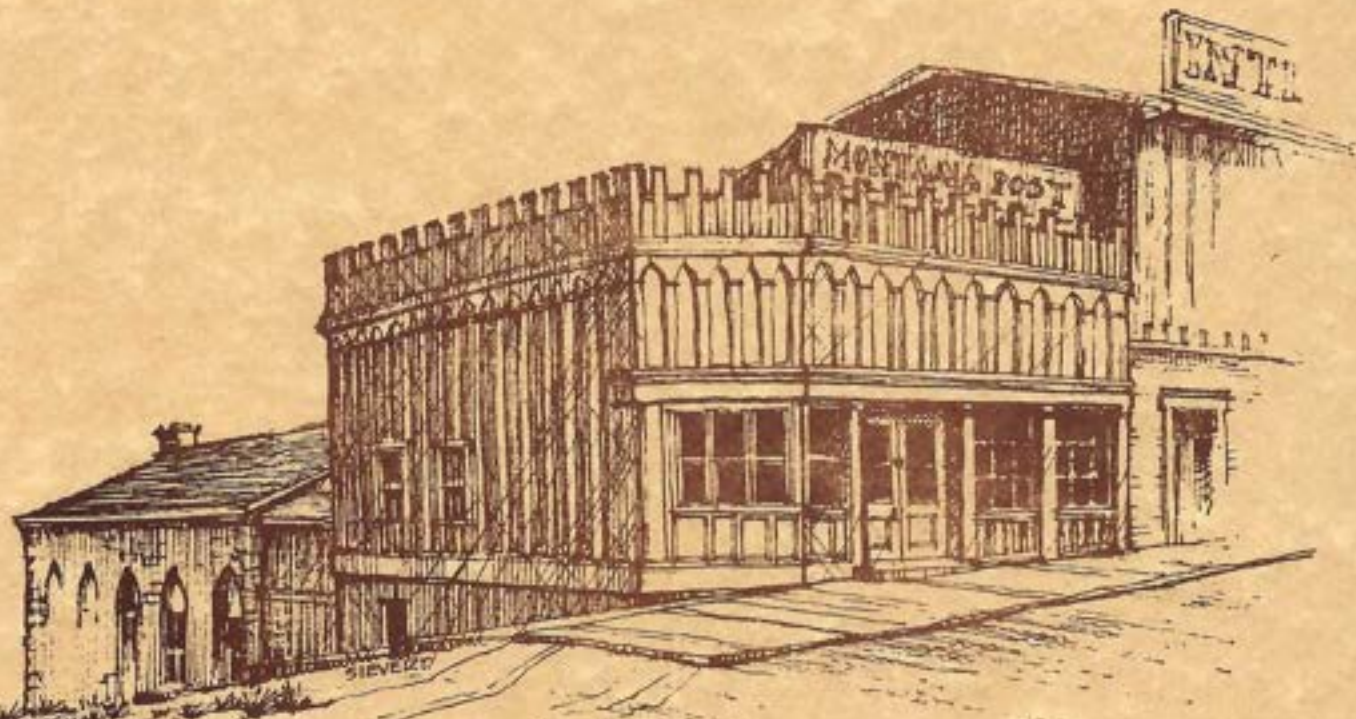
How can a prominent, substantial, stone building disappear without a trace? The Olinghouse Block, once one of Virginia City's main business buildings and quarters for the U.S. Post Office and Signal Service is gone. Today, no one would guess it once stood just east of the present Fairweather Inn.

E. Olinghouse began hauling stone for his new building on April 1, 1865. The two story building was finished on June 24, 1865, and a ball held there on July 4. District Court was held upstairs until the old courthouse (now the Bonanza Inn) was built. The upstairs also had offices which several lawyers occupied. The "Olinghouse Block" was truly the status office building of the day.

Olinghouse, himself, ran a grocery store for a short time. Drake, Clarkson & Co. occupied the first floor about 1866. Later, in the 1870's, H. Warmington operated a cigar, stationery and fancy goods store in this location. The U.S. Post Office evidently moved into the block August 15, 1872 when Mr. Francis C. Deimling became Postmaster. The Post Office remained until 1878 and returned again in 1897 to 1898.

In 1876, Patrick Largey, a mining man, purchased the second floor of the Olinghouse, making it Montana's first "condominium". Tenants during much of the 1880's period are unknown and many changes in ownership took place. Henry Elling, eventually, got title to the first floor. Eugene Stark, a jeweler, had the first floor from 1895 until he was succeeded in the jewelry business by Charles E. Goldsmith in 1900. At the time, an assay office was in the basement.

In 1910, an explosion in the assay office, blew out the foundation wall on the Jackson Street side. There was no fire. Charles Goldsmith moved elsewhere, eventually to the present Miner's Cafe built in 1915. The stone Olinghouse Block was pulled down and hauled away. Not a trace remained of the fine building.



MONTANA POST

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

After Tilton moved to Butte, Miss Celia Rank took over Miss Deimling's book store (previously in the Hangman's Building) and moved it to the old City Book Store. C. W. Rank took over this store and ran a news stand there until 1889 when he purchased the present Ranks Drug.

The Montanian founded in 1870 by George F. Cope, was published in the Montana Post Building until 1876 when it was bought out by the Madisonian. The Alder Gulch Times was published in the stone print shop from June 9, 1899 to May 8, 1903. At that time, it becomes the Times and may have been printed here as late as 1915, when it merged with the Madisonian.

After 1900, the City Book Store corner became the saloon of the adjacent Virginia (Idaho or International) Hotel. The Montana Post, along with the Virginia Hotel, burned in 1937.

Reconstruction of the Montana Post was begun in 1946 by the Historic Landmark Society of Montana, with funds donated by Charles Bovey. Extensive research followed and finally the stone walls of the print shop and the frame store reconstructed exactly as they had been. Authentic printing equipment and type, most of it now over 100 years old, is displayed and used in the print shop.

IDAHO (INTERNATIONAL OR VIRGINIA HOTEL) 1863

The Idaho Hotel, named after the territory in which it was located when it was built, was a very early construction in Virginia City. It had been completed in October, 1863, when J. M. Castner, its famous proprietor, sold Tilton the land for the Montana Post, reserving a passage through it to his own back door. Castner added a story to his building in 1865. The hotel was the center of many activities. The legislature met in its rooms several times and dances and entertainment took place. Castner's name is frequently mentioned in Montana history. The Idaho had a number of different proprietors. By 1869, it was called the "International", and later, when it was known as the "Virginia", it was run by Richard Peel in the early 1900's.

Various businesses were located in the building. A photographic gallery occupied a room on the second floor, operated by Pickett & Co. "The Mountaineer Shaving Saloon" (did you know mountaineers ever shaved?) was one door above the Montana Post. The Capitol Cigar Store, formerly Hanna & Co., grocers, was on the east of the building. It was later the telephone switchboard and is, now a hamburger stand.

The Virginia Hotel, saved in the big fire of January 13, 1888, burned in 1937. The site is now taken by the J. Spencer Watkins Memorial Madison County Museum. Mr. Watkins was a cowboy and rancher from Harrison.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

The P. A. Largey Estate discontinued paying taxes on the second floor in 1930, and the County acquired title to the former status office space for only \$2.59. It really wasn't worth much more as it was rather difficult to use with the first story missing. The Historic Landmark Society now owns the non-existent second floor.

JACKSON STREET INTERSECTS WALLACE

MONTANA POST

Montana's first newspaper, the Montana Post, was founded August 27, 1864 by J. Buchanan. It was first published in a "basement on Wallace Street", which according to Henry Blake (contributions to the Historical Society of Montana, Vo. V, p. 256) was located in the Pony Saloon.

After only two issues, the paper was sold to D. W. Tilton & Co. Tilton had arrived in 1863 and purchased a lot on the corner of Wallace and Jackson from John Castner, owner of the Idaho Hotel which was built on October 19, 1863. Castner reserved passage through the basement of the Montana Post building in order to use his own basement. On this lot, Tilton built a log building known as the City Book Store. The floor, of whip sawn boards, cost 25¢ per square foot, which Tilton thought outrageous.

The City Book Store was also headquarters for other businesses in the very early days. Among them Roath & Co., Jewelers, and A. J. Oliver's Overland Express Line.

Professor Thomas J. Dimsdale became Editor of the Post with its third issue. On August 26, 1865, when the paper was about a year old, he began serial publication of his Vigilantes of Montana, the first book printed in Montana.

The stone print shop of the Montana Post was completed January 10, 1865. Previously the paper had been published in a log building on Idaho Street across from the present Bonanza Inn. A new front ornamented the Montana Post Building on September 22, 1866. Ironically, Professor Dimsdale died on the same day.

The Montana Post moved to Helena in 1868 after it was sold to Ben R. Dittes & Mr. Pinney. There it suspended publication in the spring of 1869.

D. W. Tilton continued to operate the City Book Store in this city for many years. In 1873, he formed a partnership with O. B. Barber, which continued until 1884 when Tilton moved his stationery business to Butte. The Tilton family still lives in the Sheridan area, where they have ranched for many years.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

GOHN'S METROPOLITAN MEAT MARKET

George Gohn, who arrived with the first crowd from Bannack, opened the "Bull's Head" Meat Market prior to 1865, on the site of his Metropolitan Meat Market which was built later. While running the "Bull's Head" (in a log building), he raised his ceiling two feet to "make room to sharpen his knife", according to the Montana Post. Gohn later ran a market on the site of the present Fairweather Inn, and in 1880, moved back to the original location.

The big fire of 1888, described in detail by the following paragraph, burned Gohn's building. He moved, temporarily, to "City Drug's old stand, one door east of the Masonic Temple". Shortly afterward, he rebuilt a new brick building, calling it the Metropolitan Meat Market. It was equipped with many modern conveniences such as an oak, walk-in ice box, ice elevator, etc. George Gohn died in 1906. He was succeeded in the business by his son, George E. Gohn, father of Bob Gohn. George E. Gohn was County Treasurer and County Clerk and Recorder at various times. He died in 1935.

The Gohn Block has changed very little since first built. It is now the Western Gift Shop operated by McCollom.

MASONS' BUILDING

E. U. Driggs had a tin shop in the west one of the two buildings between the present Western Gift Shop and the Rank's Drug Store building in 1874, succeeded by J. N. Merkle's Jewelry about 1883. The other small building was a dry goods store (1878). Fire broke out in the Merkle Jewelry, destroying it, the Olive Branch Saloon (next door to Rank's Drug), Gohn's meat market, and Jacob Dick's Paint Shop adjoining the Idaho Hotel. Amazingly, the hotel did not burn. Only a bucket brigade saved it. Gohn rebuilt (using brick) shortly afterward but the rest of the area stood vacant. In 1911, the Masons, owners of Rank's Drug and the old Masonic Temple above, noticed the west wall sagging. To brace it, they built the present brick building. Jacob Albrecht, who moved from the Stonewall Hall when Dudley's garage took it over. He had been in the building many years. Dorothy Stevens ran a grocery store there until about 1970. Since then, it has been Cousin's Candy Store.

RANK'S DRUG

A civic leader from the start, Paris S. Pfouts became Virginia City's first mayor and was instrumental in laying out the town site and its government. Pfouts was president of the Vigilantes. With his partner, S. Russell, Pfouts built a general store during the summer of 1863. His first building, which stood on this site, was probably of log. It was here, on March 10, 1864, Jack Slade was arrested and hanged on a corral gate across the creek, back of the store.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

The May 6, 1865 Montana Post announced that Pfouts's new stone store was "now above ground and rising rapidly." Pfouts, a loyal Mason, built a second floor on his store for the use of the Masonic Lodge. The first meeting in this hall was on June 10, 1865. The "new Masonic Temple", next door to the east, was built in 1867, where more Masonic history can be found.

In 1867, Paris Pfouts went to St. Louis to join a mercantile firm, and was succeeded by his partner Samuel Russell. Paris Pfouts' brother, William G. Pfouts, was also in partnership with Russell, and succeeded him in the business, about 1873. The building also must have been rented for a brief time in 1867 to Tootle Leach and Co., who were the first tenants in the new Masonic Temple next door east.

About 1877, W. W. Morris apparently moved his drug business from the Hangman's building to the present location of Rank's Drug. Morris was an original partner in the firm of Clayton and Hale, druggists, founded in July, 1864. (More about the early history of Clayton and Hale can be found with the Hangman's Building article.) About 1877, Morris must have joined with Hinchman & Crockett in a drug firm. Crockett soon left, and it became "Hinchman and Morris." In 1880, Hinchman and Alward came out with a printed letterhead stating they were successors to "J. V. Hinchman and W. W. Morris". Morris went to Pony, where he, Henry Elling, and Dr. Schmalhausen had extensive mining interests. Morris later operated the bank in Pony.

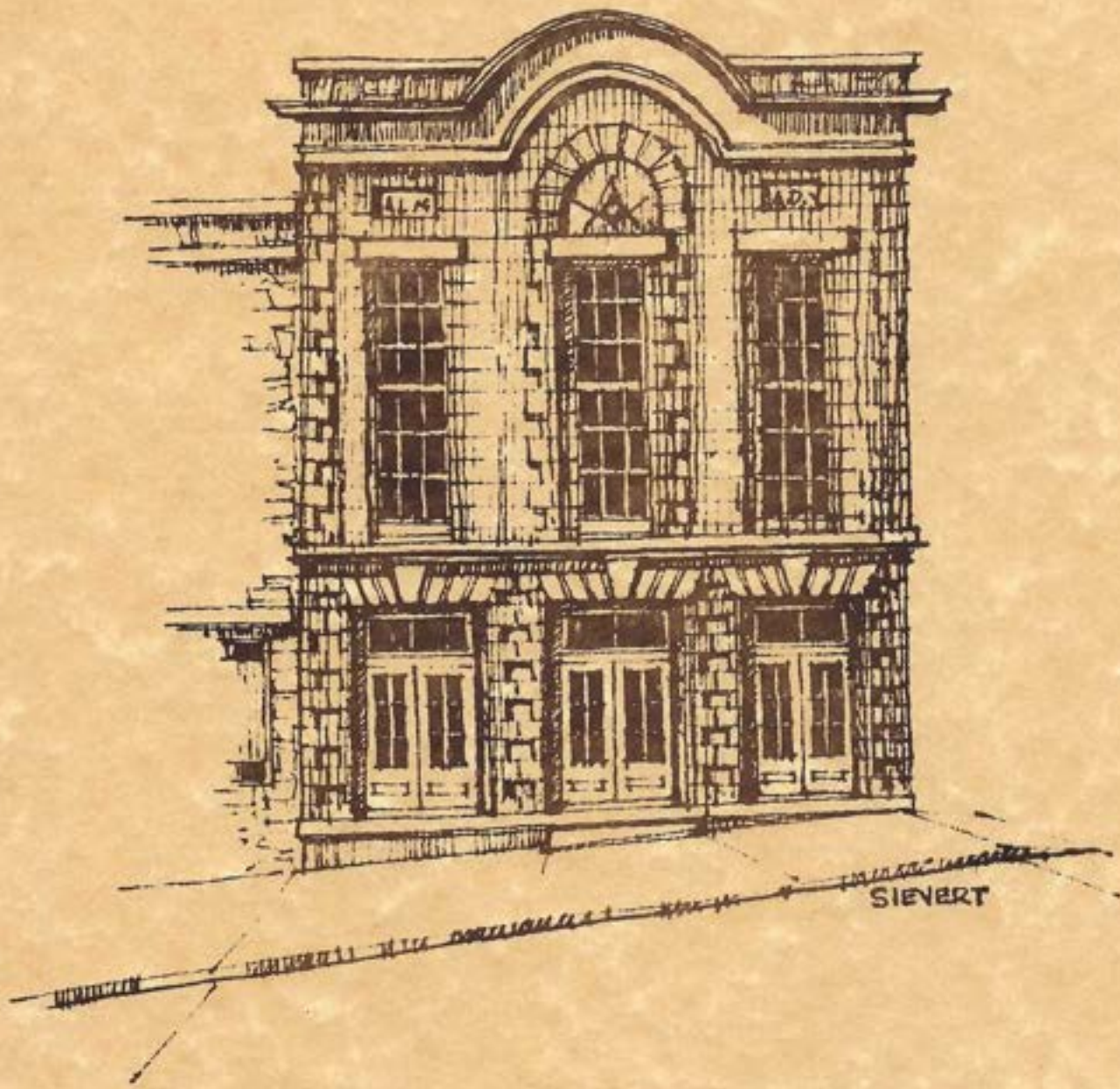
In January 1883, Hinchman and Alward sold the drug store to C. W. Barber, the son of O. B. Barber of the Montana Post. C. W.'s health later failed and his father took over the business. In 1888, the store was sold to Dr. Schmalhausen, who operated it for about one year.

In August, 1889, C. W. Rank and John S. Allen purchased the drug store from Dr. Schmalhausen. Rank arrived in Virginia City in 1875 from Bozeman, and ran the Tilton stationery store in the Montana Post building for a while, later managing the drug store while C. W. & O. B. Barber owned it.

Mr. Rank was postmaster of Virginia City from July 10, 1889 to December 18, 1893. During this time the U.S. Post Office was undoubtedly in Rank's Drug. Charles Rank ran the store himself until 1939, when he died. His wife continued the business till 1946. At that time it was sold to James H. Vanderbeck, Jr., who operated it until 1951 when Charles and Dorothy Haggett, the present owners, took over.

From 1940 until 1976, an outstanding feature of the building was the drug store museum in the basement. Containing Montana's first soda fountain, fragile glass cases shipped in by ox team, and thousands of antique drug items, it was one of the finest museums of its kind in the country.

The Rank's Drug building, today owned by the Masons, was built before lime was available for mortar, and its stone walls are secured by adobe mud. Both it and the 1867 Masonic Temple next door were badly damaged in the 1959 earthquake, but have been expertly restored.



MASONIC TEMPLE

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

1867 MASONIC TEMPLE

The Masonic Orders played an important role in the history of Montana and Alder Gulch. Many of the Vigilantes were Masons. The Grand Lodge of Kansas, A.F.A.M. granted Paris Pfouts and other Masons a dispensation to form Virginia City Lodge No. 43, on December 7, 1863, during the height of Plummer's reign of terror. The first meeting under this dispensation took place February 27, 1864 in the upstairs of the Montana Billiard Hall, next door west of the Fairweather Inn.

The Grand Lodge of Montana was formed on January 24, 1866 in the Masonic Temple over Pfouts and Russell's store, with Virginia City being Lodge No. 1. According to a pamphlet on Rank's Drug, this room is unique because it is the oldest lodge room in the nation in which a Grand Lodge was formed and still in use.

With the addition of York Rite Bodies, a larger lodge room was needed and the new Masonic Temple was built in 1867 at a cost of \$35,000.00. Stephen J. Gainan was one of the stone masons employed to erect the cut-stone facade, which has not changed in 110 years. The same doors and hinges are in constant use today.

The first meeting in the new lodge was held December 27, 1867, when it was dedicated by Bishop Tuttle. In 1868 when Virginia City sent its town plat to Washington, D.C. to be granted a patent as a townsite, embellishments around the edge included a drawing of the new Masonic Temple, as well as, a proposed capitol building and church. Since the surveyor was poor at architectural rendering, an actual photograph of the proud, new Temple was pasted over his crude drawing.

There have been few changes in tenants on the ground floor of the Masonic Temple in over 110 years. Tootle, Leach and Co. were first to have a store there, but they moved to Helena in 1868. They were succeeded by the prominent hardware firm of Patten & Lambrecht, who were there until 1877. Then F.E.W. Patton ran the hardware business alone till 1881, when he moved to Butte.

In January, 1881, Elling, Knight and Co. took over the inventory of Patrick Largey (formerly of Creighton's Stone Block) and opened their new hardware store in the Masonic Temple. They were located there for thirty-four years. They not only filled the first floor and basement with retail goods, but had a large two-story warehouse located a block south of the store. This warehouse is now the Virginia City gym.

Elling and Knight had various partners in the firm, including Patrick Walsh, and S. R. Buford; however Julian M. Knight was always the manager. After his death in 1911, the store continued for a short time under the name "Elling Hardware Store".

Since 1916, the U.S. Post Office has occupied the ground floor of the classic, beautifully maintained building.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

CITY DRUG STORE AND TERRITORIAL OFFICE BUILDING

The present vacant lot, east of the Masonic Temple, was the site of three one-story, frame buildings. That next to the Masonic Temple is best known as the City Drug Store operated in the 1870's by Dr. Dames. The eastern-most building with its arched top windows was used for Montana Territorial offices. Various professional people occupied the buildings throughout their history. They included J. L. Corbett, Civil Engineer, who drew the plat of Virginia City in 1868; D. Gilbert (1866), assayer; James E. Callaway (1873), attorney; George Callaway, doctor (1874) and Mrs. Crepin and Justice (1865). Jim Emsie, who collected the artifacts for the Thompson Hickman Museum, had the historic items before the fine stone building was finished in 1921.

The three buildings burned in 1934 in one of Virginia City's disastrous fires. At that time, they housed the State Liquor Store, and electrical shop and Monty Duncan's law office. Many residents remember the explosions as the fire engulfed the liquor store.

ELLING BANK - (1864)

Nowlan & Weary moved into this building, which is supposedly the fourth oldest stone building in Virginia City, on October 1, 1864. They were succeeded by Henry Elling in 1873.

Henry Elling, who became one of Virginia City's best known citizens, arrived in October, 1864, with a stock of goods. In 1865 he went to Helena, and made a fabulous profit on his stock. However his partner, who went East with the money to purchase more goods, was not heard from again. Elling began dealing in gold, but soon was without means and also returned East. He tried selling goods at Nebraska City, then a departure point for the West. But Omaha became the outfitting point, and Elling again was in financial difficulty. He obtained permission to move the goods to Virginia City, Montana, where he realized a handsome profit from them.

It was upon this return that Elling located in the small frame store now bearing his name on Lower Wallace Street. He bought that building in 1867, and in 1872 moved to the prestigious Content's Corner. Ellings had become involved in buying and selling gold, and in 1873 opened a bank in the gothic stone building built in 1864 by Nowlan and Weary.

Elling, through his banking interests, mining, the S. R. Buford Co., Elling and Knight Hardware, and Henry Elling & Co. (which became Charles Walter's of Sheridan), was for a quarter of a century, one of the most important men in Madison County. After his death in 1900, the Elling Estates Co. continued his banking and other interests.

The Elling State Bank was organized June 1, 1899. The bank building, which originally had a facade featuring three well-proportioned gothic arches, was remodeled to its present appearance in 1910. The ornate vault

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

is still in the building, however. After the Elling State Bank went out of business in the 1930's, assorted tenants occupied the building. It is now owned by R. Thomas Garrison who intends to restore it as a law office.

VAN BUREN STREET INTERSECTS WALLACE

HANGMAN'S BUILDING

In late 1863, Griffith & Thompson, builders of many of the early structures in the City, began construction of a log store on the corner of Wallace and Van Buren.

On January 14, 1864, the building was only partly finished. The log walls were up and a heavy, main beam to support the roof had been erected but there was no roof. On that morning, the Vigilantes captured five of the worst criminals the West had ever known and were determined to see them punished. A short trial was held in front of the Virginia Hotel, diagonally across the street (later called the O.K. Livery Stable). The men's guilt was without question and their crimes judged to be of devastating nature.

The five murderers were marched to the unfinished building where ropes had been prepared. They were forced to stand on boxes in the following order -- west to east: Frank Parish, Boone Helm, Jack Gallagher, Haze Lyons and Club Foot George Lane.

After a period of last requests, the death sentence was given. Club Foot George died first, jumping off his box. Gallagher was next, followed by Helm and Parish. Lyons, who seemed to think he would be spared, was the last. The road agents were placed in the sidewalk in front of the building after hanging for two hours. They were buried on Boot Hill by their friends.

The building in which the hangings took place was completed and purchased by R. S. Hale, druggist, soon after he arrived in Virginia City on July 10, 1864. Hale went to Helena in 1865, but his partner, Clayton, continued in Virginia City.

In 1868, the firm, selling drugs, was known as Clayton and Morris and, later, by 1873, W. W. Morris ran it independently. Morris later merged with J. V. Hinckman and S. H. Crockett, the firm from which was, later, to become Rank's Drug. The drug store evidently moved from the Hangman's Building to Rank's about 1877.

There is some relationship between O. B. Barber, partner of D. W. Tilton and the W. W. Morris Drug Store. In 1875, O. B. Barber listed his address as "No. 13, Wallace St.", which is possibly the Hangman's Building. It stands on Lot 13, Block 156, and has the obvious connotation of "13" due to its one-time use.

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

In 1880, Mrs. Mary Deimling succeeded her husband as Postmistress of Virginia City and moved the Post Office from the Olinghouse Block to the Hangman's Building, where it is shown on the 1884 Fire Insurance map. It undoubtedly remained here until 1887 when O. D. French became Postmaster and moved it across the street to Creighton's Stone Block. About 1892, C. W. Mead, U.S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor, occupied the building.

In 1903, the Virginia City Water Company purchased the building from W. W. Morris, who had become a successful banker in Pony but retained the historic structure in Virginia City. The Water Co., founded January 27, 1865 by A. M. Holter and others, originally used hollowed-out logs for pipes. Stephen Bickford, who arrived in Virginia City in 1863 and engaged in mining and ranching, bought two-thirds of the water company in 1888. He devoted all of his time to the water works, developing a large spring northeast of town. Before he died of pneumonia in 1900, he had succeeded in placing running water at the doorstep of almost every resident in town and some of the original wooden pipes were still in operation in 1971 when the present plastic pipe system was installed.

After Bickford's death, the water company was carried on by his widow, Sarah Gammon Bickford. She was one of the few blacks in Montana in the early days and the Bickford family was probably one of the only black families in the United States to own a public utility. It was a remarkable feat in a time when there were almost no women and few blacks, of either sex, in business.

While the Hangman's Building was owned by Mrs. Bickford, the center doors were partly covered and two new doors placed where windows had been previously -- resulting in its present appearance. After Mrs. Bickford's death in 1939, her son, Elmer, ran the water works for a while and it was, eventually, sold to the City.

Charles A. Bovey purchased the Hangman's Building from the Bickfords in 1947.

MADISON HOUSE HOTEL

The Madison House, also called the Crescent, was the leading hotel, here, from 1864 until the early 1920's. Often called the "Seven Story Hotel" in later years, the title was partly in jest, as it referred not to actual stories but to the seven old buildings which were linked together to form the Madison House -- the floors, of which, were all on slightly different levels.

Among the many proprietors of the Madison House, the names of Robert Conway (1873), Tom J. Farrell (1881), John H. Davis (1891), T. F. Pollard (mid-1890's), B. J. Fine (1899) and F. W. Allen and Dennis Mahagin (1903), are best remembered.

In the 1864-1879 period, "Uptown Virginia City" was a thriving shopping location. The Post Office moved to this area from Dance and Stuart's Store in 1865 and was managed by Dr. James Gibson. Later, Hezekiah Hismer

Wallace Street, North Side (continued)

was Postmaster in the building four doors above the Madison House until 1872, when the Post Office moved to the Olinghouse Block. Many doctors, lawyers, and real estate agents clustered around the Madison House. The Pease Jewelry was one door to the west and Dr. Yager (1875), to the east. William Decker, Dentist; Dr. L.M. Frary, Dentist and William Chumasero, Lawyer, were in the area in the 1860's. George H. Clark, cabinetmaker, operated a well equipped shop and furniture store on the east end of the string of one-story buildings, at the present site of the Vigilante Gift Shop. Machinery in his shop was powered by a water wheel in the creek below.

The Madison House and adjoining buildings were torn down in the early 1940's by Les Stiles, who built the present gas station.

BREWERY

Montana's oldest brewery and one of the few buildings of its kind still standing in Montana, Gilbert's "Virginia Brewery" enjoys much distinction in Montana's history. Founded by Henry Gilbert, Christian Ritcher, and William Smith in 1863, the brewery was the first in the Territory. The present building was constructed in the early 1860's and has been altered many times although its appearance remains unchanged from the 1880's. Century-old willows shade the Brewery Garden Park. The stone Gilbert House has two log additions which are older but are, now, adjacent to it. The pottery was once the bottling plant. A milk house occupied the area when Gilbert ran a dairy in the early 1900's.

Gilbert beer was proclaimed by authorities to be among the best in the country. It was produced until Prohibition when the Brewery attempted to convert to various soft drinks such as "Iron Brew". After the repeal of prohibition, an effort was made to reorganize the company but nothing resulted.

Daylight Village, built by the Bovey's in the late 1940's, now occupies a section of the old Brewery area. The row of cabins on the north were constructed from "stout houses" built during World War II. They look quite different today than when serving their military function. The false fronts facing on Daylight Creek are superior to many movie sets and even some restorations. The signs are names of old Virginia City businesses taken from early editions of the Montana Post.

JACKSON STREET

Introduction

In the 1860's, south Jackson was the busiest street in Virginia City. The road to Highland, Summit, and all the placer mines up the gulch started at Jackson. Business houses solidly lined it on both sides for two blocks.

By 1878 many of these building, though only fourteen years old, had been torn down. The Edward Gohn House, built about 1880, still stands on the site of many of the buildings on the east side of the street. Those on the west side disappeared from 1898 to the 1930's. The one time heart of the business district is now only vacant lots.

Jackson Street (continued)

WEST SIDE OF JACKSON STREET Beginning at Wallace and Going South

F. R. MERK'S TIN SHOP

F. R. Merk advertised in the first issue of the Montana Post that he had a tin shop next door south of Content's New Stone Corner. Merk moved in August 1866 to the carefully built cut-stone building "formerly occupied by Hanaur & Co." which still stands today occupied by the Pioneer Bar. The stone root cellar in connection with Bob's Place was built on this site by 1878.

LEWIS, HALE AND CO., JEWELRY

Believers in the power of advertising, Lewis Hale and Co. often had their name in the Montana Post. Later, hotel rooms were located here. The building stood until well after 1900, perhaps as late as the 1920's.

STAR RESTAURANT

An elegant stone building with an ornate front, the "Star" was built between May and August, 1865, by Mrs. Brandt and Schenk. It was the spot for fine dining in the 1860's, and featured the "European System" -- ordering from menus in the way we are accustomed to doing today. In 1873, the "Star" became a billiard hall and was later converted to hotel rooms. Still standing in the 1920's, it last served as an automobile garage.

CLASBEY HOUSE (ROCKY THOMAS GAMBLING HALL, NATIONAL PARK HOTEL)

Rocky Thomas' gambling business must have been excellent, as he did not have to advertise in the Montana Post. About 1870, there is mention being made of the Clasbey House. Looking more like a hotel than most in Virginia City, it was, no doubt, rather luxurious in its day. It must have been started by someone named Clasbey but in the fall of 1870 it was operated by J. W. Roys. Roys was a friend of J. T. Conner, who tore down the Planter's House near here, and rebuilt it at Gaffney south of present Twin Bridges. Since the Planter's House was a nicer hotel than the Clasbey, Roys was probably happy to see it moved thirty miles away.

George Clark, who ran a cabinet shop, had the Clasbey "entirely refitted" in February 1872. (Hotels were always being "entirely refitted" in those days. One old timer told me that it meant they changed the sheets.) Anton Frieler ran it from 1876 to 1880. By 1884, it had been "refitted" again and was now called the "National Park Hotel" and catered to the newest thing -- the "tourist". It was later called the "Easton". It was torn down about 1900.

PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Adjoining the Clasbey House on the south, the People's Theatre, remodeled in 1866 from a former store, brought drama and diversion to the frontier. Though it was lined with muslin and of the most flammable construction, it never caught fire. Supposedly, it could accommodate 500 people. It was



EAST SIDE / SOUTH JACKSON STREET

Jackson Street, West Side (continued)

reported to have frequently had a full house. By 1878, it had been converted into a dwelling and must have become eventually a barn. It was, along with the Clasbey House, torn down about 1900.

SENATE SALOON

Originally called the Arcade restaurant, the name was changed in 1865 to Senate Saloon. The building was demolished in the 1930's.

EAST SIDE OF JACKSON Beginning at Wallace Going South

#3 JACKSON, THE MONTANA PICTURE GALLERY

Photographers were among the first businesses in mining camps. Prospectors were, naturally, anxious to send the family back home their picture in the wild west. A.M. Smith was one of the first to occupy this first-class studio replete with its north-light window. A. C. Carter took over in 1866, succeeded by O. C. Bundy in 1873. E. D. Porter was one of the last photographers occupying the studio in 1901. The building was torn down in 1925 when the concrete part of the Dudley Garage was built.

#5 JACKSON -- JOHN S. ROCKFELLOW

Rockfellow and Dennee moved into their fine, new building from Content's Corner on July 22, 1865. Dennee soon resigned, but Rockfellow continued with success for several years. He was Territorial Treasurer in 1865 and the Legislative Council met over his store in Ming's "Occidental Billiard Hall" several times. The first Episcopal Church service also took place in this hall July 21, 1867.

Rockfellow built a fine home which still stands in 1866. He died on his way east in 1867 and his brother, George, continued the business for a short time. What happened to the Rockfellow store is unknown. Apparently one of the nicest frame building in Virginia City, by 1878 it had been torn down.

CON OREM'S MELODIAN HALL

Con Orem, famous for his prize fight with Hugh O'Neil in 1865, operated one of the most renown dance halls and saloons in Montana history. Orem later moved to Dillon where he ran a blacksmith shop. His building was the only one remaining in the area in 1878, then occupied by a wash house. By 1884, it had been converted into the Virginia City Fire Station. A garden now occupies the site.

JOHN HOW STORE

The Beaverhead Saloon, where James Brady was captured by the Vigilantes, occupied this site in June, 1864. Shortly afterward, John How located here. He is supposed to have brought in the first quartz mill into Montana. How later moved to Helena where credit extended by him allowed many small,

Jackson Street, West Side (continued)

general stores to get their start.

Like many others, this store was done by 1878. The Gohn House, built about 1880, occupies the site today.

IDAHO STREET AND SOUTH JACKSON

TOOTLE LEACH AND COMPANY

Tootle, Leach and Co. were one of the first merchandise stores established in Virginia City. Part of their "fireproof" stone warehouse, built in 1864, still stands on Idaho Street. T. L. & Co. took out a two year lease on the first floor of the newly completed Masonic Temple in the summer of 1867. Bishop Tuttle used their vacant store for the first regular Episcopal services in Virginia City from November 18, 1867 to March 1, 1868, when he moved next door east to the former store of Erfort, Busch & Co. The present dwelling was built before 1884.

In the area now occupied by a garden once stood the "Liquor Emporium" of Barnard, Slaven & Co. Farther on was the Missouri House. All were replaced by present structures by 1884.

IDAHO STREET

Both Sides of Street Beginning at the West End

JAIL - North Side of Street

In June of 1864, after the Vigilantes had freed the territory of the worst of the outlaws, it was decided that Madison County should build a jail. According to Noyes, sealed proposals for building the county jail were opened on June 24, 1864, and the contract was awarded to E. M. Dumphy for \$4,674.00. The resulting building consisted of a log building about forty feet (or less) square, with barred windows. It was a bit on the expensive side, considering that the entire brick Court House, complete with four iron cells in a real jail in the basement, plus such features as a curved walnut staircase and a cupola, cost only seven times as much (\$35,000.00) in 1876, over ten years later. Evidently use of the log jail ceased when the Court House opened in 1876. The building stood vacant until after 1900, (perhaps 1913) when Karl Sauerbier, operator of the Blacksmith Shop which still stands on Wallace Street, used the logs from the old jail to build himself a four room house, which is still standing.

REHEARSAL HALL - South Side

Built about 1948 from logs salvaged from the Superintendent's house at the Kersarge Mine at Summit, eight miles above Virginia City in Alder Gulch.

BONZANZA INN - South Side

This building was the original Madison County Courthouse, used from 1866 until the present Courthouse was built in 1876-76. The Sisters of

Jackson Street, West Side (continued)

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Idaho Street (continued)

Charity converted the building into a hospital in November, 1875. The residence in back was built about this time as a home for the Sisters. Later, this building was abandoned. It was rebuilt by Charles Bovey in the late 1940's.

BUFORD'S TIN WAREHOUSE - North Side

Built by the S. R. Buford Company in the 1890's for storage of steel, wagon parts, etc., this building was later used by the U. S. Grant Mining Company. Some of the store fixtures and items displayed in our Virginia City stores came from the Buford Block and were found stored in this tin building.

PLANTER'S HOUSE SITE - Southwest corner of Idaho and Jackson

The Planter's House was a large hotel approximately 35 x 70 with two stories in addition to an attic. It was an imposing structure and probably the finest hotel in Virginia City. However, it was owned by Owen Gaffney and he wanted it moved to his own town of Salisbury, about two miles south of Twin Bridges. He hired a man named Conner and the hotel was disassembled, the boards marked, and hauled to Salisbury where they were reassembled. A more detailed history of the unusual move can be found in the Madison County History, p. 561. (Note: See Jackson Street for history of Southeast Corner of Idaho and Jackson.)

TOOTLE LEACH WAREHOUSE - South Side

Tootle Leach and Company was a prominent early trading firm. They built this "fireproof" stone warehouse in 1864. Only the front and a section of the side still stand today.

GOVERNOR MEAGHER'S HOUSE CHICAGO HOUSE - South Side

The home of Charles and Gracie Smith, who for many years managed the Fairweather Inn, stands on the site of "Governor" Meagher's home and is similar to it in appearance. The Chicago House, a very early hotel, stood next door to the east.

MRS. SLADE'S HOUSE - On Van Buren Street - West Side

After Slade was hung by the Vigilantes, his wife took his body to this house and kept it preserved, in alcohol, in a metal coffin until it could be shipped to Salt Lake City for burial. The neat little house has been the home of Zina Hoff, former curator, for many years.

METHODIST CHURCH - South Side

Built of stone by D. C. Farwell in 1875, this is one of the oldest standing Methodist Churches in Montana. The first service held was the funeral of William Fairweather, discoverer of Alder Gulch, on August 28, 1875.

Idaho Street (continued)

GYM - Northeast Corner of Idaho and Van Buren

The present Gym is perhaps the only one built without a bond issue. It was formerly the Elling-Knight wagon and heavy hardware warehouse. In 1934, the Vigilance Club and volunteer labor with some help from the W.P.A., converted it into the present gymnasium.

DR. DAEM'S HOUSE - South Side of Street Next to Methodist Church

Dr. L. Daems, one of the pioneer doctors of Montana, and operator of the City Drug Store, lived in this house from the 1860's until his death in 1874.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH - South Side

The old, frame Episcopal Church stood just east of the present Elling Memorial Building. It was built in 1868 by Methodists, but they did not have enough money to complete it. It was sold to the Episcopalians, led by Bishop Tuttle. The new church, built with donations from Mrs. Mary B. Elling in 1902, was designed by Fennel and Grove, Architects from Butte and built by Jim Emslie. The windows are said to have come from Tiffany Studios.

JUDGE BLAKE HOUSE - Across Idaho Street from Episcopal Church, on North Side

This was the home of Judge Blake when he lived in Virginia City. He was a pioneer lawyer in Montana and editor of the Montana Post for a short time. He later moved to Helena where his building, the Blake Block, housed the Montana Territorial offices. Much of the early history of Virginia City was documented by Judge Blake for a speech on the dedication of the Courthouse on July 4, 1876.

WILBUR FISK SANDERS' HOUSE - South Side

Wilbur F. Sanders, the prosecuting attorney for the Vigilantes, was a young lawyer when he arrived in Montana. At the trial of George Ives, Sanders' courage was severely tested. Amid threats upon his life by a host of outlaws, Sanders moved that Ives be hanged. The courageous act gave other men the will to unite against the vicious Plummer band and bring safety to the citizens of Alder Gulch.

Sanders remained prosecutor for the Vigilantes and had a distinguished career in law. He was the first U. S. Senator from Montana after it became a state.

A more extensive article on the Sanders' House is included elsewhere in this book. Other famous owners of this fine home, one of the oldest frame houses in Montana include A. C. Hall (of Hall and Bennett, Bankers) and James Vanderbeck, Jr., the present owner.

Idaho Street (continued)

JUDGE BENNETT HOUSE - North Side

Built by A. J. Bennett, of the Hall and Bennett Bank in the 1890's, this fine residence was later the home of L. H. Bennett, Judge of the District Court from 1921 to 1937, and afterwards a noted attorney of the area. He lived here until 1967. The house is noted for its beautiful varnished woodwork.

FORMER HENRY ELLING HOUSE - South Side

This well-kept one story home with its interesting square bay windows and neat gingerbread trim was the home of Henry Elling before he built his elaborate stone mansion farther east on Idaho Street.

GEORGE THEXTON HOUSE - South Side

This large, stone house with its gothic porch often attracts the attention of visitors. It was built in 1884 by George Thexton, proprietor of the livery stable in the Vigilante Barn. Thexton made the first plows in southern Montana and the machinery used to bore Virginia City's wooden water pipes. The Thexton family still lives in the Madison Valley where they have a ranch.

WILLIAM THOMPSON BIRTHPLACE

William Boyce Thompson gave the money to build the beautiful Thompson-Hickman Memorial Museum and Library, which is located in the same yard as this neat frame house. His father, William Thompson, built most of the better early buildings in Virginia City in the 1860's and 70's. His mother was Anne M. Boyce. William Boyce Thompson married Gertrude Hickman, the daughter of Richard O. Hickman who ran a clothing store in the present Dudley Garage building. William Boyce Thompson became very wealthy in the East.

This house is one of the oldest frame buildings in Montana, and retains its original exterior appearance. It was restored and modernized by W. B. Thompson about 1920, and presented to the County, along with the Museum. In the late 1950's, the County decided to dispose of the house. Because of its historic value, the Vigilance Club purchased it and has maintained it since that time.

VIRGINIA CITY SCHOOL - North Side

The brick school, built in 1875-76, was designed by L. B. Olds, the same architect who had done the Courthouse in 1875. Evidently, the school board wanted a plain building. The only original embellishment, which is now missing, was the tower which was removed after the 1959 earthquake. The building is one of the oldest standing school houses in Montana, having been used from 1876 until 1972. It was the first high school in the state.

Idaho Street (continued)

ELLING HOUSE - South Side

The Elling House was started in 1875 by Henry Elling (see Elling Bank). Following her husband's death, in 1900, Mary B. Elling later made extensive additions to the home. Much later, it was converted into an apartment house by Beula Saunders, who added the present glassed-in porches.

COVER STREET

Along Cover Street (named for Thomas Cover, one of the discoverers of Alder Gulch) stand many historic houses and sites. It is possible to mention only a few here.

DIMSDALE HOUSE - Southwest Corner of Jackson and Cover

Thomas J. Dimsdale, author of the Vigilantes of Montana and editor of the Montana Post lived in this house before his death in 1866.

TILTON HOUSE - On West Side of North Jackson Street a block above Cover Street

This neat home, still well maintained, was the home of D. W. Tilton, proprietor of the Montana Post and the City Book Store.

SAMUEL WORD HOUSE (FORD BOVEY HOUSE)

The oldest part of this house, a simple stone room 16 feet square with an open fireplace, was built by D. A. G. Floweree, probably in 1863. By 1868 Samuel Word, an early day lawyer, had purchased the house and built the stone front room. In the 1890's, the Joseph Trenerry family lived here, building a large, two-story brick addition on the west side of the house for a hospital. In 1947, after the Boveys had purchased the house, a propane tank was being filled when gas fumes penetrated the house and it exploded. The intense heat of the fire destroyed the brick addition although most of the stone walls remained. The stone was repaired by Chris Christiansen and Fred Smith, and a new shingle roof put on but no other changes were made at that time. In 1973-75 the interior was rebuilt and a frame addition designed and built by John Ellingsen for Ford and Marilee Bovey, brought the historic dwelling back to life.

J. S. ROCKFELLOW HOUSE (CHARLES A. BOVEY HOUSE)

John S. Rockfellow was a prominent businessman of Virginia City's early period. He owned a grocery store on Jackson Street, over which several sessions of the new legislature were held. In November 1866 he began construction of a fine home to which he brought his bride on January 29, 1867. Mr. Rockfellow died while on his way east in 1868.

W. P. Armstrong, dealer in boots and shoes, purchased the house. Later the A. J. Morris family made their home here. The house had been vacant for years when Mr. and Mrs. Bovey began its restoration in 1947. Now, in

Cover Street (continued)

living condition it is appropriately furnished for the period it represents and is a rare example of what a "fine house in isolated Montana Territory" meant in the 1860's.



SANDERS RESIDENCE.

COLONEL WILBUR F. SANDERS HOUSE

John N. DeHaas, Jr.

Virginia City, a boom town of the early gold rush era of Montana, lives on today while many similar mining camps have disappeared. Agriculture, county government and tourism have long since replaced mining.

In 1863 the great Montana gold rush began and the strike in Alder Gulch became one of the most memorable episodes in western mining frontier history. The major camp established in Alder Gulch was Virginia City; it became the center for mining activities. Probably her period of greatest significance relative to mining was a ten year period from 1865 to 1875. During this time it is estimated that the surrounding area yielded \$70,000,000 in gold and that the Alder Gulch area had a population that fluctuated up to 10,000 people, a number far greater than the inhabitants of most towns of Montana today. However, her population dwindled rapidly as miners seeking their fortunes left the site of one gold strike to chase rumors of another. Virginia City's population dipped to 149 in 1970, but the town will not die.

A party of seven men is credited with the discovery of gold in Alder Gulch on May 26, 1863. Early in the morning of May 28 they staked out their claims and left that day for Bannack for supplies. Somehow the news leaked out and Alder Gulch came alive with camps and towns. Some of the settlements were Centerville, Nevada City, Adobetown, Junction, Ruby and Central City, in addition to Virginia City.

The area became a hustling metropolis almost instantly, with all the problems associated with many people and few laws to protect the individual. Road agents, murderers, thieves and highwaymen were on the scene almost as quickly as the miners. These camp followers caused immediate problems for Virginia City and Alder Gulch but efforts to form a government and establish law and order moved rapidly, though not exactly hand-in-hand.

Montana was then part of Idaho Territory. Sidney Edgerton was appointed Chief Justice of the Territory of Idaho and was assigned the third district which roughly comprised what soon became Montana. In June, 1863, he and his family, accompanied by his nephew, Wilbur Fisk Sanders, and the Sanders family, left Akron, Ohio, for Idaho Territory. Reaching Bannack, the largest town in his district, in September the party settled for the winter. Edgerton was quickly convinced of the need to create a new territory and started back for Washington in January, 1864, where he helped persuade Congress to create the Territory of Montana, which it did by a vote on May 24, 1864. Sidney Edgerton was named the first Governor of the new Territory by Abraham Lincoln.

But Edgerton's nephew, Col. Wilbur Sanders, also made his impact on Montana's history. Sanders was an ambitious and courageous young attorney. The trial of the first of the notorious road agents and

murderers, George Ives, was held in Virginia City on December 21, 1863. Colonel Sanders was in town at the time and was appointed prosecuting attorney by the miners' court. He successfully prosecuted Ives and obtained a conviction although threats of reprisal by Ives' friends were spoken freely. After conviction it was Sanders' motion that the sentence be carried out immediately rather than waiting until the next day, even though darkness had fallen. Ives was taken to a partially completed house selected for the site of execution and hanged that same evening. The famed quote, "Men, do your duty," is attributed to Sanders.

Wilbur F. Sanders made many other contributions to the State of Montana during his lifetime. He was corresponding secretary of the Society of Montana Pioneers when it was formed December 11, 1864; was elected first chairman of the Montana Bar Association when it was organized on January 8, 1865; and when the formation of the Montana Historical Society was authorized on February 25, 1865, he was elected president pro tem. At that body's first meeting held on March 25, 1865, Sanders was elected president. He held that office until February 1, 1890, a period of twenty-five years. He was elected U. S. Senator by the Republicans of both houses of the newly-formed State of Montana legislature on December 31, 1889. At that time Senators were selected by the state legislatures. In Montana the Democrats and Republicans split into two groups that year, each selecting a set of senators, but the election of Sanders and his running mate, T. C. Power, was upheld by the U. S. Congress. Colonel Sanders died on July 7, 1905.

The above-mentioned accomplishments add to the importance of the house Sanders built for himself and his family. Their first home was in Bannack but later they moved to Virginia City. An entry in Mrs. Sanders' diary dated July 14, 1867 reveals that she had slept for the first time in their new home on Idaho Street. They remained in Virginia City until the 1870's when the Sanders family moved to Helena. Their new three story home there was built in 1875.

The Sanders home in Virginia City is a story-and-a-half frame cottage located on a hillside acre on Idaho Street, one block above (south) of Wallace Street. The building is on the south side of the street and faces north northwest. The building has steep gabled roofs of varying heights and a hip roof (over a later addition) on the east. Apparently several additions have been made over the years. Roof covering varies from wood shingles on the rear portion of the building to asphalt shingles on the front section. Numerous brick chimneys project from the steep pitches of the various roof planes.

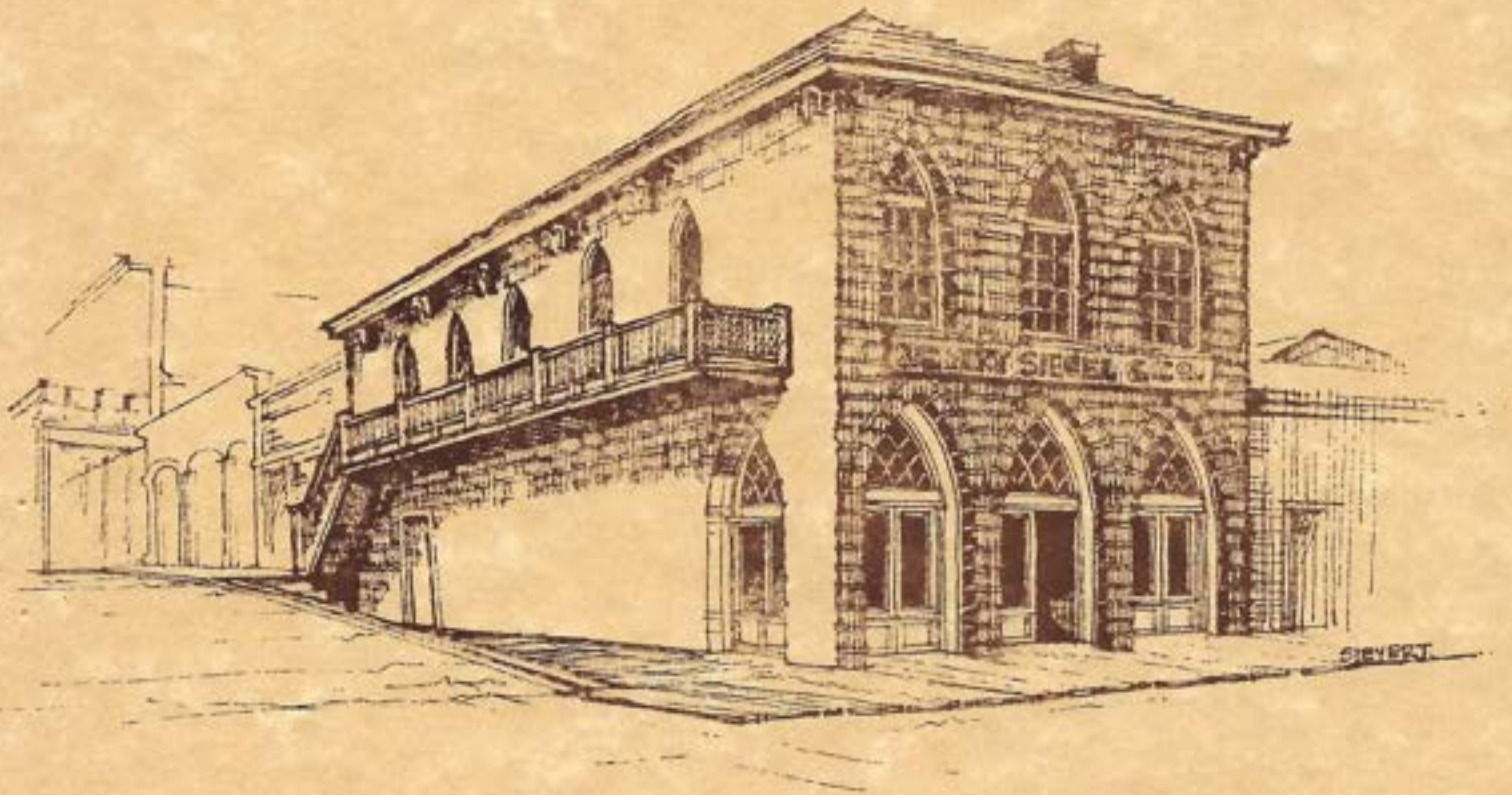
The building rests on a foundation of native fieldstone. A distinct feature of the simple well-composed building is the one story wood porch that protects almost the entire front. Noteworthy are the "open" wood columns and the ornate wood brackets that support the porch eaves and the porch beam. Simpler brackets support the eave of the bay window on the west side of the front living room. There are four columns across the front porch and two columns, one at each end of the porch, adjacent to the wall of the house.

A comparison of photographs of the front of the building shows several changes made prior to the turn of the century. The porch originally consisted of the central section of the present porch and at some time it was lengthened. Other obvious changes are ornate bargeboards (woodwork covering the joint between a gable roof and the roofing material) and the carved wood pediment above the gabled windows that are now gone. These gave a Gothic-esque appearance to the house. In early photographs the siding appears to be narrower than today, as well.

The shutters that flank the windows were added at sometime, as well. A photograph dated 1899 shows the above changes, with full porch, shutters, no bargeboards. Subsequent changes have been addition of a picture window on the west, kitchen remodeling and the small rear entry that was probably originally a porch. The west side of the building has a bay window and farther to the south a covered porch protects a side entry. The original windows are basically wood double-hung units with 4/4 lights. Interior (and original exterior) doors are panelled and framed by ornate mouldings. Of special interest is the decorative cast hardware revealed in the door hinges, knobs and escutcheon plates and the window latches.

The building has had relatively few owners. When the 1899 photograph was taken the building was owned and occupied by A. W. Hall. Later it was owned by Jones Duncan and finally by James Vanderbeck who purchased the home in 1940. He has maintained the building well; it is in remarkably fine condition.

Col. Sanders gained national prominence as a vigilante, lawyer, legislator, businessman and politician. His mark on the history of Virginia City remains in this fine home.



CONTENTS CORNER

CONTENT CORNER

John N. DeHaas, Jr.

On the southwest corner of Wallace and Jackson Streets in Virginia City stands a two story masonry structure steeped in the history of this early-day mining camp. The simple "L"-shaped structure is one of the earliest erected in Virginia City and it is still in use today. The lower floor houses "Bob's Place" -- a bar offering not only beverages but also fishing supplies and a limited selection of groceries and meats. The upper floor has been used in recent years for apartments.

An abstract recorded the sale of the structure by George P. Dorris to Solomon Content (historically the building bears Content's name) on November 11, 1864, for the sum of \$4,000. The building has had numerous owners over the years with names prominent in the city's history, such as Joseph Fisher and Henry Wood, Abraham Hauser, Jacob Feldberg, Charles L. Dahler, Isaac Heidenheimer, W. A. Armstrong, and Henry and Mary Elling (Elling was a prominent local banker). On August 31, 1876 it was purchased by Robert Bickers, grandfather of Robert (Bob) Gohn, for whom "Bob's Place" is named. The building was purchased on September 26, 1919 by Martha F. Stutbury -- Bob Gohn's aunt -- and he bought the building from her in 1944 and operated the business there until his recent retirement. The building is now owned by Bovey Restorations, Inc.

Mercantile operations that occupied the lower floor over a long period of time included Seegel & Co. and also Armstrong & Johnson. Probably the most colorful of all the building's owners was Bob Gohn, known and loved by the permanent residents of Virginia City as "Blind Bob." He lost his sight in a mining accident. As I recall, Bob told me a dynamite cap went off right in front of his face. Yet he was a damned good bartender. He had no trouble locating a can or bottle of beer. You asked for or found the proper whiskey bottle. When silver dollars disappeared from Montana it did complicate his handling of paper money. Every once in awhile someone from out of town would try to cheat him -- local patrons looked out for his interests then.

However, the building is of importance not only because of its colorful owner, Bob Gohn, nor because it was one of the earliest masonry buildings in Virginia City. The building played an important role in the early history of government in the Territory of Montana. The entire second floor was leased for use as Territorial administrative offices when Virginia City was named the capital by the Legislative Act of 1865.

Bannack, now a ghost town but the site of the first major gold strike in Montana, was the temporary capital of the new Territory after it was carved out of the Territory of Idaho. The great discovery of gold in Alder Gulch in May, 1863, led to the rapid growth of Virginia

City and numerous other mining camps lining Alder Gulch, and the seat of government was shifted here. But Virginia City was not to keep the capital too long; she lost it to Helena in 1875.

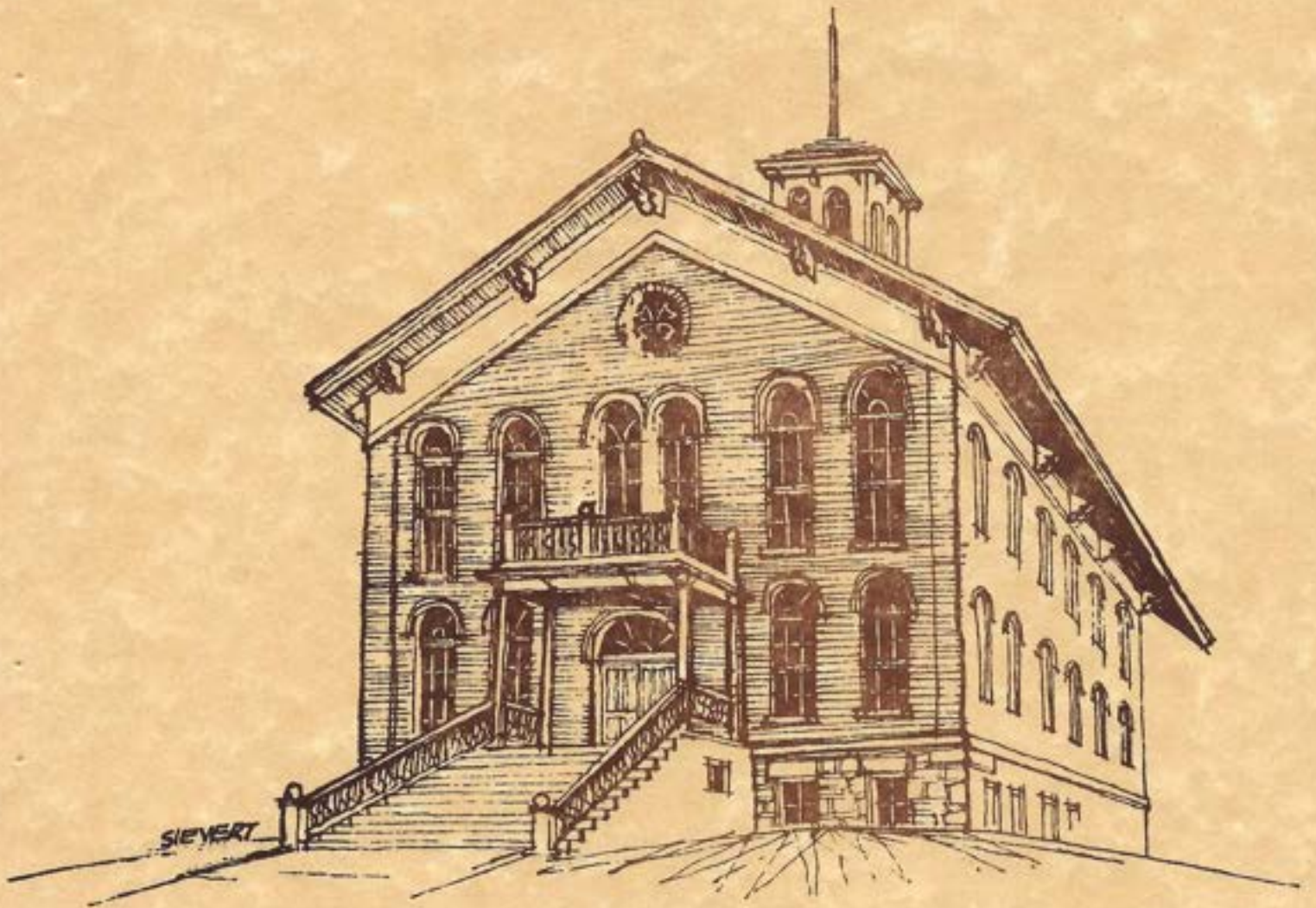
The building is equally important from an architectural point of view. Built of native fieldstone, the exterior walls are twenty inches thick. Once entirely built of stone, the front facade has been replaced by a brick front. Although the "new" front with its simple balanced composition is of interest, the charm of the original front with Gothic arched windows on the second floor and three large Gothic arches openings on the first floor have been lost. An early photograph bears evidence of its initial beauty. Above the doorways a transom unit of lace-like curved muntins held ten small panes of glass. The second floor windows had similar transoms, but on a smaller scale.

On the east side of the building facing onto Jackson Street one can still see the type of transom light used on the original front of the building. Five evenly spaced doors along the wall of the exterior balcony each has a transom light like those that were in the front.

The plan of the building is actually an elongated "L", the leg of which projects westward at the rear. The building has a frontal width of 20'-6", a rear width of 32'-6", and an overall length of 60'-7". There is a one story addition on the rear of the building built into the hillside that is used as storage for the bar. The brick front has a typical early-day rectilinear store front with a steel beam above the first floor to support the brick work of the second floor. The exterior wall of the second floor on the east side was stuccoed at one time. There are three windows on the second level of the front, evenly spaced like the original windows. These windows are double-hung wood units with 1/1 lights. They have flat arched heads and lack the charm of the original windows.

Noteworthy are the delicately carved wood brackets or knee braces that support the projecting wood eaves. The decorative metal pan ceiling of the first floor is also of interest. A minor change was a wooden storage shed built under the east side balcony at the front of the building.

A visit to this unpretentious structure is a "must" for the visitor. Too often its beauty is overlooked and even the historical marker on the front is by-passed. Here is history embodied in a building that has survived a hundred years.



MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MADISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

John N. DeHaas, Jr.

When Virginia City, the county seat of Madison County, was incorporated early in 1864, it was then part of the Territory of Idaho. When Montana Territory was formed a short time later Madison County became one of its eight original counties. The new Montana Territorial Legislature named Virginia City as the territorial capital in the Legislative Act of 1865, moving the seat of government from Bannack.

Following the gold strike in Bannack and the larger and more significant discoveries in Alder Gulch, thousands of men poured into the Territory. First tents, then log structures, frame buildings and stone and brick structures were erected. Some mining camps died -- almost as fast as they were born, but others lived longer. Some, like Butte and Helena (our present state capital) survived, while others like Blackpine, Blackhawk and Diamond City are gone. Some left only foundations while others have been totally reclaimed by nature.

Virginia City lost the honor of being Territorial Capital to Helena in 1875 but the town remains. Tourism has replaced mining, and she has retained the seat of county government.

In her glorious days of the 1860's and 1870's, Virginia City served as the center of activity for numerous mining camps along Alder Gulch. Although her population was waning, the local citizenry retained enough faith in her future to plan for a permanent and stately courthouse. A contract for construction of the brick structure was awarded on May 22, 1875, according to the Commissioners Journal. The architect was Loren B. Olds, the contractor was Daniel Steele, and the building was to cost \$35,000. The building was completed in 1876 and has been in continuous use for more than a hundred years. It is the oldest courthouse in the state still used for its original purpose.

The building is a rectangular block measuring 50'-8" wide by 80'-4" in length and is constructed of bearing walls of red brick resting upon a natural stone foundation. The two story gabled-roof structure is built on a sloping lot that drops off to the north exposing almost a full story of basement area at the front of the building. Shortly after the turn of the century an addition was put on to the east and rear of the courthouse and in the early 1960's another addition was made west of this. Neither addition is of any historical or architectural significance.

The composition is meticulously well balanced. Two windows are located on either side of the lofty entry porch with two similar windows on the second level above the first floor units. The entry porch of wood has a long flight of wooden steps leading from the sloping ground to the main or first floor level. The porch has wooden columns of relatively plain design at both outer corners and wooden half-columns against the

building supporting a balcony. The balcony is enclosed by a balustrade having interesting turned balusters and corner newel posts of plain but pleasing proportions. Two doors separated by brick work give access to the basically square balcony.

The entry doorway is recessed and flanked by painted wood panels. There are two large doors set in a decorative wood frame. The doors each have two tall separate panels with semi-circular heads positioned above two small circular panels whose diameters are equal to the width of the tall panels above. A semi-circular fanlight transom above the doors has radial spokes or muttins radiating outward from a small semi-circular light. The spokes divide the glass area into five panes. The head of the doorway is capped by a triple row of soldier brick that conforms to the semi-circular wood frame. On the interior the ornate wood casing follows the arc of the transom light.

The windows on the first and second floors are tall, narrow, wood double-hung units. Those on the front facade have 6/6 lights and semi-circular transom lights containing curved "W's" of wood muttins dividing each area into three glass panes. This transom light treatment is repeated in the narrow but fixed windows of the cupola. The windows on the sides of the building have flat arched heads and no transom lights. The two doors to the balcony mentioned earlier have semi-circular transom lights in keeping with the windows on the front of the building. The windows of the basement are rectangular wood double-hung units.

Other than the porch, the most dominating feature of the exterior is the ornate square cupola perched on the peak of the gable roof and centrally located on the original building. A balustrade caps the balcony or platform level and in the upper portion of the square cupola are two tall narrow windows with semi-circular transom lights. The cupola roof is pyramidal with wood shingles like the main roof. Ornatly carved brackets support the eaves of the roofs of the building and the cupola.

The basement houses the sheriff's office, cells, vault, storage and living quarters within the two foot thick stone walls. The first floor has a central corridor leading from the front door to the additions at the rear of the building. County offices open off this eight foot wide corridor.

While the front porch and the ornate cupola dominate the exterior composition, the interior is dominated by a beautiful decorative curved staircase leading upward to the second floor. The staircase is located in the northwest corner of the building, just inside the front door. An ornate wood newel post, turned balusters and curved handrail of deeply stained hardwood sweep upward. It is interesting to note that the large curved staircase fits into a square corner and does not disturb the fenestration or window pattern of the exterior wall. One front window has a deep apron extending inward to meet the curved stairs.

The second floor houses the judge's chambers, law library, courtroom, court reporter's office and other offices. The central corridor no longer extends to the doors of the balcony.

While the building cost \$35,000 to build in 1875-76, it cost \$300,000 to repair damages caused by a fire in the cell area started by a prisoner in the 1970's.

Special attention should be given to the architect of this and other fine structures in Virginia City and elsewhere, Loren B. Olds. He was born in Norwich, Vermont, the son of a millwright. At a young age he traveled westward to Iowa City where after several years he apprenticed himself for three years to a firm of builders and millwrights. He attended night school studying "higher mathematics, drafting and architecture." Following this he set up a business furnishing millwork to other tradesmen.

About 1859, with three yoke of oxen and supplies he traveled to Denver, Colorado, then on to Taos Valley, New Mexico where he engaged in the construction of a military fort. Like many others, he was attracted by the news of the great gold strike in Alder Gulch and arrived in Virginia City November 21, 1863. He left his mark on the community not only in the buildings he erected but also became a member of the Territorial senate. Olds became a Mason, joined the Summit Lodge on September 22, 1867 and served this and other lodges faithfully until his death in Pony, Montana on December 3, 1914. He had married Roberta Belles Freyer thirty-five years prior to his death. He and his family had moved to Pony in 1899.

The sturdy courthouse has withstood numerous earthquakes and a disastrous fire. It is a tribute to the pioneers of our state and to the faith of the people of Virginia City.

LONGEST BARE KNUCKLE FIGHT IN AMERICA

By Tony Dalich

On January 2, 1865, at Virginia City, Montana Territory, Con Orem, 138# blacksmith, fought 185 rounds with Hugh O'Neil, 190# miner, in a fight that lasted over five and a half hours for a \$1,000 side bet. The fighters fought at catchweights. The referee called it a draw, after stopping the fight which for time and rounds is the American record for bare knuckles.

This memorable fight came about as a result of the following challenge which appeared in the October 8, 1864 issue of the Montana Post, Virginia City, Montana Territory:

Editor Post

"Hearing a great deal about fighting in and about your place, and occasionally my name mentioned among the most common, I have only to say that one or any of the fighting fraternity can find me ready to fight anyone of them for \$5,000 in gold on or after the 10th day of October 1864. Any reasonable amount will be found at DANCE and STUART'S STORE in Virginia City as a forfeit for the whole amount.
Hugh O'Neil"

Dated from
Fort Hall September 24, 1864

This challenge was no doubt aimed at Joe Riley, Tom Foster and Con Orem who were living in Virginia City at the time.

Con Orem answered Hugh O'Neil's challenge with the following letter which was published in the Montana Post and dated October 15, 1864:

Editor Post

In answer to Hugh O'Neil's challenge in your columns, I have only to say that it was not my intention to seek further honors in the prize ring. If such had been my desire, I would have gone East -- but if O'Neil must have a fight, and means business, altho he is some fifty pounds heavier than I am and would have to come down that much according to the rules of the ring; yet if he will call upon me, I will make two matches with him at catchweights. One, a glove fight for \$500.00 a side and a ring fight for \$1000.00 a side, open fight for \$5000.00. Money ready at any moment. If this offer is not accepted within a fortnight, I will not receive or accept any further challenge, as it is my wish to follow my business undisturbed, and to live as a private citizen.

Yours,

John C. Orem

After much discussion on the matter, on October 29, 1864, the Con Orem-Hugh O'Neil match was made at catchweights as O'Neil was 52 lbs. heavier than Con. The side bet was set as \$1,000.00 in gold and a forfeit fee of \$500.00 was to be deposited by each fighter, \$250.00 by November 15, 1864, and the other \$250.00 to be paid by January 1, 1865.

The fight was originally arranged for February 5, 1865, but was later moved up to January 1, 1865. Then due to the fact that January 1 fell on a Sunday it was decided to change the date to Monday, January 2, 1865.

John Condel Orem, 5'6", weight 138 lbs., "The Little American Tiger", as he was generally termed, CON OREM, was born 1835 in Carroll, Ohio and brought up at Fort Finlay in the same state. His father was a blacksmith and brought up his son to the same occupation.

He started as a wrestler and toured the West engaging in matches wherever he went for from \$20.00 to \$200.00 as side bets.

Up to this time and ever since the Champion of Colorado made it his doctrine to touch, taste or handle not either spiritous or malt liquors or use tobacco in any form.

After travelling five years he opened up a blacksmith shop in Denver City, Colorado Territory. He hunted bear and wild animals in the mountains around Denver City and always kept in top physical shape.

His first regular fight came in 1861 in Denver City where he whipped a man named Texas in two rounds.

On August 24, 1861, he met and defeated Rough Enoch Davis in 109 rounds at Central City, Colorado, and this fight lasted one hour and forty minutes.

In the spring of 1863 he fought Owen Geohagen at Cheese Creek, New Jersey. After fighting 19 rounds in 23 minutes the mob broke up the fight with the pretense of a foul; the referee, with a revolver looking into his ear, deciding against Orem.

In May of 1863, Orem next challenged Jim Elliott, the young giant and claimant to the heavyweight championship. The match was arranged for a \$2,000.00 side bet and the championship of the middleweights. This fight never did come off as Elliott paid the forfeit by not showing up.

Finding it hard to make a match, Con challenged America for \$1,000.00.

Con's next fight was with Patsey Marley. Con was the victor after a lively struggle in the STUYVESANT INSTITUTE in New York City.

Con then drifted West to the Gold Rush Camps, first to Bannack, and then to Virginia City, Montana, where he opened the Champion Saloon, poaching the spenduliks with great rapidity.

His advertisement appeared in the Montana Post as follows:



CHAMPION SALOON
JACKSON ST. VIRGINIA CITY
CON OREM
ON HAND BEST STOCK OF LIQUORS, CIGARS, ETC.
SALOON IS ADORNED WITH THE BEST SET OF SPORT
PICTURES WEST OF NEW YORK
PRIVATE LESSONS IN BOXING AND SPARRING
ONCE A WEEK.

Con later changed the name of his establishment to "Melodian Hall"
(see sketch).

HUGH O'NEIL - The challenger, 6' tall and weight 190#, was born in the parish of LOUGHEE COUNTY OF ANTRIM in the NORTH OF IRELAND in 1831. He was big, brutal, and tough and loved his liquor. Both men had one thing in common, both were Irish and loved to fight. The ring for this memorable fight was pitched in lower end of the LEVIATHAN HALL, a building on the north side of Jackson Street, Virginia City, Montana, by J. A. Nelson. The structure, 85 feet long and 29 feet wide, had two galleries built around the lower end and the sides for about half the length of the building, and a range of graded seats nearly the width of the hall run from the ring to the southern end.

Additional accommodations were afforded by erecting a leanto around the part of the building in the neighborhood of the ring. Admission prices were: Reserved seats, \$10.00, Pit, \$5.00.

The ring was levelled fairly and covered with fine gravelly sand.

Waugh's Brass Band was on hand to furnish music for the occasion.

At 1:15 P.M., Hugh O'Neil deposited his felt robe on the arena rope following it by 190 lbs. of as good bone and sinew as seen in many a day.

Con Orem promptly jumped over the rope, with 138 lbs. of as tough humanity as ever crossed the Rocky Mountains.

O'Neil's colors were green with the gold harp and stars and his name embroidered in full.

Con sported a single star on a black background with a red border. Around his waist were girded the stars and stripes with the eagle bearing the motto, "May the Best Man Win".

HUGH O'NEIL had as his seconds, Joe Bean and Dan Coughlin. Con was valleted by his trainer, LON McCARTHY and JOE RILEY.

THOMAS ROWE officiated as Umpire for CON.

THOMAS McNALLY acted for HUGH.

J. A. NELSON was appointed referee.

G. W. HYNSON was timekeeper.

Order was called and the rules of the LONDON PRIZE RING were read from the gallery and 24 minutes to 2:00 the men shook hands.

At 1:40 P.M. the time was called and quickly each man toed the scratch and began to fight.

The betting by the many miners in attendance was heavily in favor of Hugh O'Neil, the bigger man.

Con lost the first round, but in the second canto drew first blood from the chin of Hugh O'Neil. Both men were stinging hitters and it was surprising to see and hear the blows and find the combatants at the call of time as ready as ever.

In Round 42 both fighters went down side by side. Round 54, Con's left eye and cheek were swelling. Round 89, Orem fell with his head under O'Neil's arm and sticking out his tongue and laughing at him. Round 126, O'Neil's left eye closing.

There were numerous knockdowns by both fighters; according to London Prize Ring Rules, when a fighter was knocked down or out, he had 30 seconds to recover and toe the mark or lose the fight.

Round 144, Hugh O'Neil fell with both knees on Con until lifted off. Loud cries of foul! foul! foul!, and appeals to go on.

Round 165, O'Neil's right eye closed.

Round 185, Con severely punished by O'Neil while slipping down.

The fight was then called by referee Nelson to joyous satisfaction of those present - bets off - ring money divided.

Hugh O'Neil's face was all contused and swollen and cut and at the close of the fight both of his eyes were closed. However, neither of the two fighters would give up as long as he could stand on his feet. Both refused to draw, after more than five and a half hours of battling until repeatedly pressed by the referee. The following is a statement by the referee as his reason for stopping this great battle after 185 rounds:

"Mr. Editor, Sir,

I have been called upon by Mr. O'Neil to give publicity to my reason for making a draw of the fight between himself and Con Orem. Now, Mr. Editor, it was not my aim to detract anything from either of its brave men, but I must state here as I stated in the ring to O'Neil, that if the fight continued, it was liable to result fatally, although Con's seconds say he was able to continue the fight. Both men were frightfully punished about the head and body. Altogether it was the best and gamest fight I ever witnessed.

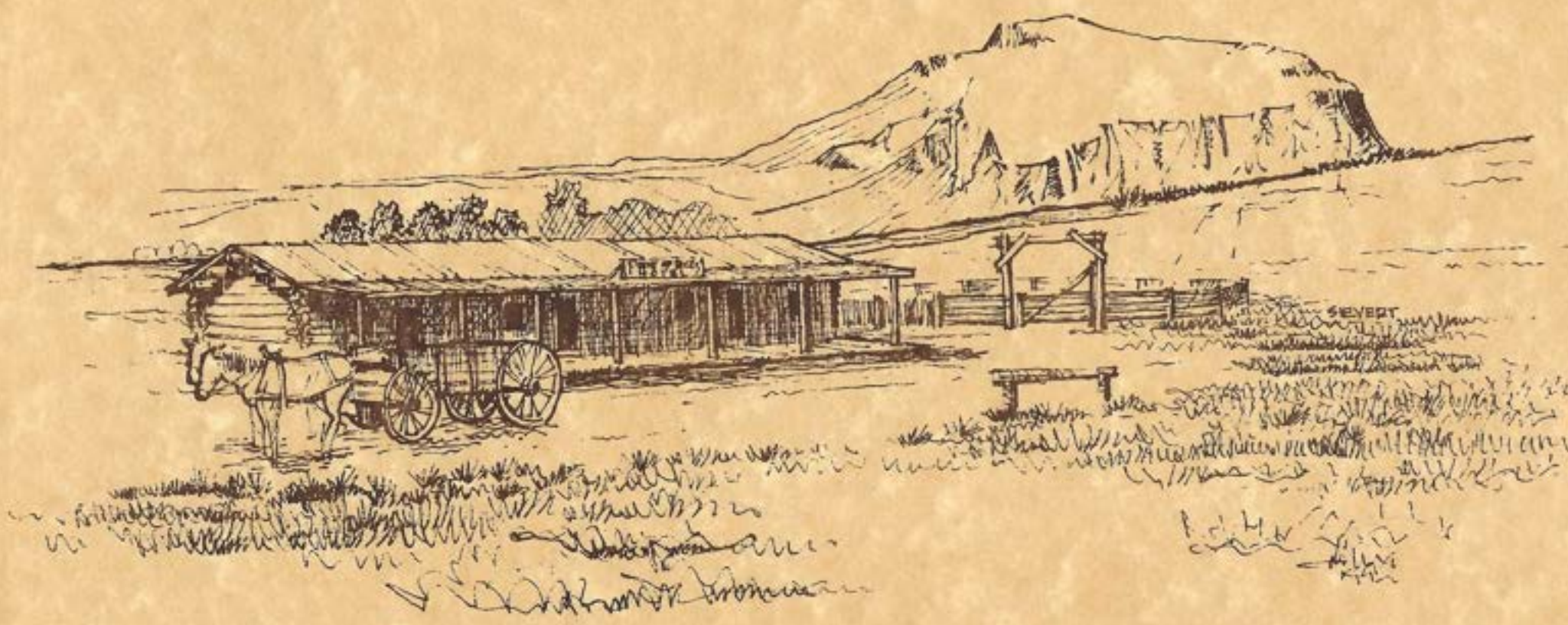
Yours respectfully,

J. A. NELSON, REFEREE"

After this fight Con Orem decided to fight no more but in 1866 at Helena he and O'Neil went at it again, with Con Orem the winner in 90 rounds.

In Helena, 1868, Con Orem, at age 33, knocked out John McArdle in 43 rounds, turned a hand spring, jumped over the ring ropes and returned to receive congratulations of his friends with scarcely a scratch upon him. In Butte, Montana, 1884, Con at the age of 49, fought a four round draw with Duncan McDonald, a heavyweight, who two years later fought a four round draw with John L. Sullivan at Denver, Colorado.

CON OREM certainly earned the title "THE LITTLE AMERICAN TIGER".



POINT-OF-ROCKS STAGE STATION

POINT OF ROCKS STAGE STATION

Kenneth R. Sievert
Dawn Mailey Sievert

It is the fall of 1863. The rebels have just beaten the federal troops at Chickamauga, but you haven't heard the news yet. You are a miner and you have just arrived at a place in Idaho Territory known as "Bannack": referred to as "Grasshopper Diggins" by some. At the Skinner Saloon a freighter says that you have arrived from the states too late; claims have been taken up in Bannack.....maybe you can find a spot to stake a claim at Alder Gulch where the big stampede took place last June. They have decided (after some discussion) to call the new Eldorado Virginia or Virginia City. It is a big bonanza alright.....

"How do I get to Virginia City?"

".....follow the stage road that starts across from the jail down the street.....go on up past Rattlesnake Ranch (you'll go past a big rock up on the ridge before you get to the ranch - you can't miss it)then you take the trail on over to the Beaverhead River where you will have to ford.....once east of the river just stay on the stage trail and you will come to a stage station at the Point of Rocks..... by the way you might want to sell your horse and take passage on the stage; it hasn't been too safe to travel alone of late..."

Maybe. I would illustrate the thought however that the histories of Bannack and Virginia City are forever intertwined. Besides their proximity in location and time, they were both conceived as permanent settlements, they were both dominated by the inhumanities practiced by the Plummer gang, both communities participated in the absolution of Plummer and his "Innocents", and both were joined by a road much traveled by both good and bad. These limited notes are about the Point of Rocks Stage Station - set forth in the interest of contributing to the understanding of that much traveled road.

The Point of Rocks Stage Station was one of the several stage stops along the road from Bannack to Virginia City. In 1863 there were Pete Daley's ranch, Loraine's ranch, Cold Spring ranch, Bob Dempsey's Cottonwood ranch, Point of Rocks, Stone's ranch, and Bill Bunton's Rattlesnake Ranch.¹ (There may have been more.) The Point of Rocks is named for the rock promontory that juts into the Beaverhead River - the rock that Sacajawea recognized as a swimming beaver. In 1863 the Point of Rocks was also known as Copeland's Ranch.² It was used as an overnight stop as well as a place to change horses. Peabody and Caldwell operated a stage line on the route as did A. J. Oliver and Co.³ By 1865 the Overland Coaches has expanded into Montana and also used the route.⁴

The Point of Rocks was host to two stages just prior to their robbery by Plummer's gang - the first carrying "Bummer Dan" and the second was a mail coach robbed by George Ives, Whisky Bill, and Bob Zachary.⁵ It was no doubt witness to other crimes in a violent era.^{6,7}

After the time of the violence, the Point of Rocks remained an important stop for many years becoming part of the Overland route from Corrinne to Helena^{4,8} and was used as a post office drop for a local stage between Dillon and Twin Bridges after the railroad was built to Dillon.⁹ Charlie Charlton first kept mail for his neighbors at his ranch about 1-1/2 miles from the stage stop, but he turned those duties over to Ben Pidgeon at the Point of Rocks Stage Stop after Ben married into the family.^{5,10} Ben Pidgeon was a political supporter of James G. Blaine and named his post office "Blaine".¹¹ In 1897 the post office was moved from the stage stop at the Point of Rocks to the nearby Mailey ranch when John Mailey was officially appointed postmaster for the area.¹²

Although the post office was no longer there, the stage stop continued for awhile but by 1906-1907 it was occupied by a caretaker: Charlie Hayes.¹³ Moses Smyth ran sheep in the area shortly after and lived at the station for four years.^{8,14} He eventually built a house across the road from the stage station.^{9,15} Thereafter, it was abandoned and rejected; little remains of the station today except some of the logs from which it was built.

A description of the stage stop is appropriate: it is located on the road between Twin Bridges and Dillon about 3/4 mile south of the bridge crossing the Beaverhead. After crossing the river you go up a hill, through a cut, and drop into a gentle coulee. The old stage station was just west of the road where the coulee flattens into the bottomland of the river. A few logs remain today but they are the relics of Moses Smyth's place. The stage station was 50-100 feet west of the remaining logs.¹⁶

The log structure itself (see sketch) had 2 large barns at each end for 20 horses each; with a post office and an eating and drinking area between.¹⁷ (Similar to the "connected" barns of Europe). At some time in its history, a painting was done on the rough lumber between the post office and dining room as payment by a bereft traveler for room and board. Much admired, it depicted a girl going to a brook to fetch water with her pitcher - a small deer was observing on one side.¹⁸ It has disappeared with the building.

In conclusion I have to say that the importance of the Point of Rocks is greater than its interesting history (Lewis and Clark's visit to the landmark, their inscription of August 10, 1805, Sacajawea's recognition of the rock and valley, etc.) The fact is that the general area thereabouts developed a sense of "community", a social value that is still evident among the residents of the area today. It was a social center replete with schools, cemetery, and entertainment. It has enjoyed a rich history and has contributed to a meaningful life style for its neighbors. May it continue to do so.

Postscript:

I am certain that area residents can enlarge on these remarks and I welcome them to do so. Names that were associated with the stage station not mentioned in the text include George Butts¹⁹ and Carl Swanstrum. It was also reported in one source (and reprinted in Pioneer Trails and Trails) that the stage building was originally built by Mr. Gutchough.²⁰

Watson²¹ and Gaffney's station were stage stops on the same route as Point of Rocks, in the 1880's. (Gaffney station was also called both Pollinger and Salisbury).

The Blaine Post Office at the Mailey ranch was discontinued in 1938²² and mail has been distributed by mail carrier from Twin Bridges since that time.⁷ The "Blaine" name is still used on the description of the mail route for that area by the post office.⁶

Many events of interest occurred near the Point of Rocks and the reader is referred to the footnotes for greater detail. One tragedy reported by Jean Davis in Shallow Diggins²⁴ involved the death of a number of Chinese while lost in a blizzard near the Point of Rocks.

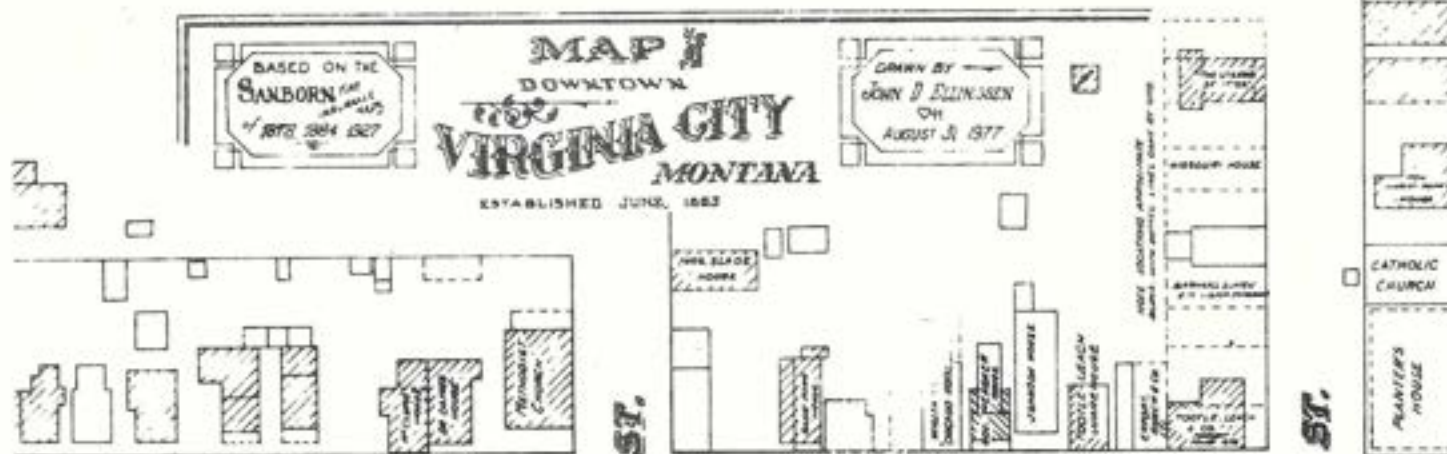
A favorite story among the Mailey children who lived at Blaine, (refer to interview with Mrs. Esther Mailey High) was of the bald-faced mare that they rode to school. The mare became so used to the routine that one morning the children got up late and found that the mare had gone to school without them - (on time, too.)

Caretaker Charley Hayes (also called the Barn Man) was known for his ability to make "bachelor's bread" and was the envy of the neighboring housewives. (Story noted by Mrs. Esther Mailey High)

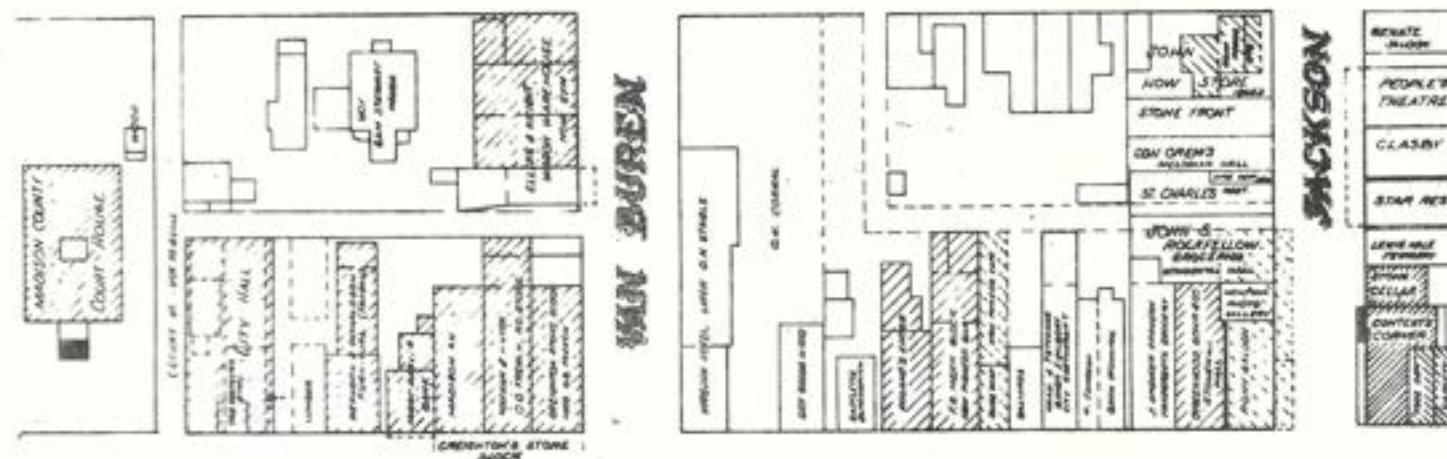
FOOTNOTES:

1. Dimsdale, Prof. Thomas J., Vigilantes of Montana, McKee Printing Co.; Butte, Montana; 1950, pp. 62, 63, 81, 82, 91, 102
2. Op. cit.; Dimsdale, pp. 63
3. Ibid.
4. Op. cit.; Dimsdale; pp. 254
5. Op. cit.; Dimsdale; pp. 63, 82
6. Madison County History Association, Pioneer Trails and Trails. Blueprint and Letter Co.; Great Falls, Montana; 1976; pp. 693
7. Pratt, Grace Roffey, "Old Beaverheads Point of Rocks", True West Magazine; Sept-Oct. 1972; pp. 40
8. Op. cit.; Dimsdale; Map bound in front of book drawn by Capt. D. H. Heap; U.S. Army, 1881
9. Personal interview; Mrs. Esther Mailey High, Twin Bridges, Montana; August 7, 1977

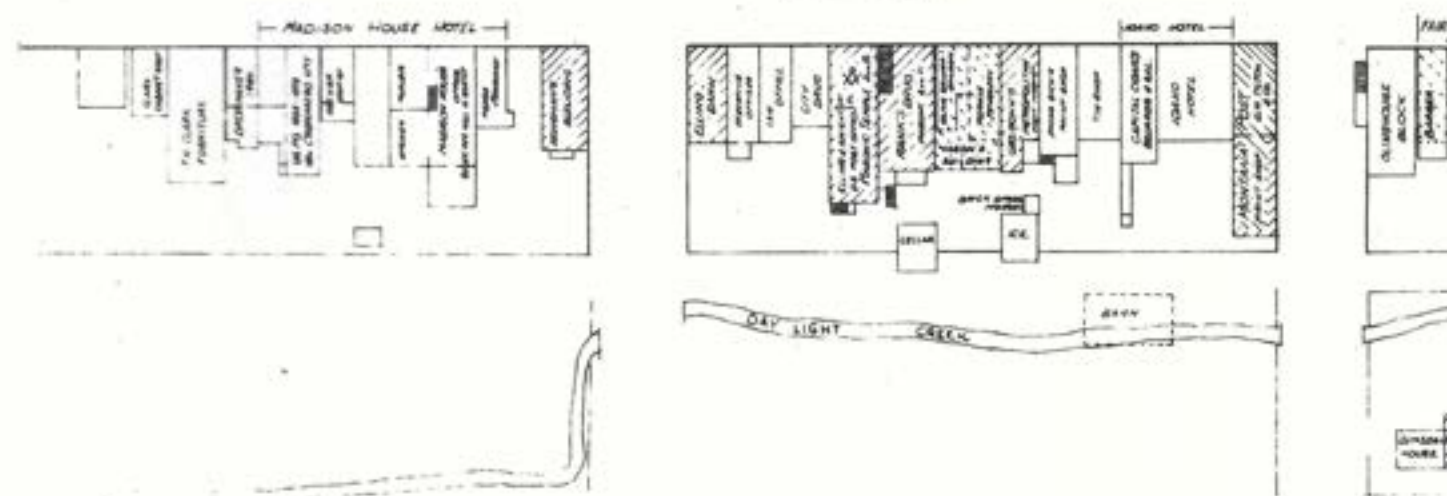
10. Ibid; Mrs. Esther Mailey High
11. Op. cit.; Pratt; pp. 69
12. Op. cit.; Mrs. Esther Mailey High
13. Ibid.
14. Op. cit.; Madison County History Association; pp. 682
15. Ibid.
16. Op. cit.; Mrs. Esther Mailey High
17. Op. cit.; Madison County History Association; pp. 628 and interview with Mrs. Esther Mailey High
18. Op. cit.; Mrs. Esther Mailey High
19. Op. cit.; Madison County History Association; pp. 571
20. Op. cit.; Pratt; pp. 40
21. Op. cit.; Dimsdale; map by D. H. Heap
22. Op. cit.; Mrs. Esther Mailey High
23. Personal interview, Mrs. Marge Nordberg Mailey, August 7, 1977. Mrs. Mailey is the current mail carrier on the "Twin Bridges-Blaine" route.
24. Davis, Jean; Shallow Diggins; Caxton Printers; Caldwell, Idaho; 1966; pp. 84



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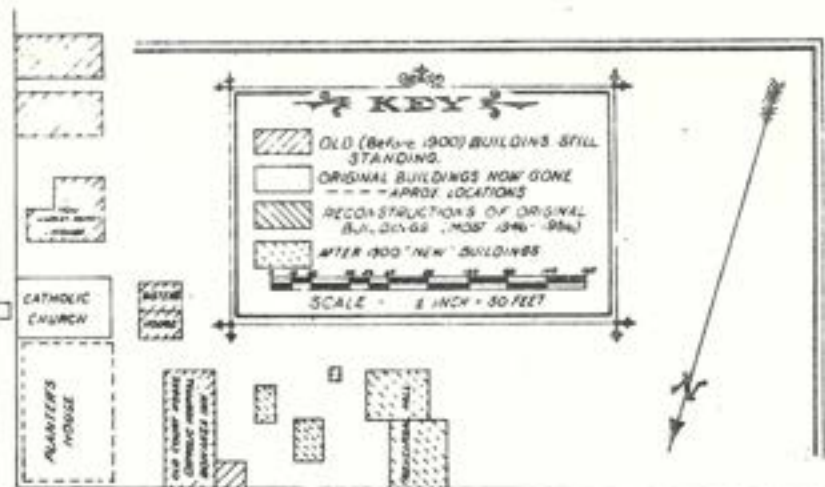


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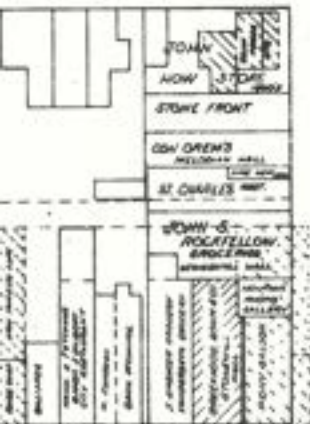




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