displaced or left flat broke by the war.

Others who came were prospectors who had not found their fortunes in the great strikes in Colorado or in the '49 Gold Rush to California. There were farmers, city dwellers, murderers and thieves, as well as men of the cloth. There were no military forces, no governments or law enforcement officers to repel the invaders. Those who resisted the white man's influx were nomads who had lived off the land and, in turn, respected it. The odds were stacked against these disunited natives.

Those who came left indelible marks on the virgin territory. Both early and late, many mining camps had sections called "Chinatown," "Finntown," "Germantown" or "Little Italy." Inevitably, conflicts, misunderstandings and prejudices arose.

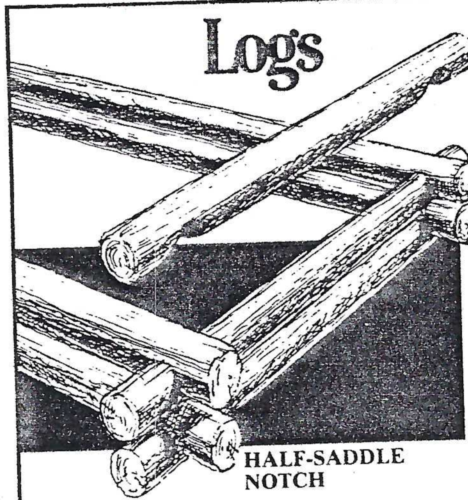
They arrived on foot, horseback or mule, driving an ox team or by steamboat up the Missouri River to Fort Benton. Later, after rails were laid, they came by train. Many left their families and loved ones behind, planning to send for them after fortunes were made. Some of them never saw those dear to them again.

The early settlements were crude and disorganized, offering few amenities. Those buildings essential to life were constructed first—log structures to provide shelter. Soon after came saloons, the basic source of food and drink, information and often a "stake" (financial backing for the prospector). Some saloons also provided sleeping accommodations. To meet the new community's demands, a blacksmith's shop, livery stable and a general store followed. Later, as the towns and camps became "tamed," partially because of the arrival of women and the birth of children, both churches and schools were demanded and built.

Supplies were often short and prices sometimes astronomical. Riots in towns short on food—such as the one in Virginia City in 1863—punctuated the period.

The seemingly endless precious metals were exhausted within a few months, or within a few years. The camps and towns were abandoned as their inhabitants followed rumors of other strikes. Many of these sites have literally disappeared. Others almost

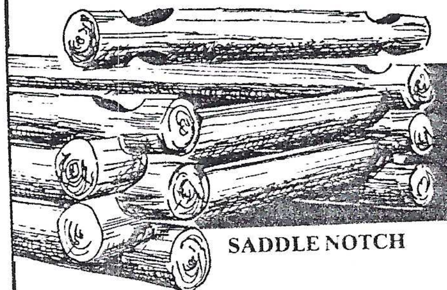
Logs



HALF-SADDLE NOTCH

At first glance, most log cabins appear similar. Yet distinct differences exist. In cabins built in the mining camps, various types of log notching can be found, as well as variations in the shapes of the logs used. Round logs were most common; the space between them was infilled with mud or clay from the stream banks. This chinking helped keep out the wind. Later, cement was mixed with the clay to form a harder infilling. In more careful construction, the tops and bottoms of the logs were hand-hewn or shaped with an ax to make the surfaces flat, thus ensuring a better fit. In other cases, the logs were hewn to a square or rectangular cross section, much like a railroad tie.

Log notching reflected not only the shape of the log, but also the builder's ethnic background. A common technique used for round logs was saddle notching (which resembles the "Lincoln Log" child's toy). This technique was

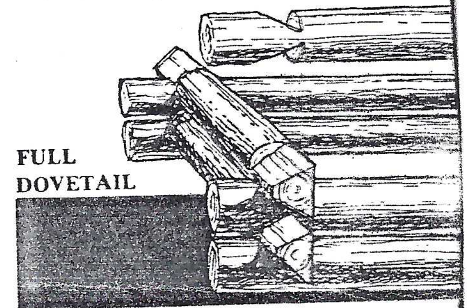


SADDLE NOTCH

used in constructing the Bannack jail. A variation of this, also used on round logs, was half notching, in which a notch was cut on either the top or bottom of the log, but not both. The blockhouse at Fort Logan exhibits the half-notching technique. Hewn logs were often put up using either the half-notching technique or the half dovetail. Examples of the half dovetail can be found in Bannack as well as on the St. Mary's Mission Church in Stevensville.

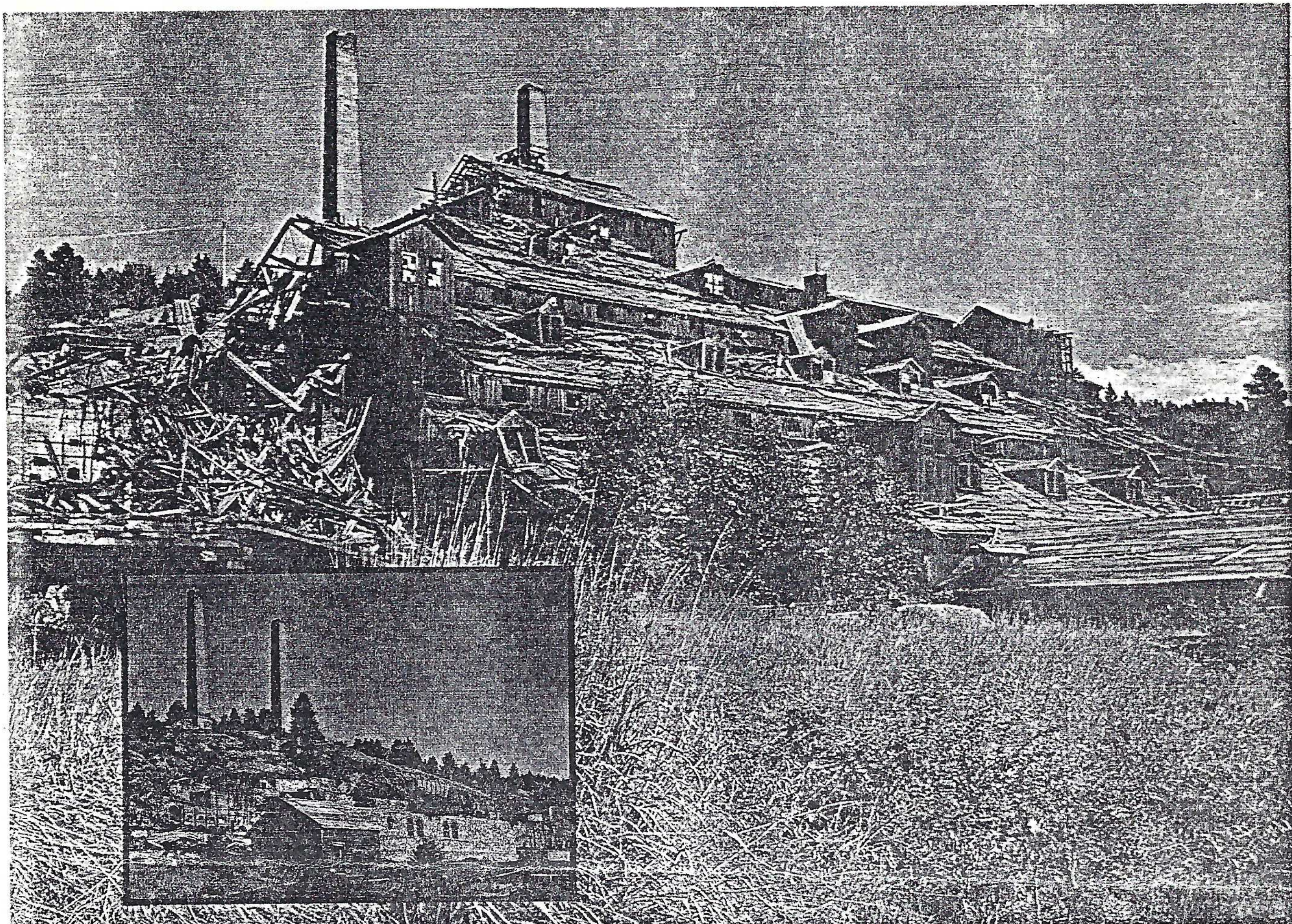
As soon as a sawmill could be built, cut lumber—siding, studs, joists, beams and planking—was available, enabling builders to proceed more rapidly and easily. The structures were built without sheathing beneath the siding and there was no time for the lumber to cure or dry properly, so the siding would shrink and air would enter.

Of course, builders didn't use



FULL DOVETAIL

insulation in these frame buildings and interior walls were often covered with newspaper or wallpaper over a canvas or burlap backing. In a letter to his family in Utica, N.Y., a minister stationed in the silver mining camp of Granite in 1889 described the experience of watching the walls (wallpaper) billow and undulate as a strong wind blew through his rented room. He even saw the rug lift off the floor. This not-so-pleasant experience has been confirmed in discussions with former extension employees of Montana State University who recalled similar happenings when spending the night in the old hotel at Norris. The two-story frame structure, now gone, lacked both sheathing and insulation beneath the siding; when the wind blew, it came through the walls and it was common to retire for the night with one's clothing on. These latter experiences in the Norris Hotel occurred in the first half of this century.



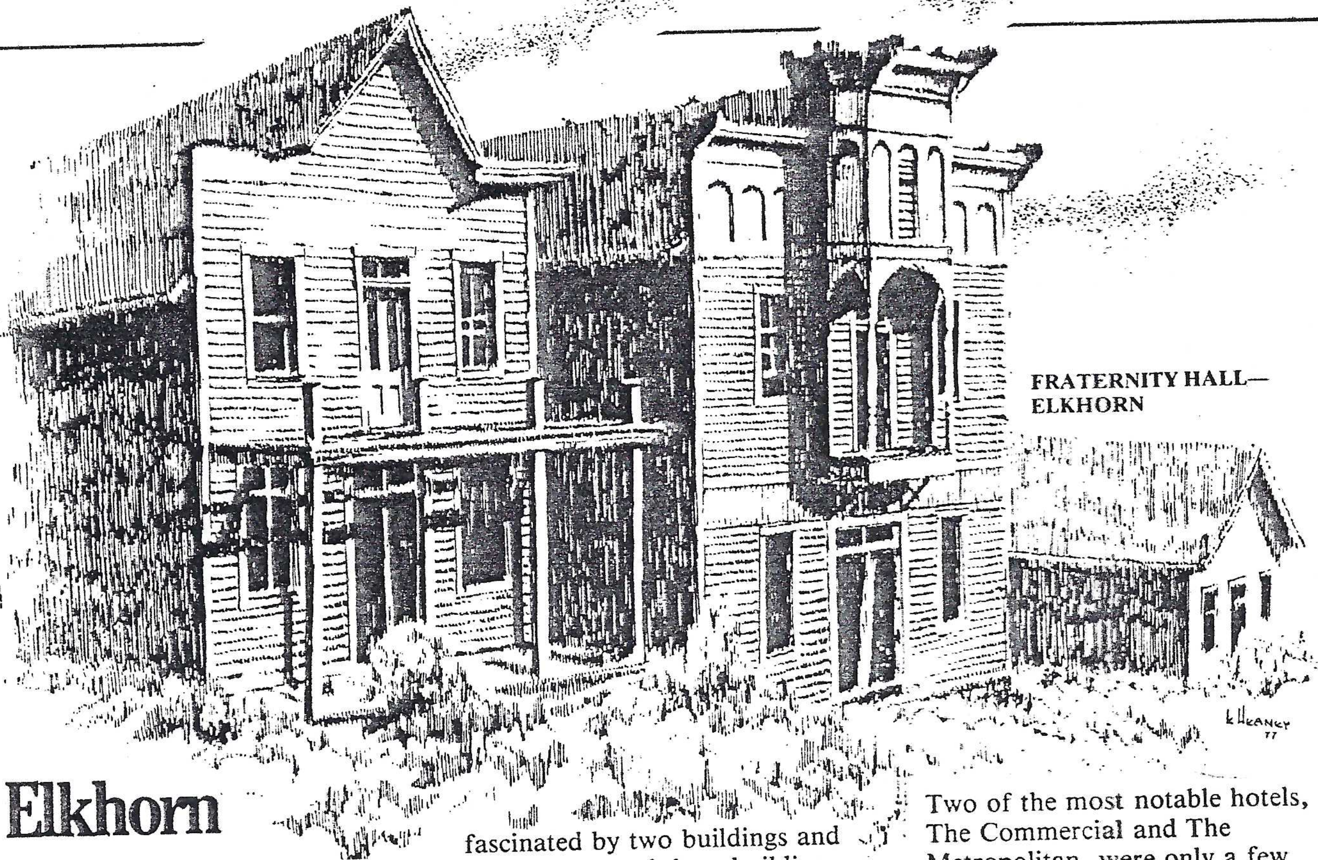
Situated at the base of Granite Mountain, two small communities—Rumsey and Clark—each had a large stamp mill. The most impressive was the huge, bimetallic, 100-stamp mill at Clark (above), built to process ore from Granite. Stair stepping down the mountain, the multistoried structure was an imposing sight, with its twin masonry stacks silhouetted against the sky. It was burned in 1967 (inset); now only the stacks and masonry foundation remain (photos: John DeHaas, Jr.).

Montana's Fabulous Ghost Towns by John DeHaas, Jr.

graphics by Kevin Heaney

PROBABLY the most fascinating era of Montana's history is that unsettled period before and immediately following statehood: the mining era. Man's struggle for riches; a new lifestyle; a constant battle against the elements in a harsh land; the real (and sometimes imagined) danger from Indians, claim jumpers, road agents and gamblers; merchants whose prices were often beyond belief, and, far too often, the failure to find the dreamed-of fortune were all factors that shaped life in the northern Rockies.

A vast area, this land known as the Montana Territory had much mineral wealth to offer to those who had the fortitude and luck to locate its precious metals. And come the seekers of wealth did, from all parts of a young nation, as well as from abroad. They came from Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Georgia and Texas. They came from Ireland, Germany, Wales, Norway and other Scandinavian countries, Slovakian countries and from China. Their numbers included loyal Unionites, Southern sympathizers and deserters from both armies, for the nation was torn apart in the early 1860s by the Civil War. Captured Confederate soldiers were "banished to Montana," after pledging not to rejoin their Army. The post-Civil War years brought many



Elkhorn

Between two mining camps that thrived and became cities—Butte and Helena—lies Boulder, present-day county seat of Jefferson County. Boulder was the hub of a large mining district and a few of its numerous mining camps still live on; others have been deserted for years or have entirely vanished. Today, only one brick stack of the original three stands at the site of the large mill at Wickes. Other camps in the region included Gregory, where the first mill was built; Corbin, Clancy, Jefferson City, Lump City, Comet, Cataract and Basin. But probably the most famous of these is Elkhorn, due east of Boulder.

Peter Wye discovered the Elkhorn Mine about 1870, but the yield did not warrant full operation until the 1880s. Gold and silver mining peaked here in the 1890s, so Elkhorn is one of Montana's later mining camps. Reportedly, the town had 2,500 residents, while 500 woodcutters, mostly French and Norwegian, were employed in the area and supplied wood for the town and the mill.

When I first visited Elkhorn in the early 1960s, I was particularly fascinated by two buildings and the mill. One of these buildings, situated on the north side of Main Street, housed a two-lane bowling alley. The lanes were delineated by long boards laid lengthwise in the building.

Across the street stands Fraternity Hall—probably the most photographed structure in any of Montana's ghost towns. The two-story frame building has a large hall on the first floor, with a raised stage at the rear. Social events, Christmas programs, high school graduation and plays were conducted here. The second floor contains small anterooms and a large hall used for lodge meetings and dances. Of special interest is the exterior balcony projecting from the second floor. The balcony is centrally located and extends up and above the cornice of the false-fronted structure. The front facade presents an unusual but pleasing composition with the balcony and its arches.

Next to Fraternity Hall stands a two-story frame building with a porch across the front. The building's first floor was a saloon, with a hotel on the second. Across Main Street and farther up the hill stood rooming houses and hotels. Two of the most notable hotels, The Commercial and The Metropolitan, were only a few doors apart. Adjacent buildings were rooming houses, saloons and a barber/bath building. The Hotel Elkhorn stood on the upper end of the block from Fraternity Hall. Main Street continued up past the mill, then curved back on itself as it climbed to the top of the hill where the Elkhorn graveyard is found.

Although it was a relatively late camp, Elkhorn lacks the more permanent structures of brick or stone found in Virginia City and Marysville. Today, fewer than 50 buildings remain. The bowling alley and mill are both gone and one of the hotels has lost its porch. Each year, nature does a little more damage. But this is slow, while fire and man's destruction are rapid. Most of the artifacts in the buildings disappeared long ago, only to surface in antique shops. Even doorknobs and cast iron hinges have been taken from Elkhorn's buildings, as well as from buildings in other ghost towns. I can only urge visitors to let what is there stay so that others might yet enjoy the flavor of a bygone chapter in Montana's history.

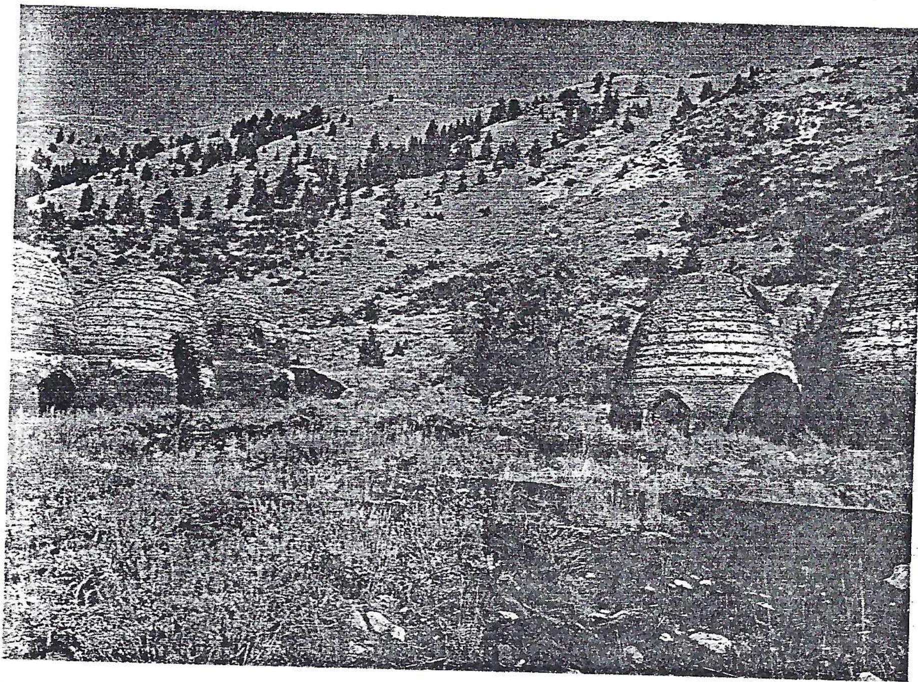
died, but today still retain a few inhabitants. A few survived, or were revived in later years to live again, either temporarily or permanently.

A few of the mining camps that began like all the others survived these trying years and grew into prosperous cities; probably the most outstanding of these survivors are Butte and Helena. Communities such as Dillon, Philipsburg and Lewistown had a far more stable base than mining; they served as transportation terminals for the mining camps scattered in the nearby mountains.

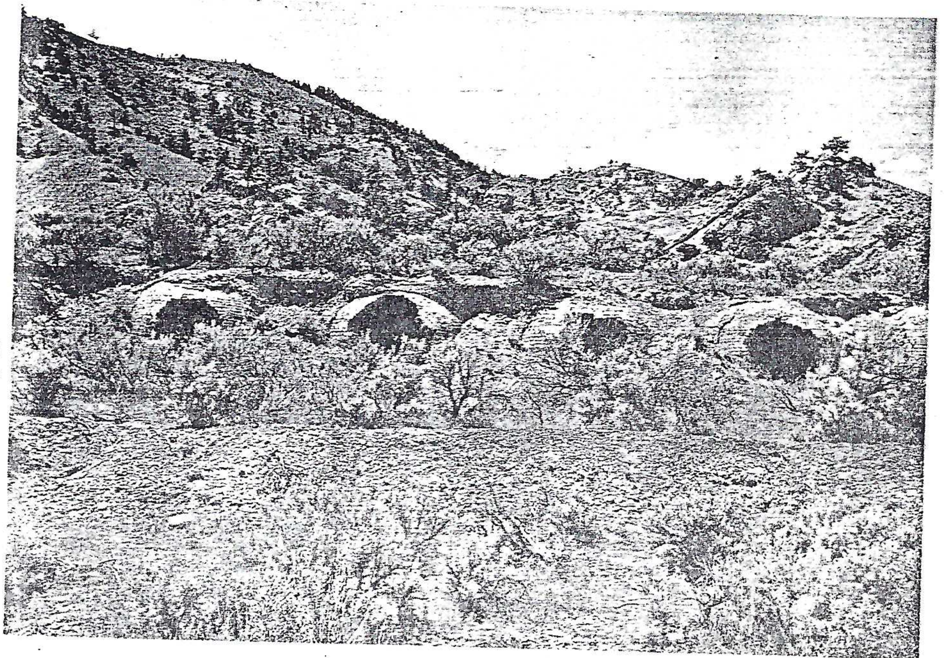
Camps like Bannack, Montana City, Diamond City, Blackhawk, Blackpine, Hecla, Kendall, Cooledge, Elkhorn, Comet, Iron Rod, Iron Age, Silver City, Hassel, Maiden, Gilt Edge, Landusky, Zortman and a hundred others were a colorful part of Montana.

In my travels, I have met families bringing their children and grandchildren to see the mining camp where a grandparent or great-grandparent had lived and worked. They often say something like, "We wanted the children to see this town before it disappeared completely."

It is impossible to know what will be left for future generations. My hope is that the reader will explore and enjoy the numerous mining camps almost in his or her backyard. Leave what remains intact; instead, take away with you a memory, a sketch, photograph or movie. These can be enjoyed by you and your family and friends for years to come. Let the rest stay there for others to enjoy.

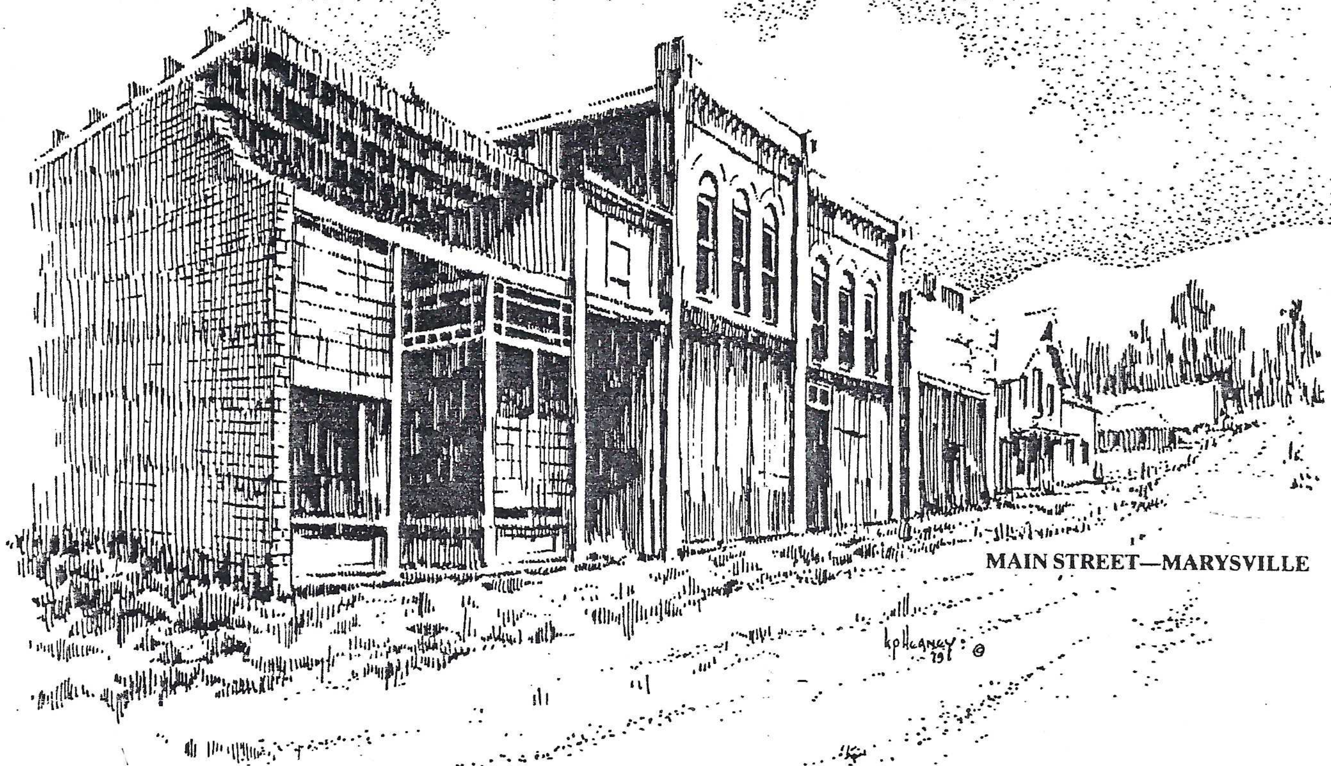


An interesting development of the mining era was the various charcoal kilns, remains of which can be seen near Clancy, Wolf Creek and Jefferson City. The kilns pictured here are at Melrose, on Canyon Creek between Glendale and Divide. Clustered together, they have an almost villagelike appearance. It is quite an experience to view these beautifully constructed kilns—they stand 15-20 feet high, with a pointed arch opening approximately six feet high. One can but speculate on the difficulty involved in transporting material and craftsmen to such remote locations. Stepping inside a charcoal kiln is a treat in itself. The walls are blackened and the backyard barbeque smell still remains (photo: John DeHaas, Jr.).



First came gold and silver, then copper and coal. Towns or mining camps such as Chestnut, Storrs, Aldrich, Timberline and Electric (originally known as Horr) were coal mining camps. Of special interest is the serpentine rock work serving as support and openings for many of the brick coke ovens. Ruins of coke ovens can be seen up Trail Creek or at Cokedale, both situated east of Bozeman; the ovens at Electric are pictured here (photo: John DeHaas, Jr.).

Marysville



MAIN STREET—MARYSVILLE

The history of Marysville, 17 miles northwest of Helena, is closely associated with Thomas Cruse, who arrived in the Silver Creek area in 1868. Here, he worked a placer claim and speculated on the vein of ore farther up the mountain. He sank a tunnel on what was later to be named Marysville Mountain and filed a claim Jan. 1, 1876. He named his mine the Drumlummon, after the parish in which he was born in Ireland. Cruse worked his mine for only six years and then sold out to an English company for $1.5 million. The new owners expanded the operation and the Drumlummon became Montana's greatest producer, paying $15 million in dividends to its stockholders.

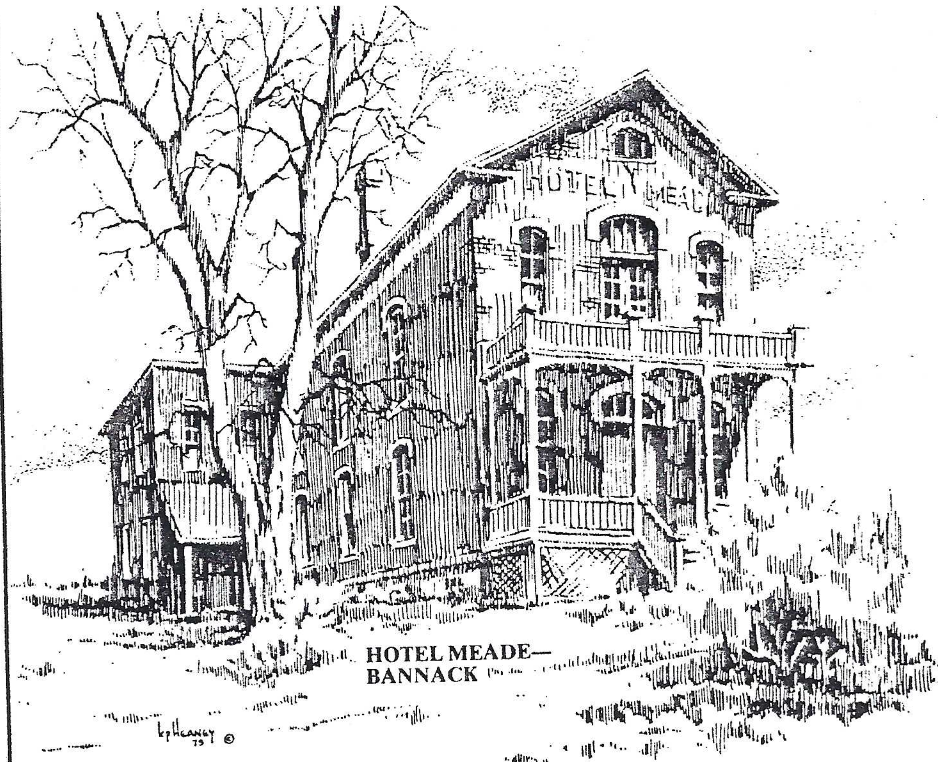
Cruse moved to Helena where he established a bank; he also contributed generously to the building fund for the Cathedral of St. Helena. He purchased Capitol Building bonds when nobody else would. These are impressive accomplishments—more so when you consider Cruse was illiterate and his wife had taught him to write his own name.

In 1887—at the peak of production for the mines in and around Marysville—the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern railroads competed to see which could first reach Marysville with a rail line from Helena. Northern Pacific succeeded and entered Marysville on a large curved trestle. A train depot was constructed on Second Street and the main Northern Pacific line and three sidetracks were situated on the north side of the depot. All of the lines terminated in a turntable on the west side of Main Street. The depot, tracks, turntable and trestle are all gone.

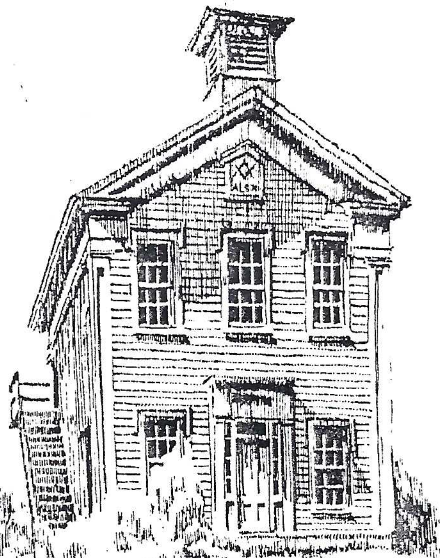
Gone, too, are the wooden two-story Bon Ton House and other rooming houses on Main Street, saloons, drug stores, a grocery, a meat market, offices, a bakery and the masonry McKenrick Block that occupied the corner of First and Main streets. Also gone from the west side of Main Street are Dillon's Livery, an opera house and a dentist's office.

The Drumlummon Mining Corp., Ltd., built a 50-stamp mill in Marysville in 1884; in 1886, the company built a 60-stamp mill nearby. Both mills are now gone; the last was destroyed by arson in 1971.

Marysville's two churches, Methodist (see illustration in "The Editor's Column") and Catholic, still stand. They are both in the same block, facing west onto Grand Street. Across the street stood a two-story wooden public school. Fire damaged part of the building and it is now a one-story structure used as a museum. Although many vacant and deserted buildings remain in Marysville, the town still has permanent residents.



HOTEL MEADE—
BANNACK



MASONIC HALL—
BANNACK

Bannack

Life was difficult in the early mining camps. A letter from a woman who spent the winter of 1862-63 in Bannack with her husband probably best described life in the new town—a place with no church, no local government and no law and order. She wrote of having a two-room log cabin, a building more elaborate than others in the area, built at a cost of $400. She told also of her desire to have a wood floor and a cookstove, but was proud she had learned to cook in the fireplace.

At that time, Bannack was booming. It became the first seat of government for the newly created Montana Territory, a distinction it lost the following year to Virginia City. Even though the great strike in the Alder Gulch area drained away many of Bannack's inhabitants, Bannack continued to develop.

In 1874, a two-story frame structure was built to house an odd pair of neighbors. Masonic Lodge No. 16, A.F.&A.M., occupied the second floor, with access gained to the lodge room by an outside staircase. The first floor housed a one-room public school with cloakrooms—one for boys and one for girls—flanking the entrance door.

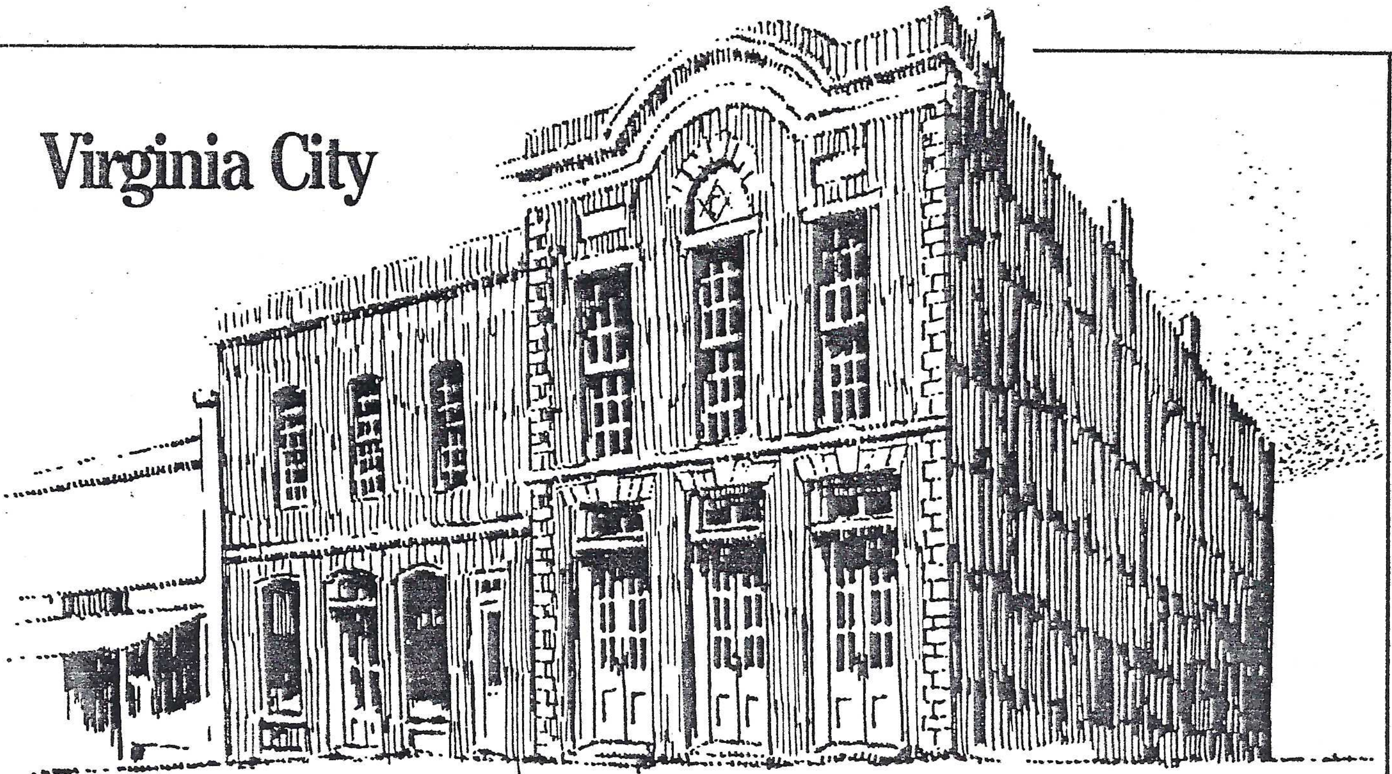
Another noteworthy building in the town is the "Carpenter Gothic" Church. This small frame building was constructed in 1877 by the Methodist circuit rider minister, W. W. "Brother Van" Van Orsdel, when townspeople feared attack by Chief Joseph. A two-story masonry courthouse had been built in 1876 to serve as headquarters for Beaverhead County government and it was here Bannack's women and children sought shelter during the emergency. Bannack lost the county seat to nearby Dillon in 1881; the courthouse became the Meade Hotel and served in this capacity for many years.

Mining continued on a reduced scale in Bannack until the late 1890s when the dredge boats reworked Grasshopper Creek and the town experienced another brief boom period.

Many buildings have disappeared, but enough remain to suggest what the town was once like. Bannack is a National Historic Landmark, and a state park supervised by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Both federal and state monies have gone into acquisition of privately owned property in the town, as well as for stabilization of some buildings and restoration of others.

To walk the dusty streets, smell the sagebrush and visually explore an early mining camp that has been maintained—but not converted into a commercial venture—is a real treat. The easily accessible historic site is a "must" for Montanans and visitors alike.

Virginia City



MASONIC HALL—VIRGINIA CITY

A small group of prospectors made the second "big strike" in southwestern Montana, this time in Alder Gulch. The find was made in early June, 1863, and caused a stampede from Bannack when word of "color in the pan" reached it. Temporary shelters were quickly thrown up along Alder Creek. A miners' meeting was conducted and a committee appointed to work out the rules and regulations for this new mining district. The gulch's population was to swell to about 10,000 persons within a year.

Although Virginia City, the biggest town in Alder Gulch, held and then lost the distinction of being capital of the Montana Territory, it became—and still is—the seat of Madison County. A large elaborate courthouse was constructed in 1875 (see back cover) and it is the oldest courthouse still in use in Montana. The handsome brick structure was designed by Loren B. Olds, the architect who also designed the Beaverhead County Courthouse at Bannack.

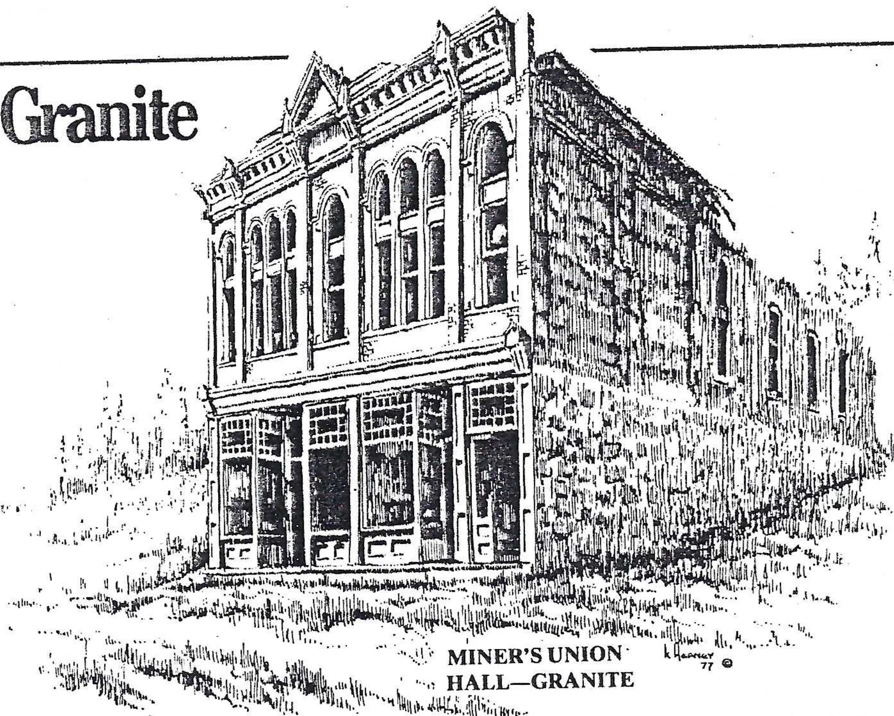
Virginia City has been more fortunate than Bannack, because it lived on even after most of its residents went off to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Many fine examples of masonry structures can be found here—for instance, the Livery Stable on Wallace Street, Viginina City's main thoroughfare. Built in 1863 as a store, it probably was the first stone structure in the growing mining camp. The vigilantes are reputed to have met here following their organization in 1863.

Another noteworthy building is the two-story stone Masonic Temple, built in 1867. Public records reveal the Masonic Lodge was recessed several times to allow members to participate in vigilante actions. However, not all vigilantes were Masons, as Thomas J. Dimsdale wrote in "The Vigilantes of Montana": "Merchants, miners, mechanics and professional men alike joined in the movement." Such citizen response was no doubt necessary in a rough and hard time when lawmen, such as Sheriff Henry Plummer and his deputies, were themselves road agents, thieves and murderers.

Life was raw and tough in these camps and pleasures were sought in saloons and from sporting events. Boxing was extremely popular and both Virginia City and Helena hosted numerous contests. Records indicate there were six professional fighters in Virginia City in 1864-65. One of them, John Condle "Con" Orem, claimed to be an American champion. In one of the world's longest fights, Orem fought Hugh O'Neil—who was four inches taller and 42 pounds heavier—to a draw. Conducted the afternoon of Jan. 2, 1865, the fight lasted more than 5½ hours and went 185 rounds. The next year, the two men again fought, this time in Helena, and Orem was the winner after 90 rounds.

Among its miners, merchants and adventurers, Virginia City had a number of well-educated citizens, like Dimsdale, editor of the Montana Post, and Col. Wilbur Fisk Sanders, a lawyer who became a vigilante, legislator, businessman and politician with a national reputation. Col. Sanders served as prosecuting attorney at the Dec. 21, 1863, trial of George Ives, one of the most notorious members of Plummer's gang. Later, he built a fine one-and-one-half story frame house on Idaho Street for his bride.

Granite



MINER'S UNION HALL—GRANITE

Known as the "Silver Queen City of the West," Granite, a few miles southeast of Philipsburg, was a bustling town in the late 1880s and early '90s. Silver had been discovered around Philipsburg in 1865, but it was not until 1875 that the Granite Mountain lode claim was filed. And it was not until November 1882 that expanded exploration, financed by St. Louis investors, revealed the rich silver bonanza. By 1892, Granite's population was between 2,500-3,000 persons, while the nearby communities of Rumsey and Hasmark were believed to have a combined population that large.

In summer 1888, the Granite Miner's Union was organized and on June 13, 1889, a Miner's Union parade was conducted, followed by a ball in the Knights of Labor Hall celebrating the Union's first anniversary. Union members made plans to build their own hall on the upper part of Main Street and the handsome, three-story masonry structure was dedicated on New Year's Eve—Dec. 31, 1890. A "Grand Dedication Ball" was held, with "an invitation to the public, tickets admitting Gents & Ladies, $3.00."

Of interest is a portion of the dedication speech made by Union President James A. Gilfillan: "The Union does not debate politics, religion or public opinion in their hall, and their meetings are confined strictly to the interests of the working men."

The first story was constructed of native granite and the upper two floors of red brick. The building was set into the hillside. From the raised stage in the main auditorium on the second floor, a door led out to grade level of the hillside. There were no fixed seats, since the auditorium was also used for dances and its maple "spring floor" was reportedly among the very best. Concerts, theatrical performances and other celebrations made the building the town's social center. The building had a decorative cast iron cornice, columns and pier covers, as well as small square panes of colored glass in the transom windows of the first floor.

In the 1890s, a series of wooden buildings, ranging from one to three stories, flanked the Miner's Union Hall. These were rooming houses, saloons, restaurants and one saloon/gambling/lunchroom. Across the street stood a small metal building that housed the Granite Mountain Star, a weekly newspaper. In the gully behind the Star was Chinatown. Also in this general area were several "female boarding houses." These structures are now gone, as are the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches. Most of the streets have disappeared and their names—Elk, Broadway, Bell—are but traces on old maps.

Magnolia Avenue can still be found; however, it is impossible not to speculate as to how a street of that name came to be situated on top of Granite Mountain. Was someone longing for a Southern home? A few wooden dwellings remain on Magnolia, along with Granite's only stone house. Constructed before 1889, it has a steep gable roof and dormers. An outside staircase at the rear of the building led to a platform that connected the doorway of the upper level with the hillside and road above. There was no interior connection with the ground floor. The house was built for Thomas A. Weir, superintendent of the Granite Mountain Mining Co. Weir came to Granite from Leadville, Colo. He was a deeply religious man, active in his church, and instigated many changes in mining operations to improve safety and working conditions for miners. He also inaugurated a six-day work week for the Granite crews.

The Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society obtained title to the Miner's Union Hall and the mill superintendent's house from the Antonioli family and presented the buildings to the Recreation and Parks Division (now Parks Division) of the Department of Fish and Game (now Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks) in 1974. Unfortunately, a series of hard winters took their toll and the Miner's Union Hall now lies in ruin, testimony to the old saying "Too little and too late" in the story of preservation.

The once-prosperous silver mining camp of Granite collapsed with the Silver Panic of 1893. A brief period of revival occurred, but Granite never recovered. Today, little physical evidence remains of the numerous homes, saloons, rooming houses, barber shops, blacksmith shops and hotels with colorful names such as The Metropolitan, The California, The Ruby and The St. Louis Lodge. ■