EMBERS OF THE SOCIAL CITY:
BUSINESS, CONSUMPTION, AND MATERIAL CULTURE
IN VIRGINIA CITY, MONTANA, 1863 – 1945

By
LAURA JOANNE ARATA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

Washington State University
Department of History

May 2009
To the Faculty of Washington State University

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of LAURA JOANNE ARTA find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

______________________________
Orlan J Svingen, Chair

______________________________
Roberta McCoy

______________________________
Jeff Sanders
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................................................iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS..................................................................................................................vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...................................................................................................................vii
INTRODUCTION..................................................................................................................................x
CHAPTER
  2. “Shaking Gold out of the Sagebrush:” The Capitol Era, 1865 – 1875............................33
  3. “A Railroad to No Place:” The Buford Store Era, 1878 – 1905.................................74
  5. “Anything but Progress:” The Early Bovey Era, 1945 – 1955.................................176
CONCLUSION.................................................................................................................................206
BIBLIOGRAPHY..............................................................................................................................211
APPENDIX
  A. Bertrand Cargo Inventory, 1865.................................................................227
  B. John P. Rogers General Store Records, 1865 – 1866.................................229
  C. Petchner Mercantile Company Records, 1866 – 1868.................................230
  D. Virginia City General Store (Unidentified) Records, 1869............................231
  E. Tilton and Barber Company Records, 1878..................................................232
  F. Mrs. O. D. French’s Ladies’ Bazar Advertisement, 1881.................................233
  G. Melville Mercantile Company Records, 1892..................................................236
  H. Buford Mercantile Company Records and Advertisements, 1898 – 1922...........237
  I. McGovern Dry Goods Store Photographs and Advertisements, 1912 – 1945........241
  J. Robert Vickers Company Advertisements, 1912 – 1930...................................248
  K. Jacob Albright Advertisements, 1912 – 1930................................................250
  L. Handley’s Resources of Madison County Business Listings, 1872...............252
  M. Pacific Coast Business Directories Virginia City Listings, 1867 – 1915.............258
EMBERS OF THE SOCIAL CITY:  
BUSINESS, CONSUMPTION, AND MATERIAL CULTURE  
IN VIRGINIA CITY, MONTANA, 1863 – 1945  

Abstract  

Laura Joanne Arata, M.A.  
Washington State University  
May 2009  

Chair: Dr. Orlan J. Svingen  

Virginia City, Montana, was established in 1863 following the discovery of gold in Alder Gulch. Although it had served as territorial capital of Montana from 1865 – 1875, it seemed destined to become a ghost town by 1880. From a boomtown nicknamed the Social City, the community’s fortunes declined as placer mines played out. Bypassed by the railroad, the town remained isolated and was served by stagecoaches well into the 1920s. The businesses that remained operational through the hard times speak to the social fabric that gave Virginia City a sense of legitimacy through times when many felt it had no future.

The Buford Mercantile Company (1878 – 1920s) and the McGovern Dry Goods Store (1908 – 1945) represent two of Virginia City’s most recognizable businesses and frame the period stretching between the loss of the territorial capital and the town’s discovery by Great Falls rancher and state politician Charles A. Bovey in 1944. In the midst of finding ways to survive changing and increasingly difficult times, Virginia City residents often came face to face with national events including entry into the two World Wars and the Influenza pandemic of 1918. Certain episodes in Virginia City history, including the China War of 1881, played an important but often poorly understood role in the town’s memory. The Chinese were, like the Lemhi Shoshone Indians who frequently visited the town, often marginalized in the retelling of
Virginia City history when the town gained new life as a tourist attraction—what many affectionately came to call a living ghost town.

The basis of this study lies in primary source documents, including business ledgers, shipping receipts, advertisements, correspondence, and Virginia City structures. Manuscript collections at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Montana, contained valuable information. Magazines collected by store owners Hannah and Mary McGovern, as well as remaining inventory, were invaluable in reconstructing the history of the McGovern Dry Goods Store. Collections at the Thompson-Hickman County Library and McFarland Curatorial Center in Virginia City, Montana, provided additional clues. Virginia City newspapers, including the *Montana Post* and *The Madisonian*, helped to fill in gaps in the historical record.
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Location of Montana Indian tribes prior to the fur trade era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The rivers of Montana, showing the Three Forks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Alder Gulch in 1863, showing “fourteen mile city” and the surrounding area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Early transportation routes to Virginia City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Land area claimed and ceded by the Blackfeet in 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Land area claimed by the Lemhi Shoshone in 1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Virginia City in 1868, looking east on Wallace Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>A Chinese resident on the corner of Wallace and Van Buren Streets circa 1870s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Virginia City after 1875, looking east on Wallace Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>A busy day on Wallace Street sometime after 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>A Chinese merchant in the doorway of his shop on Wallace Street circa 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>“Mr. Brown of Shopless Town” advertisement, 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Hannah and Mary McGovern in their store on Wallace Street, 1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>“Corsets Conforming with Style” advertisement, 1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Joe Stern’s Madison Furniture Company advertisement, 1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Lower Wallace Street circa 1940s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Mary McGovern standing in the doorway of the sisters’ store circa 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Jack and Jill Tasty Freez grand opening advertisement, 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Map of Virginia City historic sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I arrived in Virginia City for the first time in May of 2007, a member of the first Washington State University field school. I spent my first days in the Social City inside a tiny, cold, and dimly lit room in an unassuming little building on Wallace Street. It was in those first days that I became captivated by the history within the layers of Virginia City. Beneath a patchwork of linoleum scraps and rosin paper were newspapers, nailed carefully into the floor. In the walls, dozens of layers of wallpaper, burlap, fabric, cardboard, paint, magazine pages and muslin covered logs set in place in 1863. As I began researching the residents and business owners behind the names of Virginia City’s aging buildings—Buford, McGovern, Kraemer, Daems—it became increasingly clear that the social fabric of Virginia City was composed of as many layers as the structures themselves, and many had yet to be uncovered.

There are many people to whom I owe my gratitude. Dr. Orlan Svingen guided me through the past two years of graduate school, mostly with patience and has helped me develop skills I did not even realize I possessed. Along the way, he encouraged me to seek new limits as both a student and an individual. Through triumphs and tears—and there have been many instances of both in the last two years—he has kept me focused on producing research that was both balanced and meaningful. His insistence that because his name would be associated with my work served as motivation to continually out-do myself...which I’m fairly certain is how I ended up with a thesis that is one chapter and a hundred and fifty pages or so longer than I first proposed. Perhaps more important than strengthening my writing technique, improving my research skills, and expanding the limits of my knowledge, he has helped me understand the real value of hard work and thorough examination.
I must also thank Dr. Rob McCoy for guiding me through two field schools and multiple classes, all of which have been instrumental in my growth as a student, and for asking questions that I never would have thought to pose. Dr. Jeff Sanders kept me focused on considering the topic in a broad context and contributed valuable insight as the only member of my committee that had never actually been to Virginia City. When he does finally get there to experience it for himself, I hope it feels a little familiar.

Research into the primary sources about Virginia City would not have been possible without the staff at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Montana, who quite literally pulled hundreds of linear feet worth of archival material from their shelves over the course of a week and averted major crises in the form of jammed copiers, mysteriously labeled microform reels, and fragile documents. I also owe a great deal of thanks to Joanne Erdall of the Thompson-Hickman Library in Virginia City, who graciously opened archives, pulled materials from shelves, and investigated my inquiries. My research was supported monetarily by a Pettyjohn grant that made travel and copious amounts of photocopies possible. I feel particularly honored to have been selected as the 2008 – 2009 recipient of the Wayne M. Stanford Scholarship, which is awarded annually for the most promising proposal for a Master’s thesis. I hope my research has proven itself worthy of such an endowment.

The Montana Heritage Commission, through sponsoring Washington State University’s field schools in Virginia City, opened up a new world of possibilities to me. Virginia City staff provided information and encouragement that made writing this thesis possible. During the first field school, former site manager Jim Carpita made me and all the students at the first field school feel welcome. Marge Antolik and Cecile Gevock willingly offered their assistance, answered questions, found photographs and led me through the site. Janna Norby assisted in
gathering materials on S. R. Buford and the McGovern sisters, and allowed me access to them throughout the summer. Some of the most valuable information on Hannah and Mary came from the handwritten notes they left in magazines. There is no finding aid for such things—only the hours I was allowed to spend scouring the yellowed pages made their rediscovery possible. Dr. Bill Peterson reviewed drafts, answered questions, offered guidance, and enthusiastically volunteered his time to be a member of my committee. Perhaps most importantly, he has always believed in this project. Jeff MacDonald, who guided the removal of linoleum scraps and fragile newspapers from the floor of the Kraemer building in the spring of 2007, not only opened buildings and patiently answered questions, but encouraged me to dig deeper into Virginia City’s layered history. It was from an early conversation about viewing the layers of the Social City’s buildings in the context of the layers of history and life that took place within them that many of the key ideas for this thesis were conceived.

Last but not least, I owe my sincerest gratitude to the people who have kept me sane through this whole process. Amy Canfield took me under her wing as a mentor, proof-reader, and source of advice during my first year at WSU. Listening to her has served me well. My boyfriend Chris has been a constant source of encouragement, as well as my personal technical support service. I could never have accomplished so much without his love and support. My family, both biological and acquired, has been my greatest strength, and all of you mean the world to me. To my mother especially: you have always been my rock and my inspiration. A written thank-you here is little in comparison to all the sacrifices you made so that I could be where I am today. There are no words to express how much you mean to me.
INTRODUCTION

Virginia City, Montana, has been called many things in the past century and a half. For a few hours in 1863, it was called Varina after the wife of Jefferson Davis. Soon after, it was hailed as the metropolis of a fledgling but growing territory. From 1865 – 1875 it was the territorial capital, but by 1885 it was proclaimed to be little more than a dead city “crooning over the embers of departed glory.” Once known as the Social City for its lively atmosphere and varied entertainments, by the turn of the twentieth century many believed it no longer had a future. By the 1950s, it had become a tourist attraction affectionately called a “living ghost town” that catered to a brand of historical tourism which focused on interpreting the golden years of placer mining and the site of vigilante justice in 1864.

But though a long-awaited revival of fortunes failed to materialize, Virginia City never died. Sometimes prone to nostalgia, merchants and residents nonetheless persevered, maintaining a sense of place and community through alternating periods of decline and renewal. Most histories of Virginia City have focused on a few select events from its early history—the discovery of gold, vigilante justice, and the presence of notables such as Buffalo Bill Cody or Calamity Jane. These, however, were episodes—not the town’s entire history. No one has analyzed the social fabric that kept the town alive in the face of overwhelming odds. Though it never again equaled its gold rush population or prosperity, it did not lie dormant for the seventy years that separated its loss of the territorial capital in 1875 and resurrection as a haven for tourists by Charles Bovey beginning in 1945. The willingness of its residents to remain through the hard times is as much a part of its history as the glory of its early years or the brief visitations of famous individuals.
In 1962, Jean Davis defined a ghost town thusly: “it is a huddle of rotting cabins on a mountainside; it is the towering ruins of vast mills or smelters around which life once swirled; sometimes traces of rotting foundations alone are left of a busy ‘city;’ only the name may remain as a postmark on an old family letter or as a memory in the mind of a pioneer.”\footnote{Jean Davis, \textit{Shallow Diggin’s: Tales from Montana’s Ghost Towns} (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1962), introduction.} Other historians have described a ghost town as any community that has lost more than ninety percent of its population, and in many ways this very much describes Virginia City. From more than a thousand buildings during its territorial capital years, only 248 remain in 2009. The ruins of giant mining structures tower over their surroundings, and crumbling wooden and stone buildings, once the harbingers of civilization rising out of the wilderness, can be found in various states of decay throughout Virginia City. Foundations of structures long since reclaimed by nature lie as silent reminders of a more glorious past—one that remains nostalgically lodged in the memories of pioneers. From its boom-town high population of 10,000, more than ninety percent of its population has been lost. But there are many ways in which Virginia City does not conform to Davis’ definition. Many of its old buildings, far from decaying, remain functional and continue to serve the purposes for which they were built. The Madison County Courthouse, the Masonic Temple, and Rank’s Drug Store, opened by W. W. Morris in 1864, remain, for example, in business.

Virginia City is a place very much shaped by its location and environment. Once a busy region where numerous American Indian tribes traded, fought, and hunted, it became an area that most explorers and fur traders skirted in attempts to avoid encountering the Blackfeet. The people of Sacajawea, the Lemhi-Shoshoni, spent considerable time living in and around the Three Forks drainage, where they were met by Lewis and Clark when the Corps of Discovery
passed through in 1805. Treaties with tribes in the area were largely due to the efforts of Washington Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens, who sought to extinguish native ownership of lands throughout the area in the 1850s. The first significant gold strike in 1862 had momentous implications both in terms of increasing non-Indian presence in the area and affecting how people thought about the territory. From a savage country that most were more than willing to leave to the Indians, it became a vital asset to the Union during the Civil War, when Montana Territory gold contributed to a Northern victory.

From the beginning, settlers and gold-seekers took note of the difficulty involved in getting to Montana Territory. Virginia City became the territorial capital in 1865, gaining supremacy over Bannack, which held the title for only a year. But its vaulted status as the capital did little to alter the fact that Virginia City was notoriously difficult to get to. Overland routes, including the Oregon Trail and Mullan Road, were fraught with perils; Bridger’s cut-off and the Bozeman Trail were more direct, but they were desperately sparse of resources and often guarded by Indians who did not appreciate intrusion through their hunting grounds. The safer routes through Fort Benton and Salt Lake City added weeks to travel, and steamboats along the Missouri River to Fort Benton were notoriously slow. They could also be prohibitively expensive. Thus, even as Virginia City transitioned from a mining camp to an established city, with a population of thousands and entertainment that included social clubs and plays rivaling those farther east, it remained a destination that was incredibly difficult to reach. Because of this, goods and supplies remained precious commodities.

From Virginia City’s inception, weather was capable of shutting the town off from civilization completely, evidenced by the winter of 1864 – 1865 when snow choked the passes and closed the roads leading into the Social City. As supplies dwindled, residents became
increasingly uneasy, and finally took matters into their own hands. The flour riots of Virginia City were notably different from those in other mining camps; in Virginia City, they were organized, thereby avoiding both violence and bloodshed. Scarcity and isolation were commonplace for miners following the trail of gold strikes during the 1850s and 1860s. The forethought and organization shown in Virginia City’s flour riots suggests that miners and settlers there brought their experiences with them.

Throughout its remaining years as territorial capital, Virginia City was host to significant events in Montana history. An 1868 treaty with the Lemhi-Shoshoni was negotiated nearby, and the tribe continued to visit the area, often camping near Virginia City in order to sell berries and beg for food. Though often left out of the idealized retellings of Virginia City’s history in later years, the Lemhi maintained a presence there through the turn of the century. As late as 1930 individual Lemhi Indians traveled to Virginia City.

The loss of the territorial capital to Helena in 1875 was a bitter pill for the Social City to swallow, but it did not dampen residents’ belief in the importance of their community. Hopes that the railroad would connect the town to the rest of the territory remained a constant concern for more than a decade. In 1878, Simeon R. Buford, a freighter and bookkeeper, went into business for himself, opening the Buford Mercantile Company. The store would become one of the most successful in Virginia City history, operating well into the 1920s. Buford was a traditional pillar of the community—an early settler who arrived in 1863 and became self-made through hard work, determination, and a good business sense. Buford was a witness to change in Virginia City, seeing the town through its prosperous boomtown years and through the turn of the century as its population dwindled. Though he was one of many business owners, Buford is notable for the longevity of his business, his role as a community leader, and his founding-father
status. Because he served in various political capacities and kept meticulous records, Buford is an important component in reconstructing the Virginia City story.

Other elements of the Virginia City story that have been overlooked are the Chinese residents who helped keep the town afloat economically during the tenuous years of the 1870s through the turn of the century. Though often given “short shrift” in both memory and interpretation, the Chinese maintained a constant presence in the town from its earliest years through 1907, when the last of their leases were purchased by the Conrey Placer Mining Company, which opened large-scale dredging operations in Alder Gulch. An all out war that erupted among Chinese residents in 1881 and separated the community into Christian and Freemason factions has been largely overlooked, but it was a significant episode in the history of Virginia City. The final exodus of the Chinese in 1907 coincided with pleas from Virginia City merchants to patronize local businesses as competition from mail order companies threatened their existence.

Equally important but less visible were two unmarried sisters who doggedly maintained a business and a life in the Social City long after many residents had given up and left for other, more prosperous places. Hannah and Mary McGovern grew up in Virginia City’s territorial capital years, the daughters of Irish immigrants who arrived at Virginia City in 1864. Employed by Mrs. O. D. French in her Ladies’ Bazaar, which catered to the town’s female population with fancy dress goods and fine millinery, the sisters were witnesses to the prosperous times when Virginia City supported many businesses. When Mrs. French died in 1908, the McGovern sisters purchased her business, and thus the Ladies’ Bazaar, opened in 1879, became the McGovern Dry Goods Store.
As women, Hannah and Mary McGovern filled a role in Virginia City’s social fabric that was far different from that played by Simeon R. Buford. From the back rooms of their tiny store on Wallace Street, the sisters sent off for mail-order patterns which they passed along to customers. As times grew increasingly bleak, their business remained one of the few that catered to the women of Virginia City, and it became a popular gathering place for the ladies of the town. The outdated merchandise stocking the McGovern Store shelves is a testament to the economic distress the community faced, but also to the tenacity and economy of two sisters who never married and never left Virginia City. They were not politicians who gained statewide reputations or widely-known businessmen like S. R. Buford, but they became pillars of the community in their own, more delicate way—sewing dresses, ordering the latest patterns from back east, discussing new canning techniques, and participating in a women’s mutual aid society.

The twentieth century forced Virginia City residents to come face-to-face with national events. Several residents served during World War I, and a number were lost to the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918. One of the first casualties, a young soldier stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, was Simeon R. Buford’s youngest surviving son, Simeon Jr. Plagued by drought and poor crops in the 1920s, Montana entered a depression that stagnated growth across the state. When the rest of the country folded beneath the blow of the Great Depression, however, Virginia City experienced a spike in prosperity as a consequence of inflated gold prices which brought new activity to the area. The revival was one more turn in the boom-bust cycle that characterized so much of the town’s history, but residents nonetheless latched onto it with a fervor that made believers out of skeptics. Ironically, as the rest of the nation recovered during World War II, Virginia City was crippled by the freezing of mining operations as non-essential to the war effort.
The year 1944 brought a new visitor to Virginia City, one of many curious tourists who visited the town for a few hours to see the cradle of Montana’s history. Charles A. Bovey was so captivated by what he saw that he returned. A successful rancher and state senator from Great Falls, Montana, Bovey was a passionate advocate for preserving old buildings as priceless pieces of western history. Through Bovey, Virginia City gained a loyal supporter who not only stabilized, preserved, and reconstructed its aging buildings, but also furnished and interpreted them, making the town come alive as an interesting destination for tourists. Though Bovey’s interpretation of Virginia City’s history focused on a select version of events, it captured enough social, cultural, and historical threads of Virginia City’s past to hold its fabric in place.

As the story begins to unfold on these pages, understand that this study is not an analysis of a relic. It is an examination of the people and businesses who stayed and continued to believe in the future of the Social City. Its residents do not view their community only as a ghost town, for they have continued to build homes, run businesses, and organize social events there. The businesses that survived the loss of the territorial capital in 1875 continued to give the town a sense of legitimacy and purpose. Memory has played an important role in how Virginia City’s remaining residents have viewed both their community and the history of the town. Certain groups were relegated to limited niches, recalled when their presence served a specialized role in reprising Virginia City’s past glory. Although the fortunes of Virginia City did begin to tangibly decline after 1875, residents continued to believe in the vitality of their community. The mines had played out, the territorial capital had disappeared, and its numbers had dwindled, but Virginia City began a process of reinventing itself after World War II. By preserving its past, by interpreting its centrality to Montana history, it had embarked on what may be its final and lasting revival. By keeping its story alive through ongoing reinterpretation, it is tending to those
embers that have kept the town viable, dynamic, and enthusiastically alive—qualities that will continue to provide it with purpose, meaning, and a future.
CHAPTER 1

“A Savage, Unexplored Country:” The Fur Trade Era, 1738 – 1863

The freshness and beauty of this spot, which Nature seemed to have taken pleasure in adorning and enriching with her most precious gifts, contrasted, in a striking manner, with the indigence and uncleanliness [sic] if its inhabitants; and I regretted that it had not fallen to the lot of civilized men.

Gabriel Franchère, 1811

For the Lemhi Shoshonis of Cameahwait’s band, August 11, 1805, had seemed like any other day in late summer…What counted that day was that the band would soon join Flathead friends in journeying toward the Three Forks for the buffalo season. They would no longer be ágaideka’a, or salmon eaters, but kutsendeka’a, those who ate the buffalo. There would also be danger from enemies like the Atsinas and Blackfeet, but there would also be fresh meat to end days of near starvation. That anything might alter the familiar seasonal rhythm was almost unthinkable.

James P. Rhonda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians

In the whole range of human industry there is not one which has occasioned so much wild enthusiasm, subjected men to its dominion more thoroughly, brought forth so many rare characteristics of self-sacrifice, or created such sudden wealth as that of gold-mining in America.

Michael Leeson, History of Montana, 1739 - 1885

Virginia City is located in southwestern Montana, sheltered between the Ruby Mountain Range to the west and the Madison Mountain Range to the east. A little more than sixty miles north and east is the confluence where the Gallatin, Madison and Jefferson rivers meet. Both Native inhabitants and early fur traders called this convergence which formed the Missouri River the Three Forks. The surrounding land area was central to the hunting and trading activities of numerous Native American tribes for centuries prior to European contact, and the region maintained its importance as a trading ground for more than a century after white trappers and traders arrived. The people who in the nineteenth century became known as the Lemhi Shoshone—the tribe of Sacajawea—inhaled the prairies and mountains of the region, engaged in hunting, fishing, and trading with neighboring tribes. Though anthropologists debate the
length of their residence in the area, Lemhi tradition holds that they had always been there. The Blackfeet, Shoshone-Bannock, and Crow claimed vast and sometimes overlapping lands surrounding this region and these tribes, alone or allied with neighbors in all directions, frequently clashed in their efforts to maintain dominance and resource bases. On the outer fringes of the region to the northwest lived the Nez Perce, Flathead, Pend d’Oreille and Kootenai; to the northeast and southeast were the Gros Ventres, Assiniboin, Cree, Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara, Sioux and Cheyenne, all of whom frequented the area for the purposes of hunting, trading and warfare. Far from the vast wilderness that early American gold miners and settlers would describe when they arrived in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Three Forks was a busy region where tribes hunted, fished, traded and fought.

Early descriptions of the territory noted that while nearly a dozen tribes had frequented the area for centuries, “none of them acquired possessory rights until the latter part of the eighteenth century” when European definitions of land ownership succeeded in dominating traditional rights. Alliances shifted as situations changed, particularly with the introduction of

---


the horse. Prior to horse culture, Native people in the Three Forks region were more likely to live in small bands, migrating as food staples such as roots, nuts and small game came into season. Warfare and coalitions were traditional and commonplace, but they changed significantly with the development of mounted big game hunting and increased raiding activities. In response to these new factors, various tribes banded together for protection against common enemies, especially during the fall when most hunting took place. The introduction of the horse initiated a shift in the prominence of buffalo hunting and frequently realigned tribal alliances.

Prior to the introduction of horse culture, most of the tribes who inhabited the area surrounding the Three Forks had little, if any, contact with the limited number of European explorers who traveled through the vast territory stretching south from Canada and east of the Rocky Mountains. While there is some evidence that the Spanish expedition of Cabeza de Vaca passed through the area in 1535–36, there is little to indicate a European presence—Spanish, French or British—at any time during the following century. French missionary expeditions among the northern tribes did not extend into the Three Forks region until 1738 when the Jesuit Pere Coquillard arrived on the heels of French exploratory advances that began in 1717. By the time Lewis and Clark arrived in 1805, the only non-Indian presence was a handful of fur traders and trappers.


4 Leeson, History of Montana, 35, 48 – 49. According to Leeson, the earliest survey of the Montana territory can be attributed to the Spanish under La Hontan in 1688, though the party failed to correctly identify and chart the Missouri, referencing instead a “long river” that most understood to be the Mississippi.
Figure 1. The location of Montana Indian tribes prior to the fur trade era. From Phyllis Smith, *Montana’s Madison Country: a History.*

French and Canadian fur trappers and traders began pushing into the Northwest coast regions of America just after the Lewis and Clark expedition successfully traversed the newly acquired area held within the Louisiana Purchase. Fur traders had begun exploring the reaches of the continent when the Hudson’s Bay Company was formed in 1670, but extensive movement into the lands south of the Canadian border did not begin until 1787 when the rival North West Company was formed. John Jacob Astor played a key role in the expansion of the fur trade, establishing the American Fur Company in 1809 and soon after buying out the Mackinac Company, “which swept the warm regions of the South, as the two others did those of the wintry North,” thus expanding the range of the fur traders southward from Canada and down into the
American continent west of the Rocky Mountains.\textsuperscript{5} Competition among the companies was often fierce and bitter, drawing in Indian allies and enemies on all sides.

An expedition dispatched by Astor in 1811 established a trading post to the south on the Oregon coastline, where its personnel encountered the Native Americans living there. Gabriel Franchère, a twenty-five year old fur trader from Montreal, reported that the traders “paid a visit to [a] hostile camp; and those savages, who had never seen white men, regarded us with curiosity and astonishment, lifting the legs of our trowsers [sic] and opening our shirts, to see if the skin of our bodies resembled that of our faces and hands.”\textsuperscript{6} Franchère described the natives and their habitat, writing in his journal that “the freshness and beauty of this spot, which Nature seemed to have taken pleasure in adorning and enriching with her most precious gifts, contrasted, in a striking manner, with the indigence and uncleanness [sic] of its inhabitants; and I regretted that it had not fallen to the lot of civilized men.”\textsuperscript{7} The annals of the expedition indicate that at the time of Franchère’s writing the Canadians were traveling through lands of the Sioux, Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara, enroute to Astoria. They had only narrowly avoided hostilities with Sioux war parties early in May of 1811. Around this time Franchère and his party also spent several days with the Omaha, who were an important trading people on the Missouri River. Shortly afterward, at the confluence of the Niobara River on the border of present day South Dakota and

\textsuperscript{5} Alexander Ross, \textit{Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River: Being a Narrative of the Expedition Fitted Out by John Jacob Astor, to Establish the “Pacific Fur Company,” with an Account of Some Indian Tribes on the Coast of the Pacific}, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1878), 5.

\textsuperscript{6} Gabriel Franchère, \textit{ Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America in the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814 or the First American Settlement on the Pacific}, ed. J. V. Huntington (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1969), 108. For further information on Franchère, see LeRoy R. Hafen, \textit{Fur Traders, Trappers, and Mountain Men of the Upper Missouri} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 1 – 6.

\textsuperscript{7} Franchère, \textit{Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America}, 110.
Nebraska, the Astorians encountered traders Benjamin Jones and Alexander Carsons, both of whom were making their way to St. Louis. The pair had spent the preceding two years trapping the Three Forks region, and because of their considerable experience both were hired instantly by expedition leader Wilson Price Hunt.\(^8\)

The traders continued toward the coast and arrived at the location where Fort Astoria was subsequently established on February 15, 1812, after traveling overland for 1,751 miles.\(^9\) The trip could have been shortened significantly had the traders taken a more northerly route across the continent, but the advantages of a shorter route over the Yellowstone River to the eastern slopes of the Rockies were heavily outweighed by the possibility of encountering the Blackfeet. As historian James P. Ronda notes, “open conflict between Blackfeet warriors and American trappers, coupled with the constant threats from both the Teton Sioux and Arikaras” made northern trails risky.\(^10\) Franchère reported as much, stating that the overland party chose a route proceeding along the Columbia in August of 1811, owing to their desire “to avoid the Blackfeet Indians, a warlike and ferocious tribe, who put to death all the strangers that fall into their hands.”\(^11\)

\(^8\) James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 146 – 149.

\(^9\) Ibid., 194 – 195.

\(^10\) Ronda, *Astoria and Empire*, 129; for more detailed information on the Blackfeet, see Ewers, *Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains*.

\(^11\) Franchère, *Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America*, 145, original emphasis. For further information on the Flathead Tribe, see John Fahey, *The Flathead Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974). According to Fahey, the Flathead hold a distinctive place in history, in that they are “a people with a precise character and location in documented history,” and had probably encountered Chinese and Viking explorers several hundred years before Lewis and Clark arrived among them in 1805. The Flathead were widely recognized by other Indian tribes for their high quality trade goods, including white deer skins, which were
The Astorians curiously observed resident tribes as they made their way across the unsettled territory around the Three Forks region. Franchère recorded being taken aback by the custom among the Flathead tribe of compressing the skulls of infants to flatten the forehead, writing that “it shocks strangers extremely, especially at first sight; nevertheless, among these barbarians, it is an indispensible ornament: and when we signified to them how much this mode of flattening the forehead appeared to us to violate nature and good taste, they answered that it was only slaves who had not their heads flattened.”\textsuperscript{12} Despite these and other “vices that may be laid to the charge of the natives of the Columbia,” Franchère concluded, they were “nearer to a state of civilization than any of the tribes who dwell east of the Rocky mountains,” as “they did not appear...so attached to their customs that they could not easily adopt those of civilized nations.”\textsuperscript{13}

Franchère took note of the Shoshone, or “Snake” Indians in the Three Forks region, noting that they were “almost always seen on horseback, and are in general good riders; they pursue the deer and penetrate even to Missouri, to kill buffalo...these expeditions are not free from danger; for they have a great deal to apprehend from the Black-feet.”\textsuperscript{14} Franchère observed that a tribal alliance between the Flathead and “the Snakes, the Pierced-noses or Sha-ap-tins,” existed mainly for the purposes of protection. A vast area east of the Rocky Mountains was the highly regarded as rare and valuable. Though often characterized as bitter enemies of the Blackfeet, these two tribes often put their differences aside in the interests of trade. The vast trade network that interconnected the tribes west of the Rocky Mountains included the Flathead, Shoshone, Nez Perce, Crow, Comanche, Ute, Kiowa, Kutenai and Blackfeet with trade goods from the Spanish, French and British as early as the first decades of the eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 240.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 261.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 268, original emphasis.
domain of the Shoshone, who lived seasonally at the Three Forks, surrounded by allies including the Flathead. Such an alliance was noted by fur trader David Thompson as early as 1787.\textsuperscript{15} Franchère wrote that these natives did not dwell in villages, but were “nomads, like the Tartars and the Arabs of the desert,” a description consistent with the Shoshone, who migrated according to the season to follow game and other resources.\textsuperscript{16} The Astorians had also encountered the Nez Perce as they passed through the Walla Walla country on their eastward trek back toward the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Fort George, Quebec, an area they described as “the Great Plains of the Columbia.”\textsuperscript{17}

The relatively small numbers of traders and trappers who successfully established posts in the area meant that the presence of outsiders was felt by most tribes before it was seen.

Warfare between the Blackfeet and Shoshone-Bannock was particularly hostile. The conflict was so intense that when the first European fur traders arrived early in the eighteenth century their presence was largely ignored by many of the surrounding tribes.\textsuperscript{18} A development that could not

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., original emphasis; Fahey, \textit{Flathead Indians}, 11.

\textsuperscript{16} Franchère, \textit{Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America}, 268.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 265 – 266. Note: Fort George was originally located in the present-day Alberta province of Canada, east of present day Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan River. It functioned as a Hudson’s Bay Company trading post from 1792 until 1801, before it was relocated farther east to Quebec in 1803, where it remained until 1837 when it was once again relocated to an Island on the mouth of the La Grande River. For further information, see Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., \textit{The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 44 – 62.

\textsuperscript{18} Europeans considered the Blackfeet to be a confederacy composed of five different tribes; the Siksika or Blackfeet proper (also called the Northern Blackfeet), the Kena or Blood, the Piegan, the Sarcee, and the Atsina. For further information, see Author Unknown, “The Blackfoot Tribes” in \textit{Science}, Vol. 6, No. 146 (Nov. 20, 1895), 457; see also Ewers, \textit{Blackfeet Indians: Ethnological Report}. Ewers describes “The Blackfoot Nation” as a term created by the United States at the time of the first treaty negotiation between the Blackfeet and the United States in 1855. The term incorporated four tribes: the Blackfeet, Blood, Piegan and Gros Ventre,
be ignored was the introduction of horses, which became common possessions for most of these tribes during the early eighteenth century. The Shoshone-Bannock, considered by many anthropologists to be the first tribe in the region to obtain horses, did so around 1690. This acquisition was most likely a direct result of the Pueblo revolt of 1680 in Santa Fé, when thousands of the animals were captured from the retreating Spaniards. According to historian Francis Haines, large numbers of these horses were “traded off to the Plains tribes since they would bring higher prices in trade and were of less value to the Pueblos.”

The Nez Perce, who often “showed their intelligence and adaptability by borrowing new weapons, new tools, and new customs from friend and foe alike,” determined to acquire the animal shortly afterward and, combining the resources of several villages, “gathered up a large amount of trade goods…” and traveled along the old war trail to purchase several horses from their traditional enemies to the south. The Nez Perce displayed an inherent genius for selectively breeding the animals and building up herds large enough to be widely noted by the first European visitors to the area.

It is widely accepted that other tribes in the region, including the Crow, Blackfeet, and Flathead, acquired horses in the following decades, either through trading or raids on enemy

and as Ewers explains, “it was an expedient designation to cover these four tribes which, at that time, were allies. Actually it was a misnomer. They were not a nation in the sense of their recognizing any common, central government authority. Even their alliance did not last for more than six years after their leaders signed the treaty.” Ewers, *Blackfeet Indians: Ethnological Report*, 28. Adding to the confusion, while the Blackfeet, Blood and Piegan did “speak a common language and consider themselves to have a common origin, they [had] no such feeling about the Gros Ventre,” who spoke a different language and were often themselves confused with the Hidatsa, also sometimes called “the Gros Ventres of the Missouri,” 28 – 29.


herds, including those of the Shoshone. This is consistent with an account stating that in 1730 the Piegan were surprised when their traditional Shoshone enemies appeared “with a strange new weapon—big, four-footed animals ‘on which they rode swift as deer.’”21 The Blackfeet acquired their first horses soon afterward, though it is not clear whether these horses came from the Shoshone to the south, from the Flathead to the northeast, or possibly Nez Perce to the southwest.22 With the horse came new alliances.

As the Blackfeet began to sweep increasingly farther southward in pursuit of buffalo, they often came into conflict with resident tribes, namely the Shoshone, Bannock and Flathead. Powerful and fearsome, the Blackfeet quickly developed a ferocious reputation that was naturally conveyed to the first trappers and hunters who encountered the tribes of the Three Forks region. Fear of the Blackfeet often overshadowed all other consideration of the natives in the area and was reflected in the accounts of non-Indians who visited the region. In many ways, the reputation alone of the Blackfeet became a barrier, shielding tribes west of their hunting grounds from physical contact with traders and therefore a substantial place in contemporary accounts. Explorers were more concerned with avoiding the Blackfeet than close observation of other tribal intricacies, including locations and alliances.

The introduction of the horse and increasing ferocity of the Blackfeet led directly to increasing amalgamation for the Shoshone, because buffalo hunting not only required greater technical skill, but also led to more frequent encounters with enemy tribes. Better tribal organization essential for both subsistence and defensive purposes. As Gregory Campbell explains, the people who became known as the Lemhi Shoshone “underwent ethnic


transformations through cooperation and fusion rather than conflict and fission.” In other words, “the Lemhi Shoshone were composed of three societies merged by prevailing political economic conditions into a distinct tribal nation,” a transition which was firmly cemented by the turn of the nineteenth century and sometimes went unnoticed.23 As Swedish ethnographer Ake Hultkrantz noted in his detailed study of the Shoshone, historical descriptions are often vague, referencing indistinct bands named the “Eastern Shoshones.” It is clear, however, that following the introduction of the horse, the Shoshone began venturing increasingly farther east for hunting purposes, and also to establish their place among neighboring tribes. As the Blackfeet did essentially the same thing in the opposite direction, the two tribes naturally came into conflict. It was the fierce reputation the Blackfeet developed that gave them such a distinct place in contemporary accounts, leaving the Shoshone as an often shadowy, vaguely defined presence in the background.24

At approximately the same time, another weapon connected to horse culture on the plains was making its way into the hands of Western tribes. Native people located farther to the east,

23 Gregory R. Campbell, “The Lemhi Shoshoni: Ethnogenesis, Sociological Transformations, and the Construction of a Tribal Nation” American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn, 2001), 542. Also see Mann, Sacajawea’s People, 13. The Shoshone traditionally lived in several different bands; Mann defines the amalgamation of groups that eventually formed the Lemhi, the northernmost band of Shoshone, as being composed of the Agaidikas (Salmoneaters), Tukudekas (Sheepeaters), and Kucundikas (Buffaloeaters). The Kucundika formed in the nineteenth century after the introduction of the horse, at which time members of both the Agaidika and Tukudika began to travel in order to hunt the buffalo which had been absent from the traditional Idaho homelands of the Shoshone for several decades. The Shoshone and Bannock are distinct from the Lemhi Shoshone. There were some Bannock families who became permanent residents of the tribe around this time, often leading to confusion of tribal groups. It should be noted, however, that the Shoshone and Bannock were distinct tribal groups which eventually merged culturally sometime before the nineteenth century. For more detailed information on Shoshone-Bannock tribal delineations, see Robert F. Murphy and Yolanda Murphy, “Northern Shoshone and Bannock,” in Handbook of North American Indian: Great Basin, Vol. 11, ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1986).

with closer access to European trade goods, had been in possession of firearms for several decades, but around 1730, when Cree and Assiniboine allies sent warriors bearing guns to the Blackfeet, the nature of intertribal warfare on the plains became irreversibly connected to these two widely recognized and lasting symbols of the American Indian in the west. The Blackfeet used their position and acquisition of weapons to reinforce their dominance. Preventing tribes farther to the west, with less access to traders, from gaining firearms allowed the Blackfeet to control an enormous territorial area and to establish their dominance of the region in both fact and imagery during most of the eighteenth century.

Ethnographer John Ewers observes that as horses and firearms made their way into the trade networks of the Plains Indians, it was of the utmost importance for all tribes to work toward attaining a supply of both, because “any tribe possessing either without the other was at a distinct disadvantage in opposition to an enemy owning both.”

Other non-Indian trade goods, including metal knives and iron arrowheads, appeared around this time as fur traders and trappers began to establish permanent settlements in the region, beginning with the Anthony Hendry of Hudson’s Bay Company in 1754. By the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, aside from a small number of French fur traders who lived among friendly tribes, “no white man had come within hundreds of miles of the Blackfoot country,” and there was no European encroachment on


26 For a good overview of traditional Blackfoot customs, weapons, transportation and arts, see Clark Wissler, “Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians” Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. V, Part I (New York: Published by Order of the Trustees, 1910).
native lands in the Three Forks region. The Blackfeet had effectively acted as a shield, preventing contact with tribes farther west. Because most traders and trappers never made it—or attempted to make it—through the hunting grounds guarded by the hostile Blackfeet, contemporaries naturally began to view the entire area, we well as the only vaguely explored land beyond it, as “Blackfoot country.” While aware that other tribes inhabited the region, most non-Indians had limited or no contact with the people who lived west of the Blackfeet for more than a century.

The fur traders were cognizant of the necessity to maintain an awareness of the tenuous and shifting tribal alliances which were increasingly influenced by the trading of horses and firearms. The Blackfeet viciously defended their territory from both new and traditional enemies, preventing tribes farther to the west from contacting the traders whenever possible to maintain their advantage. As John Ewers writes, “as early as 1795 the Kutenais tried to bribe the Blackfeet with payments of horses to let them visit Fort George on the Saskatchewan to trade,” but the Blackfeet refused. The Crow became intermediary traders and “obtained large numbers of guns at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages on the Missouri and traded some of them to the Shoshonis and Flatheads farther west.” By the time Lewis and Clark arrived in 1805, they “found a few guns in the possession of the Shoshonis,” and also in that year “the Nez Perces sent a small delegation to the distant Mandan Villages and procured six of the precious firearms.”

The gun-trading network was further expanded to the Kutenai and Flathead in 1808 and 1809


28 Ibid., 52.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.
when Canadian traders began establishing posts among them.\textsuperscript{31} Setting up permanent posts in the area was a tenuous undertaking at best as friction between the resident tribes grew. For the Blackfeet especially, “war with neighboring tribes was the rule, peace the exception,” and it was not uncommon for traders to be inadvertently or intentionally pulled into intertribal conflicts\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to changes in the nature of warfare, altered subsistence patterns further impacted the relationship among native people. When the Crow acquired horses, they were transformed from part-time cultivators into full-time hunters, as now “men on foot were transformed into mounted hunters and into warriors who competed for wealth and reputation by raiding and trading for horses.”\textsuperscript{33} The Crow accepted their advantageous new position as important trade middlemen in a vast network that reached through the Shoshone, Flathead and Nez Perce to the west, the Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara and the Teton Sioux to the east, and to the Arapaho, Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Cree, Kiowa and Comanche to the south.\textsuperscript{34} Traditional enemies, including the Shoshone and Nez Perce, became friends and trading partners in these dynamic circumstances, while traditional allies such as the Blackfeet and Cree became competitors and enemies.\textsuperscript{35} For many tribes, the increase of possessions and power amplified the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.; for further information on the Crow, see Plummer, \textit{Crow Indians}.

\textsuperscript{32} Ewers, \textit{Blackfeet Indians: Ethnological Report, 47}.

\textsuperscript{33} Fred Vogt, \textit{The Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 3; the specific terms “part-time cultivators” and “full-time hunters,” as well as some contextual information, are cited in a report by Amy Canfield titled “Virginia City and Nevada City: A Historical Resources and Management Report” (Unpublished, Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, 2007) 6; see also Plummer, \textit{The Crow Tribe of Indians}.

\textsuperscript{34} Vogt, \textit{Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance, 9}.

\textsuperscript{35} For further information on the Shoshone, see Hultkrantz, \textit{Shoshone Indians}; for information on the Nez Perce, see Josephy, Jr., \textit{The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the
hostility of “more populous and covetous neighbors.” For the Crow, Shoshone and Bannock alike, the “Blackfeet to the north were among the earliest and most persistent raiders” of property.\textsuperscript{36}

Developing concurrently and often in connection with horse culture on the plains was a growing network of European traders. Though some tribes, such as the Flathead and Cree, were friendly to traders, the vast majority of Indians in the Three Forks region initially showed little interest in participating in the fur trade.\textsuperscript{37} The situation was not altered until France surrendered her Canadian possessions to England via the Treaty of Paris in 1763, stimulating competition in the form of independent traders who quickly expanded westward with large quantities of English trade goods. Even as late as 1772, however, Matthew Cocking of the Hudson’s Bay Company arrived in Blackfoot territory only to be met with the same arguments the tribe had offered to his predecessor—they had no reason to undertake such a long journey through unfamiliar territory; they might starve, and were quite happy where they were. They did not want for anything the white men could offer, and if they did, they could get it through trade with friendly Indians. Long after the surrounding tribes had accepted the presence of traders, the Blackfeet continued to resist with such force that they remained widely feared among both tribes and settlers for much of the Pacific Northwest, and Haines, \textit{The Nez Perces: Tribesmen of the Columbia Plateau}; for information on the Cheyenne. See also, Weist, \textit{A History of the Cheyenne People}. For information on the Cree, see John S. Milloy, \textit{The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 – 1870} (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{36} Vogt, \textit{Shoshoni-Crow Sun Dance}, 10.

\textsuperscript{37} The Hudson’s Bay Company established trading posts among the Cree around 1670, marking the beginning of the Cree’s role as trade middlemen, along with the Assiniboine. Their success in this eventually led to the formation of a Blackfoot-Cree alliance that developed by the 1730s, and was not dismantled until the end of the eighteenth century. For a more detailed discussion, see Milloy, \textit{The Plains Cree}, xv, 31; see also Ewers, \textit{Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains}; Fahey, \textit{Flathead Indians}; and Plummer, \textit{The Crow Tribe of Indians}.  

15
nineteenth century. This fear often overshadowed all else, including the Lemhi Shoshone and other tribes. The Lemhi, because of their location, had relatively little interaction with outsiders—aside from Lewis and Clark—until the 1820s when the Northwest Company and Hudson’s Bay Company began moving into the area. For the most part, these expeditions were not disruptive to the Lemhi who viewed the traders as following living patterns similar to their own, living in small, migratory groups.38

There is no question that encounters with European explorers, beginning with Lewis and Clark in 1804, irreversibly changed relationships among the tribes. Early on, Lewis attempted to make “diplomatic progress” with some of the Indians, extracting “a promise from some Hidatsa chiefs not to wage war on distant peoples such as the Shoshonis and Blackfeet,” but traditional ways were slow to respond to non-Indian pressures. Almost immediately after Lewis and Clark departed a raid against the Blackfeet was organized.39 The expedition spent the winter with the Mandan before crossing into Blackfoot country to meet the Lemhi Shoshone in the spring of 1805. It was at the Three Forks of the Missouri that Clark and a small advance party searched desperately for the Lemhi, painfully aware that failure to acquire horses would force the expedition to spend another winter stranded and starving with limited supplies on the wrong side of the Great Divide. Clark reached the Three Forks only to discover “a fire-blackened prairie and horse tracks but no Indians,” as both captains of the expedition failed to realize that during the late summer and early fall “the Shoshonis and Flatheads were still busy fishing along the Lemhi and Salmon rivers.”40

38 Mann, Sacajawea’s People, 20 – 22.

39 Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 92.

40 Ibid., 137.
Figure 2. The rivers of Montana, showing the Three Forks at the lower left. From Malone, Roeder and Lang, *Montana: a History of Two Centuries*.

It was Sacajawea, the Indian wife of French fur trapper Toussaint Charbonneau, who gave the expedition hope. Captured in a Hidatsa raid on the Shoshone in 1800, Sacajawea recognized the area of the Three Forks from her childhood memories as the homeland of her people. For the tired men of the Corps of Discovery, Sacajawea’s identification of landmarks provided much needed consolation that the expedition was nearing an encounter with the Shoshone and a chance to purchase horses that would carry them to Pacific waters. Anticipating the possibility of “seeing the headwaters of the Missouri yet unknown to the civilized world” provided the party with much needed energy to keep pressing forward up the rocky shallows and treacherous rapids of the Missouri.\(^{41}\) A few weeks later, in mid-August, 1805, Lewis finally succeeded in finding Cameahwait’s band of Shoshone as they engaged in “their familiar patterns

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
of hunting, fishing, gathering, and preparing for the annual buffalo hunt” along the Lemhi River.42 The Shoshone were apprehensive, as many feared that Lewis and his party “were really agents for the Blackfeet, or some other hostile people.” It was Sacajawea’s recognition of Cameahwait as her brother that put fears of aggression to rest and ensured the goodwill that made trade for horses possible.43

The tribe that eventually became known as the Lemhi Shoshone traditionally resided in the vicinity of the Salmon River in present-day Idaho, southwest of the Three Forks and were comprised two principle bands: the Agadika, or Salmoneaters, and the Tukadika, or Sheepeaters.44 Often grouped together with the neighboring and closely related Bannock, with whom they shared many subsistence and lifestyle practices, the Agadika and Tukadika Shoshone spent considerable time hunting and fishing in the Three Forks drainage. They sometimes encountered the Blackfeet in the common hunting grounds east of their homelands, as both tribes ventured farther into each others’ territory. Especially after the introduction of horse culture, the Shoshone often combined forces with the Bannock and Flathead for the purposes of protection and resource gathering. When Lewis and Clark arrived, Cameahwait’s band possessed only “two or three guns and no ammunition” among them, and they were constantly threatened by the superiorly armed Blackfeet who severely limited access to European trade goods from the East.45

42 Ibid., 142 – 143.

43 Ibid., 143 – 147.

44 Sacajawea was a member of the Agadika band, which, after acquisition of the horse, was also sometimes referred to as the Kucundika, or Buffaloeaters. For more detailed information on the Shoshone, see Hultkrantz, The Shoshones in the Rocky Mountain Area, 187 – 196. See also Mann, Sacajawea’s People, and Campbell, “The Lemhi Shoshoni.”

45 Ronda, Lewis and Clark among the Indians, 147; there is evidence that the Lemhi Shoshone made considerable use of and were considered to be the only permanent inhabitants of
The necessity of obtaining horses was at the forefront of negotiations for Clark when he and his men finally reached the headwaters of the Beaverhead River to reunite with Lewis and the waiting Shoshone. Stressing that the expedition was searching for a viable trade route for American goods through the continent, Lewis and Clark made any promises they considered necessary for the procurement of horses to carry the expedition across the Continental Divide. Cameahwait, “faced with well-armed enemies and an uncertain supply of manufactured goods from Spanish sources…could hardly reject the opportunity to have a place in the new American trade system,” and agreed to supply the badly needed horses.\textsuperscript{46} It was evident that Lewis and Clark thought little “about the consequences of arming the Shoshonis—consequences that would be felt by Hidatsa, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce warriors,” another example of the pliable and shifting nature of allies and enemies on the plains after contact with the Europeans.\textsuperscript{47} 

At the same time, the experiences of numerous explorers and traders came to serve as a testament to the bloody ferocity with which the Blackfeet guarded their territory, maintaining their reputation as one of the most feared of western tribes. In the spring of 1807, as the Corps of Discovery returned east, John Colter, described as “one of the ablest hunters of the Lewis and Clark party,” set out for the Missouri headwaters from the newly established Fort Remon at the mouth of the Bighorn River to trap beaver. He was attacked by a party of Blackfeet who killed his companion. Colter was captured and tortured but he managed to escape—the second time he had come close to death at the hands of the Blackfeet. Stories of close and violent encounters

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
were widely published during this time period.\textsuperscript{48} The growing number of white traders and eventually settlers in the area directly correlated to an increased fear of the Blackfeet, who were at the height of their power in 1850, even though they, along with the Shoshone, Mandan, Assiniboin and numerous other tribes, had been devastated by smallpox epidemics in 1781 and 1837.\textsuperscript{49} The Blackfeet were not the only tribe in the area that was hostile to encroachment, however, they were most widely talked and written about, and therefore became synonymous with the dangers of crossing the country. As Robert M. Utley notes, “the Arikaras remained no more reconciled to Americans that the Blackfeet,” and that tribe also had wide ranging war parties which took the lives of many traders and trappers.\textsuperscript{50} The Lemhi Shoshone also resisted.

By 1850, a trading post had been established in the Bitterroot Valley and was naturally frequented by the Lemhi. Five years later, Thomas S. Smith and “a contingent of twenty-seven Mormon missionaries…arrived to colonize the Lemhi Valley.” The area was home to large summer salmon runs which attracted large numbers of Indian people, and consequently “held great potential for converting Indians to the Mormon faith and for introducing them to the principles of civilization,” the charge given to the mission by Brigham Young. The missionaries failed to realize that they “had inserted themselves into a power struggle between competing headmen” of the various bands, as well as between the Lemhi and the Nez Perce to the west. The mission was abandoned just three years later, in 1858, after two hundred Lemhi, alarmed at the

\textsuperscript{48} There are many versions and accounts of Colter’s escape from the Blackfeet; one is provided in Leeson, \textit{History of Montana}, 54-56; see also Ewers, \textit{Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains}, 48 – 50.


increasing number of colonists and divided by internal factionalism, attacked the mission. Two missionaries were killed, several more wounded, and the cattle and horse herds taken. Some friendly Lemhi later returned what stock remained, but the damage had already been done. Brigham Young ordered the withdrawal of the remaining missionaries as soon as he learned of the violence, and “sent supplies and a militia to enable their departure.” Though the mission lasted only three years, it established a semi-permanent community of Lemhi in the surrounding area and thus “created a greater sense of territorial ownership,” and solidified the “ethnic fusion” of the Lemhi Shoshone.51

Despite the risks—either real or perceived—non-Indians arrived in increasing numbers, spurred westward by improved transportation, promises of land and wealth in the west, increasing tensions over the slavery debate, and, perhaps most seminally, the promise of gold. Many of the more than one dozen tribes who utilized the resources in the Three Forks region had signed treaties with the United States by the middle of the nineteenth century. A number of the tribes who ventured to the Three Forks area to hunt and trade, including the Crow, Gros Ventre, Mandan and Sioux, had been party to the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, which marked the beginning of the federal government moving “toward the reservation system as an alternative to the frontier line,” and also the beginning of renewed attempts to extinguish Indian title to the lands that would form the Washington, Idaho and Montana territories.52 In 1855, Isaac Stevens,


52 Kent D. Richards, Isaac I. Stevens: Young Man in a Hurry (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1993), 192. The Treaty of Fort Laramie was signed on September 17, 1851, negotiated by Superintendent of Indian Affairs D. D. Mitchell and Indian Agent Thomas Fitzpatrick. The full text is available from Charles J. Kappler, Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties,
Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory, initiated the first United States
attempt to negotiate a treaty with the Blackfeet, ignoring the fact that they were not included in
his jurisdiction. Stevens believed that eliminating the threat of the powerful tribe was necessary
to ensure the security of a northern railroad route through the territory. The railroad, as the
Indians would quickly discover, brought settlers with it.

No official government expedition had been sent to the Blackfoot country in the
intervening forty-seven years that followed Lewis and Clark’s expedition. The Blackfeet were
among the last of the Plains tribes to negotiate a treaty with the United States, largely because of
their hostile reputation. As Ewers put it, “the first treaties with western tribes were generally
made to safeguard the lives and possessions of white settlers or emigrants who passed through
tribal hunting grounds. Certainly no white man would have considered settling in or near the

---

*Volume II* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), viewable online at
[http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/Toc.htm](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/Toc.htm)

53 Richards, Isaac I. Stevens, 115. The treaty was officially known as “Treaty with the
Blackfeet Nation,” but the Indians referred to it as “Lame Bull’s Treaty,” after the highly
respected head chief of the Piegan. In addition to the Blackfeet, representatives of the Flathead,
Gros Ventre, Kootenai, Nez Perce and Pend d’Oreille were present, as well as one representative
of the Cree tribe. The treaty commissioners appointed by Stevens included Alexander Culbertson
and James Doty, both able, energetic men who were knowledgeable and sympathetic to the
Blackfeet. The treaty, signed on October 17th, 1855, ratified by the Senate on April 15th, 1856,
and proclaimed by the President ten days later, defined the boundaries of the Blackfoot Nation,
stretching between the Rocky Mountains to the west and the Musselshell, Missouri and Milk
Rivers to the east. The treaty failed to establish a permanent peace, and warfare resumed within
five years as tribes competed for dwindling resources and sought ways to live with the increasing
number of white settlers moving into the region. A string of incompetent agents, unratified
treaties in 1865 and 1868, and a devastating smallpox epidemic in 1869 – 1870 reduced the
numbers and power of the Blackfeet considerably, but their long-standing reputation remained
and 244 – 246. The full text of the 1855 treaty is viewable online at
[http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/Toc.htm](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Kappler/Vol2/Toc.htm)
country of the warlike Blackfeet so long as there was plenty of fine land available elsewhere.”

Or, as Dick Pace noted, “the westward moving emigrants of the 1840s considered the country between the lower Missouri River and the Pacific Coast as a stretch to be crossed, not settled in.” Similarly, the miners who began arriving in the 1860s did not generally view “the Rocky Mountains as a place of permanent residence; they were there merely to get a fortune, and return to ‘the States’ of which they always spoke as home.”

However tenuous, the foundations for permanent settlement were laid early in the nineteenth century, and promises of gold made even the most hostile country a great deal more appealing. Initial attempts by fur traders to establish permanent posts at the Three Forks met with disaster. An attaché of Manuel Lisa’s dominant Missouri Fur Company headed by Andrew Henry and Pierre Menard led a small contingent of thirty-two men to the Three Forks in 1809, where they attempted to establish a “central base and open trade with the powerful Blackfeet, who controlled the best fur lands in the region.” The Blackfeet continued to block other tribes from access to the traders, who found excellent trapping ground and built the post directly at the

54 Ewers, Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, 71.

55 Dick Pace, Golden Gulch: the Story of Montana’s Famous Alder Gulch (Independent Printing, 1970), 3. The United States negotiated numerous treaties with Indian tribes in the region of Montana Territory during the 1860s, including the Arikara, Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Mandan, Nez Perce, Shoshone and Sioux. Most took place in the years 1865 – 1868. An important, unratified treaty between the Lemhi Shoshone and the United States, which identified the Three Forks as part of the Lemhi’s traditional homeland, was drafted near Virginia City on September 24, 1868. Further information is viewable online at the Lemhi official website, http://www.trailtribes.org/lemhi/lemhi-reservation-and-loss.htm. See also Scriver, “The Lemhi Shoshone of Idaho Territory,” and Shirley Stephens, “The Lemhi Indian People of Idaho: Removal From the Salmon River Country to Fort Hall, 1880 – 1907” (Master’s thesis, Washington State University, 1996).

56 Plummer, Crow Indians, 72 – 73.

57 Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 48.
convergence of the Jefferson and Madison rivers. It was not long before “the Blackfeet and their Gros Ventre allies…reacted with violence,” and by the end of 1810 the partners abandoned the Three Forks venture. A little over a decade later, with the establishment of Fort Benton, non-Indians became a constant presence within two hundred miles of the Three Forks. For the most part, fear of the Blackfeet—real or imagined—prevented settlers from traveling through the territory. The promise of gold was, however, powerful enough to change everything.

Beginning with the California gold rush in 1849, prospectors flooded into canyons and gulches determined to uncover the riches buried beneath soil and embedded in rocky ledges. By the end of the 1850s, the influx of miners “gradually filled the open areas—still marked on maps of the day as ‘unknown’ or ‘Indian country’—with men and towns; at a conservative estimate there must have been half a million people either settled in mining camps or on their way to and from mining camps.” People who would never have considered passing through the territory claimed by aggressive native tribes which separated eastern settlements from the west found fortitude to make the journey in the promise of instant fortune. Prospectors and settlers swelled the numbers of those who were willing to venture into this “savage, unexplored country,” previously believed to be no more than “a befitting home for Indians and buffaloes.”

Gold was first discovered west of the Rocky Mountains in what became the Idaho Territory in 1852, when a discovery was recorded by Francois Finlay, also known as “Benetsee.”

58 Ibid.

59 Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 49 – 50.

60 Pace, Golden Gulch, 4.

The first gold strike in what became Montana Territory occurred a decade later at Grasshopper Creek—a tributary of the Beaverhead River that intersects the Madison River, a little more than one hundred miles south and west of the Three Forks. The boomtown that sprang up was named Bannack after the resident Bannock Indians. As with many instances in the American west, contemporary accounts filled page after page with warnings of the dangers posed by the local tribes; however, the story was often quite the opposite. As Dorothy Johnson notes, “the Indians were in danger from the whites instead of the other way around,” such as in one instance where “hoodlums fired into the tepees of a group of Shoshones, Bannocks, and Paiutes” who camped on the outskirts of Bannack while on their way to hunting grounds. The perpetrators were banished, but relations between the miners and Indians were understandably tense. Early in 1863, Lemhi Shoshone leader Snag was gunned down by Buck Stinson, a barber and deputy of Bannack Sheriff Henry Plummer, who reportedly committed the murder simply to “add another notch to his gun.” The act had significant repercussions. As Snag lay dying, he named Tendoy, his nephew, as the new leader of the Lemhi.  

Dorothy M. Johnson, The Bloody Bozeman: the Perilous Trail to Montana’s Gold (New York: McGraw – Hill Book Company, 1971), 7; Scriver, “The Lemhi Shoshone of Idaho Territory,” 75 – 77. Five Indians and two white men were killed in the first incident. The white instigators were arrested, and though there was talk of hanging them, all were eventually banished from the territory, though not before “vicious, threatening letters” were sent to all of the men who had anything to do with their arrest. After Snag was murdered, Tendoy managed to prevent further violence by riding into Bannack dressed in full regalia and addressing a large crowd before departing with his people for an extended buffalo hunt in the Yellowstone country. Stinson, a member of Bannack Sheriff Henry Plummer’s gang of road agents that soon became famous in Montana history, was hanged by the Vigilantes on January 10, 1864; see Frederick Allen, A Decent, Orderly Lynching: The Montana Vigilantes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 226 – 229. For more detailed information on the death of Snag, of which there are several competing accounts, see David L. Crowder, Tendoy, Chief of the Lemhis (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1969) and Brigham D. Madsen, The Lemhi: Sacajawea’s People (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1990). For additional information on the discovery and founding of Bannack, see Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 64 – 67; and Abbott, Montana in the Making, 143 – 144. See also Paul C. Phillips, ed. Forty Years on the Frontier as seen in the
It was no wonder that everyone in Bannack went armed. As Johnson writes, “everyone had reason to be suspicious about the past record and future intentions of almost everyone else,” and a number of unsavory characters like Stimson added fuel to the fire. Bannack sheriff Henry Plummer—himself suspected of being head of the gang of road agents that frequently robbed travelers and stage coaches—made matters worse by deputizing men with bad reputations. The Indians, little closer to being reconciled to sharing their land with the intruders, naturally had their own reasons to be apprehensive. Bannack’s gold rush population peaked at approximately three thousand residents, and it served temporarily as the territorial capital of Montana in 1864. As with many boomtowns the initial rush was short-lived and the prosperity of Bannack was soon eclipsed by a gold strike just seventy miles away at a place named Alder Gulch. The new discovery immediately “set off the greatest placer rush of Montana’s history.”

Alder Gulch was not the first gold bonanza in the American West, but several factors combined to make it one of the most influential of its time. The mining camp known as Virginia City was founded in dynamic circumstances, at the convergence of people—explorers, trappers, miners, settlers and Indians—and an acute awareness of the boundaries of the United States fueled by the Civil War. The discovery of gold coincided “with westward migration patterns and improved transportation routes that lit the fuse for an explosion of growth, activity, politics,

---


vigilantism, and cultural transportation that was equaled at few other places in the west."^65

Virginia City, from the very beginning, was a place where progressive modernity and nostalgic sentiment for the past collided and fused. The biggest gold strike in what was then Idaho Territory happened on the afternoon of May 26, 1863, when a party of six prospectors chose an isolated gulch as a camping site for the night.

Thomas Cover, Henry Edgar, Bill Fairweather, Barney Hughes, Harry Rodgers and Michael Sweeny were traveling to Bannack, trying desperately to avoid detection by Crow Indians. The prospectors had set out more than six weeks earlier, intending to rendezvous with a larger prospecting party led by James and Granville Stuart. The Stuarts had been organizing a prospecting expedition since early 1863, hoping to assemble a large enough party to prevent a repetition of their previous experience. An earlier party had been attacked by hostile Crow Indians along the Bighorn River, forcing “a most tortuous trip to the Oregon Trail, west into Idaho,” and finally northward back to Bannack, after ignoring United States mandates that expressly forbid intrusion into Crow lands.^66 It was the Indians, of course—not only the Crow, but also the Sioux, Blackfeet and Gros Ventre—that the Stuarts wanted protection from when they began moving a new party from Bannack toward the Yellowstone River on April 7, 1863.^67

Although the Yellowstone River country had been explored by numerous fur traders and government expeditions, the area was still considered a vast and unforgiving wilderness. Even


^66 Pace, Golden Gulch, 6.

^67 Burlingame, The Montana Frontier, 86.
Granville Stuart admitted that “without the aid of government maps” his party “never would have found the Yellowstone river” in the unfamiliar territory.  

Cover, Edgar, Fairweather, Hughes, Rodgers and Sweeny, after hearing about the Stuart party in Bannack, traveled north to Deer Lodge to gather horses and supplies. They were accompanied by a guide, Louis Simmons, and intended to meet the Stuart’s party of fifteen men on April 12. In a fortuitous turn of events, the parties missed each other, camping more than ten miles apart on the Ruby River. After waiting for nearly two weeks at the intended meeting point, it became clear that the Stuart party had moved on; determined to catch up, the small party set out in haste to cover the intervening ground. Their plans were interrupted on the first of May when they were surrounded and captured by Crow Indians. Legend holds that the seven men were released after “Fairweather pulled one of the stunts for which he became famous in the west,” allegedly stuffing a rattlesnake down the front of his shirt without being harmed himself. 

However it unfolded, the party was eventually released and given back its horses and supplies, in exchange for their promise to turn back toward Bannack immediately. Their guide, 

68 Plummer, Crow Indians, 110. 

69 Originally named Philanthropy River by Lewis and Clark, the river was commonly called the “Stinkingwater” during the 1860s owing to the smell given off by numerous sulphur deposits along its course. For a time it was also called the “Passamari,” a Shoshone term for “cottonwoods along the bank” or “quaking ash grove.” In 1877, residents discovered garnets in the riverbed, and the name was then changed to the Ruby River. See Phyllis Smith, Montana’s Madison Country: a History (Bozeman: Gooch Hill Publishing, 2006), 8 – 9; see also Pace, Golden Gulch, 7 – 8. 

70 Differing versions of the tale abound; see Pace, Golden Gulch, 9 – 10, Sievert and Sievert, Virginia City and Alder Gulch, 14, and Larry Barsness, Gold Camp: Alder Gulch and Virginia City, Montana (New York: Hastings House, 1962), 1 – 3. Yet another version of the tale is found in Johnson’s examination of the Bozeman Trail, in which Fairweather not only slapped a Crow medicine man in the face with a “medicine bush,” but “wandered around with a rattlesnake under each arm.” By this account the men were given back their own horses, saddles, “a hundred pounds of flour, some coffee and sugar, a plug of tobacco, and two robes each,” and released. See Johnson, Bloody Bozeman, 35.
Simmons, elected to stay behind. According to some accounts, there were young men among the Crows who wanted to kill the prospectors and Simmons, suspecting that some of them might try to follow the party, “reasoned that he would be safer with the hunters than with the hunted.” Simmons’ suspicions were not without foundation. On the first night after the prospectors’ release, an Indian woman snuck into their camp with a warning of an impending attack. Fearful, the prospectors retraced their trail across the mountains, west through the Gallatin Valley, and hurried north along the Madison River.

To bypass the Three Forks, the prospectors crossed the Tobacco Root Mountains into the Ruby Valley and selected a camp site in a gulch that offered abundant shelter and firewood from Alder trees. After a dinner made from their dwindling supplies, Fairweather and Edgar were given the tasks of cleaning up and caring for the horses while the rest of the party went farther up the creek to prospect. Tired of chores, Fairweather decided to pan on a nearby bar in hopes of finding enough gold to buy tobacco on his return to Bannack. By the time the others returned, Fairweather and Edgar had extracted more than $12.00 worth of gold from just four panning attempts. The strike was so rich that the other miners initially thought it was a hoax. Realizing they had struck upon important diggings, the men quickly staked 100 foot claims, identified the bars, and named the site Alder Gulch.

The miners finally made their way to Bannack, intending to replenish their supplies and return quietly to the point of discovery without revealing its location. The Bannack miners

---

71 Pace, *Golden Gulch*, 10.


watched closely, however, observing that “the items they bought were obviously supplies for men who intended to do some placer mining…the stories they told were too pat [and] they were in an awful sweat to get out of town.”

The Fairweather party made their way out of Bannack on June 2 under the watchful eyes of a large crowd of miners that waited eagerly to follow them. After the assembly swelled to more than two hundred men watching their every move, the discoverers realized the impossibility of returning to Alder Gulch alone. To protect their rights, they camped and called a meeting of the miners, admitting to their discovery and showing samples of the gold recovered at the strike, but refusing to move on unless their claims were guaranteed. When the assemblage agreed to their conditions, the Fairweather party consented to continue the next day, essentially leading a stampede the remaining sixty or so miles east to Alder Gulch.

In less than a week, a miners committee was established, districts laid out, and a president, judge and recorder elected. A town company quickly formed and laid claim to a 320 acre townsite, which was incorporated on June 16, 1863. In an example of the division between Unionists and Confederates that was always present in the camp, the town was initially named Varina, in honor of Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ wife. Newly selected town Judge, Dr.

74 Barsness, Gold Camp, 6.

75 Ibid., 6 – 7. Some also claim that the original name was actually “Verona,” a misspelling of “Varina.”

76 Ibid., 7 – 8. There would eventually be six districts: Highland, Pine Grove, Summit, Fairweather, Nevada and Junction, and more than a dozen major mining camps: see Figure 3 below. The first selected President was Dr. William Steele, and the first judge was Dr. G. G. Bissell, a native of Connecticut born in 1825, and a graduate from Yale Medical School in 1859. Henry Edgar was asked to be the Recorder, but judging it a thankless position that would inhibit the time he spent placering, Edgar refused and the job was instead given to James Fergus. There would be no jail or other civic organizations in Alder Gulch until a county government was organized more than a year later; during 1863 – 64, though Virginia City was bigger in size, the seat of government for the territory remained in Bannack.
G. G. Bissel was a staunch Union sympathizer. Bissel reportedly slammed his fist down upon his makeshift desk, exclaiming “I’ll be damned if I’ll sign it that way,” and, determined that “no such blot [would] stain the honor of the camp,” changed the name to Virginia. The name Virginia was officially marked into the record books on June 17, 1863, “renamed… with a single stroke of the pen.” Thus Virginia City was written into the history books along with aspirations of the nearly 10,000 miners who flooded into the gulch in the years immediately following the strike.

77 Pace, *Golden Gulch*, 16.

78 Hamilton, *From Wilderness to Statehood*, 234; Spence, *Montana: a Bicentennial History*, 26. As noted, “Varina” was sometimes spelled “Verona,” and written accounts contain both variations. In addition, the town was variously called “Virginia” and “Virginia City” for the first several years of its existence. There is no accurate count for the number of residents who made their way to Alder Gulch in 1863 – 1864. Estimates vary from 7,000 – 18,000. 10,000 is the number most widely given in histories and contemporary accounts of Alder Gulch—a reasonable approximation, given the 1864 census, which showed 11,493 residents in Madison County, where Virginia City is located. There were more than a dozen smaller mining camps strung along an area known as “fourteen mile city,” which ran along the length of Alder Gulch, but Virginia City was always the largest by far.
Figure 3. Alder Gulch in 1863, showing “fourteen mile city” and the surrounding area. From Marilyn Grant, *Montana Mainstreets: a Guide to Historic Virginia City*. 
CHAPTER 2

“Shaking Gold out of the Sagebrush:” The Capitol Era, 1865 – 1875

It is reported that prospectors shook gold out of the sagebrush roots at Grasshopper Creek but Alder Gulch, as the discoverers named it, was even better... Montana’s Virginia City counted its wealth in the native gold that laced the bars and bedrock of Alder Gulch as though King Midas had sifted the gravel through his fingers.

Bob Fletcher, “Montana Medley”

I...headed for the new gold discovery at Stinking Water, certain that my luck had changed and that I was soon to be in possession of a fortune. If I didn’t die of typhoid fever, get killed by Indians, or fall down some bottomless hole and starve to death. If I was to avoid these perils between here and Alder Gulch, I should be rich for life. I was assured...that the Alder Gulch diggings were so rich that the streets of the town were paved with gold. I had heard that one before, but that siren song was no less seductive this time.


The unbelievable wealth of Alder Gulch flowed through white hands, yellow hands, black hands; some were honest, some thieving, but, regardless of their color or character, few hands that scooped nuggets from the rich gravel managed to convert the glittering hoard into either luxury or leisure. For these men the wealth was too sudden and too vast; their judgment was easily overwhelmed by their good fortune. As easily as the gold came, it slipped through their fingers, or finding it here in thousands, they sought it elsewhere in millions.

Jean Davis, Shallow Diggin’s: Tales from Montana’s Ghost Towns

The first buildings erected on the Virginia City townsite were crudely constructed from logs and sod—the most easily acquired materials, and those which provided the most insulation from the territory’s harsh winters. Paint was not a priority. Soon after they were built, the wooden structures, almost never intended for permanence, took on a long-weathered look. The first business structure established was a bakery and the second a saloon—it was “probably the first and only time on record that Ceres beat Bacchus to a mining camp market.”79 Though the area surrounding Alder Gulch quickly grew in population and an array of businesses were

established in a matter of months, growth was sometimes overshadowed by the harsh conditions faced by early residents. For the first months of settlement, including the first winter, as one resident later recalled, “there was little food except such as was brought down by the rifle; flour there was none; tools were scarce; lumber, for want of saw-mills, could not be obtained,” and there was “no clothing to renew the worn suits of the miners; few blankets and buffalo robes to protect them against the rigors of a severe climate.”80 Once dangers from shortages and climate were overcome, there remained the matter of distance, as “four hundred and fifty miles of sand and mountains” separated the isolated gulches of Montana from Salt Lake City, the closest major source of supplies. Furthermore, there were unquestionably “few conveyances of any sort with which to make the toilsome and dangerous journey.”81 By 1864, there were not only merchants and freighters firmly established in the territory, but also sawmills and bankers. Before the year was out plank and stone buildings were being constructed, a testament to the longevity and prosperity that Virginia City anticipated.

Daily life was not easy, but it paled in comparison to the task of actually getting to Alder Gulch. The first stage line between Virginia City and Salt Lake City was established by A. J. Oliver in 1863. A rival line, run by the “Stagecoach King” Ben Holladay was operating by the middle of the following year. Both lines carried passengers, mail, and express between Virginia City, Bannack, and Salt Lake City and they continued to operate until 1866 when Holladay sold his line to the Overland–Wells Fargo Company, which served Virginia City until the 1920s. While there were several routes one could take to get to Virginia City, all of them were fraught with their own particular challenges. When the rivers were high enough, it was possible to travel


81 Ibid., 5.
by steam boat up the Missouri River as far as Fort Benton. From that point it was necessary to travel the rest of the way by stage—a distance of some 265 miles.\textsuperscript{82} Overland from the east, prospective miners and settlers could follow the Oregon Trail as far as Deer Creek Crossing and Red Buttes, in present-day Wyoming. From that point it was necessary to follow either the newly completed Mullan Road, which linked Fort Benton to Walla Walla, Washington Territory, or the sometimes perilous trail blazed north by John Bozeman to the gold camps in 1863.\textsuperscript{83} In 1864 another road was opened by Jim Bridger, cutting through the Big Horn Basin along the west side of the Big Horn Mountains, where the Sioux Indians were less likely to threaten passing wagon trains.\textsuperscript{84}

Bridger’s route was generally considered safer, but it was also desperately sparse of resources, including water. Travelers in the second party Bridger led reported the necessity of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{82} F. W. Warner, \textit{Montana Territory History and Business Directory} (Helena: Fisk Brothers Printers, 1879), 203; see also W. Turrentine Jackson, \textit{Wells Fargo Stagecoaching in Montana Territory} (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1979).
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Dorothy M. Johnson, \textit{The Bloody Bozeman: the Perilous Trail to Montana’s Gold} (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), 110. Bridger was a member of the Missouri Fur Company expeditions in 1822 and 1823, and also among the founding members of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Bridger’s insistence that the safety from Indian attack made up for the extremely rough conditions of his road may be partly accounted for by the fact that he had encountered hostile Blackfeet more than once. In a particularly harrowing incident that took place in 1832, Bridger led an expedition into an ambush by Blackfeet just a few miles from where Virginia City would be located, during which he was shot with an iron arrowhead that remained in his back for two years before it was removed. For further information see Hamilton, \textit{From Wilderness to Statehood}, 72 – 80; see also LeRoy R. Hafen, \textit{Fur Traders, Trappers, and Mountain Men of the Upper Missouri} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 99 – 105; Malone, Roeder and Lang, \textit{Montana}, 51 – 54.
\end{itemize}
“using water of the consistency and color of good cream.” Conditions were consistent in only one respect—they were difficult. In hilly places it sometimes took longer to travel down one slope than it did to cross the ten miles leading up to it. In the flat places, sand was sometimes deep enough to drive oxen past the point of exhaustion. More than once the trains had to stop “to shovel dirt into dry stream beds to get the wagons across.” Bridger’s route was intended as an alternate to the road opened in 1863 by John Bozeman, but it quickly became clear that Bridger’s best argument for using his road “was the lack of hostile Indians.” The combination of scarce resources and difficult conditions meant miserable traveling, and 1864 was the only year it operated.

John Bozeman, who arrived in Bannack in 1862 but failed to secure a successful mining claim, recognized the need for a more direct overland route into the Beaverhead Valley, as both of the existing ones were problematic. One could travel by water via the Missouri River to Fort Benton and then overland along the Mullan Road to the mines; however, this route was slow, impossible if river conditions were unfavorable, and it could be prohibitively expensive. It took the average steamboat nearly two months to travel the 3,000 miles, most of which were fraught with hazards. The entire waterway was subject to areas of shallow water that ran steamers aground and shifting channels that could force the boats up against the river banks. Sandbars and submerged trees, commonly called “snags,” obstructed much of the Missouri’s lower reaches, while toward the upper extensions whitewater and shifting rapids created different challenges.

85 Johnson, Bloody Bozeman, 128.

86 Ibid., 127 – 128.

87 Ibid., 128; see also Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 75.
Under such conditions it was “no wonder the average 1850-era steamer survived less than three years.”

Getting to Fort Benton or Salt Lake City was only a portion of the tedious journey that prospective settlers from the east had to undertake in getting to the gold camps. The remaining distance was shorter, but not necessarily less perilous. The Mullan Road connecting Fort Benton and Fort Walla Walla was a government project completed in 1862. Its purpose was to move troops through the Oregon country to protect settlers there from Indian attacks. Providing access to the gold fields was a secondary benefit, but not a priority. It was considered the safest passage because of the near constant military presence, but it also took longer to travel. In the other direction, the southern route over the Oregon Trail to Fort Hall covered long stretches of barren plains, unless travelers chose a longer itinerary which took them south to Salt Lake City. Reports of warfare and hostile Indians on the plains caused many travelers to think twice about chancing the shorter but more dangerous direct routes.

Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that those who dared to carry supplies, provisions and mail into the mining camps charged heavily for their services. A. J. Oliver, for instance, charged $1.00 for carrying a letter the 375 miles between Salt Lake City and Bannack. A sheet of writing paper and an envelope was an additional $0.25, and a postage stamp was still another $0.25—substantial for a time when the cost of sending a domestic letter in the states was

---


a mere $0.03 per half ounce. Mailing a letter of the same weight across the Rocky Mountains was only $0.10, and sending the same more than 2,500 miles cost $0.20. Oliver’s rates were reasonable compared to some independent mail runners, who charged as much as $2.00, but for men in the isolated, dreary gold camps, it was a small price to pay for the chance of a reply from home. Letters were sometimes more important than supplies. Hardship was expected in the gold camps, and few things could ease the suffering as did a kind word from loved ones. It is not surprising that post offices served the mining towns as important community and social centers.\(^{90}\)

Merchants stood to make greater gains than gold seekers, as the miners who poured into the gold camps often arrived unprepared and short of the most basic supplies. Aaron T. Ford, an early resident of Bannack recalled that “not long after we got in the mines a few men took their teams and started for Salt Lake [City] for supplies for there were no groceries or clothing to be had in Bannock at any price.” Soon after, Ford continued, a Mormon man arrived “with some burnt rice. He sold it for .75 per pound. A Mr. Buts got some sorgum [sic]. It had been scorched about as thick as tar and just about as good. He sold it for $4.00 per gallon.”\(^{91}\) Ford recorded two additional incidents during his early Bannack days that illustrate the day-to-day challenges of life in a fledgling frontier mining camp. “I paid twenty dollars for a pair of boots that had been worn,” Ford recalled. “The man said he would not let me have them, but they were too small for him. They were too small for me too, but I wore them all the same.”

Around the same time, the pants Ford had made while crossing the plains wore thin, and he had no supplies to make more. When an acquaintance commented that he was “ragged,” Ford acknowledged his appearance and asked what he could be expected to do about it. The solution

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{91}\) Aaron T. Ford Reminiscence, “Life and History of A. T. Ford,” SC 702 Box 1, Folder 1, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana (hereafter referred to as MHS).
offered was an elk skin, which Ford purchased for five dollars. He paid another four dollars to have a woman named Mrs. Stanly sew him a new pair of pants, of which Ford wrote that “they fit me nice. I put them on the next day and worked where it was wet. When I came in at night they were down over my feet. A lot of the men commenced to josh me.” Bashful at both the pants and his ignorance about the nature of wet elk skin, Ford pulled out his knife and cut the pants off at the bottom. The next morning, when the pants were dry, he discovered that “they were about six inches too short so I was worse off than ever before but I wore those pants about a year.”

Given the dismal circumstances in which most of the gold seekers arrived after the difficult journey across the plains, early merchants arrived knowing the potential for making a fortune, sometimes in less time than it took the miners to do so. Merchants, like letters, provided an important connection to the world miners left behind when they rushed to new gold strikes. Consequently, the merchant became a source of great insight into the social history of frontier mining settlements. As historian J. A. Burkhart observes, “living in the middle of a tremendous boom, yet not entirely absorbed by it, the merchant in a mining town could comment on many phases of everyday life which might escape the ordinary prospector,” who was more concerned with “striking it rich” than with the conditions around him. These merchants saw the prospectors through the difficult early years when connections to the familiar world left outside the mining camps were minimal. This period was prolonged for some Montana gold camps,

__________________________

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

because even though multiple roads into them were established within a few years, all of them remained notoriously difficult and dangerous.

Bozeman’s route was no exception. Dangerous because it was unmarked and ran through Indian Country, the Bozeman Road was also over 350 miles shorter than the Mullan Road route. It was an enticing option for travelers hoping to save anywhere from a month to six weeks in time. The first wagon train Bozeman attempted to lead across the new trail was turned back by Cheyenne and Sioux, who “expressed a determination that a wagon road should not be opened through their country.”95 The perils were worth the risk for some who hoped take advantage of the new route, along which “wagon trains no longer had to cross the backbone of the continent twice.”96 Bozeman and two other men completed the trip, traveling by night and arriving in Alder Gulch in early August, 1863.97 The road was more permanently established the following year, but fear of hostile Indians scared many travelers into taking the longer, safer routes. Though the number of travelers killed by hostile Indians during the time was greatly exaggerated, fears of an Indian attack were not entirely unfounded. Memory and reality tended to supplement each other in the minds of settlers. Fear of the Blackfeet was already firmly entrenched in popular memory when Bozeman was killed by Blackfeet on the Yellowstone River on April 18, 1867. Though Bozeman’s murder in and of itself was an isolated incident, for settlers who were already terrified of the tribe, it served as a warning and an affirmation.98


98 Ibid., 564.
In general, however, the Indians had more to fear from the trespassers. Mary Kelly, who
taveled with a wagon train on the Bozeman cut-off to meet her husband in Virginia City in
1864, recalled that the road “ran through a new country to the white man...over, through, and
across, the hunting grounds of the Sioux and Blackfeet Indians.” Increasing strain on limited
resources and massive killing of buffalo for hides would effectively end Native ways of life in a
little more than a decade. When the wagon train encountered the first herds of buffalo, Kelly

---

99 Mary Kelly Reminiscence, “My Trip Across the Plains in 1864” SC 920 Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.

100 The disappearance of the buffalo was the final link that broke the chain of independence for many of the tribes in the Three Forks region. As Harrison A. Trexler described it, “the suddenness with which the buffalo herds of the northwest disappeared must have surprised even the hunters themselves. As late as 1882 vast herds were grazing about the Yellowstone. Two years later the buffalo was a relic of the past;” see H. A. Trexler, “The Buffalo Range of the Northwest” The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Mar., 1921), 360-361. Most mistakenly believed that the disappearance of the buffalo herds would force Indian people to accept civilization. A report in Science journal in 1895 proudly proclaimed that “the complete extermination of [the buffalo] which has taken place during the last five years, has made an entire change in the mode of life of these Indians. From a race of wandering hunters, they have become a community of farmers, and, as the official reports show, have displayed a remarkable aptitude for the arts of civilized life.” Author Unknown, “The Blackfoot Tribes” Science, Vol. 6, No. 146 (Nov. 20, 1895), 457. In reality, the Indians were more desperately hungry than settled. Even before the United States government began large scale extermination campaigns aimed at forcing Indians onto reservations, the massive destruction and overgrazing of plains land had changed buffalo migration patterns extensively enough to affect many tribes. For example, see Tom Weist, A History of the Cheyenne People (Billings, Montana Council for Indian Education, 1977), 43 – 44, 114; John S. Milloy, The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 – 1870 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 69 – 70, 104 – 111; John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 277 – 280. Large scale hunting of the buffalo by both Indians and non-Indians continued into the mid 1870s, and efforts to prevent the extinction of the large herds that roamed the plains did not begin until the end of the century—too late to have any real effect. By the end of the decade, the plains tribes that relied on the buffalo as an intrinsic resource were faced with the shocking reality that their way of life was no longer possible, and great numbers faced starvation. See also Shepard Krech III, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999), and M. Scott Traylor, “Buffalo Hunt: International Trade and the Virtual Extinction of the North American Bison,” (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, Paper 12969).
noted their seemingly vast numbers, remarking that “on several occasions our wagons had to stop, in order for the buffalo to pass, their low rumbling tramp, and peculiar bellowing could be heard at a distance as the advance of a herd approached.”¹⁰¹ It is no surprise that the travelers killed buffalo for food, but Kelly recalled that often the herds “could not be diverted from the direction in which they traveled; some of them came through our lines—but this afforded sport for the hunters who slew them in abundance—more than we actually needed. No wonder the Indian opposed any encroachment of the whites into this great country!”¹⁰² Kelly arrived in Virginia City early in the fall to join her husband, Robert. A placer miner, Kelly was one of the many who had trekked across the plains to seek the promise of fortune in the vast wilderness beyond “the States” and escape the reality of the Civil War.

The task of moving supplies, foodstuffs and machinery might have seemed monumental to all but the most intrepid. There were no railroads in Montana Territory until 1880 when the Utah and Northern reached Dillon, just over fifty miles southwest of Virginia City. It did not reach Butte, eighty miles to the northwest, until one year later. The Northern Pacific did not complete the work of crossing the territory until 1883, and even at that date, stagecoaches continued to serve most rural communities—including Virginia City—which never received feeder railroad lines.¹⁰³ Thus, from 1863 until well into the 1880s, everything that came into Virginia City was hauled by freighters who drove wagons pulled by teams of oxen or mules from

¹⁰¹ Mary Kelly Reminiscence.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Fort Benton, Corinne or Walla Walla, where goods brought in by steam boat or train could be stockpiled.

**Figure 4.** Early transportation routes to Virginia City. From Malone, Roeder and Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries.*

Freighters were a literal lifeline, moving between “six and seven million pounds of goods annually—at an average cost of about ten cents per pound” to supply Virginia City. A train could bring in up to 100,000 pounds of freight at a time, as evidenced by an 1877 report in The Madisonian that the Raymond Brothers’ train, consisting of twenty wagons, had unloaded that amount of merchandise on one day in June.\(^\text{104}\) These shipments “included everything from tools, machinery, dry goods, and coal oil to whiskey, fresh fruit, and carefully packed eggs.”\(^\text{105}\) A small number even traveled along the Bozeman Road from the east. Everything that came into the

---

\(^{104}\) Sievert and Sievert, *Virginia City and Alder Gulch*, 18; *Virginia City (Montana) The Madisonian* June 16, 1877, reprinted June 17, 1932.

mining camp was brought by the muscle power of oxen and horses. As one freighter later recalled, “once a dealer was out of some article, the customers had to do without it until freighting could be opened up again in the spring,” and consequently every one of the outfits serving the territory “was a factor of importance in the upbuilding [sic] of Montana.”

By 1873 there were hundreds of freighters working in Montana, including a number of small, independent lines run by farmers who worked for the extra income, in addition to larger outfits like Kirkendall Consolidated and Far West Freight. The principal outfit by far was the Diamond R, founded at Virginia City in 1864, which employed more than 300 wagons, 350 mules, and 500 yolks of oxen. The combination of its sheer size and efficient management enabled the Diamond R to dominate the local carrying trade.

There are many examples of young individuals who took notice of opportune moments to enter into the freighting business in Montana Territory. One example, Alexander Toponce, was just twenty-four years old when he arrived in Virginia City with the initial stampede from Bannack in 1863. Toponce’s early arrival is attested to in the fact that he managed to stake a 100 foot long claim before subsequent rushes of gold-seekers lobbied successfully to have the creek bed divided in the middle, cutting the size of claims in half. In September of 1863, tired of working paydirt, Toponce set out for Salt Lake City with two wagons, two horses, four mules, a jug of whiskey, and more than $20,000 in gold dust. After narrowly avoiding losing it all to road agents outside of Bannack, Toponce and his partner made it successfully to Utah and loaded his wagons with flour, tea, shovels, picks, butter, and “a fine big hog, dressed, for 6¢ a pound.”

---

106 *The Madisonian* January 26, 1911.

he returned to Virginia City, “where pork was scarce, he sold it to a butcher for $1 a pound.”

There were, quite literally, hundreds of men who did much the same thing, serving as frontier freighters and merchants for a short time. All contributed to the growing economy and variety of goods in the fledgling camp.

Early residents brought with them only the most basic of necessities. Most, like William T. Tinney, who kept an expense journal of his travels, brought items like butter, sugar, tea, coffee, molasses, yeast, salt, bacon, apples, grapes, peaches, soap, candles, and whiskey. Even those who came with the intention of establishing mercantiles brought only staple items. Ichabod Borror, traveling from Columbus, Ohio, to Virginia City in 1864 with a company of fifteen, noted that his travel provisions included flour, meat, salt, vinegar, molasses, apples, potatoes, onions, a bread pan, two tin plates, a tin bucket, an ax, candles, matches, yeast powders, and one bottle of pepper sauce. The items he brought for establishing his company, Borror, Ford & Co., were equally basic in nature—clothing staples like socks, drawers, pants and boots, whiskey, tobacco, ammunition, and some foodstuffs. Borror travelled as far as St. Joseph on the Burlington and Quincy Railroad, where he then embarked on a steamboat for Omaha. In a letter home, he reported that passage cost him “One hundred & thirty dollars.”

108 Johnson, Bloody Bozeman, 85 – 86.

109 William T. Tinney, “Journal of William T. Tinney Overland Trip, Arrived in Virginia City, Sept. 7, 1864” SC 851, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.

110 Ichabod B. Borror, “The Diary of Ichabod B. Borror, A Virginia City Gold Miner 1864 – 1866,” ed. Dick Shover, SC 2376, Box 1, Folder 2, 2003, MHS. Items Borror recorded purchasing for his company included “2 pr socks 1.20, 2 lbs tobacco 2.00, ammunition 3.70, 1 qt. whiskey 1.00, 3 lbs tobacco, 3.00, scissors .25, 1 bottle oil .10, 2 pr drawers 4.00, 1 pr pants 1.50, 1 pr boots 7.25, 1 box soda .35, 1 half sack meal 11.25, beans and sugar 4.75, pipe .25.”

111 Ichabod B. Borror, January 26, 1865, SC 2376, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.
was low that year, necessitating that passengers frequently disembark and unload large portions of the freight, thereby lightening the load sufficiently for the steamboat to pass over sand bars.

Missouri River steamboats played an important role in getting goods to Virginia City after 1865, when land better routes were established making it easier for freighters to move goods between stockpiles and settlements. Before those days, however, residents had to survive the winter of 1864, when bitter cold and record snowfalls closed all the roads leading to Virginia City and all but shut the town, located at an elevation of around 5,761 feet, off from the outside world. Incidentally, Borror, who arrived in Virginia City on July 24, 1864, was among the last of the settlers to make it in that year before snow choked the passes. Borror was well aware of this when he wrote to his father on January 26, 1865 that “The snow is very deep here…and tonight there is a many poor fellow laying in it frozen to death not yet found a hole [sic] train froze to death a few miles from there and are not yet found, not will be until Spring.” On September 29, 1864, Borror had recorded a heavy snowstorm, the first of many. By the end of October, he lamented that he “could not work on account of the cold weather.” At the end of January, 1865, he noted in his diary that the previous week had “been one of the most unpleasant weeks I was ever called to pass. It has been the coldest I ever experienced…” Borror was not alone. In town, other residents recorded temperatures so cold the mercury froze solid in thermometers. “I don’t know that ever I seen it snow as it did,” Borror complained, continuing that he was “confident I never heard the wind blow as it did in the past week. The snow is drifted in many places twenty and thirty feet deep.” Borror was experiencing the bitterest winter ever recorded.

---

112 Ibid.

113 Borror, “Diary of Ichabod Borror.”
The months leading up to the winter of 1864 were marked by vast improvements in the buildings and businesses of Virginia City. Sawn timber was available and substantial buildings of brick and stone, including the impressive Masonic Temple, were springing up along Wallace Street as the town transitioned from a mining camp to an established city. Small, independent merchants were everywhere, conducting business out of every available cabin and mercantile space. Virginia City could even boast such specialties as a “daugerrototype” [sic] studio that a Mr. A. M. Smith operated over a saloon run by Con Orem, and a “hair dressing parlor,” run by a Mr. Thomas White, “where one could not only have his hair cut and combed, but could also have it colored,” the proprietor promising “that the shade would be a beautiful glossy black or brown.”

A ledger for Peter Herbert, who ran a general dry goods store shows that typical items in stock between March and April 1864 ranged through the basic necessities, including stove pipe, candles, dish and stove pans, kettles, forks and knives, bar soap, flour, yeast powder, salt, coffee, potatoes, tea and bacon. In addition, Herbert also had a small selection of specialty items on hand—cigars, pepper sauce, pickles, half-inch screws, bitters, peppermint, and writing paper. Despite many improvements, the town was still a little rough.

Like most other western frontier towns, Virginia City had its fair share of lawless men and questionable women. Hurdy-gurdy girls in Virginia City found the profession very lucrative—so much so that Thomas Dimsdale reported that it was not unusual to see them “in clothes that cost $700 to $800 dollars.” In addition to lavish dancing clothes, many of these

---


115 Peter Herbert Account Book, March – April 1864, SC 275 Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.

women “were known to have invested gold worth thousands of dollars,” and were, according to Dimsdale, “able to earn more in one week than a well-educated woman could earn in an Eastern city in two years.”

Yet even during these early years, as frontier law and vigilante justice ruled Virginia City, there were individuals concerned with its salvation. Jonathan Blanchard, who was sponsored by the American Home Missionary Society and directed to assess where missionaries were needed in the west, wrote to his sponsor that business was booming in Virginia City—especially on Sundays. The town was in a state of what Blanchard described as “positive gospel destitution.” Even the “little Book shop,” Blanchard wrote, contained “scarcely a decent novel,” let alone Bibles. The quality of reading material was scarcely a concern for residents when basic food items were in short supply. Blanchard noted that vegetables that had

117 Ibid.

118 Virginia City became famous almost immediately for lawlessness and violence that characterized the first years of its existence. Road agents lurked on the trails surrounding the town and showed little discrimination in robbing stage coaches, freighters and travelers. Additional tensions that simmered beneath the surface often boiled over due to Virginia City’s location and composition—located in Union territory, but settled largely by secessionists. During the Civil War, Montana gold supported the Union and Abraham Lincoln encouraged settlement to Idaho, Montana and other pro-Union territories. The mixture of Union and Confederate sympathies in Virginia City naturally created a volatile environment, just as it did in “the States.” The organization and function of the Vigilantes in bringing law and order to Montana is well documented, and many book-length accounts and studies exist. See, for example, Thomas J. Dimsdale, The Vigilantes of Montana, or, Popular Justice in the Rocky Mountains (Butte: McKee Printing Company, 1924); Nathaniel Pitt Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways: the Pioneers of the Rockies, the Makers and Making of Montana and Idaho (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1912); Hoffman Birney, Vigilantes: a Chronicle of the Rise and Fall of the Plummer Gang of Outlaws in and about Virginia City, Montana in the early ‘60’s (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Company, 1929); Lew L. Callaway, Montana’s Righteous Hangmen: the Vigilantes in Action (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982); Frederick Allen, A Decent, Orderly Lynching: the Montana Vigilantes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); Ruth E. Mather and F. E. Boswell, Hanging the Sheriff: a Biography of Henry Plummer (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987). See also Virginia Rowe Towle, Vigilante Woman (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co.), which discusses several notable women connected to the road agents, including Electa Plummer and Maria Virginia Slade, as well as some of the wives of the Vigilantes, including Mrs. Wilbur Fiske Sanders and Annette Dimsdale. For a brief overview, see Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 78 – 82.
arrived from nearby farming regions were sold “by the pound at enormous prices...they were forty cents a few days ago.”

Another visitor named Albert D. Richardson reported that there was no fruit very few vegetables at one of Virginia City’s finer hotels. High prices, fortunately, were manageable for most of the miners, who by some accounts were averaging about $18.00 a day working the placer fields.

Despite the hardships, there was no shortage of independent merchants willing to set up business in Virginia City. Even Blanchard was forced to grudgingly admit that while nearly all the buildings in Virginia City in August of 1864 were “extemporized log cabins, covered with earth shoveled on poles for roofs,” there were also “several costly one story stone buildings going up on Main Street...showing that someone has belief in the potential and future of the place.”

In that category was Thomas Conrad, who, upon arriving in July of 1864, wrote triumphantly home to his wife, Mary, that he had made it to the “great City,” and while many were “going back discouraged, [and] many more will continue to do so...I have not come so far to be scared.” In a humorous nod to the rapid inflation in the cost of living, Conrad closed the letter by joking that he was about to invest $2.50 in “grub...for fear the price will be three dollars if I wait longer.”

Less than a week later, Conrad described his intended business, noting that


121 William H. Healy Reminiscence, 1869 – 1916, SC 814 Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.


123 Thomas Conrad to Mary Conrad, July 17, 1864, MC 30, Box 1, Folder 13, MHS.
he and his partner had “bought a Shanty…built of poles about 20 by 30 feet for which we paid 1500 dollars dust.”\(^{124}\) Even as merchants arrived to set up shop, giving the town some measure of civility by territorial standards, newly arrived easterners found the situation less than ideal.

“There is no Priest, no church, no Sunday here,” Conrad complained to his wife. “I believe there [are] more goods sold on Sunday than on all the balance of the week. The miners appropriate Sunday to do their trading and merchants and shop keepers, seem quite willing to accommodate them. I am sorry to inform you,” he continued, “that I, willing or not, must conform to the custom or shut up shop and sacrifice my investment. I promise however, to use all honorable means to counteract this unchristian custom.”\(^{125}\) Just over a week later, Conrad was still waiting for his goods to arrive. In the meantime, he and his partner were “about making expenses from the little stock we have on hand, but,” Conrad informed his wife, “we must do better than that…I don’t relish my mode of living.” As proof of the less than desirable living conditions, Conrad explained that his food was “cooked very poorly & filthy by a young man that neither knows nor cares much about it. My bed is the hard floor with a comfort under me & a pair of Blankets over me. My Pillow Slip has not been washed since you made it.”\(^{126}\) Conrad, like many, was already anticipating new diggings and increased profit opportunities. Understanding, however, that such a move was “in the future,” Conrad believed it was necessary to improve the present. Therefore, he wrote, “I must sell tin cups & plates, tea cups & bar

\(^{124}\) Ibid., July 23, 1864.

\(^{125}\) Ibid.

\(^{126}\) Ibid., July 31, 1864.
tumblers. So as to be able to meet the big tumble of Greenbacks, which I think is certain to come and that quickly.”

While many merchants carried a number of essential supplies, demand continued to exceed the amount of goods actually available. Flour commanded especially high prices, selling for a dollar a pound in Bannack during 1862—a price that was high, but not outrageous. H. A. Trexler observed that the following year W. A. Clark and A. J. Oliver, two early suppliers to Virginia City, purchased 261 pounds of flour for $208.80 and 60 pounds of meal for $18.00, respectively. It was not uncommon for flour to sell for as much as “$28.00 per sack of 98 pounds in ‘gold dust’ or $56 in greenbacks.” He continued that “although prices were not consistent they were all very high. Bread kept pace with flour.” Pioneers could often expect to pay up to $2.50 for just seven pounds, and Granville Stuart recorded that in the early territorial years “a meal of ‘sour-dough bread, black coffee, and bad doughnuts universally cost a dollar.’” Of course, prices were inflated nationwide because of the Civil War, and naturally were even higher in the isolated mining camps.

Most mining camp residents were willing to pay prices of $28.00 per sack with few complaints. When the winter of 1864 hit, prices skyrocketed as snow closed off all the roads into Virginia City. Even without this added hardship, flour in the mining camps was scarce. Wheat

127 Ibid. “Greenbacks” or paper money remained scarce in the territory for a number of years, with even Virginia City’s largest banks struggling to find enough paper and coin currency to exchange with miners for their gold dust. For a more detailed examination, see C. James Wall, “Gold Dust and Greenbacks” Montana: The Magazine of Western History, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring, 1957), 24 – 31.


129 Ibid.
farming was not native to the Bitterroot Mountains, and though mills were established early on, there was not enough supply to meet the demands of the growing population. In these circumstances, miners judged Montana wheat as inferior. In most instances they were so convinced of the “superiority of the Utah commodity that they willingly paid a third more for it than for the local brands.”

During the winter of 1864, with no supplies arriving in Virginia City between December and May, flour became a scarce commodity and prices soared as merchants doled out shrinking quantities for prices as high as $150 a sack.

Even with supplies for all of the town’s major merchants, including Rockfellow and Dennee, stalled on the wrong side of the Rocky Mountains, flour prices remained relatively reasonable through April, when Virginia City’s first newspaper, the Montana Post, reported the first substantial increase in the price of flour, noting that “St. Louis was up $8, Salt Lake $11, States $15.”

Riots had begun as early as March in other communities, including nearby Silver

130 Ibid., 6.

131 Johnson, Bloody Bozeman, 150. The Montana Post was Virginia City’s first newspaper, established by a young easterner named John Buchanan, who arrived in Virginia City in 1864 with a printing press and turned out the first issue in August of that year. For several years during the territorial era Virginia City boasted multiple newspapers, with competing weekly and tri-weekly offerings like The Montana Democrat (1865 – 1868), Virginia Tri-Weekly Post (1867 – 1868), Tri-Weekly Democrat (1868), Weekly Montana Democrat (1868 – 1869), and the Montana Capital Times (1869 – 1870); however, the Montana Post, a daily, was considered the town’s main newspaper. By 1876, The Madisonian announced that its daily publication would end its three year run because the lack of demand made it an endeavor of “empty glory” that could not turn a profit. The weekly edition continued. At least one newspaper has remained in continuous production since 1864, the best known being The Montanian (1870 – 1876), The Daily Madisonian (1874), Alder Gulch Times (1899 – 1903), The Times (1903 – 1915), Madisonian Times (1915 – 1920), and The Madisonian (1920 – Present). The Montanian was essentially a continuation of the Montana Post, and for a number of years was run by Thomas Deyarmon, a prominent Virginia City citizen, and also for a time by Thomas Dimsdale, who during his time as editor wrote and published the book The Vigilantes of Montana, the first book published in Montana Territory. The Montanian became known as simply The Madisonian toward the end of the century, and would remain Virginia City’s main newspaper after that time—the various name changes between the 1880s and 1920 were all variations of the same
Bow City, and they spread to Alder Gulch on April 2, 1865, when a riot broke out in Nevada City. By then, flour was selling for $40 a sack. A town meeting was called in Virginia City the following day, and “a committee went to call on the merchants, pleading that the people were destitute.” Its efforts only inflamed already short tempers, precipitating an unorganized, angry, and unsuccessful attempt to “take flour by force from the Newbanks store.” Only after the sheriff deputized twenty policemen was the mob talked “out of its violent intentions.”

A second and more successful flour riot occurred two weeks later, directly on the heels of the news that General Lee had surrendered and Richmond had fallen. While the Montana Post did not fail to report this news, it dedicated far more space to scolding Virginia City merchants, who “had run the price of flour up to $100 a sack—a dollar a pound!—and boasted that they had a right to sell as they pleased.” In a matter of days the price had risen from $65 on April 16 to $90 the next day. Despite the price, “people who could were paying that much.” When the price topped out at $1 a pound on April 1 with merchants like Rockfellow and Dennee claiming that the same commodity was “selling at $5 a pound within a few hundred miles,” the citizens of

---

publication. A smaller competitor called simply The Times was published for a time shortly before World War I, until it was absorbed by The Madisonian, which then changed its name to The Madisonian Times before going back to The Madisonian in 1920. The Madisonian is still in publication, but printing operations were removed from Virginia City to Ennis in 1992. For a short period of time at the end of World War II the newspaper was published in Sheridan, but moved back to Virginia City in the early 1950s. For more detailed information, see the Library of Congress Chronicling America Project, viewable online at http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/home.html

132 Johnson, Bloody Bozeman, 151.

133 Ibid., 151; see also Phillips, Forty Years on the Frontier, Part II, 28.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid., 152.
Virginia City took action. In contrast to the first flour riot, the second involved a number of the town’s most respected men—more than four-hundred and eighty of them—who marched a little over a mile from Nevada City to Virginia City with their leader carrying “a symbolic banner: an empty flour sack.” The rioters formed into companies of fifty men, each with a captain. All were ominously silent, ignoring the jeers and curses of the bystanders. Their search of the town “stores, warehouses, restaurants, boarding houses, even some haystacks,” yielded “eighty-two sacks of precious flour. They handed out promissory notes, printed up in advance at the Montana Post, promising to pay for the flour at a price it used to sell for, Salt Lake $27, and States $30,” in addition to the cost of freighting and interest. The flour was gathered in a building on lower Wallace Street, where residents lined up and were allowed to enter twenty at a time and purchase twenty pounds each.\footnote{Ibid., 153; an account of the flour riot from an eyewitness, Theodore N. Bobbitt, was printed in The Madisonian in 1917. Bobbitt recalled that the flour sack flag carried by the rioters had the words “Fall in, Fall in, Flour $1.25 per pound” written on it. According to Bobbitt’s estimate, at least 1,000 men “fell in” with the mob as it marched from Virginia City to about three miles below Nevada City and back again, and an additional 500 or so joined in the streets of Virginia City when it returned. See Virginia City (Montana) The Madisonian March 30, 1917.} While there were still some individual cases of looting and bootlegging, the organization and forethought of the flour seizure prevented violence.

Still, not everyone agreed with the mob. Thomas Conrad wrote to his wife early in May that there had been “several flour or bread riots, but there was no cause to justify them.” He acknowledged that flour was in short supply, but he argued that there was “not the least danger of starvation,” as there was an abundance of cattle, fish, and wild game. Instead, he blamed the riotous behavior on “the wild and ungovernable disposition of our people. The same disposition will be manifested I fear,” he wrote, “on any trifling occasion in all the states.”\footnote{Thomas Conrad to Mary Conrad, May 14, 1865, MC 30, Box 1, Folder 16, MHS.} Whether
Conrad’s store was among those searched is unclear, but as the rioters were thorough—taking more than a day to scour the town—such is certainly within the realm of possibility.

New shipments of flour finally arrived in early May, when sixty-four sacks arrived and prices settled back down to $65 a sack. The *Montana Post* reported that to get the flour to Virginia City, freighters had to unload it three times, “with terrible effort, to lighten the wagons for the straining oxen, floundering in deep snow where the crust had melted.”\(^{138}\) Dorothy Johnson explained that “men carried the sacks on their shoulders two hundred yards at a stretch,” but their efforts were rewarded with “joyful weeping in the streets of Virginia City when the first flour wagons rolled in.”\(^{139}\) Along with the wagons came a new wave of gold-seekers, merchants and immigrants eager to make their fortunes in the gold mines. Among them was a young man named James Knox Polk Miller, who fought his way to Alder Gulch during the spring of 1865, and arrived in time to experience the town’s transition from mining camp to “Social City.”

Setting out from Salt Lake City on May 22, 1865, Miller carried only basic necessities with him—food, some blankets, a few utensils and the clothes on his back.\(^{140}\) Miller had purchased a horse, but like many travelers intended to walk the more than 400 miles to Alder Gulch. He arrived there on June 6, 1865, and was immediately forced to pledge his saddle blankets, horse and overcoat as security for food and board while he waited for a quantity of 660


\(^{139}\) Ibid.

\(^{140}\) Andrew Rolle, *The Road to Virginia City: the Diary of James Knox Polk Miller* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 62. Upon leaving Salt Lake City, Miller reported that his outfit for the trip consisted of “14 lbs. Bacon, 3 lbs. Coffee, 4 lbs. Sugar, one $25 paper of pepper, $10 worth of salt (1 lb.), 18 lbs. of flour, a horse, cost $90, Saddle, one pr. California blankets, an overcoat,” and the suit of clothes on his back, in addition to a few basic utensils.
dozen eggs that he had packed and shipped from Salt Lake City to arrive. Miller hoped to sell the eggs to local merchants for a profit as a means of earning enough capital to establish himself in his own business in Virginia City.

Miller described Virginia City in 1865 as a collection of “houses and stores…mostly on one street…built of loggs, mud, & stones with dirt roofs [sic],” and he soon rented a cabin for $10 per month. Within a few days, he was hired by Rockfellow and Dennee as a bookkeeper, a position he held until he departed for New York in 1867. He often purchased goods from Salt Lake City, which he sold to the store partners, common items including dried peaches and apples, for which he made a small profit. There was no escape from the high cost of living in the gold camps. Late in the year, Miller was persuaded to purchase a new suit of clothes because of the numerous social events he was invited to attend, and he reported spending $105.25 for a new outfit consisting of a coat, pants, vest, hat, shirt, neckerchief, handkerchief, and gaiters. Miller, like many residents of Virginia City, enjoyed the expanding variety of entertainments that were rapidly becoming available in 1864 – 65.

Despite sometimes seemingly exorbitant prices, residents of Virginia City enjoyed a wide variety of goods after the harsh winter of 1864 – 65, thanks to improved roads and the diminishing threat of American Indians who objected to wagon trains passing through their hunting grounds. A ledger from September, 1865 kept by John Moore, recorded typical items, including bottles of pickles, honey, canned strawberries, crackers, flour, sugar, salt, pepper, tea,

---

141 Ibid., 75.
142 Ibid., 83.
143 Ibid., 84.
potatoes, butter, vinegar, candles, matches and gun powder. \textsuperscript{144} Also bringing in supplies were the dozens of steamboats plying the waters of the Missouri River between St. Louis, Missouri and Fort Benton. One of these, the \textit{Bertrand}, set out from St. Louis on March 18, 1865, loaded with supplies for the Montana gold camps. Just twenty-five miles north of Omaha, Nebraska, the \textit{Bertrand} hit a snag and sank. Shortly afterwards, the boat’s insurers “sent professional divers to salvage most of the boat’s machinery and portions of the cargo,” but their attentions were diverted when a second vessel, the \textit{Cora II}, sank nearby. Salvage crews returned to the \textit{Bertrand}, but the river had already begun to deposit silt over the wreck and efforts were soon abandoned. \textsuperscript{145} A number of basic and specialty items were on board the \textit{Bertrand}, many of them bound for Virginia City merchants M. Kingman and Co., Vivian and Simpson, and G. P. Dorris, who were stocking their businesses with goods ranging from building, food and mining supplies to clothing, housewares and patent medicines. \textsuperscript{146}

Even though a wider array of goods were starting to make their way into the territory, most men who arranged for their wives to join them still encouraged the transport of their personal household goods. It was cheaper to convey them across the country than to buy them in Virginia City. When Thomas Conrad began planning for the arrival of his wife and children in

\textsuperscript{144} John Moore Store Records, September, 1865, SC 519, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS. For a comparison to another 1865 Virginia City General Store, see Appendix B, John P. Rogers General Store Records, 1865 – 1866. For purposes of comparison, see Appendix C, Petchner Mercantile Company Records, 1866 – 1868.

\textsuperscript{145} Peterson, \textit{Bertrand Stores}, 6. The Bertrand was rediscovered and excavated in 1968 – 1969, after being submerged under 28 – 30 feet of silt for more than a century. More than 200,000 objects were recovered and preserved, and form the basis for our knowledge of the steamboat’s cargo. For more detailed information on the Bertrand cargo, see Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{146} Jerome E. Petsche, \textit{The Steamboat Bertrand: History, Excavation, and Architecture} (Missouri Valley: Midwest Interpretive Association, 2003, 48 – 72.)
January of 1865, his instructions to her contained a long list of household items that needed to accompany her to Montana Territory, including bedding, chairs, sewing necessities, and even the family cook stove.\textsuperscript{147} That Conrad, who was doing well in the Territory, still encouraged his wife to bring family effects is telling. He was able to write in January of 1865 that he had “made clear four thousand dollars” since arriving in the territory, and that he had on hand “about $13,000 worth of goods.” He feared, however, that one night might clean him out of everything before more arrived.\textsuperscript{148} A month later, during the flour riots, Conrad had increased his profit to more than $8,000, in part because no new goods had made their way to the territory.\textsuperscript{149}

Most merchants improved their odds of making money by diversifying. In a reminiscence, Samuel Leach, a resident of Virginia City during the territorial years, noted that in 1867 his dry goods store, Tootle and Leach, had become something of a general merchandise establishment. It “carried a general stock of merchandise, consisting chiefly of dry goods, boots and shoes, a greenware and notions, also a full line of men’s and women’s wearing apparel from overcoats, shawls, wraps, and gloves, to underwear [red flannel] and lingerie, to worsted socks and silk hose.”\textsuperscript{150} Leach came to the territory in April of 1867 on the Holladay and Co. stage line, paying $375.00 for fare from Denver, Colorado to Virginia City. Meals ranged between

\textsuperscript{147} Thomas Conrad to Mary Conrad, New Years Day 1865, MC 30, Box 1, Folder 15, MHS. Conrad included a detailed list of the items his wife should pack, including her “sewing machine & threads, bedding, carpet, 6 chairs, 2 Rocking chairs, Book case & Books, Cook stove…the stove from the family room…several pairs of shoes for each of the family 1 ps domestic, 2 ps Calico, 1 ps flannel, 1 ps toweling, needles, pins tape thread braid etc…also bring the lounge. I would like to have the balance of it this afternoon.”

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., January 8, 1865.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., February 26, 1865.

\textsuperscript{150} Samuel Leach, “Excerpts from the Autobiography of Samuel Leach, November 1, 1865 – October 1, 1870,” SC 369, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.
$1.50 and $2.50, and lodging cost $2.00 per night. Over the course of the ten days on the road Leach reported that “stale bread, fried bacon and baked beans were the sum total of the meals,” and that he took with him “a bag of stick candy and a package of sweet and bitter chocolate,” which he shared with his fellow passengers.\textsuperscript{151} By 1867 supplies of goods had been replenished, and Leach recorded that flour sold for $12 – $16 a sack, and bacon and ham ranged from $0.18 to $0.35. Common cotton prints were $0.25 a yard, while cotton thread was $1.50 a dozen or $0.25 for a single spool.\textsuperscript{152} As specialty goods made their way into the territory, personal ledgers reveal that goods such as flour, butter, candles, whiskey, coffee, eggs, catsup, salt, tea, bacon, tobacco, socks and matches were common purchases. Certain items that were less common included looking glasses, hair pins, lemon syrup and bitter gin.\textsuperscript{153}

In addition to respectable businesses, Virginia City, like most mining camps, hosted a number of less reputable establishments. John G. Overton, who had arrived in 1864, wrote home the following year that “there are a great many ways to make money in this country. Some make it by Mercantiling, some by mechanical pursuits, and some by keeping billiard halls – ball alleys – Gambling saloons – Grog shops and many other ways too tedious to mention.”\textsuperscript{154} Even James Miller, who made repeated efforts to reform his habits, reported spending many evenings playing chess, billiards, and bowling, among other activities. Miller and Overton were among those who never managed to fully adjust to life in the territory. “I do not like this country,” Overton

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} Virginia City General Store (Unidentified) Records, 1869, SC 274, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS. For more detailed information, see Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{154} John G. Overton to Father Gray and Family, June 12, 1865, SC 615, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.
complained. “It is too cold and barren. The seasons are too short here for this ever to make much of an agricultural country…I do not like the society here.” Overton wrote in disbelief that while Virginia City was barely “an incorporated territory with about 3000 inhabitants…the Mayor Alderman and other officers put on all the pomp and display of an Oriental Metropolis.”

Within a few months of its founding, Virginia City could claim a number of social establishments that helped settlers maintain connections to the civilized world of the States. Book and social clubs were organized, as well as mock legislatures and dances. Amusements like billiards, bowling and cards were popular diversions year-round. During the winter, sledding, skiing, and ice skating were popular, and during the warmer months hunting, fishing, horse and foot races and rock-drilling contests were common. Boxing was extremely popular, and one of the well known events in Virginia City history was the 185-round draw match between Hugh O’Neil and Champion Saloon owner John Condel “Con” Orem in January, 1865. Tickets sold for $5.00 – $10.00 and DeWitt Waugh’s Brass Band entertained the audience prior to the fight.

The first real taste of urbanity for many, however, was the arrival of theater productions, which began as early as September of 1864 when DeWitt Waugh organized a small theater. In

---

155 Ibid. While it remained primitive by eastern standards, Virginia City was the most “civilized” camp in the territory in 1864. In addition to providing services for its own residents, Virginia City was the supply point for surrounding satellite mining districts, some of which were more than thirty miles away. While many of these camps were considered temporary and did not have their own infrastructure, Virginia City hoped for permanence from the very beginning—a fact attested to in its quick organization of programs to help the poor and destitute. Miners and those in need of medical or social services relied on Virginia City for their needs. One example is the Hot Springs mining district, located just north of Virginia City along the Madison River; for more information, see Jeffrey Safford, The Mechanics of Optimism: Mining Companies, Technology, and the Hot Springs Gold Rush, Montana Territory, 1864 – 1868 (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2004), 47 – 64.

156 Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 89; see also Smith, Montana’s Madison Country, 67; and Phillips, Forty Years on the Frontier, Part II, 23 – 24.
addition, a number of traveling performers entertained audiences for a few days or weeks at a
time before moving on. On February 21, 1866, the New People’s Theater gave its opening
performance. Among those in the audience was James Miller, who reported that while the play,  
“The Hunchback,” proved tolerable, the cold was not, which influenced his decision to retire  
after the first act to John Ming’s Occidental Billiard Hall, where he remained until four in the  
morning, ending the night “the loser of 20 games & drinks,” a loss of $10.00.157 The most  
successful mining town theaters were successful in producing “serious drama of high quality that  
gave the pioneers a touch of the culture they had left home.”158 Professional theater productions  
were always a welcome diversion. Jack Langrishe, an entrepreneur theater producer, director and  
star, arrived in August, 1867. Already successful in establishing theaters in Denver and Salt Lake  
City, Langrishe’s troupe performed in Virginia City until the end of September, when it moved  
on to Last Chance Gulch. Langrishe’s troupe returned to packed houses for the next three  
years.159

While primitive to most, especially easterners, in 1865 Virginia City nevertheless became  
the territorial capital of Montana, and its vaulted status made it host to a number of sights that  
were uncommon by any standards, including experiments using camels as pack animals in lieu of  
horses in June of 1865.160 Virginia City also gained the distinction of receiving the first telegraph

157 Smith, Montana’s Madison Country, 64; Rolle, Road to Virginia City, 96 – 97.

158 Alice Cochran, “The Gold Dust Trail: Jack Langrishe’s Mining Town Theaters”  

159 Ibid., 64 – 65; see also Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 89.

160 Some freighters experimented with the use of camels as pack animals, believing that the  
hardy animals would be better suited to the rough terrain and harsh traveling conditions of  
the west than were oxen or mules. One camel was capable of carrying six to eight hundred  
pounds, and in addition to being able to go for more than a week without water, camels could
line in Montana Territory in 1866.\textsuperscript{161} Even as the town transitioned from mining camp to proper metropolis, however, many were being drawn north to the new gold strike at Last Chance Gulch. While snowed in at Virginia City, Conrad informed his wife in March of 1865 that he and his partner had “another shop in operation at Helena on Last Chance Gulch which place will we think in one year be a larger place than Virginia City.”\textsuperscript{162} Conrad was right. From the beginning, it appeared that the new strike would provide better opportunities, as “the open contour of the land and close proximity to Fort Benton’s trading post, as well as access to the Missouri River, established Helena as a permanent town from its beginning. Supplies were obtained quicker and cheaper than in Virginia City, which was dependant on the unreliable stage route from Corinne, Utah.”\textsuperscript{163} Hope that the coming of the railroad would alleviate the situation was a staple for many merchants and residents who continued to believe in the future of Virginia City.

Montana was originally part of the Idaho Territory, created by Congress on March 4, 1863. It was Sidney Edgerton, the first territorial governor, who, upon arriving in Bannack to take his post on September 17, 1863, “realized that Idaho Territory was a geographic

---

\textsuperscript{161} Malone, Roeder and Lang, \textit{Montana}, 78.

\textsuperscript{162} Thomas Conrad to Mary Conrad, March 19, 1865, MC 30, Box 1, Folder 15, MHS.

impossibility.\textsuperscript{164} With portions of the territory separated by treacherous mountain ranges and the general difficulty of travel, it was unrealistic for the vast area to function as one united entity. A petition to separate Montana Territory from Idaho Territory quickly passed through Congress, and Montana Territory was officially proclaimed on May 26, 1864. Edgerton was appointed territorial governor of Montana, but his work was hindered by Congress’ failure to appoint a Territorial Secretary. Very little effort was made to give definite structure to the government of Montana Territory until the Civil War had ended. Against that backdrop, territorial politics were colored by the division between Republican and Democrat, a divide that was never completely mended.\textsuperscript{165} These sometimes volatile conditions aided in giving rise to some of the most famous episodes in Virginia City history, including the Vigilantes scourge of Henry Plummer’s gang of road agents in January of 1864.

Edgerton’s government was wrought with problems from the beginning. The territorial capital was moved to Virginia City from Bannack on February 7, 1865.\textsuperscript{166} According to the establishing proviso, the location of the capital was “subject to change only by a vote of the people,” and attempts to put that legislation into practice began almost immediately. The first two attempts in 1867 and 1869 were unsuccessful, the second due at least in part to a fire that

\textsuperscript{164} Sievert and Sievert, \textit{Virginia City and Alder Gulch}, 20.


\textsuperscript{166} Sievert and Sievert, \textit{Virginia City and Alder Gulch}, 22 – 23; see also Clark C. Spence, \textit{Territorial Politics and Government in Montana, 1864 – 89} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 20. Edgerton established Bannack as the temporary capital of the territory in 1864, but, upon seeing the results of the census, which showed that the overwhelming majority of citizens in the territory were located in Madison County, he moved the capitol with a clause subjecting the location to change based only on a vote of the general electorate.
destroyed the election results before they could be officially counted. The third attempt, in 1874, essentially “offered the voters two choices: ‘for or against Helena,’” and was eventually settled by the Montana Supreme Court—Virginia City lost the capital, but remained the seat of Madison County. The Social City felt the blow, but continued to revel in the glory of its position, believing that a second boom and subsequent revival was just ahead on the horizon. The city had been resurveyed in 1868 by John L. Corbett, with a revised plat stretching over nearly 580 acres, upon which was a site set aside for a Capitol Square, stretching 300 by 450 feet. Despite the loss of the capital, an impressive brick courthouse was erected on the Capitol Square site in 1876, built by Daniel Steele and designed by L. B. Olds, a gesture of the grandeur and permanence Virginia City still hoped for and believed in.

As Montana Territory grew and settlers poured in, American Indians were pushed onto reservations and even the most feared of the “hostile” tribes subdued. It was during the territorial years that many of the tribes in Montana Territory were forced to negotiate with the United States government. The Flathead, Kootenai and Pend d’Oreille were encouraged to occupy one reservation after ceding more than twenty-five thousand acres of land in 1855, the same year the

167 Ibid., 22–25. There were several contenders for the location of the capital, including Deer Lodge and Helena. Virginia City managed to hang on to its position until 1875, when a recount of the ballots finally favored making Helena the capital city. Numerous charges of fraud arose during the campaigns, including the 1869 vote where Virginia City was declared the winner, even though the ballots were burned in a fire before they could be officially counted. Many claimed that more than 1,800 ballots were cast in favor of Madison County in 1874, at a time when the actual voting strength of the area was only about 1,200. For more information see Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 109–110. See also N. C. Abbott, Montana in the Making (Billings: Gazette Printing Company, 1937), 216–221; and Clark C. Spence, Montana: a Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), 81–82.

168 Sievert and Sievert, Virginia City and Alder Gulch, 35; Paul D. Friedman, “Final Report of the Architectural, Historical and Archaeological Inventory of the Virginia City National Historic Landmark, Madison County, Montana” (Unpublished, Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, 1990), 95.
“Lame Bull” treaty with the Blackfeet was signed.\textsuperscript{169} The treaty failed to establish a lasting state of peace, and warfare and raiding resumed by the end of the decade. Since treaties with the Blackfeet in 1865 and 1868 were not ratified, by 1870 the tribe had technically ceded none of its land, which many mistakenly believed included the ground upon which Virginia City was located.\textsuperscript{170} The independence of the Blackfeet, like many tribes, was rapidly extinguished, though they remained widely feared by settlers for a number of years. Another smallpox epidemic struck in 1869–70, and as the buffalo disappeared from the plains the tribes found themselves destitute, hungry, and reduced in numbers with nowhere to turn.

Most non-Indian contemporaries believed that Native claims to the Virginia City area had been extinguished in 1865, when representatives of the Piegan, Gros Ventre, Blood and Blackfeet were induced by their Indian Agent, Gad E. Upson, to agree to a treaty that effectively pushed the southern boundary of their land “northward to the Teton River and so open the region


\textsuperscript{170} The land area ceded was farther north, encompassing an area surrounded by the main divide of the Rocky Mountains to the west, the Marias River to the north, the Missouri River to the east, and the Sun River to the south. The area of the Three Forks was included in the 1855 Lame Bull Treaty, but only in the context of being identified as common hunting ground shared by the Blackfeet and “other tribes.” The 1865 treaty was mistakenly hailed by the correspondent for Virginia City’s newspaper, the \textit{Montana Post}, as giving up “all the land of any worth,” when in fact the area surrounding Virginia City, Bannack and Helena was only established as a common hunting ground, to be shared peacefully by the signing tribes for a period of ninety-nine years—almost verbatim to the description given in the 1855 treaty. See Ewers, \textit{Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains}, 236–253. The Lemhi Shoshone signed a treaty with the United States in 1868 that clearly defined their ancestral homelands as including the Three Forks drainage—they remained the only tribe to make a definitive claim to the area. See Lynette Scriver, “The Lemhi Shoshone of Idaho Territory: Mormons, Gold, Treaties, and an Executive Order, 1855–1875” (Master’s thesis, Washington State University, 2008).
south of that line to white settlement.” The treaty was never ratified, but nonetheless the special correspondent for the *Montana Post* “hailed the treaty as a great victory,” and the newspaper was quick to point out that the treaty gave over to white settlement a vast tract of land “embracing between two and three hundred thousand square miles,” including the largest settlements in the territory—Helena, Virginia City, and Bannack. Effectively, it encompassed what the editors referred to as “all those portions of our Territory that have proved to be of any worth.”

The treaty was never ratified, but as the buffalo disappeared from the plains and Indian ways of life became harder to sustain, it was a simple matter for settlers in Montana Territory to ignore this technicality, along with the fact that the Blackfeet did not claim the area as part of their homeland, but only as a shared hunting ground. The only tribe who continued to claim the Three Forks drainage, the Lemhi Shoshone, outlined the boundaries of their ancestral homeland in an 1868 treaty signed just a few miles from Virginia City. Once again, however, as the buffalo herds disappeared from the plains, the Blackfeet and Crow became increasingly hostile as they fought to retain native ways of life. As had often been the case during the fur trade era a century earlier, the Lemhi, who maintained friendly relations with settlers, were overshadowed in most popular memory by their more fearsome neighbors.

---


Figure 5. Land area claimed and ceded by the Blackfeet in 1855, showing land area claimed only as a “common hunting ground.” From John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains.

The people who became known as the Lemhi Shoshone had definitive ancestral ties to the region. A treaty recognizing the homeland of the Shoshone, Bannock, and Sheepeater Indians from the Fort Lemhi area was negotiated at Laurin, just fifteen miles to the north of Virginia City in 1868. Several hundred residents of Virginia City traveled north to be present at the negotiations, including a number of women, who gained the express notice of negotiator Alexander Culbertson. Several of the town’s most prominent citizens were witnesses to the treaty, including Levinius Daems and Wilbur Fiske Sanders. Reporting on the negotiations, the Montana Post observed that Tendoy’s band numbered between five and six hundred, and had inhabited “the country between the southern part of this Territory and Snake River, on the north
and south, and Salmon River, in Idaho, and the head waters of the Madison and Missouri on the east and west” for “many years.”

Figure 6. Land area claimed by the Lemhi Shoshone in 1868. The land Tendoy specifically outlined in the Treaty of Virginia City included the area of the Three Forks drainage, which the tribe was willing to cede in exchange for lands in the Salmon River country of Idaho, just outside the present-day border of Montana. From John W. W. Mann, Sacajawea’s People: the Lemhi Shoshones and the Salmon River Country.

The Indians of Tendoy’s band were described as being “steady and firm friends of the settlers” and “very poor.” As the Blackfeet gained power in the early nineteenth century, they often came into contact with the Lemhi Shoshone. The Lemhi considered the area their homeland, but had to be wary of the Blackfeet who had better access to trade goods and were better armed. The newspaper was correct in noting that as a consequence of not being able “to

173 Montana Post, October 2, 1868.
visit the buffalo hunting grounds, where they would be cut to pieces by the Crows and Blackfeet,” the Shoshone were “obliged to pick up a precarious subsistence by fishing, hunting for small game, and gathering roots and berries for winter supplies.” Far from abandoning the area, however, the Lemhi continued to visit their traditional hunting grounds in the Three Forks region, despite the risk of encountering their superiorly armed enemies. As the buffalo herds dwindled and all tribes were faced with the necessity of adapting to a changed way of life, the Lemhi sometimes relied on their friendly relations with settlers for subsistence. In Virginia City, citizens reportedly “bought gooseberries and other articles from them, and thus contributed to their support.” The article also noted that Tendoy’s band frequently camped near Virginia City during the winter, “begging from door to door,” and often being fed by residents of the town. “They are regarded as harmless, and as objects of pity, rather than dislike,” the article observed sympathetically, “their past history is a proud one.”

Article III of the treaty stated that the Indians were entitled to “two townships of land, commencing at or about a point known as ‘the Point of Rocks,’ on the north fork of the Salmon River, about twelve miles above Fort Lemhi.” Notably, Point of Rocks was one of the

174 Ibid.

175 W. J. Cullen and James Tuft to N. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 25, 1868. Viewable online at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol5/html_files/v5p0707.html

176 Treaty with the Shoshones, Bannacks, and Sheepeaters, September 24, 1868, viewable online at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol5/html_files/v5p0707.html Fort Lemhi was established by Mormon missionaries on June 15, 1855 and was located in the Salmon River Country of Idaho, near present-day Tendoy, Idaho, and a little more than 150 miles from Virginia City, Montana. The mission operated for only three years before hostilities from
landmarks that had been recognized by Sacajawea as the Lewis and Clark Expedition approached the Three Forks, and was near the area of her capture by the Hidatsa in 1800—a clear indication that she considered the area part of her homeland. The Corps of Discovery had, in fact, encountered Agadika Indians—of which Tendoy’s band were direct descendants—as it made its way up the drainage. The failure of the United States Senate to ratify the Virginia City treaty had long-lasting implications for the Lemhi Shoshone. Although they were allotted a one-hundred square mile tract of land through an Executive Order of President Ulysses S. Grant signed on February 12, 1875, “in lieu of the tract provided for in the third article of an unratified treaty made and concluded at Virginia City, Montana Territory, on the 24th of September, 1868,” the Lemhi Shoshone claim to the area was ultimately ignored.177

Even Cullen and Tufts were of the opinion that the Shoshone were “very poor, frequently being in great want both of provisions and clothing, and too weak, as a warlike nation,” to compete with the other buffalo hunting tribes in the area.178 The commissioners also noted, Shoshone, Bannock and Nez Perce in the area led to its closure. It was from their close proximity to the Mormon mission at Fort Lemhi that the Shoshone, Bannock, and Sheepeater Indians eventually came to be known as the Lemhi Shoshone. The Mormon mission was named after Limhi, a Nephite king found in the Book of Mormon; the name remained long after the mission was closed and became commonly applied to both the area and the Native people who lived there. For more information see Brigham Madsen, The Bannock of Idaho (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1958), 196; see also John W. W. Mann, Sacajawea’s People: the Lemhi Shoshones and the Salmon River Country (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 24 – 25; Scriver, “The Lemhi Shoshone of Idaho Territory;” and Orlan Svingen, “Who are the Lemhi and Where is Their Home?‖ viewable online at http://www.lemhi-shoshone.com/svingen.html

177 The full text of the Executive Order is viewable at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol1/HTML_files/IDA0835.html; see also Mann, Sacajawea’s People, 29.

178 W. J. Cullen and James Tuft to N. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 25, 1868. Viewable online at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol5/html_files/v5p0707.html. Like other tribes in the region, the Lemhi were impacted by the rising numbers of non-Indian settlers as already limited
however, that the Indians were “peacefully disposed towards the whites,” an opinion that often cropped up often in contemporary accounts.\(^{179}\) Just a year later, on August 10, 1869, the *Virginia City Republican* reported that Tendoy and the Lemhi were “encamped with a hundred lodges near this city,” sympathetically continuing that “his lands are gone, his tribe is broken, they have nothing; they are starving. They have been ever kind to the whites, and the Great Farther [sic] has made promises to them which he has not kept…”\(^{180}\)

Virginia City residents were given further reason to feel good will toward Tendoy and the Lemhi Shoshone when Joseph’s band of Nez Perce made its ill-fated flight away from General Oliver O. Howard and his 2,000 pursuing troops in 1877. Several Nez Perce leaders had encouraged the Lemhi Shoshone to join them—a proposition in which at least a few of the younger Lemhi were interested.\(^{181}\) Volunteers from Virginia City under the command of Captain James E. Calloway included S. R. Buford, a clerk for the Raymond Brothers General Store, George Thexton, proprietor of the Star Stables, and R. O. Hickman, who owned a clothing store. The volunteers joined the regular army forces at Junction, about five miles north of Virginia City, but General Howard refused their help. L. V. McWhorter remarked that “like other

resources were stretched thin. The presence of non-Indians naturally impacted the relationships between tribes, and the Lemhi often took out their frustrations on the neighboring Flathead, with raiding and warring parties traveling between camps stealing horses and sometimes scalps. One account can be found in Phillips, *Forty Years on the Frontier*, Part I, 197, 201 – 202.


volunteer companies who joined the regular army for short periods on the long trek, they were the natural result of the insecurity and fear rampant among the scanty civilian population of the country through which the Indians passed." The good intentions shown by Tendoy and the Lemhi Shoshone were quickly forgotten at the end of the decade, against the backdrop of the Bannock War of 1878 and the Sheepeater War of 1879 in Idaho. As settlement in Montana Territory increased, so did the drive to remove the remaining Indian population onto increasingly shrinking areas of reservation land. From the standpoint of popular memory, the Lemhi Shoshone simply were not threatening enough to be written into most contemporary accounts—thus they were often overshadowed by their more notably ferocious neighbors, such as the Blackfeet.

Despite successful campaigns to increase settlement by forcing out Indians in the surrounding areas, the fortunes of Virginia City declined slowly but steadily following the loss of the territorial capital. Although gold mining continued for nearly another seventy years, Virginia City never recaptured the glory of its first decade. The reputation it earned as “the Social City” during its early years, due to its claims of having twenty-five hotels, seventy-three liquor dealers, and three dance houses, gradually gave way to comments made in 1885 that it was a dead city,

182 Lucullus V. McWhorter, *Hear Me, My Chiefs! Nez Perce History and Legend*, edited by Ruth Bordin (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1992), 413. Accounts of the company vary, with some stating that they did fight with Howard near Camas, after which they were sent home on foot following the loss of their horses, but there is little from Virginia City substantiate this interpretation; some Virginia City merchants, including the Raymond Brothers and William Morris did supply goods and supplied to the Army, for which they were reimbursed; see Leeson, *Montana*, 137 – 150. See also Merrill D. Beal, “I Will Fight No More Forever,” *Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 140.

183 Mann, *Sacajawea’s People*, pp. 31 – 33.
“crooning over the embers of departed glory.”

Beginning in 1875 and continuing until the turn of the century, Virginia City clung to hope that fortune would be revived by tourism, investment of eastern capital, and a connecting railroad line—a promise that was often courted but never realized.

Figure 7. Virginia City in 1868, looking east on Wallace Street. McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana.

---

184 Sievert and Sievert, *Virginia City and Alder Gulch*, 27; Michael Leeson, *History of Montana, 1739 – 1885* (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Company, 1885), 774. According to Leeson, the population in 1885 was about 1,000, with between 600 and 800 of the residents engaged in mining activities. However, Leeson also states that “the proportion of industrial and merchandising elements” was far larger in 1885 than in 1864, when Virginia [City] was at the height of her glory and population; included among the businesses were 12 grocers and general merchandisers, 2 boot and shoe dealers, 5 boot and shoe shops, 2 tobacco shops, 2 tin and hardware stores, 2 saddlery and harness shops, 2 drug stores, 4 livery stables, 1 billiard hall, 2 breweries, 2 banks, 2 Chinese stores, 4 lumber yards, 2 barber shops, 4 clothing stores, 5 dry goods stores, 3 jewelry stores, 4 tailors, 5 blacksmiths, 1 book shop, 4 hotels, 1 newspaper, 1 restaurant, 7 saloons, 1 bowling alley, 3 furniture stores, 2 bakeries and 1 gunsmith. In addition, Leeson notes the presence of 10 lawyers, 5 physicians, 2 ministers, 2 churches (3 places holding divine service), and 2 schools. Leeson concluded his assessment by stating that “Virginia is the metropolis of Madison County,” see Leeson, *Montana*, 777.
CHAPTER 3

“A Railroad to No Place:” The Buford Store Era, 1878 – 1905

If it is impossible to procure white labor, then we say hire Chinamen, Indians, anything to keep the mines working; for the advantages of working mines during this season of plenty of water should not be lost.

_The Montanian_, May 18, 1871

If we err not, Virginia City will have a greater population, present a handsome appearance, and be generally more prosperous at the close of ’81 than at any time in the last decade.

_The Madisonian_, April 9, 1881

On the famous Alder gulch lies the former capital of the Territory, Virginia City. Its history is that of the gulch. Once full of life and bustle, the wonder of the world for apparently inexhaustible wealth, its glory has departed, and it is left without a future.

Peter Koch, “The Towns of Montana, Present and Future,” 1881

Virginia [City] has been spoken of as dead, crooning over the embers of departed glory.

Michael Leeson, _History of Montana, 1739 – 1885_

Much of Virginia City’s existence can be defined by the businesses that managed to survive through the decades that followed its boom. It is not surprising that business establishments and residences sprang up by the dozen as hopeful miners flooded into the town, or that the array of merchants expanded as more and more families settled in the area. What is perhaps most surprising about Virginia City is the tenacity with which some residents and businesses clung to their way of life long after it was clear that a revival was unlikely. Perpetual hope accompanied by perpetual depression was a central theme during most of the town’s existence. It was a special kind of businessman that chose to stay in a town that was, according to most, sinking into permanent decline. No story of Virginia City would be complete without the inclusion of the general store established by S. R. Buford in 1878, and operated by him until his death in 1905. Like many things in Virginia City, the store outlived its initial period of success, remaining operational well into the 1920s.
The role of the merchant on the frontier was multi-faceted; they often served not only as sources for material goods but also in many cases as “public letter writer and letter reader, news reporter, speculator, banker and general adviser.” Many of Virginia City’s mercantile establishments—even the most humble—were natural gathering places. As historian J. A. Burkhart concludes, when the considerable range of roles the frontier merchant played are taken into account, it becomes clear “that the frontier store played an important part in the social life of Virginia City, and that the frontier merchant was a leader and an articulate person in the social organization of the community.” The general store was more than a place of business; it was a meeting place, an opportunity to catch up on news, a chance to discuss the weather and a floor to debate politics. The interaction between patron and merchant and the relationship between the purchase of goods and the exchange of pleasantries became an integral part of the social fabric of the business, which was itself intrinsic in the make-up of the town. The transaction of business was an essential component of survival for both the merchant and the patron, but the physical establishment also functioned as a social and cultural crossroad where commerce was sometimes secondary to personal interaction.

Simeon R. Buford was born in 1846, on a farm in Lewis County, Missouri, one of fifteen children. In 1865, at the age of nineteen, he was hired to drive a team of oxen across the plains, part of the wagon train that included Sarah Raymond Herndon, who later wrote a book about the experience. Buford was contracted to go to California as a driver for an individual named Kerfoot; however, in a twist of fate that would shape the rest of his life, Buford fell ill with

---


186 Ibid.
Mountain Fever just when the wagon train was to split into two parties, one going to California and the other to Montana Territory. It was Herndon who insisted that Kerfoot release Buford from his contract so that she might care for him during his illness. Thus, Buford arrived in Virginia City on September 5, 1865.\footnote{Sarah Raymond Herndon, \textit{Days on the Road: Crossing the Plains in 1865} (New York: Burr Printing House, 1902), 173 – 176, 260 – 263.} Herndon closed the account of her journey across the plains by noting that when she and “Sim,” as she called Buford, along with others from the wagon train, first laid eyes on the town they “were not favorably impressed with Virginia City.” Her initial reaction was not uncommon. “It is the shabbiest town I ever saw,” Herndon wrote, “not really a good house in it.”\footnote{Ibid., 262 – 263. Sarah Raymond went on to teach one of the first schools in Virginia City. Since there were no textbooks in 1865, she relied on an assortment of books brought with her across the plains. She quickly tired of the job, which she found tedious and tiresome, and soon after married James M. Herndon. The couple eventually started a Protestant Sunday School that remained operational for more than four decades. See Smith, \textit{Montana’s Madison Country}, 66.}

But it was perhaps something Buford witnessed later that night that reinforced his idea that business, rather than gold, was the way to make a fortune in the dusty mining town. It was the day after the party’s initial arrival, and Buford was playing checkers with another man named Winthrop. The two had discovered “a checkerboard nailed on the window where a pane of glass was broken out,” and they were playing games with makeshift pasteboard checkers when a member of the party entered the room carrying a porcelain lamp bought at an auction of household goods. The lamp cost only a dollar, but Herndon’s mother noted that it was as good as useless without a chimney, which the buyer then set out to purchase. “He had to pay two dollars...
and fifty cents for a chimney, and five dollars for a gallon of coal oil, so,” Herndon noted, “our light is rather expensive after all.” Miners needed supplies, regardless of high prices.

In some ways, the Virginia City of 1865 and 1875 were not that different. Both were shaped by the rough and tumble character intrinsic to mining towns, as well as by the competing ideologies of civility that so many residents clung to in an attempt to remain connected to the ways of life they had left behind. Sim Buford was no different. Though he chose not to engage in mining, he established himself in the community by operating a freighting line between Fort Benton and Virginia City until the Union Pacific Railroad reached Corinne, Utah, in 1869. Buford then spent several years freighting between Corinne and Virginia City before becoming a clerk for the Raymond Brothers at their Virginia City grocery store in 1872. In 1878 he went into business for himself, opening the S. R. Buford & Co. general merchandise store with Henry Elling, with whom he maintained a lifelong business partnership.\textsuperscript{190}

There were very few things Sim Buford was not involved in. He served with the company of Virginia City militia who volunteered their services to General Howard during the Nez Perce War of 1877. He was a staunch Democrat, and later a member of the constitutional convention of 1889 which framed the Montana state constitution. Buford and Elling were regarded as premier examples of Virginia City’s most successful businessmen. In addition to owning business

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 269 – 270.

\textsuperscript{190} Michael Leeson, \textit{Progressive Men of the State of Montana} (Chicago: A. W. Bowen & Co., 1902), 368. Buford was also an organizer of the Elling State Bank, which operated in Virginia City for many years. There are competing accounts of exactly how Buford initially acquired the store. The building, one of Virginia City’s earliest brick structures, was completed in 1875 by E. J. Walter, who ran a clothing store. The building had been described by \textit{The Madisonian} as “the finest business house in the city” when it was completed in 1875. See \textit{The Madisonian} December 18, 1875, reprinted December 19, 1930. Competing accounts state that Walter sold out of the business and that it was foreclosed upon by the Elling State Bank, which transferred ownership to Buford.
buildings in town, the two combined owned more than 3,000 acres of ranch land and substantial herds of horses, cattle and sheep. Buford was among a small group of Virginia City residents who remained from the boomtown times through the turn of the century. He serves as a testament to the tenacity with which the community clung to its survival, always believing in its viability.

As early as 1875, some outsiders viewed Virginia City as a ghost town in the making. When Peter Koch wrote in the Bozeman Herald in February, 1881 that Virginia City had been “left without a future,” the editors of The Madisonian lashed out calling the statement an utterance from a writer with “an irrepressible itching to be ‘written down an ass.” Residents refused to believe the fate of the town had been sealed, despite the initial signs of decline that were already beginning to manifest. When merchants Maxham and Dinter closed out their business in October of 1876 on the basis that they had “no choice of customers,” the newspaper scoffed that “they would as soon sell to a rich heathen as a poor Christian. All same.” In November of 1875, the newspaper insisted that it spoke “well for the prosperity of Virginia City, that notwithstanding the many houses that have been built during this past summer, there is not a dwelling-house empty in town.” A few months later, it insisted that at least $100,000.00 had “been spent on building, repairing, and enlarging houses in this city” in the past year.

191 S. R. Buford Collection, Unidentified Biographical Records, MC 260, Box 1, Folder 1, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana (hereafter referred to as MHS). The exact date of the writing, which is an unidentified book page, is not known, but it was obviously written from a standpoint later in Buford’s life.

192 Virginia City (Montana) The Madisonian February 5, 1915.

193 Ibid., October 5, 1876, reprinted October 9, 1931.
Madisonian made a habit of pointing out any minute detail that pointed to the town’s modernity. In one instance, at the end of 1876, it even proudly announced that D. W. Tilton had “just received from the East for the Virginia City Guards one of the latest style Prussian snare-drums.”\textsuperscript{195} If the city was declining, it would not do so without a fight.

In 1867 Virginia City was listed in the Pacific Coast Business Directory as the “Territorial Capital, incorporated city, and county seat of Madison County,” with a population of approximately 4,000. It was described as “the seat of considerable trade,” where affairs were “conducted by an excellent municipal organization.” By 1870, the population had dipped to just 867.\textsuperscript{196} The 1867 directory listed more than one hundred and twenty businesses and business people, among them two lumber dealers, two newspapers, and two dealers of “Fancy Goods.”\textsuperscript{197} An 1872 pamphlet promoting the virtues of Montana Territory gave a different interpretation, stating that “the present population of [Virginia City] is about five hundred, which does not make a fair showing for the wealth of the city, nor for the amount of business transacted…as a rule, the

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., November 18, 1875, reprinted November 21, 1930. A year later the newspaper was still claiming that there were “fewer empty houses in Virginia City at present than for a year past. All the available and desirable residences are inhabited and there are no empty business houses,” November 16, 1876, reprinted November 20, 1931; January 15, 1876, reprinted January 16, 1931.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., December 21, 1876, reprinted December 23, 1931. The Virginia City Guards were housed in a modified building on the corner of Idaho and Jackson Streets. Their first drill took place on October 2, 1876, as noted in The Madisonian September 28, 1876, reprinted October 2, 1931.


\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
business men have been eminently successful.” Another 1872 publication about the Montana Territory, authored by seventeen leading merchants, attorneys and citizens titled “Facts about Montana Territory and the Way to Get There,” listed the population of Virginia City as 1,200; Helena, the mining town to the north, by contrast, was the city to which all distances were related and boasted a population of more than 6,000.

Virginia City had reason to be optimistic. In 1872, it could still hope for a population boom brought in by the railroad, which promised opportunities for seemingly unlimited growth to communities along main lines. A closing letter from Territorial Governor B. F. Potts, published in the Philadelphia Inquirer on April 22, 1872, noted the absolute necessity of bringing the railroad through the territory to encourage settlement and expansion. Regarding the Indians of the territory, Potts noted that “the aborigines in Montana are what are known as “Treaty Indians,” living on reservations far away from white settlements.” Probably to allay the fears of potential settlers who were still hesitant to cross the plains separating Montana from the east, Potts acknowledged that at one time “the Sioux threatened to oppose the location of the Northern Pacific railroad through their rich buffalo hunting region,” but continued that “the presence of troops and the humane

198 James Handly, “The Resources of Madison County, Montana” (San Francisco: Francis and Valentine, 1872), 9. For more detailed information, see Appendix L, a listing of the Virginia City businesses given in Handley’s directory; for more detailed information on Virginia City businesses over time, see Appendix M, Pacific Coast Business Directory listings for Virginia City, 1867 – 1915.

199 J. R. Boyce, “Facts about Montana Territory and the Way to Get There” The Rocky Mountain Gazette, 1872, 20 – 21. There is some discrepancy in population figures—1,200 is probably a generous estimate.
and just policy adopted toward the Indians by the railroad company itself, have changed their attitude, and no opposition is likely to be offered.”

Potts concluded that progress and development hinged on the arrival of the iron horse—without it, the territory would no doubt find itself “practically at a standstill.” The completion of a railroad line, “from end to end, at least six hundred miles of the route being within our Territory,” promised Montana “a tide of immigration” on the same scale as had poured into Minnesota and Nebraska. Indeed, that was exactly what happened—for Helena. Virginia City’s isolation and declining fortunes resulted in it being bypassed, and it never received an often-promised feeder line. In the end, stagecoaches served the town well into the 1920s. The same directory that had advertised more than 120 businesses in 1867 contained only thirty-four listings for Virginia City in 1878, and two of them were repetitions. Even proprietors who had stayed in business seemed to have lost something. Isador Strasburger, for example, listed as a “fancy dry goods” dealer in 1867, was downgraded to simply a “dry goods” store in 1878. Strasburger, coincidentally, eventually removed his business to Butte in 1883, but remained a member of the Virginia City Masonic Lodge. At this time, the permanence and status of most Montana towns was still hotly debated, and not even Helena was truly safe in its position as capital. As late as 1892 Henry Blake, a prominent Virginia City attorney and later first chief justice of the Montana Supreme Court, was “cordially invited to vote for Anaconda

\[200\] Ibid., 23.

\[201\] Ibid., 24.

\[202\] L. M. McKenney, *Business Directory of the Pacific States and Territories for 1878*. For example, *The Madisonian* newspaper was listed twice—once as “Thomas Deyarmon, publisher, *The Madisonian*,” and once as “*The Madisonian, Thomas Deyarmon, publisher.*”
for the Capital at an election to be held by the people of the State of Montana, on
Tuesday, November 8, 1892, from 8 a.m. till 6 p.m.”

Virginia City’s population continued to decline, and like Strasburger, many businessmen were among those who left. An estimate of 750 was given in the 1880 Pacific Coast Business Directory, but the 1880 census reported a population of just 634. Less than five years following the removal of the territorial capital to Helena, the nostalgia of Virginia City’s glorious past already trumped its present. While Virginia City’s residents clung to hope of a revival through modern mining methods or the arrival of the railroad, outsiders embraced its historic past and role in the settlement and growth of Montana territory, allowing its transition from a “raging wilderness” to established territory. In this context, Virginia City was proud to claim its place as Montana’s original “Social City,” the cradle of civilization in a wilderness.

While directories are valuable sources of information, they do not give a complete picture of the town. Not all of Virginia City’s merchants were included, such as those who chose not to advertise or were overlooked. Some, like Julius and Frederick Kraemer, advertised only in local newspapers. Julius Kraemer, a German immigrant, arrived in Virginia City in 1864. By 1870 he had opened a saddlery on the corner of Wallace Street at the west end of town. Julius and his son, Frederick, ran their business continuously until the turn of the century, though sometimes at different locations. By 1881, the Wallace Street building, which bordered on Virginia City’s Chinese district, had become their permanent business location, and it remained so until

203 Henry M. Blake Papers, SC 438, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS.

204 L. M. McKenney, Business Directory of the Pacific States and Territories for 1880 – 1881. The nickname “Social City” was acquired by Virginia City in the early years of its settlement, owing to the large number of residents and “civilized” entertainments the town boasted during those years.
Frederick’s death in 1902. The history of the little building offers a valuable glimpse into the dynamics that shaped Virginia City.

The original structure was entered through a 70-inch wide opening surrounding the central ridge pole of the roof, a construction feature that was consistent with a blacksmith’s workplace, which would have accommodated the entry of large draft animals, including oxen and horses. This is consistent with chain of title records showing that the first owner on record was a blacksmith by the name of Augustus Griffith. Later residents encased the doorway and added window openings after commercial glass became available to Virginia City residents. A peculiar bay window on the front of the building was in place by the 1870s. Julius Kraemer purchased the building for just $8 in 1870, indicating that few improvements had been made to the structure at the time he bought it. Crate boards bearing legible packing labels and

---

205 Virginia City (Montana), The Madisonian January 30, 1902.


207 The first glass that became available in Virginia City was freighted in by oxen or mule trains from Fort Benton or Salt Lake City. Because the trip covered rough terrain, most of the glass shipped was cut to six-by-eight inch squares, which could be more easily packed to prevent breaking. Each pane cost roughly a dollar, and a dozen or more could be used in one opening. The Kraemer building’s bay window, which contains its original glass, is a pristine example of how these small glass panes were used to create a larger window. For more information on the styles and construction of Virginia City buildings, see Marilyn Grant, Montana Mainstreets Volume I: A Guide to Historic Virginia City (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1998), 34 – 51.

208 There is some confusion in extant sources, many of which state that Julius and Frederick Kraemer were brothers. This confusion is due to the fact that there was both a Julius Kraemer Sr. and a Julius Kraemer, Jr. Though the existing chain of title records do not specify the point, the younger Julius Kraemer was only thirteen years of age in 1870, meaning that Julius Sr. was undoubtedly the purchaser of the Wallace Street building. The senior Julius Kraemer and his eldest son, Frederick, who was born in Germany before the family migrated to the United States, were both leather workers, and it was these men who ran the saddle and harness shop which operated in Virginia City from the time the family arrived in 1864 until Frederick died in
newspapers in German print found within the walls attest to the early presence of the Kraemers; however, it is impossible to know exactly when the bay window was installed or by whom, as the building changed hands many times during its early history. In 1875 E.W and Amanda Driggs sold the building to one of Virginia City’s Chinese residents, Ah Yow, for $200. Dye and whitening chips found surrounding the building suggest that Ah Yow ran a laundry—a reasonable assumption, as the decade of the 1870s was a time in which many Chinese operated laundries in the town. A fire in 1881 damaged portions of the back rooms and it probably prompted Ah Yow to sell the building back to Frederick Kraemer in December of that year for just $35. The presence of German language newspapers dated to 1882 indicates Kraemer’s presence and makeshift repairs to the structure.  

Building materials from all eras of occupancy are present in the Kraemer building, and they shed light on what materials were available to residents of Virginia City at different points in time, as well as what techniques were used. The original log walls were daubed with lime cement and whitewashed. Later they were covered with muslin that was stretched tight over the logs to imitate the appearance of plaster. These layers of materials—sometimes referred to as “events” by preservation specialists, as they date different events in the history of the building—are found throughout the building’s four rooms. Later, many different kinds of materials were used on the walls, including newspaper, burlap, fabric, wallpaper, Upson board, linoleum, cardboard and paint. The roof of the Kraemer building was initially made of poles covered with 

---

January of 1902. Frederick had a younger brother named Julius, who was born in America about 1857—the younger Julius Kraemer engaged in mining for most of his life. He was not at any time a saddlemaker. He died on July 23, 1907, after receiving a blow to the head from a falling tree while he was working for the Montana Power Company.  

---

sod, a common building practice during the winter of 1863. The Kraemer building also contains a membrane of stretched bovine hide that was placed hair-side up between the poles and sod. Whether this was an anomaly or a common building technique from the period is unclear. Coincidentally, reports that a number of oxen from the Diamond R freighting company disappeared mysteriously during the first years of Virginia City’s existence are a source for speculation.

The first sawmills began operating in Virginia City soon after settlement began. The earliest, run by a Norwegian carpenter named Anton Holter, was operational by the end of 1863, and second was running by 1867. The plank boards produced by these sawmills helped Virginia City transition from its “camp” to “town” phase, as they were used to encapsulate existing building materials. In areas with limited resources, mining town residents found ways to make their dwelling mimic the civilized homes they had left behind. Muslin, stretched tight over log or plank walls and whitewashed, was a common way to imitate the appearance of plaster. This technique is found throughout the Kraemer building, and in other early Virginia City structures.

Most buildings initially had dirt floors, but the presence of sawmills also meant that plank floors were available by the first winter. In the Kraemer building, multiple layers of newspaper and

---

210 Grant, Montana Mainstreets, 34.

211 Smith, Montana’s Madison Country, 43, The Pacific Coast Business Directory for 1867, printed by Henry G. Langley in San Francisco, lists two sawmills and lumber dealers: A. M. Holter, and Spencer, Harrison and Company. Marilyn Grant writes that there was at least one sawmill operating near Virginia City as early as the summer of 1863—it was these early sawmills, the large population, and the influx of residents from eastern states to the Montana goldfields that allowed Virginia City to transition through the three periods that mining towns generally displayed—settlement phase, camp phase, and town phase—within the first two years of its existence. Grant argues that in Virginia City the overlapping of these three phases was an essential part of preserving older building materials, as residents added on before there was time for the earliest structures to deteriorate. For more information, see Grant, Montana Mainstreets, 27 – 51.
linoleum were added for padding, insulation, and appearance.\textsuperscript{212} Virginia City residents also welcomed the addition of more civilized touches, like wallpaper, trimmings, and Kalsomine paints supplied by Virginia City businesses. Unique among the materials found inside the Kraemer building walls are pieces of Upson board, which illustrate the variety of materials that eventually became available to Virginia City residents.

The presence of Upson board is a particularly interesting facet of the Kraemer building. The earliest laminated fiberboard was invented and mass-produced in the late nineteenth century by the Beaver Manufacturing Company of New York. Struggling company owner J. P. Lewis developed the product by accident when he glued a number of individual plies of mat board together and used the large sheets to finish his attic.\textsuperscript{213} The discovery saved Lewis’ floundering company from bankruptcy, and by 1906 he had established a product that “dominated the wallboard market for the next two decades.”\textsuperscript{214} The first patent for the product was issued in 1914, and by the 1920s the formula for patented Beaver Board called for an inner layer of ground wood composed of hard, short, loose fibers, which provided insulation, and an outer layer of cooked wood which was both strong and moisture resistant.\textsuperscript{215} The wall covering material became popular throughout United States in part because it was easy to ship, simple to install, cost-effective, and its surfaces could easily “be painted, stained, tinted, stenciled, or left bare.”

As an added benefit, wallboard was naturally resistant to cracking, chipping, moisture, mold and

\textsuperscript{212} Kjelland, “Conservation Assessment Report,” 7 – 11; MacDonald, “Preservation Team Annual Report, 2005.”


\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
Upson board, a competitor and successor to Beaver Board, was produced beginning in 1910. Interestingly, a Virginia City building supply company, Herndon and Donaldson, was advertizing its own version of building paper as “a thick, solid pasteboard, a good substitute for plastering, at half the cost,” well before the mass-produced adaptation was available.

Beaver Board could be easily customized to fit the personal taste and building style of individual home owners, and it was touted “as not only the most versatile material for interior decorating but also as a material that could be adapted to period styles.” In the Kraemer building, Upson board is present between other layers of wall events—it was installed over newspapers dating to 1873 and also over the original stretched muslin wall covering. Striped wallpaper, which had become popular during the 1840s, was installed later, decades after its initial phase of popularity. The front room ceiling of the Kraemer building was lowered some time prior to the Great Depression, and Upson board was used for this modification. This, combined with the presence of another layer of red, depression-era cotton textile wall treatment, indicates that the Upson board was probably installed sometime between 1904, when Henry Steffens purchased the building from Frederick Kraemer’s estate, and 1911, when S. S. Potter took ownership of the building. The Victorian wallpaper was evidently installed at the turn of the century and thus was already vintage material when it was put up. While this indicates that times in Virginia City were getting increasingly difficult, evidenced by residents making use of

---

216 Ibid., 72.

217 Handly, “Resources of Madison County,” 60.

218 Weaver, “Beaver Board and Upson Board,” 72 – 73.
whatever materials were at hand, in a way it also represented tradition. Residents of the community had been doing much the same thing for decades.²¹⁹

Even if times were difficult, Virginia City residents were clearly aware of popular national trends, and made conscious efforts to imitate them. Another residence, contemporary to the Kraemer building, offers additional insights. The initial chain of title listing for Block 198, Lot 10, in Virginia City shows a sale from the Virginia City Town Company to J. H. Olmstead in March of 1864 for the reasonable price of $2.50. Two months later, Olmstead sold the lot, “with all improvements,” to an individual named George Higgins for $200.00. A break in the chain of title records leaves its ownership between 1864 and 1870 unclear; however, in 1870 the title was transferred to Mary L. Daems by her husband, Levinius for $1880.00. Several accounts indicate that Levinius Daems had been living at the site since 1864. When the Virginia City townsite was resurveyed and patented from the United States to the City of Virginia in 1868, all town lots had to be resold to legally convey the titles. Levinius Daems became Virginia City’s first elected Mayor in that year, and the transaction likely represents this legal transfer of ownership. Levinius

²¹⁹ Much of this information is found in the Conservation Assessment Report for the Kraemer Building prepared by John Kjelland, conservator, in April, 2007. While Kjelland refers to the product as “Upson Board” throughout the report, it is unclear if the product is Upson Board or Beaver Board, or a local imitation, all of which are possibilities. The Victorian wallpaper was in place by the 1920s, according to Virginia City resident Evelyn Johnson, who lived in the building with her family as a child during the Depression era. Johnson contributed this information to Kjelland’s report, and also to several reports on the building contained in Jeff MacDonald, “Historic Preservation Team Annual Report, 2006” (Unpublished, Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, 2006); and “Historic Preservation Team Annual Report, 2007” (Unpublished, Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, 2007).
Daems may have received a deed for the property as early as 1864, but it was evidently not recorded.\textsuperscript{220}

Daems had immigrated to the United States from Paris in 1856, while he was employed by the Valtsin family. Born in Thearut, Belgium, in 1822, Daems studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Paris. In 1860 he married Marie Valtsin, the daughter of his employers and a registered nurse, in Saint Louis. Dr. and Mrs. Daems moved west to Denver in 1861, and shortly thereafter Dr. Daems relocated to Montana Territory, coming first to Bannack in 1863, and shortly thereafter to Virginia City where he opened the City Drug Store. Mrs. Daems arrived in Virginia City in 1864 with her young daughter, Alice Bertha. Mrs. Daems’ sister, Elsie, also made the journey to Montana Territory. Levinius Daems, in addition to being one of Virginia City’s first physicians, apothecaries, and the town’s first elected mayor, was one of the representatives from Virginia City whose signature appears on the 1868 treaty with the Shoshone, Bannock, and Sheepeater Indians. Daems’ occupation and community status are visible throughout his residence in touches that reflect the family’s affluence and cultural ties to the east. Even the construction itself—framed, rather than made from notched logs—reflects the status Daems enjoyed. It is likely the earliest example of frame construction still standing in Virginia City. The Daems home was also finished with genuine lath and plaster, rather than an imitation made from stretched muslin, as was found in most early homes including the Kraemer building.

Lots 11 and 12 of Block 198 have ties to another prominent citizen of Virginia City, John L. Corbett, a civil and mining engineer who arrived in the town around 1867. A surveyor, 

\textsuperscript{220} Though the spelling was recorded as “Mary,” it undoubtedly refers to Marie L. Valtsin Daems. It was not uncommon for deeds to go unrecorded for a number of years—or entirely—during this time period, especially in relatively small communities like Virginia City.
Corbett completed the 1868 survey of Virginia City that mapped out its capital square. By 1872 he was the Deputy United States Mineral Surveyor for the First District of Montana, as well as the Surveyor of Madison County. He kept an office in Virginia City and conducted surveys for mineral lodes and placer mining claims, as well as drafting applications for United States patents. Title records show that Corbett purchased multiple lots of land between the years of 1867 and 1875. At one point, Corbett lived in a residence located next to the Daems house. What began as a crude one room log cabin in 1863 was quickly expanded to four rooms, as was common with many of Virginia City’s early structures. The Corbett house, notably, contained a large, well-constructed double hung glass window containing twelve individual panes, which would have been a very expensive feature—a luxury—during Virginia City’s early years.

At some point before 1878, when the first insurance map of Virginia City’s buildings was issued, the buildings were moved together. The joined structures remained in the possession of the Daems family for nearly a century. It is unclear exactly when or why the two buildings were joined. One plausible theory is that the Daems house was moved up against the Corbett residence as early as 1864, when Lots 11 was sold for the remarkably high price of $1750.00 to the “building committee of the Union Church on Idaho Street.” Such a high price in 1864 indicates that a very expensive building was present on the site. The titles for Lots 11 and 12 were not transferred until 1875, when the Methodist Episcopal Church of Virginia City was constructed.

221 Handly, “Resources of Madison County,” 51.

222 Much of this information on Corbett is found in Madison County court records. See for example, Index to Deeds June 12, 1866 – Dec 30, 1868, Madison County Montana, Vol. 2, Madison County Courthouse; Index to Deeds September 14, 1868 – Jan. 1879, Madison County Montana, Vol. 3, Madison County Courthouse. See also Levison Maps Collection Fireman’s Fund Insurance Co. San Francisco California, “Virginia City Montana 1878, E. W. Carpenter from J. M. Knight” and Sanborn Map & Publishing Co. Ltd. Virginia City, 1884.
on the site. Fittingly, the first service, held on August 28, 1875, was William Fairweather’s funeral.\textsuperscript{223} The window present in the Corbett house wall is perhaps one of the best indicators that it was the Daems house which was moved. It is difficult to imagine that such an expensive window would have intentionally been installed into a non-exterior wall—in addition to being impractical, to do so would have lowered the property values of both lots.

Several other factors lend weight to the theory that the Daems house was moved. For one, the exterior cladding of the east sidewall of the Daems house is comprised of clapboard which is only a few inches from the log construction of the Corbett house. A 2006 Montana Heritage Preservation Team report concludes that “it would have been impossible to put this siding in place unless 1. the Corbett house is newer, 2. the Daems house was moved into location, or 3. the siding was nailed onto the outside wall when it was lying flat and it was titled up into position.”\textsuperscript{224} Another important piece of the puzzle is that the two houses were never connected from the inside—one had to exit one house to enter the other, and both had front and rear doors. A porch ran the length of both houses, but showed notable differences in style and construction. Even the vernacular styles of the homes were slightly different, as gingerbread-style molding found on the Corbett side of the house is not found on the Daems house. It is curious that Dr. Daems, who could certainly afford to add substantial finishing touches to his residence, left such differences unaltered, unless the building was moved subsequent to his death. It is likely that the

\textsuperscript{223} Much of this information is contained in a description of the property written by John D. Ellingsen, Curator of Collections at Virginia City, and is contained in MacDonald, “Preservation Team Annual Report, 2006.” Bill Fairweather left Virginia City in 1868 and prospected in places as far away as Alaska before returning, destitute, to Montana in 1875. He died at the Robber’s Roost—the building where the road agents had gathered—at the age of thirty-nine. See Smith, \textit{Montana’s Madison Country}, 72.

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid.
reasons the two structures remained differently finished after their joining will remain one of Virginia City’s mysteries.

Levinius Daems died in Virginia City on December 9, 1874. Marie Daems lived in the house for another thirty years until her death on January 9, 1904. Both Dr. Daems and his wife died in the family home. Electricity was installed around the turn of the century, probably when the rest of Alder Gulch was electrified in 1908. The interiors of both houses were covered with carefully placed pasteboard that was installed much later—probably during the 1930s. The buildings eventually became a rental property during the Depression, coincident with a mining boom triggered by a world-wide spike in gold prices. The pasteboard encapsulated patchwork layers of wall coverings, including different colors and patterns of fabric, wallpaper, and newspapers. Some of the materials were very similar to those found in the Kraemer building—a mixture of whatever was available. Others reveal a home that was markedly high-class by Virginia City standards.

As a doctor, druggist, mayor and politician, Dr. Daems had the means to purchase more household items than most residents in Virginia City. The civilized tastes of the Daems family are apparent in the home’s finishings. In addition to genuine lath and plaster, refined wood moldings lined the interior woodwork—an indication of how much attention and money the Daems’ could afford to spend on their home. Perhaps one of the most unique and well-preserved indicators of the Daems’ attempts to mimic popular trends from the eastern part of the country is found on the doors of the home, which were finished with very high quality painted wood graining.

\[225\] Smith, *Montana’s Madison Country*, 121 – 122; Virginia City finally received electricity in November of 1908. The project was initiated by banker Henry Elling and completed by his son, Karl Elling.
The technique of imitating high-quality wood graining through the application of paint was not new. Sometimes called “oak graining,” a finish was created by first painting the surface with a cream colored base paint and layering a tinted varnish on top, then “combing” the upper varnish layers with various tools to produce a linear grain effect that mimicked oak. The popularity of this process is attested to in its presence in numerous building and painting manuals from the time period, including Andrew Jackson Downing’s popular pattern books. It was a popular practice from the 1850s well into the 1880s. Virginia City had at least one resident painter, E. E. Chase, who did such work. The Madisonian reported in March of 1876 that Chase, “ornamental sign, house, and carriage painter,” did work of the highest quality, noting that “the oak graining in Henry Elling’s new dwelling was done by Mr. Chase, and can not be excelled.” It is possible that a local painter completed the graining work at the Daems house; the family might also have hired a traveling painter who specialized in such things.

226 Virginia City (Montana), The Madisonian March 25, 1876. The technique was used throughout the country. A wonderful example for comparison is found in the Tenement Museum in New York City; see the Tenement Museum: Paint Analysis Report, 1 – 29, viewable online at http://www.tenement.org/documents/Paint.pdf. The presence of the technique in a variety of dwellings, from upper class to the most humble, is attested in its presence at 97 Orchard Street, New York, where the Tenement House Museum is currently located. Constructed in 1863, the building was located on the Lower East Side of New York City just a few blocks from the Brooklyn Bridge—an immigrant district, home to families from a wide array of backgrounds, who crammed into twenty-two 325 square foot apartments spaced over six floors, home to as many as ten thousand people during the seventy years it was functional. Rapidly deteriorating and failing to meet safety codes, the buildings’ last residents vacated in 1935, after which the structure was sealed off and remained untouched until the late twentieth century. For the first three decades of its functional existence, there was no running water; gas and electric heat and lighting did not arrive until the turn of the century; indoor plumbing was not installed until after World War I. When restoration began on the building in the 1990s, the series of wall events uncovered was remarkably similar to those uncovered in Virginia City. In depth paint analysis of the Tenement House revealed several color schemes consistent with those found in the Daems-Corbett house; parlors, for instance, were typically painted in shades of blue, cream, pink or salmon, ceilings in shades of lavender, blue or green, and trims in “oak” graining. In the Daems-Corbett house, shades of salmon, green, and blue were found in several rooms. The doors and moldings displayed high-quality graining treatments that appear to have been completed by
By 1879, with its population declining, Virginia City still clung to its status as an important part of the Montana Territorial economy. The 1879 *Montana Territory History and Business Directory* printed by F. W. Warner in Helena, noted that, although the capital had been removed from Virginia City to Helena, the Social City “yet commands a large trade from Southern Montana and is an active and prosperous city.” During 1878, for example, “the business men of Madison County paid $85,000 in freights,” the Directory explained, and of this “Virginia City merchants paid…the agent of the Diamond R Transportation Company $72,259.” What this monetary amount represented, effectively, was that “three hundred tons of merchandise and machinery came in by way of the Missouri river.” Despite its decline in population, Virginia City was still able to display a certain level of affluence. Times were growing harder, but they were not insurmountable—there was hope for growth, prosperity, and new business opportunities for those who were willing to take them. S. R. Buford was one such individual, and he struck out in business for himself in 1878. Historically it was stores like Buford’s that would be remembered as presiding over Virginia City through times of decline, helping the town to maintain a sense of legitimacy, purpose, permanence, and identity. In reality, much of Virginia City’s survival through the 1880 – 1910 period depended on Chinese residents, professionals. The many layers of wall coverings in the Daems house also reveal the increasing hard times of Virginia City in the same fashion as the walls of the Kraemer building: newspapers, scraps of wall paper, materials, fabric, burlap and linoleum scraps cover the walls in both structures, in places more than a dozen layers deep. Likewise, more than eighteen layers were found in many rooms of the Tenement House. For more information on popular interior decoration techniques of the period, many of which are found in the Daems-Corbett house, see Gail Caskey Winkler and Roger W. Moss, *Victorian Interior Decoration: American Interiors 1830 – 1900* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1986).


228 Ibid., 181.
who bolstered the town economically and enabled its survival. Though they were often overlooked, the Chinese played an integral role in sustaining Virginia City through a period during which many contemporary communities became ghost towns.

According to the *Montana Post*, Virginia City’s first Chinese residents arrived in 1865. It is even possible that a handful were among the initial throng of more than 10,000 that rushed into Alder Gulch in 1863. There was a sizeable Chinese population in Bannack at that time, and surely some of them followed the crowd that descended onto the new diggings—even if these first Chinese were not miners, there was always a demand for laundry and other services. By 1866, the *Montana Post* reported that the Chinese population consisted of “one hundred and fifty persons, including nine females and a ten month old baby;” a decade later, there were a reported “one hundred and sixty Chinamen, and eleven female Chinamen,” which the newspaper quipped was “quite a sprinkle for the population.” Very few Chinese were engaged in mining during the boom years, but as the mines at Alder Gulch played out, the Chinese filled an important economic niche by taking up diggings that were considered worked out. This scenario was common in mining towns across the American west: when mines played out and miners moved on to the next big strike, the Chinese took over the “worked out” claims. Chinese residents who ran laundries or restaurants during the initial mining boom often found placer mining opportunities after the initial owners moved on in search of better prospects. Such had been the case in California, Colorado, Idaho and Nevada.

---


In Virginia City the Chinese population more than doubled between 1866 and the first census in 1870, sustaining economic viability in the face of threatened deterioration. When the Chinese could not afford to purchase mining claims individually, they often formed companies, successfully pooling capital, resources, and labor. The Chinese in Virginia City had organized themselves into six companies by 1880. Many non-Chinese residents believed the companies were closely aligned with San Francisco’s six mutual protection organizations, called tongs, although no proof of such a connection has ever emerged.231

**Figure 8.** A Chinese resident on the corner of Wallace and Van Buren Streets in Virginia City circa 1870s. McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana.

In addition to engaging in mining activities, the Chinese operated “mercantiles, restaurants, bakeries, gambling halls, and grocery stores,” and they raised fresh vegetables both in

---

231 The six tongs were organizations for mutual protection, sometimes called the “Six Companies” or “Luck Dai Gong Sue.” Composed of immigrants from six districts in the Canton region, the companies elected six men who formed a tribunal that ruled on matters concerning the members. Beneath this overarching organization were smaller family groups or guilds controlled by the eldest member of the family. For more information, see Karen Wong, *Chinese History in the Pacific Northwest* (Unknown Printing, 1972), 79 – 102.
gardens and on the sod roofs of their houses. Especially in the period before large numbers of farmers began growing produce for the region, this made vegetables such as beans, Chinese cabbage, corn, melons, onions and tomatoes available to the community.\textsuperscript{232}

In Virginia City, Chinese labor was essential to keeping the mines operational after thousands of white miners had abandoned Alder Gulch. An 1871 newspaper story supported the idea of hiring Chinese laborers, insisting “that if ‘it is impossible to procure white labor, then we say hire Chinamen, Indians, anything to keep the mines working; for the advantages of working mines during this season of plenty of water should not be lost.’”\textsuperscript{233} The Chinese recognized an opportunity and took advantage of the prevailing political climate in Virginia City. While life was far from easy for Chinese residents, it was clear that they benefitted the community—enough so that other residents often took notice. When the \textit{Montanian} reported in 1872 that “‘a piece of ground in Alder Gulch was recently sold to Chinese for one-thousand dollars, which could not have been sold to whites for one hundred dollars,’” it underscored the economic importance of the Chinese presence. While other mining communities fought, sometimes viciously, for the passage of new, restrictive mining laws aimed at excluding the Chinese, “Virginia City opposed these laws as unconstitutional, and economically damaging to the community.”\textsuperscript{234} Though there were isolated cases of discrimination, by and large Virginia City paid careful attention to protecting its Chinese residents.

\textsuperscript{232} Lionello, “Cultural and Economic Impact of the Chinese,” 6; see also Zhu, \textit{A Chinaman’s Chance}, 112 – 113.

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Virginia City (Montana)} \textit{The Montanian}, May 18, 1871, in Lionello, “Cultural and Economic Impact of the Chinese,” 7.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
The Chinese operated general stores in Virginia City where female residents often browsed the selection of “items imported from China including silks, dishes, newspapers, and joss sticks,” and accounting ledgers indicate that the Chinese were welcome in other Virginia City businesses. An 1883 sales ledger from S. R. Buford’s General Store included an entry for Hi Chung, who made a substantial purchase totaling $50.00 in January, 1884. Several subsequent entries were attributed simply to a “Chinaman.” In 1885, a business directory included a single general store run by a Chinese proprietor, Hop Hing Kee.

Although there were occasional disagreements between Chinese and non-Chinese residents in Virginia City, conflicts within the Chinese community itself were more common. Tensions reached a boiling point in February, 1881, when the six companies clashed in a battle over mining rights and religious beliefs that became known as the “China War” and resulted in the deaths of two Chinese residents. The breaking point came on the morning of February 28, 1881, when members of the Hy Chung Company dumped tailings from a flume they were cleaning onto the workings of the Hung Wah Company. The site, located a few miles up Alder Gulch from Virginia City, was one that both sides had fought bitterly to lease. Reinforcing a religious and cultural divide that had begun earlier in the year with the arrival of a Chinese Christian preacher named C. H. Han Bo, the Hy Chung Company and its three allies found

---

235 Ibid., 8 – 9.

236 S. R. Buford, Book of Sales, December 1883 – March 1884, Buford Mercantile Company, Virginia City, Montana. Buford was somewhat unique in that he did not group Chinese purchases onto their own separate pages—other business records, such as an unidentified ledger from a Virginia City butcher dated 1879 – 1880, group the Chinese together by both individual and mining company

237 Minnesota, North and South Dakota and Montana Gazetteer, 1884 – 1885, Vol. IV, 1255, MHS.
themselves pitted against the Hung Wah and Sam Wah Companies, who were staunch in their support of the Chinese Christian faction.

Tension had been brewing for several months. On August 7, 1880, *The Madisonian* reported that Ah Sin, also known as “China John,” had been stabbed by Sam Lee during a fight in which Sin was attempting to recover money he had given Lee to start a laundry. Instead of investing in the business, Lee reportedly squandered the money at the “celestial gaming house downtown”—a notation of particular significance, because at this time the Chinese Freemason Temple was still under construction. Sin lived, Lee was arrested, and no further word of the incident appeared in the newspaper.\(^{238}\) Just two months later, however, on October 9\(^{th}\), 1880, *The Madisonian* reported that the dedication ceremonies for the impressive temple at the end of Wallace Street had ended in violence. Evidently a man named Lem Sue had contributed just $25.00 toward the temple building fund. While Sue was in an opium-induced state several other members pressed his wife for an additional sum of $15.00. When Sue discovered what had happened “he took the opportunity afforded by the gathering, and a certain amount of Dutch courage” induced by whiskey to make his discontent known. The “finance committee” responded to the outburst with a “vigorous attempt with a stool to reduce Sue’s head to a jelly.”\(^{239}\) Three arrest warrants were issued soon after, but no report was given as to what punishment, if any, the combatants received. For the next several months, however, *The Madisonian* dutifully reported on other developments.

---

\(^{238}\) *Virginia City (Montana) The Madisonian* August 7, 1880. No mention of the Chinese made it out of the “generalities” section in all issues of *The Madisonian* published between January 1, 1878 and August 7, 1880.

\(^{239}\) Ibid., October 9, 1880.
At the center of the controversy was C. H. Han Bo, who came to the United States by way of Portland, Oregon, in 1873, arriving in Virginia City in January of 1881.\textsuperscript{240} “The advent of a Chinese preacher of Christianity is not hailed with favor by the Mongolian denizens of the city,” \textit{The Madisonian} reported on January 15, 1881, continuing that “C. H. Han Bo informs us that the Chinese Freemasons have threatened him with violence—some going so far as to say they will kill him—if his efforts to convert his countrymen...are not discontinued.”\textsuperscript{241} A week later, several Chinese were jailed “to await an opportunity of contributing to the school fund as a reward for indulging their combativeness,” and the newspaper noted with marked disapproval that the “Chinee Fleemasons” had made numerous efforts to induce the non-Chinese freemasons of Virginia City to post bail money.\textsuperscript{242} At the end of the month, \textit{The Madisonian} reported that the Chinese freemasons had “made large purchases of knives, hatchets, pistols, and other weapons...surrounded and threatened Han Bo and demanded that he desist [in] his labors to convert their yellow-barked countrymen to Christianity.”\textsuperscript{243}

Apparently fearing for his safety, Han Bo issued a circular on January 24, 1881 declaring that he had determined to leave Virginia City; however, he was still in town almost a week later, and \textit{The Madisonian} reported that the numbers arrayed on the Christian and Freemason sides

\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., March 4, 1881.

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid., January 15, 1881.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., January 22, 1881.

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., January 29, 1881. Searches of remaining dry goods store records do not show these purchases, but it is possible that large purchases were made at other stores for which records are not available. There were also a number of Chinese owned and operated dry goods stores in Virginia City and the surrounding areas at this time, and it is entirely possible that the large purchases were made from these locations, but records for these stores are not extant.
were nearly equal. According to the newspaper, “the ‘Fleemason’ version of the Chinese squabble” was that Han Bo wanted “to tax them too heavily, on the pretext that ‘he must have money, alle same Melican pleacher.’” Even as many residents struggled to maintain the peace, pressure within the community continued to build. “There is a truce in the Christian-Freemason war in Chinatown,” The Madisonian warned on January 29, 1881, “but the belligerents are sleeping on their arms, so to speak.” The situation improved briefly, but a report the following week that “the Chinese War is about ended, open hostilities have been suspended, and the Christian and Confucian heathen are dwelling in peaceful unity and brotherly love for a season” proved to be far too optimistic.

Fueled by these earlier incidents, what might otherwise have been a minor disagreement between the Hy Chung and Hung Wah companies quickly turned into an all out war, with much of Virginia City’s Chinese population leaving the town for the scene of the battle, several miles above the town in Alder Gulch. In the end there were only two casualties—Ah Sue was stabbed to death, and Ah Lang was “beheaded” with a sharpened shovel—but the incident made Virginia City history. Many of the town’s most prominent citizens were involved. I. C. Smith, one of Virginia City’s four practicing physicians, was driving his buggy into town on the morning of the battle. He later testified in court that he had witnessed the murder of Ah Lang. Shortly after

Ibid. The trial was postponed due to the illness of the judge, and the men were released from prison several days later on the promise of good behavior.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., February 5, 1881.

Ah Wah and Ah Yen Trial Records 1881, Microfilm MF66A, MHS. Contemporary reports often state that Ah Lang was beheaded, but according to the testimony of I. C. Smith,
the hostilities had ended, Virginia City’s sheriff, Marshall D. Platner, arrived in Chinatown and discovered the corpses. For no specified reason, he arrested Ah Wah and Ah Yen as the culprits and the two were quickly indicted for murder. Serving as their defense council were two of the most capable lawyers in Montana: Henry N. Blake and James E. Callaway.249

It is not surprising that Virginia City’s non-Chinese residents looked upon the China War with curiosity. Even as the town focused on the conflict within the Chinese community, there was a simultaneous recognition of the need to protect Virginia City’s Chinese residents. On the same day that *The Madisonian* reported on the outbreak of the China War, it also issued a statement on the proceedings of the most recent city council meeting. Noting that there had been numerous complaints about “the treatment to which the Chinamen have been subjected by certain young men of the town, in being pushed off the side-walks, and insulted in various ways calculated to raise the Mongolian ‘mad’ to the highest pitch,” *The Madisonian* insisted that something had to be done. “The latest act of hoodlumism reported is the breaking of the windows of a Chinaman’s house at the lower end of Wallace street,” the report continued, condemning the acts as “an intolerable nuisance, not only to the victims of the vicious perpetrators, but, also, to all respectable white people in the neighborhood.” The editors closed the column by insisting that the city council had declared to suppress any further incidents “with the strong arm of the law,” and threatened to arrest the perpetrators should any further incidents

occur. “If other means fail,” the column concluded, “the virtues of a position in the street-
cleaning gang, with a ball-and-chain attachment, will be tried to abate the nuisance.”

As the trials of Ah Wah and Ah Yen began in Virginia City, Han Bo was on trial
separately in Helena. On March 12, 1881, he was arrested and called to answer charges of theft
brought by Ah Sing—purportedly hired by the Chinese Freemasons. Ah Sing fled when
confronted by a number of Han Bo’s supporters. Included among them were several prominent
non-Chinese citizens of Virginia City. One, William W. Morris, a town councilman and druggist,
not only offered bail security, but actually accompanied Han Bo to Helena to ensure the fairness
of his trial. Han Bo was acquitted, and the guilty Chinese Freemason had, much to the
disappointment of The Madisonian editors, fled by March 13—just in time for Han Bo to be
called upon to act as an interpreter in the Ah Wah and Ah Yen trials in Virginia City. Also called
to act as interpreters were “Two Chinese chiefs from San Francisco,” adding weight to the theory
that the Chinese mining companies were aligned with the Six Tongs. As the trials wore on into
the end of the year, Virginia City’s residents became increasingly concerned over the cost of the
trial and the expenses incurred by jailing two Chinese men for nearly a year. Many were
noticeably more worried about the cost of justice than its pursuit. The length of the trial was

---

250 The Madisonian March 5, 1881.

251 W. W. Morris, who ran the first drug store on the lower floor of Virginia City’s
Masonic Temple on Wallace Street, often served Chinese customers. A typical entry for Joe Lee,
identified as a “Chinaman,” showed a purchase for coal oil in cash. Morris, like Buford, did not
write the purchases of Chinese customers in a separate section of his ledger, as some other
business owners did. See Virginia City Druggist and Sundries Shop (Unidentified) Records,
1864 – 1880, Microfilm MF137A, MHS.

252 Ibid., March 19, 1881; March 26, 1881.
regarded “as the worst feature of all, as it forebodes an expense to the county which it could well dispense with,” *The Madisonian* noted.\(^{253}\)

In the end, the Chinese mended their differences before justice could be officially rendered. After the first guilty verdict was overturned on the contention of the defendants’ lawyers that one of the jurymen had been ill for most of the trial and that Ah Wah and Ah Yen had thus been convicted by a jury of only eleven men, a second trial was scheduled. In the intervening weeks, two Chinese men who resembled Ah Wah and Ah Yen visited the defendants in jail. Surreptitiously, they exchanged places with the suspected murderers, taking on the identities of the accused and allowing them to walk out of the jail. Sheriff Platner was called to testify on November 26, 1881, and in response to the defense lawyers’ claim that the defendants were not their clients, was forced to admit that he could not positively identify the accused. “‘Your honor,’ Platner reportedly admitted, “all Chinamen look alike to me. If these men are not the defendants, I do not know who they are.’”\(^{254}\)

The China War illustrated both the important economic role played by the Chinese community and the increasingly difficult economic conditions that were beginning to take a toll on Virginia City. In 1881, there was still great hope for a revival. Meanwhile, Montana Territory’s railroads were still unfinished, and it remained unclear when they would be completed and where the lines would go. The Governor’s Message for 1881, published in the

\(^{253}\) *The Madisonian* March 5, 1881.

\(^{254}\) Moore, “Virginia City’s Strange Chinese Trial,” 42. There is no verification for the statement, though it appears in most contemporary accounts of the trial. Most of the trial records are extant, including subpoenas, testimony, and receipts of court costs; see *Ah Wah and Ah Yen Trial Records 1881*, Microfilm MF66A, MHS. See also *The Madisonian* January 15, 1881; January 22, 1881; January 29, 1881; February 5, 1881; March 5, 1881; March 12, 1881; March 19, 1881; March 26, 1881; April 2, 1881; April 9, 1881; April 16, 1881; November 19, 1881; November 26, 1881; and December 10, 1881.
January 22 issue of *The Madisonian*, noted that citizens of Montana Territory could not “overestimate the advantages to be derived from railroad communication with the great cities of the east.” A week later, on January 29, Wilbur Fisk Sanders agreed that “the advent of railroads to the Territory during the year past is an advent of historic importance,” and one that he deemed would be “destined to exercise a transforming influence upon the interests and character of our people and their industries.” It was no wonder the residents of Madison County were worried about an economic reemergence. The 1880 census recorded a total of 3,916 people living in the county—the third smallest in the territory. The net indebtedness of Madison County, by contrast, was the third highest in the territory, totaling some $84,890.00. The number of businesses announcing liquidation and closing sales on *The Madisonian*’s pages rose in direct relationship to the number of mines that closed. Even as mines shut down, however, *The Madisonian*’s editors stubbornly argued that “no person possessed of ordinary perspicuity can witness the wonderful strides which mining is making in Montana without feeling in their inmost souls that the era of depression in this important industry has passed away.” By 1881, large scale dredging operations were beginning to consider locating on Alder Gulch. They did not arrive in force until late December, 1897, when the Conrey Mining Company arrived for the beginning of

---

255 *The Madisonian* January 22, 1881; January 29, 1881. Wilbur Fiske Sanders was a prominent figure in Montana politics during the 1880s. One of the original leaders of the Vigilantes, Sanders was also a leader of Montana Territory’s Radical or “Black” Republican Party that stood behind granting Blacks legal rights during and after the Civil War. In 1890 when Montana clumsily sent four potential senators—two Democrats and two Republicans—to Congress, Sanders was one of two who were seated. He remained active in Montana politics throughout his life. For more information see Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang, *Montana: a History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 80, 97 – 99, and 194 – 200.

256 *The Madisonian* January 1, 1881.

257 Ibid., February 26, 1881.
its forty years of dominance. Virginia City hoped that large scale mining would spell revival, but in reality it spelled the end of the Chinese presence which had been so important economically to the community.

The number of Chinese residents in Madison County had declined steadily following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and by the turn of the century only approximately eighty remained. Combined with the abandonment of smaller scale placer mining, the changed political circumstances effectively foretold the end of the Chinese in Alder Gulch. The Conrey Placer Mining Company established the first large-scale hydraulic dredging operations in 1897. By 1907 it had purchased the last leases from the handful of remaining Chinese. The arrival of eastern capital and investments in large-scale mining was ultimately not enough to save the Social City from a dwindling population and a slowly stagnating economy. In reality, it was eastern investment in Alder Gulch that sealed the fate it was fighting to avoid. Eastern interests provided their own labor forces, and the gold extracted from Madison County often left the state entirely. Consequently there was little economic benefit for Virginia City—the mining companies failed to contribute to the economic stability of the community the way the Chinese had.

In the end, this spelled disaster not only for Virginia City, but for most of its sister settlements along fourteen mile city. Tiny Nevada City, just a mile away, was among those destroyed by large-scale dredging. When eastern capital arrived in Virginia City, it fueled hope that decades of decline would be reversed into an economic revitalization. In the end, however, the extractive nature of large companies such as Conrey removed the remaining gold.


reserves as well as the hope for a financial rebirth. The new era of dredge mining left the days of placer mining and Chinese behind. Unfortunately, whereas the Chinese had been a financial asset to Virginia City, the large companies like Conrey left nothing except water-filled holes and rubble piles in Alder Gulch. Virginia City itself escaped demolition only because the ground it stood on was empty of precious metals. Other communities, including Nevada City, Pine Grove, Highland and Summit, disappeared into piles of gravel tailings—mute reminders of past glory days.

The hopes Virginia City pinned on the coming of the railroad were aggressively courted, but nothing materialized despite repeated efforts. A headline in the January 31, 1880 issue of The Madisonian posed the key question—“Shall We Have A Railway?” Residents looked expectantly at the Utah & Northern Railroad with its miles of tracks slowly creeping across Montana Territory. “It would seem that a prudent thing for the people of Virginia City to do,” the newspaper editors lectured, would be “to take the initiatory steps to secure connection with the main line by a branch road to form at a junction with it at the nearest convenient point...of the necessity for such a connection there cannot be the slightest doubt.”

The reasons such a connection was so vital were twofold. First was the pressing necessity of transporting gold and mineral resources to eastern markets. A second incentive involved the developing prospect of tourism. With the geysers of Yellowstone National Park less than eighty miles to the south, it was clear that a feeder line would bring in visitors and business. Aware that Virginia City’s “peculiar location” made it an unlikely candidate for the railroad’s main line, it was important to fight for the next best thing: a terminus of “one of its most important feeders.”

---

260 The Madisonian January 31, 1880.

261 Ibid.
The debate over railroads and subsidies in Montana Territory quickly turned bitter. Beginning in 1872, debates over where feeder lines would run in Montana Territory had been stormy and heated. With a number of cities, including Helena and Deer Lodge, still vying for capital status and each loathe to see any perceived advantage awarded to a rival, territorial politics grew increasingly volatile. The ultimate hope was the same, Clark Spence argues—that “through emigration, Montana would prosper and become Republican: the railroad would be the instrument of this change.” The territory’s counties could agree on little else. All bitterly opposed subsidies that appeared to benefit their rivals and consequently rejected numerous pieces of railroad legislation that could have helped the territory. Among the lost opportunities was an 1879–1880 bill that would have brought through 130 miles of Union Pacific Railroad tracks for the small concession of providing the Utah and Northern an exemption from taxation for fifteen years. While some business leaders expressed their willingness to cooperate, others balked at the prospect of funding a railroad that would not connect to their favored communities. While newspaper editors across the state urged compliance with the railroad’s financial demands, arguing that “Montanans could not simply sit and wait for their part of America to be discovered,” the territorial legislature was forced to admit that it had no legal power to make the territory to accept responsibility for subsidy bonds.

Tensions cooled slightly in the following years, as financial woes struck the nation and effectively doused enthusiasm for building the railroads. The nationwide depression touched off

---


263 Ibid., 127.

by the Panic of 1873 “had a deadening effect on all western railroad building” and efforts to extend the lines into Montana Territory were especially slow to recover. The stalled Northern Pacific was often sarcastically referred to as the line “From Nowhere Through No-Man’s Land, to No Place.” Building was renewed in 1875, but the proposed routes for railroad lines changed constantly, as did voter opinions. A typical statement in the newspaper put the matter plainly in 1876, when yet another bill was put before Madison County voters, this one for a $3 million dollar subsidy. “The white population of Montana is about 20,000, in round numbers—her taxable property is about $10,000,000. If you think these figures will stand a $3,000,000 railroad vote ‘Yes,’” the newspaper urged. “If you think the figures won’t stand the press, vote ‘No.’” The pages of *The Madisonian* were filled with triumphant assurances of being granted a terminus on week, only to object bitterly to railroad builders favoring other communities—including Butte, Fort Benton and Helena—a few weeks later. Disappointed once again by the Utah and Northern, Virginia City began looking to other railroads. “There is one possible benefit which may finally accrue to the territory from the Utah & Northern discrimination,” the editors concluded, “that is, the construction of another road into our region by, or in the interest of, the Central Pacific.” Soon after a report appeared stating that as it was clear that the Utah and Northern intended to build a line to the Yellowstone Valley, Virginia City concluded that it was a natural choice for a terminus on the projected line. If Virginia City was to receive the honor of

---


266 *The Madisonian* April 1, 1876, reprinted April 3, 1931.

267 Ibid., June 19, 1880.

268 Ibid., August 6, 1881.
inclusion along the Utah and Northern’s Yellowstone route, The Madisonian interjected, it would not be far behind its “territorial sisters in seeing the iron horse” within its limits. The editors decided that no more commentary was appropriate until more was learned on the matter. “In the meantime,” they wrote, “bring on your railroad.”

Almost a decade later, an 1888 report prepared and printed in Virginia City by some of the town’s most prominent citizens, including Henry Elling, was still urging railroad interests that Madison County was a viable investment. “Silver-lead ores must have iron, as gold-ores must have lead,” the pamphlet writers lamented, “and though the county has both, in larger quantities than has any other county in Montana, still, like Tantalus, with this vast wealth in the midst of us…we are practically starving for the want and necessity of a railroad.”

The territory as a whole was struggling. While neighboring districts tended to look upon Virginia City as a declining community, in reality, although Virginia City was smaller than during previous years, it managed to survive the hard times that characterized the late nineteenth century relatively well. Even though Helena, with a larger population, had become the territorial capital in 1875, “that decade was one of general stagnation among its merchants,” leading some to conclude that while the rest of the territory was growing, Helena itself “appeared to be standing still.” In Virginia City, the newspaper was delighted. “Helena is a great town, a city, a metropolis. For years the citizens of Helena coveted the Capital. They wanted the Capital, imagining that in its possession prosperity and plenty would come,” the editors smirked. “Now

269 Ibid., August 20, 1881.

270 George F. Cope, compiler, “Statistical and Descriptive Report upon the Mines, Farms and Ranges of Madison County, Montana” (Virginia City: Unknown Printing, 1888), 7. The report was prepared by sending out circular letters for information, and was compiled by Cope, Henry Elling, R. O. Hickman, T. J. Farrell, F. Harrington, and W. Raymond, who collectively formed the Madison County Railroad Committee.
let’s see what the result is. The legislature is in session and Helena is the deadest town in the territory…This is the elephant they have won,” the newspaper concluded with satisfaction, “they enjoy the prestige of the Capital, and are stagnant, while Virginia City is flourishing.”271 The Madisonian conceded that “the progress of Virginia City in wealth and importance” was not as rapid as some “other towns in Montana of later birth,” but still clung to the belief that Virginia City’s growth had nonetheless “been steady and constant; and to-day it has a more stable foundation than ever upon which to build its hopes of future prominence.”272 General decline struck Montana because the prohibitive costs of moving in quartz mining equipment for low-grade ore had prompted many to simply leave the territory all together.273

In addition to bringing in settlement, Montanans hoped that the arrival of the railroad would lower the prices of groceries and dry goods without a corresponding drop in miners’ wages.274 “Patronize Your Neighbors,” The Madisonian pleaded on June 1, 1878, because “the growth of a neighborhood, village or town simply is the aggregate improvement of its individual members...Let every patron determine, for the coming year, to patronize his neighbors, and watch the good effect on the whole community.”275 Six months later, Isador Strasburger’s dry goods store advertisement was even blunter: “HARD TIMES—MONEY SCARCE. I. Strasburger has reduced the prices on all his goods.”276 Meanwhile, the railroad had failed to


272 The Madisonian January 31, 1880.


274 Ibid., 15.

275 The Madisonian June 1, 1878.
progress as promised, and “in their moment of disappointment, Montanans rejected the enterprise they had regarded as their salvation,” and instead “buried themselves in bitter despair.”\textsuperscript{277} Virginia City had reason to be disappointed—when the Utah Northern railroad finally reached Montana Territory in 1880, the Social City was left out of its plans.

The cycle of perpetual hope and disappointment had already entrenched itself in Virginia City. Referencing Rank’s Drug Store, \textit{The Madisonian} triumphantly announced in the fall of 1880 that “it will be seen that this company alone has transported goods, this year, amounting to half a ton to every man, woman, child and Chinaman in Montana.”\textsuperscript{278} But just a few months later, once again on the defensive, the newspaper responded to an “insinuation that Virginia City was going to decay,” arguing that Virginia City was home to “the most flourishing and hearty lot of paupers…that ever the sun shone upon.”\textsuperscript{279} Four months later, the editors boasted about “considerable improvement” in the city, with Julius Kohls and John Vetter erecting new buildings on lower Wallace Street, and S. R. Buford expanding his store by making improvements on the old Taylor, Thompson & Co. building, among others. “All this bespeaks the confidence which our people feel that the era of a revival of Virginia City’s importance has begun,” \textit{The Madisonian} continued, “and that it will soon resume some of the old-time greatness.”\textsuperscript{280} The Social City’s theme was, in reality, repeating itself: hope was soon stricken by disappointment.

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., December 21, 1878.

\textsuperscript{277} Athearn, “Railroad to a Far Off Country,” 13.

\textsuperscript{278} \textit{The Madisonian} October 30, 1880.

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., June 25, 1881.

\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., October 8, 1881.
While times were challenging, Sim Buford proved that business was still a viable enterprise in Virginia City. Maintaining a brisk correspondence with merchants and retailers from San Francisco to New York, Buford kept his store stocked with the necessities of civilized life and still found time to remain engaged in civic affairs. On January 4, 1877, he married Katie Cooley in Virginia City. Even his marriage contained elements that mirrored the theme of hope and disappointment on a personal level, as Buford had failed to write and explain his impending marriage to Katie Cooley to his other fiancée, Gertie Lancaster. Waiting patiently for him in California, Lancaster, as late as 1875, was accepting invitations to parties signing “Compliments of Mr. Buford, Respectfully received by Wife G. Lancaster.” In August 1876 she wrote to Buford “with feelings too sad to describe,” that she had learned of his impending marriage. “Mrs. Johnson called here she very abruptly asked me had I heard that Sim was married,” Gertie lamented. “I am not the kind of girl to faint but I came near it…But [I] tried to control my feelings before her. I almost hate that woman,” she bristled, “but may judge her wrong.” Assuming that money was at the root of the problem, Lancaster wrote that “if things haven’t
gone all right with you financially why don’t you tell me all and don’t think for a moment that...it would make any difference in my feelings. I can never marry any but you – my feelings would not allow it for I should always be unhappy.” Buford was, in fact, not married yet, but evidently did little to explain the situation.

In November of 1876, Lancaster answered a letter from Buford, the first she had received in months. “My Dear Sim,” she wrote, “I received your letter...was glad to receive one before opening but after reading the contents was angry for the first time with you...had you been truly sincere in your love for me that you could not write such a cold indifferent letter and I think you have a cause that you do not reveal to me.” She continued: “never would I marry a man if I thought I was not his choice from all others...You say in your letter that I need not consider myself bound to you (if I ever have) – it is hard hearted of you to speak in that way,” she admonished, for “I have not for one moment wished myself not engaged to you.” Buford ignored Lancaster’s pleas to stand by their parents’ wishes and married Katie Cooley despite them. While it is impossible to speak for Buford, who must certainly have had reasons for his actions, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Cooley’s sister was the wife of Henry Elling, Buford’s long time business partner. The marriage took place at a critical time when Buford was transitioning from employee to business owner. While citizens in Virginia City clung to their civilized ties through imported forms of material culture sold in stores like Buford’s, the realities of living in a town such as Virginia City left some—including, perhaps, Buford—open to

281 Gertie Lancaster to S. R. Buford, August 9, 1876, MC260, Box 16, Folder 2, MHS. Lancaster and Buford were apparently intended for each other by their parents, as Gertie repeatedly pleaded with Buford to honor their parents’ wishes.

282 Ibid., November 7, 1876.
complaints of being cold and indifferent…even, as Lancaster had described him, “heard-hearted.”

By the 1880s, with the question of his marriage settled and his brief military foray in the Nez Perce War behind him, Buford’s store was well established. By then he had joined ranks with other notable Virginia City businesses, including Mrs. O. D. French’s Ladies’ Bazaar, Harry Warmington’s Dry Goods and Cigar Store, and H. A. Pease’s Jewelry Store, all of which were located on Wallace Street. Even the advertising revealed a subtle recognition of the necessity for keeping goods affordable as times grew increasingly difficult. In 1876, Harry Warmington advertised that he had received one Singer Sewing Machine, with an “inside music-box attachment—the only one in this longitude,” and surely an expensive purchase. By 1878, the year that Buford opened his business, general store owners Tilton and Barber featured a list of “A Few of the Things that can be Bought for $1.00”: dried fruit, soap, coal oil, salt, vinegar, brooms and matches were just a few of the items. Mrs. French, in a few years time, would employ two young women who would continue the Ladies’ Bazaar following her death—sisters Hannah and Mary McGovern.

Conditions in Virginia City continued to deteriorate, despite high hopes for renewed fortunes. In May of 1889, Jacob Albright, who worked in R. O. Hickman’s Clothing and Gents’ Furnishing Goods store before opening his own establishment, wrote to his brother in New York that not only had the weather been stormy, but “business is also at a standstill, scarcely anything doing and no favorable outlook ahead.” Albright worried that “about two more years of such as we have been having and there will be several vacant buildings in town.” After describing the

---

283 *The Madisonian* June 29, 1876, reprinted July 3, 1931; July 13, 1878. For more information on Tilton and Barber’s advertisement, see Appendix E.
poor mining conditions and the general consensus that everything was “decidedly against old Madison County,” he concluded that even the ranchmen would likely be “compelled to borrow money to put in their crops the coming season,” and “unless we have a railroad soon this county will be the tail end of the state.”

Even as prosperity slackened after the turn of the century, Buford managed to keep his business successful. He experienced Montana Territory’s passage to statehood in 1889, and he survived the depression that ensued thereafter—the Panic of 1893. Patient and considerate of his customers, his incoming correspondence revealed more than one letter from grateful customers whose bills were overdue. “Please find enclosed $1.00 for 6 cans condensed milk bought last January,” Mrs. Charles Vetter wrote on August 2, 1902, “Many thanks for waiting.” Despite the hard times, Buford ordered some interesting commodities, including, in 1901, registered Border Collie Puppies, A. K. C. S. B. certified and pedigreed, at the cost of more than $20 per puppy. Perhaps the relative luxury of registered puppies was reflective of growing stock-raising operations in the Madison Valley. Buford himself was engaged with livestock herds, including cattle, horses and sheep, and his leniency to customers behind on their bills may have stemmed from his relative affluence due in part to having other customers able to purchase luxury items.

284 Jacob Albright to Peter Albright, May 8, 1889, SC2149, Box 1, Folder 1, MHS. Albright’s clothing store remained in business until his death in 1933; for a selection of advertisements, see Appendix K.

285 Mrs. Charles Vetter to S. R. Buford and Co., August 2, 1902, SC 260, Box 27, Folder 10, MHS.

286 Buford sent at least two inquiries, one to Dr. John C. Schapps, of Pony, Montana, who replied on October 24, 1901, and another to E. A. Rogers of Dundee, Michigan, who wrote back on November 4, 1901. John D. Schapps to S. R. Buford, October 24, 1901, MC 260 Box 23, Folder 27, MHS; E. A. Rogers to S. R. Buford, November 4, 1901, MC 260, Box 23, Folder 11, MHS.
Buford was more to the community than just a merchant. He served as the Virginia City Postmaster at the turn of the century, and letters written to the Second Assistant Post-Master General in 1900 illustrated the plague of Virginia City’s isolation. When the stage lines were rerouted to include Pony and Ferguson, Montana in 1900, Buford wrote to his superiors to complain about the change. “The actual increase in distance to be traveled one way, by such change, is fourteen miles,” Buford wrote, and “by running direct from Norris to Pony you have given us a very hard and crooked road, more especially hard in the winter season.” More than one report appeared in The Madisonian noting that the condition of the roads had prevented the mail from arriving at its destination. The Post-Master General was unwilling to revise the route, or to offer increased funding for the extra time it took mail carriers to battle their way between communities on poorly kept roads. Despite making little headway, Buford continued to argue for

---

287 S. R. Buford to W. S. Shallenberger, April 9, 1900, SC 260, Box 27, Folder 4, MHS. Norris, Montana, is approximately 30 miles northwest of Virginia City; Pony is a little more than 15 miles west of Norris, and approximately 50 miles due north of Virginia City.
more than a year that the mail carriers needed more time and funding, as well as the allowance to revise their routes to accommodate conditions.

The most common purchases recorded on Buford’s account books at the turn of the century were much the same as they had been more than two decades earlier when he opened his store—necessities. The day-to-day orders of customers reflected a decades-long routine that seemed to indicate that life in Virginia City had settled into a pattern that kept pace with deteriorating conditions and allowed the town to retain its functionality. However, even the reorganization of the American railroad system following the Panic of 1893 did not dampen Virginia City’s belief that it would eventually be accorded the role it deserved as terminus for one of the major railroad lines. Nor did it dampen the belief of residents that Virginia City had a future. A brief population surge in 1885, which brought the total number of residents up to about 1,000, had reversed and by the turn of the century there were less than 600 people living in the town. The dwindling numbers did not stop Frederick Kraemer from writing to P. A. Largey on March 17, 1897. “Dear Sir,” Kraemer penned, “I intend to Build this Summer. I think now Virginia has a future, and safe to invest. If you think that you will please be Kind enough to Loan Twentyfive hundered [sic] dollars at a low rate of interest for five years. I would be pleased with many thinks to you if you will favor the request.”

---

288 Buford Account Ledgers, MC 260, Volumes 35, 37, 42, 50, 93, and 110 were used as a representative sample spanning 1883 – 1902, MHS. See Appendix H. For purposes of comparison, see Appendix G, Melville Mercantile Company Records, 1892.


290 Frederick Kraemer to Patrick A. Largey, March 17, 1897, MC 289, Box 1, Folder 22, MHS.
Simeon R. Buford died at his home in Virginia City on January 15, 1905, after prolonged suffering from repeated attacks of rheumatism and other ailments. “Simeon R. Buford was among the most prominent and respected of men in southern Montana,” one account offered. “He was liberal, generous, upright and honest in all his business dealings, and many a poor prospector,” it continued, “will feel a personal loss when he remembers the kindness and friendly consideration he received at the hands of S. R. Buford.”

Kate Cooley Buford followed her husband ten months later, on October 11, 1905.

The Buford Mercantile Company remained open for more than two decades after Simeon’s death. The store changed with the community, offering delivery services and on-time delivery of the very best groceries to customers who simply telephoned “No. 16” in 1907. “As you must eat, the best eating is none too good,” the mercantile boasted, “and we have the best stock of fine edibles in Virginia City.”

The ability of the Buford Store to outlast its founder in many ways illustrates a common theme of Virginia City’s history. For more than half a century, hope in a revival consistently outlasted the realization that Virginia City would not reclaim its place as a central mining and business hub of Montana. Despite this harsh reality, the pages of The Madisonian carried headlines proclaiming the revival of Virginia City’s most important industry; on January 24, 1907, for example, the newspaper’s front page featured a report from the State Mining Inspector for 1905 – 1906 boldly stating that Madison County was forging...

---

291 “Obituaries,” Dick Pace Collection, Thompson-Hickman Library, Virginia City, Montana. The Dick Pace Collection consists of newspaper clippings and other memorabilia from Virginia City compiled by Virginia City resident Dick Pace. Some newspapers are not identified, but most are from Montana. The obituaries collection contains biographical and obituary clippings on Virginia City residents, mainly for the period between 1900 and 1960. The collection is preliminarily indexed by the first letter of last name, but it does not have a comprehensive finding guide. The collection can be viewed at the Thompson-Hickman Library in Virginia City.

292 The Madisonian January 17, 1907.
ahead. The natural conclusion was, the editors wrote, that the “development now going on will place us in the front rank of mining counties.”\textsuperscript{293} It was during this time that an increasing number of columns began appearing in \textit{The Madisonian} arguing plaintively for the necessity of patronizing local businesses. While the financial crisis of the Panic of 1907 triggered similar pleas across the country, in Virginia City the call to patronize local businesses instead of mail-order catalogues would remain a theme for more than four decades.\textsuperscript{294}

And then, on April 4, 1907, a front page headline in \textit{The Madisonian} proclaimed the “Last of the Chink: Moon Eyed Mongols Mine no More in Alder Gulch Placers.” This was the newspaper’s peculiar way of announcing the expiration of the last of the Chinese leases in Alder Gulch, which had been purchased by the Conrey Placer Mining Company. After forty years, the newspaper reported, the last of Virginia City’s Chinese population had departed. “The ‘heathen Chinee’ as a co-laborer in the Alder gulch diggings is a memory of the past,” the news account continued, “and the huts and hovels of his abiding place in the little village...are the only reminder that he ever had such an existence. The march of Caucasian progress has doomed the passing of the Chink, even in cheap diggings.” While acknowledging that the Chinese played some role during the years when “the cream of the golden deposits had been churned from the principle pay streaks of Alder gulch,” the article expressed satisfaction that the Chinese had been supplanted by “the advancement of civilization and the achievement of science.” The editor was pleased “to see the little village of hovels replaced by the neat abodes of Caucasian laborers.” He decried “the plodding, primitive modes of digging” associated with the Chinese, and he lauded “the mammoth machines propelled by electric force” that the Conrey Placer Mining Company

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid., January 24, 1907.

\textsuperscript{294} Ibid., February 28, 1907.
was installing. In declaring that “the passing of the Chink will thus open a new era of prosperity for the placer mining industry of Madison county in general and Alder gulch in particular,” the article revealed the editor’s ignorance about the actual dynamics of Virginia City’s economic base. While the Chinese lived, worked, and spent their money in Virginia City, the resources extracted by Conrey and other large dredging companies were not directed into local spending and investment.

![Figure 11. A Chinese merchant in the doorway of his shop on Wallace Street circa 1900. Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.](image)

Ironically, the 1907 article waxed nostalgic about the China War as “a well remembered episode in Mongol history in Alder gulch,” that, according to the editor, had “occurred about 1880 and was a bloody fray between the two companies of Hi Chung and Sam Wah.” The article’s description displayed a very different tone than the original account of 1881. Rather than focusing on the conflict itself, the 1907 piece noted that “On the morning of the big battle, Virginia City was denuded of Chinamen, who left on the run for the scene of action; boarders at hotels and house holders employing Chinese cooks were forced to the alternative of

---

295 Ibid., April 4, 1907.
going without meals or preparing their own provender...”\textsuperscript{296} By 1907, the China War had become a portal back into Virginia City’s golden years, when residents could afford to employ Chinese laborers, and the hope of a revival still hung tangibly on every breath. Anti-Chinese sentiment was common throughout the west, where foreign laborers were often viewed as competition by residents of declining communities. Virginia City’s failure to look back and recognize that its Chinese residents had bolstered the community through a time of depression and enabled its survival is reflective of the town’s historical disconnection from its origins. Moreover, what the citizens and newspaper failed to grasp was that the final exodus of the Chinese from the Social City hastened its decline. Hope for a revival had hinged for decades on two things: the arrival of the railroad and the reinvigoration of mining. Virginia City was not strategically located, nor was it populous enough to be noticed by railroad interests. The dredge mining corporations were more concerned with extracting resources to the east for processing than with investing in the deteriorating community. As Virginia City clung tenaciously to the present, hope for survival became increasingly connected to the “embers” of a past that was often based on corrupted memory.

\textsuperscript{296} Ibid.
CHAPTER 4

“A Silver-Lined Depression:” The McGovern Store Era, 1908 – 1945

Mister Brown of Shopless Town
Behold a man of Shopless Town; His name is Obadiah Brown.
He says the town does not improve, But runs along its ancient groove.
He’s like to see it spread and grow, And yet he does not help, you know.
Instead of buying things for sale Right here in town, he’s sent by mail
For many years and bought his things From those faroff Mail Order kings.
No wonder, Obadiah Brown, This home of yours is Shopless Town!

The Madisonian, August 29, 1907

Altogether, old Virginia City is far from being the exiled, deserted, lifeless old town that
most people in other parts are prone to think it.

The Dillon Tribune, July 22, 1909

What is the matter with Virginia City? There is nothing going on socially.

The Madisonian, February 3, 1910

Virginia City was, years ago, about all there was to the state of Montana, the mecca for
the rich, the poor, the high and the low; but with the exhaustion of its fabulously rich
placer deposits decline set in and the Virginia City we have known for the past 30 years
is the Virginia City of slumber, cherished in memory and reverenced for the noble part it
played in building the state of Montana—looked upon as a place whose future
possibilities can never approach its past greatness.

The Madisonian, March 23, 1917

Virginia City residents watched as the rest of the nation plunged into a financial crisis
when the Panic of 1907 struck. In hindsight, it might have been fortuitous, as 1907 was also the
year that irreversibly altered Virginia City’s economic base when the last of the Chinese, who
had quietly kept the town afloat during earlier financial panics, faded just as quietly from the
picture. The impact of mail-order catalogues on local businesses was apparent in the pages of
The Madisonian as it pleaded with residents to advance the growth and business prosperity of
Virginia City by patronizing local industries. Comparing the mail-order business to the
importation of Chinese prior the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, The Madisonian demanded to
know what the difference was between bringing “celestials over to this country to do your work
for you at a cheaper rate than your fellow countrymen could do it” on the one hand, and on the other “sending off to some mail order house in a distant city and purchasing an article at a few cents’ lower rate than you could obtain it in your own city. In either case,” the newspaper argued, “you are getting cheap value for your money,” and, worse yet, the money went “to a joss house in the orient, or…to swell the coffers of some millionaire in a distant city,” in both cases at the expense of the local economy.

**Figure 12.** “Mr. Brown of Shopless Town” appeared in the pages of *The Madisonian* in 1907 encouraging residents to patronize local businesses. From *The Madisonian* August 29, 1907.

“Mr. Brown of Shopless Town” was one of a string of advertisements that encouraged residents to support local businesses. Another unfortunate character who suffered the consequences of the popularity of mail order houses was “Owen Moore,” who “Went Away, Owen More Than He Could Pay.” Owen Moore’s small business failed because of people like Mr. Brown of Shopless Town, who ordered everything through the mail and neglected to trade with him. As a result, Owen Moore “had to go away and find a location in some town where the people patronized home merchants,” and people like Mr. Brown found themselves living in a shopless town.\(^{297}\) Some fictitious citizens, like “Mr. William Dollar,”

\(^{297}\) *Virginia City (Montana) The Madisonian* August 29, 1907; November 14, 1907.
whom residents teasingly nicknamed “Dollar Bill,” were “dignified, enterprising,” and supported local business. Others, however, ignored “the claims of their own community” and ran “away to a big city to be spent.” If the town’s economy was stagnating, it was because the Dollar Bills who left town taking two cent stamps with them went to mail order houses, helping “the postmaster a little,” but not the local merchant.298 The solution, clearly, was to “look over the advertisements in the Madisonian and patronize those merchants.”299

   It was difficult to patronize what did not exist. Though staple businesses like the Buford Store were still operational, certainly residents would have been offered a wider variety of goods via mail. Times were hard even for service industries, as evidenced in June of 1907 when the Bell Telephone Company was forced to close its office in Virginia City because no one could be found to take the job of operator. “They now offer to pay $65 per month salary,” the newspaper reported, and would agree to rent the entire $2,800 investment including all equipment for ten percent—$280 dollars per year, to anyone willing to take over the business.300 Virginia City

298 Ibid., January 2, 1908.
299 Ibid., February 28, 1907.
300 Ibid., June 27, 1907. Indeed, businesses run by Virginia City residents tended to fare better, even in the case of services. One example, the Virginia City Water Works, which was initially built by sawmill owner Anton Holter in the early years of Virginia City, remained locally run throughout the town’s history. In the mid 1880s, a controlling interest in the business was purchased by Stephen E. Bickford and his wife, a black woman named Sarah Gammon Bickford who had come to Virginia City in 1873 as a nanny for the family of a judge. Sarah Bickford continued to run the company after her husband’s death, purchasing the remaining interests from the other business partner, Harold Gohn. Sarah Bickford continued to operate the Virginia City Waterworks until her death in 1931, after which it was taken over by her son, Elmer Bickford. In addition to opening up a rest parlor for lady travelers in her building in 1920, Sarah Bickford also had a trap door installed in the ceiling in 1930. Opening the door exposed the beam from which five of the road agents—George Lane, Frank Parish, Jack Gallagher, Haze Lyons, and Boon Helm—were hanged by the Vigilantes in 1864. The five road agents’ graves on Boot Hill overlooking Virginia City were already popular tourist attractions, indicating Bickford’s awareness of the potential for tapping the growing tourist market. See Smith,
residents were not, however, so easily discouraged. Though the population dwindled from a reported 1,000 residents in 1900 to just half that number by 1908, the tenacious few who remained continued to believe that restoration and revival were tangible possibilities. As the nation fought through a series of financial crises, Virginia City residents remained hopeful that restoration of prosperity for the entire country would trickle down into the foothills of the Tobacco Root Mountains. Life went on for both residents and businesses.

Virginia City had lost several of its prominent businessmen at the turn of the century. William W. Morris, the druggist and politician who accompanied Chinese Christian Preacher C. H. Han Bo to Helena in 1881, died from heart failure on August 21, 1904.\textsuperscript{301} The following year was particularly marred by loss. In addition to S. R. Buford, Isador Strasburger, the “Fancy Dry Goods” merchant, died in February, as did Oliver Drew French, a prominent Virginia City merchant since 1863. O. D. French was among the first merchants to purchase “flour and provisions in Salt Lake to sell to the miners in Alder Gulch,” and was well remembered for his partnership with John D. Thomas in 1866, when the pair entered the merchandising business under the name French and Thomas. When Thomas departed for Butte in 1878, French continued the business on his own. He had also been active in mining as a member of Elling, French and Ramsay, which assisted in establishing a successful flour mill at Silver Springs that remained operational well into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{302}

\textit{Montana’s Madison Country}, 119 – 120; see also \textit{The Madisonian} July 10, 1920; and May 2, 1930.

\textsuperscript{301} “Obituaries,” Dick Pace Collection, Thompson-Hickman Library, Virginia City, Montana.

\textsuperscript{302} Ibid. Strasburger had moved from Virginia City to Butte, Montana, in 1883, but retained close ties to the town and remained a member of the Masonic lodge there. The Masons conducted his funeral. O. D. French died on January 22, 1905. Silver Springs was located in the
Charles H. Buford took over the management of the Buford Mercantile Company following the death of his older brother, Simeon, in January of 1905. C. H. Buford was equally adept at business, and equally responsive to changing times. By 1909 *The Madisonian* was reporting on day trips he made in his new Ford run-about automobile, which traveled “at a most excellent rate of speed.” In addition to proudly owning and operating a Ford, Charles Buford became a licensed agent for the Ford Motor Company—one of the first in Montana. By February, a local news note in *The Madisonian* quipped that Buford had already “run his Ford runabout automobile over a thousand miles,” without having to repair it. “Possible purchasers should not order an automobile before making an examination of the Ford,” the newspaper concluded, happily noting that Buford would “be pleased to exhibit his auto” to anyone who inquired. Residents of surrounding communities traveled to Virginia City often for that purpose, a testament to Buford’s salesmanship.

The Buford Mercantile Company was not the only Virginia City business that stood its ground against the tide of departing fortunes. Merchants like Robert Vickers and Jacob Albright, who both ran clothing stores promising shoppers “fashionable and correct styles of dress” were among the select few who remained in business for much of the long period of decline that stretched across the first half of the twentieth century. Others, like Michael Mailand, Virginia Passamari Valley—a historical name for the valley immediately surrounding the location of present-day Sheridan, Montana, a little less than twenty miles from Virginia City. The mill was described in an 1872 pamphlet on the resources of Madison County as being a four story brick building “capable of grinding five sacks of flour per hour” with each of its two sets of burrs. The building, at the time, was considered “one of the best conceived and finest executed structures in Montana.” See James Handly, *The Resources of Madison County, Montana* (San Francisco: Francis & Valentine, 1872), 42.

303 *The Madisonian* January 28, 1909.

304 Ibid., February 4, 1909.
City’s “exclusive shoedealer,” remained in business for several decades before succumbing to the changing times, after which the remaining merchants expanded their businesses to provide everyday items and necessities for the town.305 Another long-time Virginia City business that managed to survive under new proprietorship was exclusively for the ladies. Called The Bazaar, the millinery store was opened in 1879 by the woman who would become O. D. French’s second wife; it would continue on under the ownership of two sisters employed by Mrs. French named Hannah and Mary McGovern.

Hannah McGovern was the oldest of seven children. Born at Highland, Wisconsin, in 1861, her father, Patrick McGovern, was a first generation immigrant from Ireland who came to Virginia City in 1864 to engage in gold mining. Hannah and her brother Phillip accompanied their mother, Mary McGovern, a native of Pennsylvania, on a three month journey to Alder Gulch in the following year, traveling by boat from New York City to Panama, then to San Francisco, and by stage to Virginia City.306 The family’s trip was delayed when the team pulling a stagecoach carrying the family bolted near Salt Lake City, Utah. According to one report, Mrs.

305 Ibid., January 7, 1909 and January 14, 1909. Robert Vickers opened his store in the early 1880s, and appeared in business directories for the town by 1884. The Vickers clothing store remained open for nearly a decade following his death on April 13, 1923. Jacob Albright started out in livestock and worked as a clerk in R. O. Hickman’s clothing store for several years before opening his own clothing store around 1889—Albright also remained in business until his death in 1933. Michael Mailand opened his shoe store in Virginia City around the same time, 1888 or 1889, and remained in business until 1915, when the store he rented burned down in a fire that destroyed four buildings on Wallace Street. For a sample of advertisements for Robert Vickers’ store, see Appendix J; for advertisements from Jacob Albright’s men’s clothing store, see Appendix K.

306 Note that there are several slightly different accounts of how the McGovern family came to Virginia City. Hannah McGovern’s obituary, which appeared in The Madisonian on Friday, September 7, 1945, states that the family traveled to Panama by way of New York, while a short history on the family that appears in the book Pioneer Trials and Trails: Madison County, Montana 1863-1920, states that “Mrs. McGovern elected to travel down the Mississippi to New Orleans, across Panama, then up the Pacific coast to Sacramento,” where she was then forced to wait two weeks for a seat on a stage coach.
McGovern threw the two children out into the sagebrush before jumping herself, during which event “she struck her head on the low doorway and was thrown beneath the wheel, breaking her collar bone.” The stage line, Gilmer and Salisbury, “put Mrs. McGovern in a Salt Lake hotel for two weeks with all expenses paid while she recovered.”307 Mary gave birth to five more children after arriving in Alder Gulch: Mary, Edward, Charles, Walter and Emma. Of all seven children, only Phillip and Emma ever married. The only one to have a child was Emma—the infant lived just a few hours. Most of the McGovern children remained close to Alder Gulch. Emma, Charles and Phillip moved as far away as Adobetown, and James moved to Laurin, where he became a well respected rancher. Patrick McGovern impressed others with his hardworking and respectful nature. Indicative of how others in the community viewed him was a quip that appeared in *The Madisonian* in 1876, which noted that he and an assessor were working a channel, and while “McGovern, with his usual Irish modesty, refused to tell what is ground paid…it resembled $8 diggings.”308

Hannah and Mary remained in Virginia City. It is unclear exactly when the sisters entered the employ of Amanda Ellen Robinson—more commonly known as Mrs. O. D. French. The sisters continued to operate the millinery store after Mrs. French suddenly died in January of 1908.309 Hannah purchased the business, including the stock of merchandise, and the McGovern sisters moved the store from a corner of Creighton’s Stone Block, where it had been since it


308 *The Madisonian* July 13, 1876.

309 “Obituaries,” Dick Pace Collection, Thompson-Hickman Library, Virginia City, Montana. Robinson married O. D. French in 1880. The two had no children of their own, but Robinson was greatly respected in the Virginia City community for raising the children from French’s first marriage to Anna Dow French, who died in Virginia City in 1878.
opened in 1879, to a vacant building at the lower end of Wallace Street. Their building, which served as a store at the front of the building and living quarters at the rear, shared a common wall with the Kraemer building, and was erected at the same time, early during the gold rush to Alder Gulch. The building had passed through the hands of a number of notable residents, including B. Berry, Wm. H. Kastor, S.H. Bowman and G. Goldberg, who collectively formed the Pioneer Clothing Company, in 1864, when they purchased the building for the already hefty price of $1,800.00. The following year, Goldberg bought out the other partners for the same price, and just four months later sold the building to Joseph Knight. The building passed through numerous hands, including those of Thomas Deyarmon—one of the editors of *The Madisonian*. It was converted to a residence around 1866, and among its many inhabitants was Mary Ronan, who arrived in Virginia City with her family as a girl during Vigilante days.  

Despite their long history as residents and business owners in Virginia City, the McGovern sisters in many ways remain one of Virginia City’s mysteries. Their shop was a social center for Virginia City’s female residents for many years, but little documentation remains of their activities. Sporadic accounts of the visitors they received over the years appear in the local happenings section of *The Madisonian*; however, unlike Simeon Buford, who saved every scrap of paper he received for his business, the McGovern sisters either did not keep records, or those

---

310 John D. Ellingsen, John N. DeHaas, Tony Dalich, and Ken Sievert, “If These Walls Could Talk: the History of Buildings of Virginia City, Montana” (Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society, 1977). Ronan’s story became one of the many famous episodes in the early history of Montana Territory; it is retold by her daughter, Margaret Ronan, in the book *Frontier Woman: the Story of Mary Ronan*, edited by H. G. Merriam (Missoula: University of Montana, 1973). Another resident who spent most of her time at the lower end of Wallace Street where the less reputable element of town was most often found was a girl of about twelve who, with her younger sisters, spent a good deal of time begging in the streets while her father frequented the gambling halls. Her name was Martha Jane Canary—Calamity Jane. See Smith, *Montana’s Madison Country*, 66.
that do survive have not been found. The items and evidence that do remain are testaments to the sisters’ tenacity, self-sufficiency, industriousness and endurance, as they managed a small business during some of the most difficult financial times in United States history.

Figure 13. Hannah and Mary McGovern in their store on Wallace Street in 1908. This photograph was taken by their father, Patrick. Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

Though remaining evidence is fragmentary and simple, it illustrates how the sisters were engaged in their community. A representative example, which took place in December of 1886, was the sisters’ attendance at the high-profile wedding of Susie J. Strong and James Mitchell in Virginia City. Included in the long list of gifts received by the bride and groom was a card basket courtesy of Miss Mary McGovern and a glass  

311 The latter scenario seems more likely; when collector Charles A. Bovey arrived in Virginia City in 1944, Hannah McGovern was extremely ill. When she died in 1945, Bovey paid Mary to lock the door and leave the inventory in the building. Bovey purchased it a little more than five years later upon Mary’s death. While some of the sisters’ personal effects remain in building, the back rooms were subject to severe water and moisture damage, and it seems that Bovey removed many things, probably in order to preserve them. He stored items in buildings all over Virginia City, including the reconstructed Montana Post, where many of the McGovern sisters’ effects were found. In the event that the records of the McGovern store are rediscovered, a great deal more may be learned about how the sisters ran their business. For the time being, what evidence has been uncovered begins to paint a picture of how two sisters survived for more than half a century as Virginia City decayed around them.

312 Some of this information is detailed in an unpublished report prepared by Jeffrey Tiberi, former Executive Director of the Montana Heritage and Development Commission, for a Save America’s Treasures Grant application, March 28, 2001.
bracket and comb case courtesy of Miss Hannah McGovern. A different example, from twelve years later, is a small, handwritten ledger from 1898 that contains meeting minutes from Virginia City Hive No. 7 of the Ladies of the Maccabees, a women’s fraternal and benevolent association.313 “The first regular quarterly meeting of the auditing committee of Virginia Hive No 7 LOTM was held at the home of Lady Sarah Powell,” the minutes noted, continuing that “Lady Powell was elected chairman, Lady Johnson secretary. Ladies Powell, Johnson and McGovern were present.” The auditing committee concluded that the financial reports of the organization were correct, and that $71.12 was contained in the general fund, and $11.75 in the life benefit fund for a total balance of $88.87. The auditing committee met three more times over the course of the year for the same purpose; no first name is given to “Lady McGovern,” which could refer to either Hannah or Mary.

An 1881 advertisement in The Madisonian for Mrs. O. D. French’s Ladies’ Bazar [sic] listed a wide variety of goods, including specialty items like Ostrich feathers and parasols, in addition to staples like ready-made dresses and hats. As business slowed with the economic woes of the 1890s, fewer goods left the shelves. Many of the items that Mrs. French received and added to her “splendid stock of Ladies’ and Millinery Goods” were still on the shelves and already long out of date when Hannah purchased them in 1908; a good deal of them never left the shelves of the McGovern sisters store on Wallace Street. The sisters advertised in the

313 Ladies of the Maccabees, or L. O. T. M., refers to a fraternal and benevolent legal reserve society which was organized in the mid-1880s. Its roots trace back to biblical times, to a priestly family of Jews who defied Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV and reconsecrated the defiled Temple of Jerusalem. Ladies organizations of the order were independent, but eventually recognized by the Knights of the Maccabees, which formed in London, Ontario in 1878. The original purpose of the organization was to provide insurance benefits, sick, disability and relief aid to members. For more information, see “Ladies of the Maccabees,” viewable online at http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/maccabees.htm The Virginia City chapter remained functional for several decades. In 1915, they even threw a grand masquerade ball in the Social City. See The Madisonian February 5, 1915.
newspaper for several years under the name of “The Bazaar,” but very few advertisements for their business appeared after World War I, and a sense that their merchandise was out of date already pervaded those that did appear.

**Figure 14.** This advertisement for the McGovern sisters’ store appeared in 1912, when they still called it “The Bazaar.” From *The Madisonian* August 9, 1912

In 1913, and advertisement for The Bazaar was headed with flowing script reading “The Old Fashioned Woman, ‘She Looketh Well to the Ways of Her Household.’” Urging common sense, the advertisement noted that “this is a good store to come to in order to learn what real economy means in buying...you will find that it pays to be an old fashioned woman in the buying sense—and this store will help you practice grandmother’s policies.”

Evidence that some individuals continued to believe in the business potential of Virginia City was apparent in the pages of the town’s newspaper. In 1910, for example, *The Madisonian* announced that “Miss Johanna Freihammer, an expert modiste [sic],” had been visiting the city for two months, and was planning to return for the purpose of opening dressmaking parlors. A few weeks later a notice appeared stating that Mrs. John O’Gorman had completed a course in

---

314 *The Madisonian* May 28, 1881; February 14, 1913. For Mrs. French’s Ladies’ Bazar advertisement from 1881, see Appendix F. For more detailed information on the McGovern Store, including selected advertisements, see Appendix I.

315 Ibid., April 21, 1910.
dressmaking and was “prepared to do up-to-date work.” No listing for Miss Freihammer or Mrs. O’Gorman appeared in business directories following the 1910 announcements, and it is unclear whether or not either ever established a viable business in Virginia City. Mrs. O’Gorman’s husband, John, ran a Virginia City saloon until 1912, and it is certainly possible that she did custom work for individual residents. There was also enough demand for goods in Virginia City to entice merchants from other towns into visiting. On September 22, 1910, for example, Miss Mary Cisler of Sheridan arrived and spent the week at the Madison hotel “with a line of the latest hats and millinery.”

In 1911 The Madisonian’s editors announced that business in the city was picking up, reporting cheerfully on “the success that has attended the furniture store now owned by Joe Stern.” Noting that in just two months Stern had “ordered and disposed of nearly two carloads of new goods,” all of which were up-to-date, the editors concluded that Stern was “surely making a success of a business, which, in all probability is the oldest established furniture store in the state.” The same column of local news notes contained an advertisement for Virginia City merchant J. H. Vanderbeck promoting “1000 samples of wall paper and home decorations,” in addition to “painting, kalsomining and paper hanging.” Clearly, at least some Virginia City residents were interested in purchasing furnishings and accessories for respectable homes.

---

316 Ibid., September 22, 1910.

317 Minnesota, North and South Dakota and Montana Gazetteer, 1910 and 1912.

318 The Madisonian September 22, 1910.

319 Ibid., March 23, 1911.

320 Ibid.
Despite some hardships, Virginia City businesses were still viable and changing. In September of 1910 *The Madisonian* reported that the Elling State Bank building, an “Ancient Landmark” was in the hands of contractors. “It looks very much as though it had been struck by a cyclone,” the newspaper reported, “the front of the building has been torn out and the windows…have been filled in with masonry. The plaster has all been taken off the interior walls so that it really presents a very sad appearance.”[321] The building, constructed by Henry Elling in 1874, had served as a bank and a clothing store, and at the turn of the century was occupied by Robert Vickers’ dry goods store. It was clear from the pages of the town newspaper that remodeling of the bank represented more than just the modernization of a physical building.

**Figure 15.** This advertisement for Joe Stern’s Madison Furniture Store featured rocking chairs. From *The Madisonian* February 8, 1912.

The intention of the Ellings to keep their interests in Virginia City, the newspaper concluded, insured “the continuance of this city as a banking center” of Madison County. With the Elling State Bank serving as Virginia City’s “rock of Gibraltar,” *The Madisonian* argued that the town could easily maintain its supremacy in Montana banking circles.[322] To prove the point, the newspaper reported a week later that the newly ordered compound manganese steel safe, a product of the Diebold Safe and Lock Company, was necessary, because although “the old safe is a fine one,” it

---

[321] Ibid., September 8, 1910.

[322] Ibid., July 21, 1910.
was “too small to hold the currency and papers handled by this large and rapidly growing financial institution.”

Another business that received a substantial facelift during the same period was the Anaconda Hotel, Café, and Saloon owned by Frank McKeen, who modernized the bedrooms to include running hot and cold water. McKeen had “worked wonders,” according to The Madisonian, which credited the proprietor with transforming “the rooms on the second story of his building into first class lodgings,” making it “one of the neatest and cosiest [sic] places in the state.” Still, the newspaper had to admit that there were businesses at the other end of the spectrum. Representative of the decline were some of Virginia City’s oldest buildings, torn down before they had a chance to collapse. Perhaps the most notable of these was a stone building at the corner of Wallace and Van Buren streets. Erected between 1864 and 1865 by Thompson and Griffith, prominent contractors of the time, the building had housed some of Virginia City’s most prominent merchants, including Henry Elling and Julian Knight’s Hardware Store, Tilton and Barber’s Book Store, and even the Virginia City Post Office. Charles E. Goldsmith, who remained in Virginia City well into the twentieth century, operated a jewelry store in the building until the time it was razed. The upper story of the building, torn down in the 1890s, like many early Virginia City structures, had been the site of numerous political meetings during the territorial era.

\[323\] Ibid., July 28, 1910; the original safe had been installed by Elling in 1875. When it arrived in Virginia City in November of that year, the newspaper reported that the new vault was “both fire-proof and robber-proof,” and described the vault as being “one of the largest size and of the latest combination style, and…finished off in the best of workmanship.” The Madisonian November 13, 1875.

\[324\] Ibid., June 8, 1911.

\[325\] Ibid., June 22, 1911.
The Madisonian commented frequently on the desirability and viability of Virginia City’s remaining businesses, as in 1911 when it reported that “the future management of the O. K. stables,” a livery that had “been in business…since pioneer days,” was in question, but many applicants were jostling for position and “the privilege of conducting” it. The necessity of maintaining horses in Virginia City made an operational livery a requirement; as late as 1910, the roads into the town were so poorly maintained that even the mail had to be brought in by horseback when the weather was bad. The town also adapted to changing times, however, as evidenced by C. H. Buford’s dealing of automobiles. In keeping with the need to adjust, the town acquired two new automobile garages—one run by Joe Buford and Dan Sherman, and another run by Lewis A. Dudley and Ray Kohls. Reporting on Buford and Sherman’s establishment, the newspaper editors regarded the garage as a fulfillment, noting that “automobile owners of this city have realized the need of a public garage for a long time.”

Buford and Sherman’s conversion of the old International hotel buildings on Jackson Street was in line with the practice of reusing old structures. “The stone building will be used as a garage,” The Madisonian reported; “the partitions have been removed and a double door put in the front of the building,” which was thus “made large enough to hold seven or eight large automobiles.” The newspaper continued, noting that a nearby frame building was being converted into a machine shop, to be complete and modern with “a lathe, shaper, drill press, emery grinders and a vulcanizer for repairing the outer and inner tubes of the rubber tires. The

326 Ibid., April 6, 1911.
327 Ibid., March 10, 1910.
328 Ibid., May 5, 1910.
latter machine,” the editors concluded with satisfaction, “will be the second one in the state, the other being at Great Falls.”

The new emphasis on automobiles and travel had other implications for Virginia City. Early in 1910, as Virginia City bustled with preparations for hosting an upcoming businessmen’s banquet, The Madisonian scolded that “every town of any importance in Montana” was currently “actively engaged in a campaign for more settlers and more business enterprises except Virginia City.” Noting that the merchants of the town were “exclusive dealers in certain lines” and thus there was no competition between them, the newspaper concluded that the simplest means of getting more business into the city lay in the construction of a new hotel. “It would be the means of bringing more business and more people to town than any other enterprise that might be mentioned,” the editor wrote, indicating that a hotel would stimulate large amounts of tourist travel.

“Tourists are liberal spenders,” the editor coaxed, “and many thousands of dollars would be left here annually from these alone.” In addition to such financial enticements, the town’s reputation as “the Social City” demanded such construction because, the editor argued, “the people of the surrounding country enjoy coming here to participate in the big social functions but they complain of the hotel accommodations.” In short, “a modern hotel would mean everything to this city.” In May of 1910 The Madisonian was again proclaiming the pressing need for “a new hotel, modern, convenient, and up to-date in its appointments. We will not enumerate the advantages and benefits to be derived from such a hotel,” the editor wrote, “except to say that it

329 Ibid. Note: in the original article, the word “inner” is misspelled as “innes.” Typographical errors were common in the newspaper at this time, and in this case the spelling has been corrected as doing so does not detract from the meaning of the article.

330 Ibid., March 10, 1910. Clearly some heeded the newspapers’ advice, including Frank McKeen who restored the Anaconda Hotel shortly after this article appeared.
would pay reasonable interest on the money invested. Let us all join heartily,” he continued, “in any movement calculated to better our town in the year 1910 and trust the results will justify the action and meet the highest anticipation for a prosperous future.”

More rested on the stimulation of business than bringing in tourists with plenty of spending money. In a move that surely must have recalled the agitation of losing the territorial capital in 1875, Virginia City in 1910 found itself battling to save its status as the seat of Madison County. The first report of impending county divisions appeared in December, when The Madisonian reported that Whitehall, a town located a little more than fifty miles north of Virginia City at a railroad junction, was proposing a new county embracing parts of Madison, Jefferson, Gallatin and Silver Bow counties, encompassing an area of approximately forty square miles. “The little scheme,” as the newspaper called it, was wholly unacceptable to the citizens of Virginia City.

The county-splitting movement lasted for most of the decade from 1910 – 1920. The beginning of the movement, in northern and eastern Montana, was a result of inevitable necessity. The vast distances between county seats were impractical, as in 1910 approximately half of Montana’s enormous land area was broken up into just nine counties. Some division was necessary because, as Malone, Roeder and Lang explain, distances involved and “the needs of

---

331 Ibid., May 5, 1910.

332 Ibid., December 15, 1910. Attempts at splitting counties had cropped up from time to time, with perhaps the earliest report appearing in The Madisonian on January 15, 1876, when the newspaper reported that two men, Henry Thomas and Nez Moore, of Stinkingwater Valley, had “called and promised to hold a ‘bumble-bee mass meeting’ on the division of the County. We are not populace enough to divide yet, boys,” the editor chided, “can’t see the force if your argument.” The Madisonian January 15, 1876, reprinted January 16, 1931. There was little attempt to begin dividing counties in southwestern Montana until 1910 – 1920, when the movement gained momentum.
citizens to be near their county seats demanded it.” During this period, Virginia City’s internal attitude toward development and potential very much mirrored that of the rest of the nation. It was a time when each small town “looked forward to a rosy future of unlimited growth,” and planned to develop into a “great railroad center.” In Virginia City there was still hope of receiving a connecting railroad line to Alder that would open up opportunities for commerce, tourism and growth.

Perhaps the greatest problem with the county-splitting movement was that it carried too far for all the wrong reasons. According to Malone, Roeder and Lang, “counties did not usually divide along sensible geographic lines,” and the preponderance of “fast-talking promoters and political con men” who dominated the movement made matters even worse, traveling from town to town “whipping up enthusiasm about the advantages of smaller counties and the blessing that a new county courthouse and its payroll would bring to any village, no matter how remote.” For a fee, the county-splitters organized petitions and arranged elections, leading to a disorganized frenzy that would have damaging consequences for the entire state. For Virginia City, which already had a county court house with its associated payroll, there was no benefit to splitting. To the contrary, it threatened Virginia City’s existence because the town was becoming increasingly reliant on the business and trade stimulated by its position as the county seat, which created opportunities that would not have existed otherwise.


334 Ibid.

335 Ibid.
In the end, portions of Madison County were shaved off, but fortunately for Virginia City for once its location proved strategic. Resting near the center of Madison County, and thus at the center of numerous surrounding communities, there was little inducement for moving the county seat. The Social City was lucky. In 1915 the Montana legislature passed the Leighton Act, which essentially “gave counties an almost completely free hand to subdivide as they saw fit.” By the time the splitting ended, the number of counties in the state of Montana had ballooned to more than fifty. While the new counties, with their court houses and payrolls, did fine during the “flush times” when property taxes were sufficient to pay the bills, the error of such indiscriminate subdivision quickly became apparent when boom turned to bust at the end of the decade. Counties pressed for funds were forced to seize delinquent properties from their own residents, in essence “devouring their own property owners.”\footnote{Ibid., 252.}

Many communities lost substantial portions of their population, and as a result found themselves hard-pressed to support the very local governments that had promised great prosperity. Back in Virginia City, the editors of \textit{The Madisonian} smirked with satisfaction that Virginia City’s assessed valuation was more than that of Pony and Sheridan combined.\footnote{\textit{The Madisonian} August 11, 1910.}

By 1915, when Montana was entering a boom period, Virginia City was hailing itself as “the most prosperous city in Montana,” based on the fact that while other counties sank into debt, it did “not owe a dollar in the world.” According to newspaper editorials, the town also had enough money available in public funds to contribute to significant improvement projects, including “laying cement sidewalks, crosswalks, and otherwise improving the appearance of the
city’s streets.” Despite this rosy outlook, Virginia City found itself hard-hit by the long-brewing economic and agricultural downturn that was about to strike Montana full force.

Montana watched warily with the rest of the nation as Europe went to war in 1914. Reports of world news naturally expanded across *The Madisonian*’s pages; however, even as the country moved toward war in the following years, Virginia City maintained its pace of life, and its businesses were proud to begin carrying national brands. In 1915, advertisements for the Buford Store flooded through the local notes section of the newspaper, promoting everything from “Bellflower apples, California and Concord grapes, and sweet potatoes” to candies, nuts, and cookies. The store advertised its complete line of blue and white enamel ware along with national brands like “A-1 or Heinz Beef Steak Sauce” and Libby’s sweet pickle onions, relish, chow chow, mustard and dill pickles. “Have you seen the new ‘Quality’ washing machine at Buford’s store?” *The Madisonian* asked in 1915, describing it as “the most perfect working washer on the market.” In the same year, the newspaper proudly pointed out that the Buford Mercantile Company was “having the ceiling of its store repainted, the walls kalsomined and the shelving, counters and store furniture revarnished” by an artist named J. H. Turnbull.

The contributing factors that sank Montana into a depression years before the rest of the country suffered economic hardships were, unbeknownst to residents of the state, already

---

338 Ibid., unknown date, 1915. Note: in 1915, Virginia City had two newspapers that were consolidated into *The Madisonian Times* when *The Madisonian* absorbed a smaller, short-lived competitor called *The Times*. In 1920, the name was changed back to simply *The Madisonian*. In the interest of clarity, the newspaper will be cited as simply *The Madisonian*, as it represents the same publication. Also note that during 1915 the newspaper did not print dates on the headers of its pages; because of gaps in the microfilm record for this year, some dates have not been conclusively identified aside from falling in the year 1915.

339 Ibid.

340 Ibid.
beginning to develop. America’s entry into World War I on April 2, 1917, coincided with the peak of Montana’s homestead rush. In what Malone, Roeder and Lang have referred to as “a curious twist of fate,” high war-time prices and “the patriotic urge to produce for victory added the final boost to the great Montana boom.”

Settlers and speculators rushed into the state, especially into the vast open regions of eastern Montana. Oblivious to the first signs of drought that were already becoming apparent in 1917 and 1918, farmers sank themselves into debt, convinced that high prices and increased productivity would prevail to pull them back into a solid margin of profit.

For Virginia City, like the rest of the nation, entry into the war spelled an increased need to economize and introduced meatless and wheatless days, liberty bonds and sugar rationing. In many ways, the Social City was not as hard-hit as other communities because it had been continuously adjusting in the interests of self-preservation for more than half a century. Even as Madison County proudly proclaimed itself prosperous and debt-free in 1918, the prevailing atmosphere in Virginia City had been one of economy for decades. In the tiny back rooms of their store on Wallace Street, Hannah and Mary McGovern fought through increasingly hard times with a tenacity and endurance that relatively few Americans experienced prior to the harsh years of the Great Depression. Judging by what the McGovern sisters left behind, sugar rationing was far from a crisis. For example, the McGovern sisters did not own a pre-made mop, even though they could have purchased one in town—instead, they made their own, fashioned from a broken broom handle, a piece of twine, and cluster of ragged socks.

---

342 The mop is still on site in the back room of the McGovern sisters’ store on Wallace Street. See Appendix I.
Hannah and Mary were avid readers, and, like many who grew up during hard economic times, they saved things, including stacks of publications that ranged from popular periodicals such as *The American Magazine, Farm and Fireside, Women’s Home Companion, The Ladies’ Home Journal, People’s Popular Monthly* and *Farm Life*, to more obscure publications like *The Gentlewoman* and *Home Circle*. Both Hannah and Mary subscribed to numerous publications and both faithfully signed their names on the magazines—even ones that had address labels still attached. They scribbled notes on the covers and in the pages. More telling of the difficult times that were striking Virginia City were the lengths Hannah and Mary went to in order to save their magazines, even stitching some publications, like *The Gentlewoman* and *Home Circle*, together with string in bundles kept in chronological order.

Notable among the many publications the McGovern sisters subscribed to and indicative of the practical and economical nature that permeated through both business and daily life was *The Delineator*. An oversized monthly periodical, *The Delineator* was a product of the Butterick Publishing Company based in New York. At $1.50 per year for a subscription—fifteen cents per

---

343 This listing of magazines and periodicals is partial. Charles Bovey evidently cleaned out portions of the back rooms in the McGovern Store after purchasing it from Mary McGovern in 1951; since Bovey did not record what he moved or where he moved it, it is impossible to know what portions of the McGovern sisters’ personal belongings were either removed by their relatives or placed in different locations by Bovey. The collection of materials mentioned in this chapter were discovered in Bovey’s reconstruction of the Montana Post building on Wallace Street, where Bovey stored periodicals, magazines, books, and other printed materials gathered both from various sites in Virginia City and via auctions and other private collections. Searches of the Montana Post building during the summers of 2007 and 2008 revealed dozens of periodicals; however, certain items that have not been found, including record books for the sisters’ business, leave large gaps in the record. Unfortunately, water leaks, rodent infestation, and other environmental factors have damaged large portions of the collection stored in the Montana Post building—whether or not the McGovern sisters’ kept records and if they still exist remains unclear.
An offshoot of Butterick pre-sized clothing patterns, *The Delineator* was among the premier American women’s fashion magazines at the turn of the twentieth century. While it is not surprising that the sisters, who engaged in selling dress goods, fabrics and sewing materials, subscribed to publications that kept them up to date on the happenings of the world of fashion, *The Delineator* was one of the most practical publications they could have purchased. Unlike other periodicals that dealt strictly with fashion, Butterick’s publication included a wide array of other offerings in each issue—everything from short stories and non-fiction works to self-help articles and practical advice, in addition to multiple pages of the latest fashions and patterns available for mail-order purchase from the Butterick Company.

Most issues of *The Delineator* were addressed to Hannah McGovern, whose handwritten notes on advertisements, patterns, cooking tips and movie stars adorned the pages of her magazines, or “books,” as she called them. In an issue dated January, 1914, Hannah calculated that twelve copies of pattern number 6624, a skirt described as “clearing length…about one yard and one-half at the lower edge,” and closing “at the center or side front…softly gathered at the slightly raised or regulation waistline,” would cost $1.80. If Hannah really did order twelve copies of the pattern, it is unlikely they were all for her own personal use—at least a few were probably for other ladies in town. Another pattern in the same issue for a “two-piece skirt in clearing length, with deep tucks giving the three-tier effect” bore her notations for a 28 inch waist and 40 inch bust. A more intricate and frilly pattern, number 6610, for a “bewitching evening gown,” Hannah noted, required a substantial six yards of fabric. While the magazine

---

344 Some publications, like *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, cost slightly more, at 20 cents per issue, but most of the magazines the McGovern’s subscribed to were substantially less—for example, *The Gentlewoman* cost a mere 5 cents per issue.
boasted that “nothing could be more simple than the construction of this dress, yet the effect is utterly adorable,” and continued on that “the slight caught-up drapery at the side of both the flounces adds a distinctive touch,” Hannah simply noted measurements and the need for an additional “1 yd an half” of material.  

Whether or not Hannah was ordering fabric and patterns for herself or for customers can sometimes be ascertained from her notes on the pages of her magazines. In many cases her comments were simply practical—for instance, a reminder on an issue of The Delineator which indicated that pattern “No 8615 – Princess Dress,” was priced at 20 cents. A note below the pattern, which appeared on page 52, read that “4 ½ yd made small pleats,” a clear indication that Hannah had ordered the pattern and made the dress, but not who it was for. At the top of the same issue, Hannah scribbled another notation that was clearly for her future reference—“canning vegetables [sic] in this Book.” Toward the end of the same magazine, Hannah took note of an intricate cross-stitch pattern for a luncheon cloth, adorned with sparrows and rosebuds. “For the woman who prides herself on her fine table appointments,” noted The Delineator, suggesting blue as a color pallet. The full article, entitled “A Bead on Your Bodice and some Delightful Cross-Stitch Patterns for Blouses, Dresses and Linen,” was written by a Miss Marie Ashley, who, the magazine noted, would “be glad to answer any question relating to this article upon receipt of your address and a stamped envelope.” Hannah’s hastily scrawled note on the

---


346 The Delineator, September 1916 (Butterick Publishing Company) McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana.
back cover of the magazine, above an advertisement for “Jiffy-Jell” fruity desert, indicate that she requested more information.

Numerous other notations attested to Hannah’s tastes, including a May 1916 issue in which she scribbled a reminder that there was a “pattern for apron in this book I like.” In the same issue, she calculated the cost for purchasing a 4 ½ by 4 ½ and 4 ½ by 6 foot rug from the Congoleum Art-Rugs Company for a total of $3.15. For the sisters, it might have been something of a luxury purchase, but the patterns shown in the advertisement are similar to linoleum scraps still on the floor of the McGovern Store. What becomes clear from the pages of the sisters’ magazines is the opportunity they took to use mail-order business to enhance their own. During times when little merchandise left their shelves because of economic hardships, most of Virginia City lamented the negative impact of mail-order houses on local business. Hannah and Mary used it as a bolster, sending off for patterns and other relatively inexpensive items that were practical and still in demand by local women.

Wartime impacted all of Virginia City’s businesses. The Madisonian reported on World War I at both the national and local level, noting the movement of troops and the status of other countries involved in fighting the war, as well as Montana’s quotas for purchasing liberty bonds and conserving food products. “Do You Live to Eat? Do You Eat to Live?” the Buford Mercantile wanted to know in 1918, noting that “it doesn’t matter which. The point is, no matter why you eat, you want the BEST.” At the same time, Robert Vickers’ clothing store informed customers that it was well aware that “War-Time Prices Call for Extra Values,” asserting “with confidence that not more high-class lines were ever brought to this market.” Also finding its

347 Ibid.

348 The Madisonian January, 1918.
way into the pages of the newspaper in 1918 with little admonition from the editors were some of the first advertisements for mail-order goods, most being from Hennessey’s Mail Order Department in Butte.\textsuperscript{349}

By March, the Buford Mercantile Company announced it was changing its credit and delivery systems in order to reduce its costs of doing business, and would only offer free delivery on orders amounting to $1.00 or more.\textsuperscript{350} Virginia City business dove headlong into the Liberty Bond drive in March as well; Robert Vickers encouraged his customers to “ Feather Your Nest” with Liberty Bonds, “the safest investment in the world.” The Dudley Garage’s advertisement for that month was simply a quote from John N. Willys which read in part that “it is the patriotic duty of every man to expend his usefulness to the very limit. In building automobiles, that thought ever has been in my mind.”\textsuperscript{351} Every major business in Virginia City contributed an ad promoting Liberty Bonds to \textit{The Madisonian} in 1918. “THEY ARE LISTENING OVER THERE,” the Buford Mercantile Company’s full page advertisement read on April 12; “Ring the Liberty Bell: Ring it Loud; Ring it Now.” The same edition of the newspaper featured an additional full page of advertisements promoting Liberty Bonds, including one from Jacob Albright’s Clothing Store which admonished that “Bonds Are Not A Burden, But A Blessing.”\textsuperscript{352}

A month later, the Buford Mercantile Company proposed to sell “groceries at small profit,” announcing that as everyone should be doing his part to assist the war effort, the store

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., February, 1918. Ironically, just a month earlier the newspaper had run a long column entitled “Sight ‘Unseen’ Trade is Gamble: Consumer Takes Long Chance When He Buys From the Mail Order House,” \textit{The Madisonian} January 24, 1918.

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., March, 1918.

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., March 5, 1918.

\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., April 12, 1918.
would do its part by selling “the best Groceries at the very lowest prices” for which they could be handled. While the store admitted that the policy might impinge on certain luxuries, it would still enable customers to meet their obligations, “and perhaps save enough to but some War Savings Stamps. Don’t be humbugged and think you have to pay just any old price because it is asked.” The advertisement concluded that customers should “come to the stores that guarantee to treat you right,” as such was “mutually beneficial.” A few months later, ever acting as Virginia City’s protector, the store advertised that “with war on our hands and price boosters and speculators and gougers all scrambling for illegitimate profits,” it could not control the projected increases in wholesale prices on hardware. “Therefore, we urge you to buy hardware NOW—buy everything you are likely to need in the near future,” the store urged in a personal warning to residents.

World War I touched Virginia City in more personal ways than business relations. A number of young men from Madison County were among the draftees called up to serve their country, and several fought overseas. Among then was Harold Gohn, the son of George Gohn who ran Virginia City’s Metropolitan Meat Market. On June 23, 1918, fifty-four of Madison County’s “bravest lads” were assembled in the Virginia City auditorium for a “grand ball and banquet” send off before they shipped out to Camp Lewis in Washington for training. “As stated, all patriots will be there, if conditions possibly permit,” the newspaper remarked, “so an invitation is unnecessary.” 1918 would soon touch Virginia City very close to its heart. By the

353 Ibid., May 10, 1918.
354 Ibid., September 20, 1918.
355 Ibid., June 21, 1918.
time the newspaper headlines read “11th Month 11th Day 11th Hour Proclaim Close of World’s War” on Friday, November 15th, 1918, the Social City had lost one of its own.

Montanans, like the rest of the nation, were hit with influenza twice during 1918. The first bout of the virus appeared during the spring and was generally mild, with sufferers recovering after several days of manageable symptoms. A second wave of the flu that struck beginning in August was far more deadly. Montana was one of the four states hardest hit by the disease, losing around one percent of its total population—approximately five thousand people.\(^{356}\) The disease struck some communities harder than others, but tiny, isolated areas like Virginia City that had limited medical supplies were particularly vulnerable. Virginia City had only one resident physician, and additional doctors in the surrounding communities, like Dr. J. A. Sacry who practiced in Harrison, but offered his services to other communities, were more than forty miles away and often out of reach. With a total of 37,567 cases of the flu reported between October and December of 1918 alone, the disease struck Montana with a deadly ferocity that dazed even the most seemingly prepared communities.\(^{357}\) One of the first deaths occurred not in Virginia City, but at Camp Lewis in Washington where the Madison County recruits had been sent—it was S. R. Buford’s youngest son, Simeon, Jr.\(^{358}\)


\(^{357}\) Ibid., 58.

\(^{358}\) A short report appeared in *The Madisonian* on September 20, 1918, to the effect that Mrs. S. R. Buford and Henry W. Buford, S. R. Buford’s oldest son, had left for Fort Lewis to be with Simeon, who was reported as “seriously ill of pneumonia.” He died on September 22 with them at his side. Simeon’s body was brought back to Virginia City and buried in the family cemetery plot. S. R. Buford, Sr. and Katie Cooley had eight children, but only three, including Simeon Jr., survived into adulthood.
Despite several other deaths in the surrounding area, *The Madisonian Times*, like many Montana newspapers, largely ignored the epidemic until December, when the flu made its way full force into even the most isolated rural communities, probably as a result of residents from small communities traveling to other places for the celebration of the armistice in mid-November. After Simeon R. Buford, Jr., one of the first obituaries to appear in the pages of *The Madisonian* relating to the flu was for John Carey, clerk of the district court and volunteer clerk of the local draft board, who died on November 26, 1918 after a week-long illness. The following week, the newspaper published a national column from the United States Public Health Service on “Advice to ‘Flu’ Convalescents,” warning residents to be wary about contracting tuberculosis following bouts of influenza, as well as a report of four deaths in Virginia City alone due to the flu.

The Masonic lodges of Virginia City responded quickly and “turned over the Masonic temple for use as an emergency hospital during the prevalence of the Spanish influenza epidemic.” The city council appropriated $1,500.00 to combat the epidemic as “professional nurses” from both Butte, Montana, and Rochester, Minnesota, arrived to assist the sick. There was a severe shortage of nurses nationwide in 1918 due to the large numbers dispatched overseas to aid in the war effort, so it is notable that when seven nurses were dispatched to Montana by the American Red Cross Nursing Service, two were sent to Virginia City.

---


360 *The Madisonian* November 29, 1918.

361 Ibid., December 6, 1918.

362 Ibid.
received the assistance of Dillon physician Dr. E. G. Balsom. In an unfortunate turn of events, Virginia City’s only local physician, Dr. Clancy, fell ill with a severe cold that coincided with the worst of the epidemic, leaving him “unable to look after patients, which left the sufferers entirely without medical attention until the arrival of Captain Balsom,” whose services, the newspaper noted, were entirely voluntary.363

Many Virginia City citizens, including Charles H. Buford, then the County Commissioner-elect, and prominent attorney Lyman H. Bennett, volunteered time and automobiles for running errands and assisting hospital. On December 13, 1918, the newspaper reported that no new cases of influenza had developed during the preceding week, and “all those who were afflicted are now recovering.” Continuing on, the editors warmly reported that the epidemic had “revealed sterling human qualities in a number of citizens, qualities of a kindness of heart and sacrifice of personal comfort and physical care hard to duplicate in any community.” A number of Virginia City’s young women had volunteered their services in assisting the professional nurses.364

On December 20, 1918, The Madisonian reported that the last of the patients in the emergency hospital had been “discharged as cured,” and “Miss Louise Moreau, one of the Red Cross nurses, had left for her home in Helena,” while the remaining nurse, a Miss Anna Bergshen, departed for Seattle several days later.365 By the end of the month, reports were appearing in the newspaper that some of Virginia City’s female residents, including Mrs.

363 Ibid., December 13, 1918.
364 Ibid.
Virginia Kohls, had returned from Sheridan, where they had been nursing influenza patients.\textsuperscript{366} The epidemic had run its course, leaving Virginia City reeling as it tried to recover with the rest of the nation. There were some significant bright notes as the town transitioned into the next decade, including the return home of another Buford—Luther, Charles Buford’s son—from the frontlines in France in the spring of 1919.\textsuperscript{367}

There were other notable occurrences in Montana at the end of World War I—for example, the 1918 election of the first woman, Jeanette Rankin, to Congress. Among the thirty-four registered voters in Virginia City that year were Hannah and Mary McGovern.\textsuperscript{368} Overall, however, Montana entered the 1920s on a sour note. Drought had wiped out crops and newly severed counties, unable to pay their bills, foreclosed on farmers, driving the state into a depression that “hit harder and lasted longer” than the nationally felt recession that followed the conclusion of the war. Severe drought coupled with a decline in the price of wheat and other commodities, artificially inflated by wartime price controls. Montana’s residents bore the brunt of the consequences when the state’s key industries, farming and mining, suffered a direct hit “as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{366} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{367} Ibid., May 2, 1919.
  \item \textsuperscript{368} Ibid., March 29, 1918; for more information on Jeanette Rankin, see John C. Board, “The Lady From Montana” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer, 1967), 2 – 17. For more information on women’s suffrage in Montana, see Judith K. Cole, “A Wide Field For Usefulness: Women’s Civil Status and the Evolution of Women’s Suffrage on the Montana Frontier, 1864 – 1914” *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1990), 262 – 294. Interestingly, when women in Montana were given the right to vote in 1914, Madison County was one of the proponents for equal suffrage, at least in part because, as Cole notes, “rural women stood firm to help win the vote by encouraging male members of their families to vote for women’s suffrage.” The only three counties in Montana that voted against equal suffrage were Lewis and Clark (where Helena is located), Silver Bow (where Butte is located), and Deer Lodge.
\end{itemize}
the end of swollen wartime demands for raw materials meant local shutdowns and unemployment.”

While the rest of the nation had largely recovered by 1921, residents in Virginia City suffered from a lack of basic necessities that still had to be shipped into the town via the railroad to Alder and moved the rest of the way by wagon or automobile. Despite early warnings from the Buford Store, which urged its patrons to order their coal supplies as early as July because “no one can depend on getting it later when the weather is bad and railroad facilities can not be depended upon,” the town found itself without enough fuel for the winter. The Madisonian reported in December that “the fuel situation…is becoming serious,” as there was “no coal in town for sale and but little wood.” To make it through the freezing months residents turned to the past. As the newspaper reported, “old log cabins are being torn down and converted into firewood, which meets a ready sale.”

Two years later residents faced similar problems with coal shortages beginning early in the winter, re-igniting fury over the damage failure to receive a feeder railroad line had done to the community. To make matters worse, the town was entering a period of business upheaval. While old-time businesses like The Post Office Store, run by W. A. Francis, closed out, some, including the McGovern sisters, C. W. Rank, Robert Vickers, and Jacob Albright continued to cling tenaciously to solvency.

Virginia City found hope and optimism in the potential development of new industries. Ever seeking the elusive restoration of its rightful place as one of Montana’s premier economic

369 Malone, Roeder and Lang, Montana, 281.

370 The Madisonian July 22, 1921. The situation would continue to repeat itself into the subsequent decade as well: on January 29, 1937 the newspaper reported that a coal shortage had developed as weather isolated Montana and prevented trains for arriving in Alder.

371 Ibid., December 12, 1919.
centers, the promise of an untapped “vast pool of oil” beneath Alder Gulch renewed effervescent hopes for fortune. The first time the subject appeared on the pages of *The Madisonian* was on January 14, 1921, in the form of a front page question: “IS THIS ANOTHER OIL FIELD?” Basing the assumption on the presence of red clay deposits, which supposedly indicated subsurface areas where “mammoth lakes of oil had burned at some remote period,” the newspaper relied on the expertise of a resident to make the point. Arthur Blankenship, who had “much experience in the oil fields of both Texas and Oklahoma” promised that the “red beds” lining the ridges surrounding Virginia City were of the oil-indicative variety, rather than deposits of simple volcanic ash as had previously been supposed. “Now show us the man or company with nerve enough to come in here, give the proposition the once over, and if not convinced of the possibility and probability of oil, leave with the knowledge that it has cost only the investigation,” the newspaper challenged.\footnote{Ibid., January 14, 1921.}

As the nation worried about its economic and industrial future, Virginia City latched on to the prospect of oil with an unshakable fervor. “Graphite is burned petroleum, and there is so much of it in and about Virginia City that the tails of the…rabbits…are jet black,” *The Madisonian* claimed in February, irritated that no investment was forthcoming. “The only thing that has prevented oil wells from bristling all over the Virginia City district,” the newspaper opined, “has been the lack of capital, and a dearth of men willing to invest in such a project.” In a statement reminiscent of those who had loudly proclaimed revival half a century earlier, the editor remarked that “All Virginia City needs to make it the metropolis of Montana is capital and faith. It has all of the great natural advantages, with a good place for a railroad.”\footnote{Ibid., February 4, 1921.}
No matter how loudly it complained, the newspaper could not seem to get anyone to listen. In a headline that dwarfed the print of the newspaper’s name—and even the lettering that had proclaimed the end of the First World War—*The Madisonian*'s front page on February 18, 1921 read simply “OIL HERE?” The editors were, they announced, “sorely distressed because of the apparent indifference of its Madison county constituency as to the possibility and probability of vast oil pools underlying the county’s surface.” The newspaper reported on the interest of investors in other parts of the state, specifically at Miles City, more than three hundred and fifty miles away. At least one company with capital interest of $50,000.00 had organized, but the newspaper expressed its disappointment that local people sat “idly by,” permitting “progressives people from a distance to take from under their very feet the riches to which their long residence” entitled them. Relying on information from local residents who weekly claimed new discoveries of oil, the newspaper argued that if there was oil in Madison County, “it should enrich this entire community.”

*The Madisonian* continued faithfully reporting on new theories and oil activities for the next few weeks. By March 4, 1921, the paper was reprinting letters from Harry Daems—one of Dr. Levinius Daems’ children—who claimed that there was abundant geological evidence to prove the existence of oil without ever sinking a drill. Daems suggested that if residents needed further convincing they might “but just take a stroll up Idaho street” and gaze upon Virginia City’s Elling Memorial Episcopal Church, erected in 1903, which was constructed of sandstone that was nearly identical to sandstone found in the Wyoming oil fields. Investors were

---

374 Ibid., February 18, 1921; February 25, 1921. According to the newspaper, various private drilling projects and at least one sheep herder, who discovered a “cone” in a local canyon that was “bubbling of oil from the interior of the earth,” were positive proof of “the largest oil field in the world” being present in Madison County.
beginning to pay attention. The following week, more than half of the newspapers’ front page was covered with a headline proclaiming “MONTANA’S LIQUID GOLD.” The only problem with the flurry of activity surrounding drilling in the nearby Jefferson and Ruby Valleys was that, once again, Virginia City was left out of the mix. “We do not deny that drilling for oil is a gamble,” the newspaper admitted, but questioned the possibility of there being “any creative work” that was not.\textsuperscript{376} In a further attempt to convince anyone who would listen about the presence of oil reserves,\textit{The Madisonian} ran a story about Bill Hicks, one of Virginia City’s noted characters from its capitol era days. Hicks claimed that oil was so abundant in Alder Gulch in the 1870s “that stage drivers often used it in lieu of wagon grease.” Hicks also hinted that a gold-laden Wells-Fargo Company safe, stolen from the stage in 1879 by “Injins” was still hidden in a “grease spring” in the area, waiting to be recovered.\textsuperscript{377}

A slew of reports on oil prospects continued throughout the year. “WE HAVE OIL DECLARE MEN WHO KNOW,” read a typical headline of March 25, 1921, but still frustratingly little progress was made. By the end of April, four mining companies were organized, and one, the Madison Oil Company, was presided over by Jacob Albright—Virginia City’s longtime clothing merchant. Still, despite claims of definite proof, little oil was extracted from Madison County ground. In columns reminiscent of railroad hopes forty years earlier, the optimism of potential revival and bitterness at being overlooked seeped into the pages of the newspaper. On Friday, May 6, 1921, readers were informed that oil was assured by yet another

\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., March 4, 1921. An interesting side note, the dedication speech for the Elling Memorial Episcopal Church was delivered on March 28, 1903 by Simeon R. Buford. The full text of his remarks is viewable online at \url{http://www.bufordfamilies.com/Page%20X.htm}

\textsuperscript{376} \textit{The Madisonian} March 18, 1921.

\textsuperscript{377} Ibid.
encouraging letter from Harry B. Daems. The same week, the editors resentfully blamed the lack of development on “a few wealthy interests” who wanted nothing but “to stifle the smaller oil organizations, drive them out of business, eliminate competition, and gobble up their holdings.” Despite a headline proclaiming the beginning of drilling on June 3, 1921, no inexhaustible oil field was ever discovered beneath Virginia City.\textsuperscript{378} As Malone, Roeder and Lang note, Montana’s first true oil boom, which did occur in the early 1920s, was centered in the northeastern part of the state.\textsuperscript{379} Like the railroad, oil offered the limitless possibilities for prosperity—and, like the railroad had, it bypassed the Social City completely. Numerous reports expressing the belief that Virginia City would someday get its promised railroad line continued well into the 1940s, but even a popularly supported electric railroad from Alder to Virginia City, promised repeatedly from 1911 – 1915, failed to materialize.

Frustration at being left out of industry booms that seemed to help the rest of the state but not Virginia City crept into the pages of the newspaper. Even an optimistic report that the town’s ability to draw “trade from a large territory…was evidenced Thursday, when there were 25 or 30 automobiles upon Wallace street,” was tempered with a tone of disappointment. Though the newspaper felt justified in stating that local businesses carried lines “of merchandise needed by the residents of this community,” it was clear that Virginia City was falling behind its sister cities economically and socially.\textsuperscript{380} Searching for explanations, the newspaper argued that “the citizens of Virginia City want to wake up and bring our little city up-to-the minute, make it a town to be proud of,” but were plagued by the same persistent problems. One was the livestock that roamed

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., March 25, 1921; April 1, 1921; April 8, 1921; April 22, 1921; May 6, 1921; June 3, 1921; June 10, 1921; June 17, 1921; and June 21, 1921.

\textsuperscript{379} Malone, Roeder and Lang, \textit{Montana}, 334 – 337.

\textsuperscript{380} \textit{The Madisonian} May 28, 1920.
in the streets. If the animals “were kept in the proper place,” the editor fumed, the fences could be removed, new walks laid and the town become modernized.”

Keenly aware of national building trends that were sweeping the nation, the newspaper admonished its readers that there was “No Excuse for Ugliness” in erecting new buildings, and it urged the prospective builder “to avail himself of the services of a good architect.”

There were some improvements to the town. At the end of 1918, work had begun on a Public Library, a gift to the city from Colonel William B. Thompson who was born in Virginia City. The finished building was expected to cost some $25,000.00. Though overseers, including Jacob Albright, were selected as early as May, the corner stone for the building was not laid until August of 1918. The finishing touches, including leveling the lawn and landscaping, were completed in June of the following year, but it was 1922 before the commissioners for Madison County finally approved accepting the building, officially named the Thompson-Hickman in honor of Colonel Thompson’s wife, Gertrude Hickman, as the city’s free county library. Their acceptance was qualified with a proviso that its approval would not be finalized until the building was “fully completed, the ground fenced and perfect title tendered.”

---

381 Ibid., September 10, 1920.

382 Ibid., January 24, 1918.

383 Ibid., May 3, 1918; August 30, 1918; June 27, 1919; and October 6, 1922. Virginia City’s first library was organized in 1874 by the Knights Templar, who arranged benefit performances in support of the project. An original member of the Library Association, H. A. Pease, kept the collected volumes in his jewelry store. On August 28, 1876, The Madisonian reported that “the books of the Virginia City library are kept at Pease’s jewelry shop. The collection number about four hundred volumes.” There were more than fifty male members who paid $4.00 per year in dues; ladies could patronize the library for free. There were reportedly more than 400 books in the collection by 1876. The movement for a public library stretched back to 1917 and was initiated by the Virginia City Commercial Club, see Phyllis Smith, Montana’s Madison Country: a History (Bozeman: Gooch Hill Publishing, 2006), 148 – 149; see also The Madisonian March 2, 1917.
Dramatic swings in business became commonplace and happened overnight. In July of 1919, the newspaper announced that “the delicatessen department of the Buford Mercantile Company” had exceeded the capacity of Mrs. Frank Conway’s kitchens. In response, preparations were underway to enlarge the kitchens “just as quickly as possible, in an endeavor to keep the stock of baked goods replenished so as to accommodate all customers.” Several months later, the newspaper reported on “a business deal of greater than ordinary importance,” when Orrick O. Duncan of the Southern Montana Bank at Ennis purchased the Buford Mercantile Company. The store remained in business for only a few more years, closing before the Great Depression hit in 1929.

Virginia City gained a new business owner named Robert Gohn in 1920. Injured in a mining accident, Gohn was left completely blind in 1919. Within six months he returned to Virginia City where he opened “Bob’s Place.” In addition to liquor, candy and sporting goods, in 1929 he became Virginia City’s licensed dealer for Temple Radios, and later for Westinghouse appliances. Proving in both personal and business affairs that his blindness was not a hindrance, Gohn not only managed his business alone but built his house on Idaho Street unassisted. *The Madisonian* reported with some amazement in 1937 that Gohn’s blindness had “not prevented him from doing mechanical work on the building,” including laying the floors.”

---

384 Ibid., July 28, 1919; October 17, 1919. It is unclear exactly when the Buford Mercantile finally closed; advertisements for the store appeared in *The Madisonian* as late as 1922, but were absent by 1928, suggesting the store closed as some point within that window of time. A thorough search of business listings and newspapers would likely uncover the exact date of the business’ closing. Matters are complicated by the fact that a branch of the Buford Mercantile operated in Alder for a number of years as well. Since Duncan was not a Virginia City resident, for the purposes of this study the Buford Mercantile is considered to have operated from 1878 – 1919, during which time the Buford’s ran it in Virginia City; the more narrow scope of Chapter 3, which focuses more specifically on Simeon R. Buford, looks at the years of his proprietorship, 1878 – 1905.

385 Ibid., March 19, 1920; April 16, 1920; May 21, 1920; November 1, 1929.
was reported that though “he has paused to scold his thumb a few times for getting in the way of the hammer,” he nonetheless completed the work himself.  

**Figure 16.** This advertisement for William Siprelle’s Vigilante Theater was for the film *The Right to Happiness* starring Dorothy Phillips. From *The Madisonian* May 14, 1920.

Robert Gohn also kept moving pictures available to Virginia City. Motion pictures had been available as early as July of 1910, when *The Madisonian* first lauded the “moving picture show” for its “endeavor to secure at least one film of a historical character for each performance, thus bringing history before the eyes of the children.” Run by proprietor E. R. Avery, the pictures were shown twice weekly, on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. When the movie house opened, the newspaper praised Avery’s investment, noting that “it would have been only a matter of a short time before some outside concern would have come in to reap the benefits of the wave of prosperity” that was surely coming to the city.  

Not all proprietors were so successful.

During the 1920s, a motion picture house called the Vigilante Theater, operated by William Siprelle, featured drama and comedy films, including such big-name productions as *The Right to Happiness* and *Pay Me!* Both were popular films that starred Dorothy Phillips, but

---

386 Ibid., September 17, 1937.

387 Ibid., July 14, 1910; September 29, 1910. Unfortunately, though the newspaper often reported on how “up-to-date” and popular the moving pictures were, it did not advertise the names of the films shown in 1910, but only reported on the quality of the pictures and the accompanying songs that were played in the theater.
Siprelle’s timing was off. The newspaper reported that Siprelle “tried to please the people of this community, but is becoming discouraged because his shows are not more largely patronized,” and it urged residents to attend the Friday night film showings. Part of the problem was that by the time Siprelle got his films to Virginia City, they were already outdated. *Pay Me!* for example, which Siprelle featured on Friday, June 11, 1920, had been released in 1917.\(^388\) When Siprelle went out of business is unclear, but his advertising was all but non-existent in the pages of *The Madisonian* by 1922. It would be several years before Robert Gohn took over proprietorship of the moving pictures.

In the interim, residents enjoyed the same entertainments that had been mainstays for years—plays put on by the local high school, the local drama club, church events, and occasional performances by visiting entertainers. In 1918, for instance, the town welcomed the Clifton Mallory Players Group who staged “David Garrick.” In 1921, lecturer Fred Dale Wood and The Carolina Concert Trio stopped in Virginia City. In 1922, the Ralston-Frosh Trio presented “costume numbers, musical monologues, readings, sketch work and delightful voice numbers,” and the All-Sisters Quartet performed for audiences. Other diversions included ice skating and sleighing during the winter and baseball during the summer months. The town frequently cheered on the local team, the Virginia City Road Agents. When the Elks baseball team played

\(^388\) Ibid., May 14, 1920; June 4, 1920. *Pay Me!* was popularly received around the country, and in addition to Dorothy Phillips, featured Lon Chaney in the starring male role. The story told of a corrupt gold miner who murdered his wife and partner for a mine. It seems odd that Virginia City residents, constantly concerned with mining matters, showed so little interest in the film. It is possible, of course, that they had already had already seen it three years earlier. Surely the picture was shown in Helena, Butte, and other Montana communities much sooner after its release. William Siprelle was a “man of many jobs” in Virginia City, working for the Economy Power plant as a maintenance man and reading the power meters. He was reportedly “so enchanted with the possibilities of electricity that he brought the first radio to Virginia City, and also the first electric clothes washer.” Siprelle and his family left Virginia City with the Humphrey’s Mining Company in 1937. See Smith, *Montana’s Madison Country*, 22; and *The Madisonian* September 1, 1944.
the All-American Indians from the Crow Agency in February, 1941, it made front page news.

And, as in the past, dances and balls put on in neighboring communities, as well as in Virginia City, were widely attended.389

Robert Gohn, ever the capable businessman, restored moving pictures to the Social City. In 1930, he purchased the motion picture house in Virginia City and announced its reopening with the promise of weekly entertainment and “pictures of the highest quality.”390 In 1931 he signed a contract with Universal Pictures that brought new feature films, as well as news reels and serials to the town.391 By 1932 Gohn was managing a chain of moving picture houses in Virginia City, Twin Bridges and Ennis, and featured the latest shows, including talkies such as 1932’s The Virtuous Husband, Fanny Foley Herself; and Iron Man.392 Moving pictures were no doubt a welcome addition to diversions, and provided a welcome respite to residents during hard times.

While the rest of the nation languished through the Great Depression, Virginia City ironically enjoyed a brief revival of prosperity. Even though reports that mining districts in Madison County were picking up had proved largely untrue in the past, especially during the pre-

389 There are countless examples in The Madisonian; see for example December 30, 1909; September 29, 1910; September 14, 1911; April 11, 1912; June 20, 1913; January 22, 1915; March 30, 1917; February 9, 1918; August 36, 1921; October 15, 1921; August 25, 1922; November 3, 1922; and December 8, 1922. There is some evidence that particularly popular plays by both local dramatic clubs and high schools were performed for neighboring communities. For example, on October 28, 1909, the newspaper reported, the “the Virginia City Dramatic Club are contemplating the proposition of presenting their last success, ‘The Woven Web,’ in Sheridan, Twin Bridges, or Ruby in the near future. The club has been invited to go to Twin Bridges.” For the Elks and Crow Indian baseball game story, see The Madisonian February 14, 1941.

390 Ibid., October 17, 1930.

391 Ibid., August, 1931.

392 Ibid., March 25, 1932; April 1, 1932; April 15, 1932; December 23, 1932.
World War I years, the real potential for economic stimulation led to renewed hope. “If we put the depression in its place,” The Madisonian urged in a column titled “Silver Lined Depression” that it ran in February, 1932, “it doesn’t hurt so much.” Like Virginia City, the newspaper opined, the nation had come through other depressions and managed to make it out just fine on the other side. Still, there were businesses in Virginia City that failed to survive the economic crisis, including the Elling State Bank, which was liquidated at the end of 1930. Some Virginia City business owners survived by employing the same methods that had gotten them through the loss of the territorial capital in 1875—they branched out. Robert Vickers, for example, expanded the variety of his stock from mostly clothing and sundries to include groceries, “dry goods, fancy goods, notions, hats, hosiery, dresses and jewelry, etc.”

Even through repeated failures, Virginia City maintained its hope. Mining, the town’s lifeblood, was always a central component of optimism. When gold mining slowed, hopes simply turned to other potential mining resources. One of the earliest examples, an attempt to mine phosphates in 1911, proved a dismal failure, but it did not dampen the belief of residents that Virginia City was “going to boom” in the future. From the promise of stamp mills and dredge boats in 1910, Virginia City shifted its hopes in 1929 to yet another technological innovation—steam shovels and hydraulic powered mining which promised to “replace primitive

393 Ibid., February 26, 1932.

394 Ibid., October 17, 1930. For more information on Virginia City businesses, see Appendix M; for a selection of advertisements from Robert Vickers’ store, see Appendix J.

395 Ibid., September 1, 1910; November 24, 1910; January 26, 1911; February 2, 1911; and July 4, 1913. The November 24, 1910 article, for example, claimed that the mines of Madison County had just begun to yield, and a good future in the industry was assured—promises that were repeated continually through the Depression years two decades later.
methods” and recover gold buried deep in Montana’s bedrock. After hopes of finding oil faded at the end of 1921, The Madisonian turned its attention back to gold. It devoted a full page on March 24, 1922 to a report on the source of the gold deposits in Alder Gulch, hinting that the true mother lode had yet to be discovered.

On November 1, 1929, while the country was still reeling from the crash of the stock market, The Madisonian cheerfully printed an editorial claiming that thanks to the arrival of a syndicate composed of eastern capitalists, Virginia City was about “to experience a revival of the mining industry.” It predicted that the promised forthcoming investment would spark prosperity that would eclipse even “that enjoyed by Virginia City and Alder gulch in those palmy days of the early ‘60’s when placer gold was taken from Alder gulch in untold millions.” There was reason for optimism, because the worldwide scarcity of gold during to the Great Depression had stimulated the mining industry, and Eastern capital finally did flood into Virginia City. As it had in the past, however, it also poured directly back out. The California Mining Company arrived in late May, 1930 and began installing a massive dredge boat, which was fully operational the following year. Another company, the Humphrey’s Gold Company, encouraged by the depression era surge in gold prices, arrived soon after. Virginia City hoped that the promised and long-forgotten revival that had accompanied the Conrey Company dredges two decades earlier would finally arrive with new mining interests. It would once again be disappointed.

Virginia City welcomed both the California Mining Company and Humphrey’s Gold Company, but their arrival was a dark omen. Even as California Mining Company’s lead geologist, Frank Zichosch, wrote to The Madisonian refuting charges that the company favored

396 Ibid., April 19, 1929.

397 Ibid., November 1, 1929.
California purchasers over local Montana ones, most of the stock in the company was owned by outside interests. The Humphrey’s Gold Company not only favored outside interests but imported its own workers. Rather than hire local labor, the company purchased and refitted the old Anaconda hotel building on Wallace Street and housed its labor force there. As a result, relatively little business flowed into Virginia City, despite a large number of new residents. The influx was enough to stimulate the opening of several new businesses, including a ladies’ beauty shop, but the revival was short-lived. By the end of 1937, as the national economy began to show signs of recovery, mining companies began to lose interest in Alder Gulch. The Humphrey’s Mining Company promised when it pulled out in June of 1937 that it would return to resume operations in the spring of 1938. It never came back, and when it left, some residents, including William Siprelle and his family, went with it.

By the end of 1937, everyone but the residents of Virginia City seemed reconciled to the idea that its only claim to a future lay in the memories of its past glory. Even the 1937 mining convention, which drew a large number of delegates and was reported to be the most successful in history, relied less on the discussion of actual mining matters than on entertainment based on Virginia City’s history. The convention opened with a business session that was immediately

---

398 Ibid., May 22, 1931.

399 Ibid., June 11, 1937. Run by Mrs. Edna Bosworth, the shop shared space with Virginia City’s barber shop run by Harvey Romey. Bosworth was lauded by the newspaper for having studied under three nationally famous hairdressers—Burton Skyles, Gus Condos and Norman Hillier. She was also evidently the only woman in the state of Montana licensed to practice the “Parker method of hair and scalp treatment,” and one of only three licensed in the art of hair tinting. The newspaper took great pride in noting that the shop was completely modern and that it would perform all kinds of beauty work, including permanent waving hair, manicures, and facials.

taken over by “a group of bewhiskered Vigilantes, who informed the delegates that no gold panning or other business activity could be engaged by them until after they had subscribed to the laws of the Fairweather mining district.” The Vigilantes then proceeded to read the original 1863 mining laws in their entirety. A session the following day was interrupted by the Vigilantes invading the convention hall to take one member, J. C. Gibson, into “custody” on the charge that he had failed to grow a beard for the event. The unfortunate Gibson, who pleaded that the whiskers were “making his home life unhappy,” was then put on trial, “found guilty of being a disgrace to his sex and was accordingly dressed in a pair of beautiful pink bloomers, and then forced to appear before the assemblage.”

Despite reports that gold mining in Madison County was more active than at any time since the turn of the century, Virginia City continued to decline. Continuous reports that Madison County led Montana in gold production throughout the final years of the 1930s may have been true statistically, but such production provided little real improvement for the Social City. The population had continued to drop, reaching a new low of just 380 by 1940.

---

401 Ibid., August 13, 1937. According to the article, there were “between 500 and 1000 visitors,” so even the number attracted to the convention is unclear.

The first half of the twentieth century was challenging for Montana’s Native American residents as well. Confined to reservations and reeling from poorly planned and executed government programs instituted at the turn of the century, Indian people struggled to maintain their identity in changing times. Tendoy, the Lemhi Shoshone Chief who signed the Virginia City Treaty of 1868, died in 1907 still fighting to prevent his people’s removal from Salmon, Idaho, to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation more than 200 miles south, near Pocatello. The

---

403 The failure of the United States government to ratify the 1868 treaty with the Lemhi had devastated the tribe. By 1870 they were starving, and Tendoy came often to Virginia City to meet with Governor J. M. Ashley, pleading for annuities from the government to sustain the tribe. Suggestions that the Lemhi would be better situated on the Fort Hall or Crow reservations surfaced by 1870, but Tendoy continually refused, insisting that the Lemhi had signed a treaty promising them a reservation in the Salmon River country. On February 12, 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant signed an Executive Order promising the Lemhi Shoshone a 100 square mile reservation in the Lemhi Valley. The reservation was considerably larger than the one outlined in the 1868 Virginia City treaty, but had little arable land suitable for farming. Insufficient annuities
Crow Indians faced the opening and sale of more than 440,000 acres of their reservation land to non-Indians in 1909, and another bill to open additional lands for sale was introduced in 1916. When the flu epidemic of 1918 struck the nation, it naturally struck Indian reservations the hardest.

By 1929 Virginia City looked back on Native people in much the same way it looked back on its own past—as relics and portals to more glorious times. The Madisonian featured serials dedicated to western history, including one focused on “Memorials to a Vanished Race” which examined particular famous Native Americans such as Pocahontas and Sacajawea. A set of serials that ran weekly and biweekly from June through October, 1932 was entitled “Tales of the Chiefs,” and was written by Editha L. Watson. It contained stories about famous Indians such as Sitting Bull, Tecumseh, Black Hawk, and Joseph, as well as less widely known individuals including Cornplanter, Spemicalawba, Ouray, and Oseola. At a time when looking back to


404 The Madisonian May 27, 1909; June 24, 1909; and December, 1916.

405 Ibid., March 26, 1920. See also Crosby, America’s Forgotten Pandemic, 228. Crosby writes that the death toll among Native Americans was approximately nine percent—four times higher than that of America’s hardest hit cities.

the past was more promising than projections for the future, it is not surprising that Virginia City found comfort in nostalgia.

There were occasional events dedicated to the Native Americans of the Three Forks region, such as in October of 1929, when the County Federation of Women’s Clubs met at Twin Bridges to unveil and dedicate a marker commemorating the arrival of the Lewis and Clark in the area. The opening address by Professor R. M. Austin praised the Women’s Club for taking an active role in “arousing public sentiment in the marking of points of interest.” Latching on to the opportunity to promote Virginia City’s place in Montana history, *The Madisonian* noted that since “the Vigilantes of Montana were among the epoch makers of national history and the shaping of national policy in the west was in their hands,” it was only fitting that such “a marker to the Vigilantes should be placed at Navada [sic] or some other spot in Alder Gulch.”

Reminders that Virginia City had once been a destination for American Indians appeared in the newspaper from time to time. Throughout its history, *The Madisonian* often reprinted stories from its files, frequently selecting items from the 1860s and 1870s. On August 24, 1911, one such account from 1874 disapprovingly noted that “the Bannack braves haven’t much respect for the holy Sabbath,” the article read, explaining that on the preceding Sunday “Ten-Doy’s tribe of Indians held a war pow-wow and dance and a beef banquet at the forks of Daylight gulch,” about a mile from Virginia City. The story reported that “the performance

__________________________

Chiefs” serial was available in a number of newspapers during 1932. In *The Madisonian*, the columns were printed in the following order: June 24, 1932—Sitting Bull; July 1, 1932—Cornplanter; July 8, 1932—Pocahontas and Milly; August 5, 1932—Mangas Coloradas and Cochise; August 19, 1932—Tecumseh; August 26, 1932—Spemicalawba; September 9, 1932—Joseph; September 30, 1932—John Otherday; October 14, 1932—Shikellamy and Tahgahjute; October 21, 1932—Red Jacket; November 4, 1932—Ouray; November 11, 1932—Black Hawk; November 16, 1932—Osceola.

407 *The Madisonian* October 18, 1929.
consisted of whoops, nude Injuns, Injun songs and Injun coloquence [sic]; and a lot of white folks, both of the male and female persuasion.” It was not the first time that Virginia City’s residents had looked upon the Indians as cultural curiosities, vaguely perceived pieces of a corrupted memory. Typical impertinent quips, such as “…last Saturday a Bannack squaw was bitten by a large rattlesnake. The squaw survived, but the snake died in writhing agony inside of one hour,” appeared from time to time. In accounts of Virginia City, more feared tribes like the Blackfeet continued to overshadow the Lemhi Shoshone—often identified as Bannock or Snake Indians—even though the Lemhi were the only people who regularly camped in lodges on the outskirts of the city and frequented the town.\footnote{Ibid., August 10, 1876, reprinted August 14, 1931; August 24, 1911.}

Although accounts of Indians visiting Virginia City were less common once the reservation period began, there were notable exceptions. On August 14, 1931, the front page of The Madisonian contained a note that “Squaw Mattie,” a Lemhi Shoshone woman living at the Fort Hall Reservation, was back in Virginia City after an absence of many years. Most had thought she was deceased prior to her reappearance. As far back as 1871, according to the newspaper, “Mattie and her following of bucks, squaws and Indian children came to Virginia City on horseback each year for many seasons, camping near the slaughter house for weeks at a time.” Mattie had clearly been among the number of Lemhi who came to Virginia City frequently to beg for food and provisions. The column continued that “the personnel of the band changed from year to year, but always Mattie came back,” until she grew feeble and stopped visiting around 1920. “During these last years she has been on the Indian reservation at Ft. Hall, Idaho,” the paper noted, “and although she is feeble and not in the best of health, she look much better than she did on her last visit.” The article reported that there were two other Indians
accompanying Mattie and all were camping at her accustomed place, near the slaughter house, where they planned to remain for a month.\(^{409}\)

Apparently they stayed longer, for on October 2, 1931, the newspaper reported that Mattie, as well as “Squaw Annie and Annie’s brother, Charlie,” had just left town “en route to the reservation at Fort Hall.” Noting Mattie’s failing health, the newspaper reported that Mattie believed her medicine man would “put her in condition to live through many more moons.” As for Annie and Charlie, the newspaper reported, they “had been here a few times previous to this year,” and they were making the return trip with Mattie in the “two-horse wagon in which they arrived, and left by way of Ruby valley.”\(^{410}\) Evidently the party did not return to Fort Hall, for there was one more report of Mattie in *The Madisonian* in 1931. On December 18, a local news item appeared which read simply that “Mattie, the aged squaw who is passing the winter in camp here with squaw Annie and a buck, Charlie, is reported to be quite sick and unable to leave her wicki-up [sic].”\(^{411}\) Mattie’s departure went unreported, but the fact that she made front-page news indicated that she held a place in Virginia City memory. When silent film star Mary Pickford visited Virginia City in 1918, by contrast, she received only a passing note buried in with other local news.\(^{412}\)

\(^{409}\) Ibid., August 14, 1931.

\(^{410}\) Ibid., October 2, 1931.

\(^{411}\) Ibid., December 19, 1931.

\(^{412}\) Pickford toured the town for a day, and her visit was reported in *The Madisonian* on July 19, 1918. As an interesting side note, consider that while Pickford arrived in an automobile at that early date, Mattie arrived fifteen years later in a horse-drawn wagon—an interesting parallel that illustrates the merging of both the traditional and the modern in Virginia City.
As it had done with a war two decades earlier, Virginia City watched warily as Europe edged toward war once again in 1939. That same year, the state quietly turned fifty years old. Although the Social City could not have suspected it then, its future and survival were very much in peril. Several Virginia City residents had already enlisted in early 1941, including Robert Vickers, Jr. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, prompting United States entry into World War II, the bombs might well have reverberated through Virginia City. At least one resident, George Staley, was stationed at Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack, and it took an agonizing three weeks for word to reach his mother in Virginia City that he was safe. ⁴¹³ In September of 1942, the Madison County draft board voted to classify mining as an essential industry, thereby deferring all men who were engaged in mining activities. However, while copper, zinc and manganese were critical to the war effort, gold was not. In October of 1942, President Roosevelt issued Limitation Order L – 208, ordering the industry temporarily shut down. Faced with unemployment, residents had no choice but to leave the town in search of work, some ending up as far away as Alaska. ⁴¹⁴

With the population of Virginia City hovering at just 380 in 1940, every one of the residents who left for the war was felt by the community. Several young women moved to larger cities to attend nursing school, and a number of young men joined the ranks of the armed services in 1942. George (Bill) Gohn, a nephew of Robert Gohn, became a paratrooper, earning “the coveted Wings and Boots of the United States’ Army’s most modern soldier.” Gohn ⁴¹³ Ibid., January 2, 1942.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., October 3, 1941; February 13, 1942; and September 4, 1942. Among those who ended up in Alaska was Robert Gohn, a nephew of Robert Gohn who ran Virginia City’s movie theater. The younger Robert Gohn was employed first in Juneau and later at Dutch Harbor, where he worked on building the wartime defense base for the United States recapture of the Aleutian Islands Attu and Kiska from the Japanese. Both Robert Gohn and his father were also employed in the Seattle shipyards during the war.
completed his training at Fort Benton, Georgia in December of 1943. He was reported Killed in Action in Belgium in 1945, the second Virginia City citizen to lose his life in the Second World War.\textsuperscript{415} First Class Petty Officer James H. Vanderbeck, who had taken over the proprietorship of Rank’s Drug Store in 1939, miraculously survived the invasion of Okinawa Island in 1945. Vanderbeck’s ship took fire for forty successive days before it was sunk. He spent three hours in shark-infested waters before being rescued, the only survivor from the aft gun crew of the ship. Vanderbeck was sent to New York for treatment of his injuries, and later appeared in a radio program discussing his experience.\textsuperscript{416} Another former Virginia City resident, Sgt. R. D. Raymond, survived the war, but relocated to California, selling his interests in the Virginia City Tavern Café, which he and his wife had operated prior to the war. Two other residents who survived the war were sons of Virginia City businessmen—John R. Vickers and L. A. Dudley, Jr.

The end of World War II coincided with an ending and a beginning for Virginia City. Hannah McGovern fell ill in 1940. She lingered for five years, becoming an invalid who required constant care until she died on Wednesday, September 5, 1945 in Virginia City.\textsuperscript{417} That day, in response to her sisters’ illness, Mary McGovern flipped the little sign that hung in the McGovern Store window to read “closed” and locked the door. It was the last time she would ever do so.

\textsuperscript{415} Ibid., December 10, 1943; March 23, 1945. The first Virginia City resident killed in the war was school teacher Robert W. Farmer, who was reported Killed in Action in France soon after D-day. Gohn arrived in France with an airborne division very early in 1943. On February 2, 1943, he was reported Missing in Action over Belgium, and confirmed KIA more than two years later.

\textsuperscript{416} Ibid., June 1, 1945; September 21, 1945.

\textsuperscript{417} Ibid., September 7, 1945.
Figure 18. Mary standing in the doorway of the sisters’ shop circa 1930. Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

The front room of the sisters’ store on Wallace Street was destined to become a trademark for a new Virginia City—one that was already quietly in the making in 1945. That year marked the beginning of Virginia City’s formal transition to a town whose future was intrinsically tied to interpreting its past for the outside world. This time, however, revival would not rest solely on the town’s own internal structure. The generation of merchants who had sustained the town through challenging times in the past was nearly gone. This time, it would take an outsider—a Montana stockman, politician, and western history enthusiast named Charles Argalis Bovey—to revive the embers of the Social City.
CHAPTER 5

“Anything but Progress:” The Early Bovey Era, 1944 – 1955

Keep your eye on Virginia City. She will furnish a real sensation before next fall.
*The Madisonian*, November 14, 1919

This may be just the beginning of a prosperous era for Virginia City…Tenting days will be here again.
*The Madisonian*, November 23, 1945

About ten years ago, neighbors began to think that Charles A. Bovey…was going mildly crazy. He went around buying up tumble-down buildings, stagecoaches, barroom nudes, old corsets, feather boas, street pianos and penny arcade shows, refurbishing them, and putting them where people could look at them and wax nostalgic. Bovey concentrated most of this effort in Virginia City, Montana…Once a roaring gold camp, it was now generally considered a ghost town—to the annoyance of its 300 unghostly inhabitants. One hundred million dollars in gold had been taken out of Virginia City in its day, but Bovey swung his pick into a different kind of pay dirt—a rich vein of public sentiment regarding the past.
*Collier’s*, November 8, 1952

Charlie Bovey, nearing 40, is a shy, modest man who admits frankly that he is a “great starter, but a poor finisher.” He believes his present interest in Virginia City is intense because it gives him ample opportunity to start many things—with no compulsion to finish any of them.
*Family Circle*, February, 1952

When Charles A. Bovey first laid eyes on Virginia City in the summer of 1944, it was obvious that the place was in danger of succumbing to the ghost-town fate it had been struggling to avoid for the better part of its existence. World War II had caused a population drop that threatened the remaining infrastructure, as wartime work created opportunities in other places. The town was declining physically as well. A fire in 1937 had destroyed some of its most treasured landmarks on Wallace Street. Residents salvaged collapsing buildings piece by piece for firewood out of necessity during hard winters, and many of the early buildings were crumbling from neglect, in imminent danger of collapsing. While the rest of the nation breathed a collective sigh of relief and triumph as victory was declared in 1945, in Virginia City it seemed
there was little to celebrate. While the town clung to life, Bovey’s intuition—saving a building here, rebuilding one there—created a tourist destination and a new future for the Social City.

Fires were not as common in Virginia City as in many contemporary mining towns. In fact, there were few significant blazes during its nearly eighty year history—one of the main reasons being that, unlike many towns that had transitioned through gas lighting on the way to becoming electrified, Virginia City skipped that national trend, going directly from candle flames to electric lights in 1908. Small, isolated fires that damaged portions of buildings occurred periodically, but there were only two significant blazes between 1900 and 1944. The first, in 1915, destroyed four buildings in the business block before it was contained—not by firemen, but because it ran up against stone buildings on either side. The second, in 1937, took down the building where Virginia City’s first newspaper, the *Montana Post*, had been founded. The

---


419 *The Madisonian* April 9, 1915. The newspaper called the fire “the most destructive loss…Virginia City ever suffered,” a testament to how relatively little fire damage had occurred in the town prior to that year. The buildings burned were early Virginia City constructions from the gold rush days and had been variously occupied. At the time of the fire housed they housed among other things, a photograph studio, a shoe store, and the town’s barber shop. A resident noticed the blaze shortly after 5:00 in the morning, while it was still contained to the back room of one building; between 50 and 100 men reportedly responded to his voiced alarm of “fire,” including members of the Virginia City volunteer fire department. An insufficient supply of chemicals was soon exhausted and, as the newspaper reported, “when the hose were attached to the street hydrants of the Virginia City Water company it was found that there was not sufficient water to throw a stream of 10 feet, so there was nothing that could be done other than make an effort to remove the goods and fixtures from the store rooms.” Residents stood on Wallace Street and watched helplessly as the fire spread to neighboring buildings and burned out of control, “unable to control the flames until they had burned their way to solid brick and stone walls.” While the embers of the lost buildings smoldered, blame quickly turned inward, with some citizens claiming “that the fire might have been controlled had the city owned a bell loud enough to awaken the firemen; many of whom knew nothing of the fire until they came down town to attend their business duties at 8 o’clock.” Other residents argued that the citizens were “entirely to blame for the greater part of the loss, as the city had a chance to become the owner of the water works” in 1914, but voted against the proposition.
original structure, composed partly of stone with gothic arches resembling a European cathedral, had also been the location of D. W. Tilton’s City Book Store, and the headquarters for A. J. Oliver’s Overland Express Line.\textsuperscript{420} There was no question when Charlie Bovey arrived for the first time in the fall of 1944 that the town was surviving on hope and limited amount of tourism.

Tourism had long been a part of Virginia City’s history. As early as 1872, pamphlets about the resources of Montana included sections on tourism in Madison County.\textsuperscript{421} Going back to the years directly following the loss of the territorial capitol, the town had received numerous visitors interested viewing the cradle of early Montana history and landmarks the site offered. The road agents graves, sitting on Boot Hill overlooking the town, were particularly popular attractions after they were identified in 1907, and a museum was operational by the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{422} As early as 1911, Madison County had organized a “publicity club” for the purpose of giving “as much publicity as possible to all the resources of Madison county with the view of gaining an increased population by telling the people at large what the pioneer county has in store for homeseekers.”\textsuperscript{423} For Virginia City, whose population had declined continuously since the turn of the century, it was more realistic to encourage visitors to engage in the towns foundational role in the settlement of Montana by viewing the relics of its past.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{421}] James Handly, \textit{The Resources of Madison County, Montana} (San Francisco: Francis & Valentine, 1872), 48 – 53.
\item[\textsuperscript{423}] \textit{The Madisonian} April 20, 1911.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Virginia City hoped to capitalize on its close proximity to Yellowstone National Park, created by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872. Expeditions to the area were constantly discussed in Virginia City beginning as early as 1866; however, the first organized groups to fully explore the area did not get underway until 1871.

Real tourism visitation to Yellowstone began with the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883, but as early as 1876 notes were appearing in *The Madisonian* informing prospective tourists that parties headed for the geysers would “find Virginia City the place to buy their outfits.” The same advertisement reassuringly noting that the route through the Social City was “the shortest and most direct, and is at all times free of hostile Indians.”

Given its location and the perpetual hopes of residents for a revival, it is not surprising that, along with other communities throughout the territory, Virginia City “envisioned the park’s creation as they did the coming of the railroad—as a vehicle for economic progress.” The two entities were inextricably tied to one another. Even after it

---

424 An expedition had taken place in 1870, and included prominent citizens of the territory along with a six man military escort. Known as the Washburn-Doane expedition, the limited exploration led directly to the 1871 government sponsored surveys of the Yellowstone region. There were two full expeditions in 1871. The first, led by Ferdinand V. Hayden, director of the United States Geological Survey for western territories was sponsored by the U. S. Department of the Interior. The second group, which included Nathaniel Pitt Langford—an early, prominent citizen of Virginia City who went on to become “National Park” Langford, the first Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park—was sponsored by the U. S. War Department and headed by Captain J. W. Barlow of the Army Corps of Engineers. For more information see W. Turrentine Jackson, “The Creation of Yellowstone National Park” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, National Parks Issue (Summer, 1957), 52 – 65. For information on the Hayden Expedition, see Marlene Deahl Merrill, *Yellowstone and the Great West: Journals, Letters, and Images from the 1871 Hayden Expedition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). For information on the Barlow Expedition, see Nathaniel Pitt Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone National Park, 1870* (Saint Paul: J. E. Haynes, 1923). Another good source on the founding of the park itself is Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

425 *The Madisonian* September 7, 1876, reprinted September 11, 1931.
became clear that Virginia City would not be linked by a direct connection to the railroad’s main branch line at Alder, the town could hope to draw in tourists bound for Yellowstone through the newly developing automobile culture that was sweeping across America. “Ho for the Geysers,” read a 1915 advertisement in The Madisonian, “the most direct route to the National Park is via Virginia City.” The announcement, paid for by J. P. Nelson and Company, offered “teams, horses, and camping outfits,” in addition to “tents for hire or sale.”\(^{427}\) The town also urged citizens to come together and commit to building a “Madison club” including a resting place and museum for tourists, claiming that doing so was “essential to the preservation of this city’s distinction as the ‘Social City.’”\(^{428}\)

While Virginia City boosted itself as a community rich in history and romanticized days of the old west in an attempt to ensure its place as “one of the principle stopping points on the park-to-park highway,” there were elements that remained conspicuously absent from the story. Even when the Virginia City museum was presented with “an old exhibition of Chinese art, brought to the United States by a marine shortly after the Boxer war,” among other relics, the city’s Chinese residents were given short shrift, and no attempt was made to contextualize their presence.\(^{429}\) There was similarly little attention paid to the Lemhi Shoshone Indians, who continued to visit Virginia City periodically before their removal to the Fort Hall reservation in June of 1907. When reports did appear, they were tempered with tones of amusement. For example, an interesting note from 1874, reprinted in The Madisonian on May 4, 1911, reported

---


\(^{427}\) The Madisonian 1915.

\(^{428}\) Ibid.

\(^{429}\) Ibid.
that a Chinese man named Ah Sing had been arrested on the charge of selling whiskey to “a bunch of Bannack Indians, which same is unlawful if done by either white men or Chinamen.” The newspaper noted, in a rare admission of sympathy, that “the law is rough on the Indians, for an Injun can get as happy on rectified corn juice as a white man or a foreigner. Still,” the editor wrote, “the law reads that Indians mustn’t drink and the same law makes it a crime to lead them into temptation.”

There were few exceptions to the conspicuous absence of any acknowledgement of Montana’s Indian population in Virginia City, unless, of course, it was to allay the fears of visitors from other states who were still somewhat reluctant to enter the land of “predatory” savages. To get to Yellowstone from the east generally required travelers to pass through the Crow Indian Reservation in south central Montana. By 1915, travelers were not allowed to carry firearms of any kind through the reservation, which, according to an article reprinted from *The San Francisco Chronicle* in *The Madisonian*, left travelers vulnerable to attacks and harassment from Indians who took advantage of their “defenseless condition.” While the newspaper recognized that the preservation of wildlife was an essential component of the park’s appeal, it argued that measures should be effected allowing firearms to be carried for defensive purposes. “Perhaps those who have the custody of the Yellowstone may retort that all defensive weapons are equally available for offensive purposes,” the writer considered. “If that is the case,” he concluded, “and some effective method of protecting travelers from the raids of bandits is not found, the popularity of the Yellowstone must decline, and a sight of its wonders will soon be reserved for the venturesome only.”

---

430 *The Madisonian* May 4, 1911.

The interaction between Indians and visitors to Yellowstone had been strained since the founding of the park. Between that time and the turn of the century, Bannock and Shoshone Indians living to the west and south of Yellowstone continued their native hunting practices, and they “continued to set fire to select areas of the region as a means of encircling prey and regenerating feeding grounds,” much to the dismay and “constant aggravation [of] park officials, local hunters, and conservationists.”432 The Crow Indian Reservation was viewed by the same groups as being too large, allowing Indians to retain their primitive ways. The popular view that eliminating the buffalo would force Indians to accept “civilization” over traditional practices led one contemporary writer to conclude in 1884 that “from the standpoint of the rationalist and optimist, the buffalo must rapidly disappear before the rapid march of the ox and cow, just as the Indian disappears before the march of his superior, the Caucasian.” The buffalos’ “bleached bones and moldering horns which now dot the prairies will fertilize the soil over which he was wont to roam in times of old,” the statement ended, and the buffalo “will go to dwell forever with the mastodon as one of the extinct species of an ancient and honorable race.”433 Most expected that the Indian would follow the buffalo.

When hopes for the railroad faded at the turn of the century, Virginia City was quick to refocus its attention. If trains were not going to bring tourists to the Social City, they could

---

432 Magoc, Yellowstone, 146. Indian people were technically banned from the park almost from the beginning—as early as 1872 provisions abrogating treaty rights were written into park legislation. Because the first superintendent, N. P. Langford, was not paid for his duties during the early years, however, and because the railroad was not completed until the 1880s, most Indian people continued to use the park as they had for centuries. See Jeanne Marie Oyawin Eder, “An Administrative Treaty History of Indians of Yellowstone National Park, 1851 – 1925” (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington State University, 2000), 99 – 127.

perhaps be enticed to spend time in the town by the community’s own efforts. By 1910, *The Madisonian* was hailing the town as an “ideally situated summer resort” that held the potential for offering “healthful recreation among not only historical but interesting and beautiful surroundings.” In addition to being on the highway to Yellowstone, the Madison River was becoming an increasingly popular fishing destination. “Scarcely a day passes that there are not campers passing through the city to and from the Madison river,” the newspaper noted, adding that visitors were always requesting “to have the old landmarks pointed out to them.” Looking optimistically toward future prospects, the editor closed the article by urging that as it was obvious that the town was at “the heart of one of the most attractive places in the west” and could readily become “a summer resort and outfitting point” for the various attractions of the territory. All that was needed, according to *The Madisonian*, was “a modern hotel…with a little judicious advertising and plenty of boosting.” 434

As Virginia City anticipated the promotion of tourism based on a combination of the town’s modern merits and colorful past, it leaned back on its history as foundational support. The newspaper praised the beauty of Virginia City’s flower gardens and hospitality, noting that while these things were “singularly beautiful” and enjoyed by visitors, the landmarks and points of historical interest were also “of particular interest to visitors who have read of the wonderful rich gold discoveries and of the undaunted courage and daring of the vigilantes who brought law and order out of disorder and outlawry in the days of ’64 and ’65.” With its popular historical background and romanticized golden years most familiar to strangers, Virginia City often hard-pressed to convince outsiders that it was still its own functioning community. The same article reported that the towns’ “homes and mercantile establishments show that it is a prosperous town

and that it is far from falling into decay."\textsuperscript{435} Despite remaining functional, Virginia City found itself on the defensive fighting for recognition as a living community rather than a dying city.

The construction of the modern American highway system had its early beginnings in the years following the First World War, when movements for improved roads began to gather support thanks to the popularity of automobiles. The release of excess war materials and need to employ returning servicemen created an ideal situation for making domestic improvements across the country.\textsuperscript{436} Better roads and the popularization of historical sites as tourist attractions again gave Virginia City hope for revived fortunes based on a complex mixture of its past and the present. Its placement along the route from Butte to Yellowstone reflected a fusion of history and modernization—new roads, accommodations, and automobiles would bring tourists through Virginia City, while its history would entice them to pause and look around. Movements to better establish the Vigilante Trail, which ran from Bannack to Virginia City retracing the route of the road agents, were considered vital. "The building of this road means increased business for every town located near it," \textit{The Madisonian} stated plainly in October, 1919. "It means an advance in real estate values," readers were reminded, "and, best of all, it means a good road for the use of yourself and your neighbors and everybody else who wishes to use it." Anyone who did not support the road, the newspaper warned, "ought to be compelled to take his pleasure…trips in a jolt-wagon, drawn by a team of burros, during the balance of his hum-drum life," as the plodding gait of the burros could easily be seen as "an apt illustration of such a man’s idea of the march of progress." If that was not clear enough, the editor closed the column with an admonition: "if you

\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., August 18, 1910.

\textsuperscript{436} For more information on the "Good Highways Movement," see Bruce Seely, \textit{Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).
don’t want to boost the Vigilante Trail, why, go to Helena!” Among the Virginia City citizens who supported the movement was Charles H. Buford.

The development of the road meant more than improved prospects for tourism. Many hoped that it might attract better mining interests as well. “In connection with the subject of the Vigilante Trail,” the editor wrote in November, 1919, “we want to say, and with emphasis, that from indications now cropping out over the vicinity of Virginia City, Madison county people need not be surprised to awaken some fine morning to find our little city even more famous than in the palmy days of placer mining.” Resurrecting the belief of mining experts that the real mother lode of Alder Gulch had not yet been struck, the editor urged building the Vigilante Trail, and preparing for the success that was sure to come. “Keep your eye on Virginia City,” the article closed, “she will furnish a real sensation before next fall.”

There seemed to be rosy prospects for increased automotive travel in 1920. The Madisonian noted that while the government prepared for the huge crowds that were expected to visit the national wonderland, residents in the towns along the route to the park were also “taking preliminary steps toward providing adequate accommodations for tourists who pass this way.” Attempts to organize citizens into an executive committee that could meet “for the purposes of advancing the interests of the Vigilante Trail,” filled Virginia City with hope that development of the road would become a reality. “A summer hotel in Virginia City will probably be erected early next spring,” the newspaper boasted, “and a number of cottages will be built here and at

---

437 The Madisonian October 31, 1919.

438 Ibid., November 14, 1919.
various points along the Vigilante Trail.” There was no shortage of optimism, but once again, Virginia City overestimated its capabilities.

The construction of better, more permanent roads was a reality, but as railroads had been, also became a subject of bitter division. Asking if its readers were for or against development of the Vigilante Trail, *The Madisonian* urged unity, arguing that “no man can be neutral in this matter. He is either a friend or an enemy. He can’t sit on the fence all winter; the wind will blow him off one side or the other.” Discussions about the best paving surfaces and most cost-effective maintenance plans began in Madison County at the same time they developed in other parts of the nation. A Vigilante Trail association and numerous booster clubs cropped up toward the end of 1919, all proclaiming the real potential of the route. “We all know the liberality of California and Colorado tourists,” *The Madisonian* coaxed, “and say, wouldn’t it be nice to have the privilege of entertaining our friends from these states as they pass through Virginia City en route to and from Yellowstone park?” What tourism meant for Virginia City was more clearly spelled out in another article which noted that, by conservative estimates, if each tourist spent only $5.00 the result would be an additional $25,000.00 for each of the four main communities located along the Vigilante Trail route: Ennis, Sheridan, Twin Bridges, and Virginia City, and—an amount sufficient to pay for completing the route, “and then some!” Noting that the section of the trail had already been built between Butte and Twin Bridges, the newspaper urged quick action in completing the thirty-mile long section between Twin Bridges and Virginia City.  

---

439 Ibid., December 26, 1919.
440 Ibid., November 14, 1919.
441 Ibid., November 28, 1919.
442 Ibid., November 21, 1919.
The roadway was improved. Once again, however, Virginia City found itself facing an outcome that was different from what had been promised. While the Vigilante Trail became a popular route for tourists traveling to Yellowstone during the summers, Virginia City failed to build a hotel and a campground, thereby failing to advance its status as an “ideal summer resort” for the passersby, most of whom simply continued on to Ennis, which offered more amenities. “Why would it not be advisable,” the newspaper asked in 1921, “for citizens of Virginia City to assemble in mass meeting…and devise ways and means for making this a more attractive stopping point for this constant stream of tourists?” The newspaper enthusiastically pointed to the vacant space on Wallace Street caused by the 1915 fire, and proposed converting it “into a leveled lawn, with a number of benches for citizens and tourists to sit upon and enjoy a rest.” To create camping space, the editor identified a location “near the elegant Thompson-Hickman library building,” and other locations that might accommodate “a whole colony of tourists.” The editor also promoted making the town’s historical points of interest, including the road agents’ graves, the public museum, the Masonic Temple, and Montana’s first capitol building, accessible to large numbers of tourists.443

Sometimes the tables were reversed. In July of 1921 the newspaper printed an article recounting the recent visit of a tourist on his way home from Yellowstone with a strange, large box on the side of his car. When it was revealed that the box contained two bear cubs, word spread quickly and “nearly all the youngsters and some old ones, too,” rushed to view the creatures. “Poor, little innocent bears were in for a long ride,” the newspaper lamented, “for Mr. Tourist was on his way through the park and to his home in Connecticut.”444

443 Ibid., May 20, 1921.

444 Ibid., July 29, 1921.
If building the road was a challenge, maintaining it proved to be a nightmare. By 1929 citizens and the newspaper alike were decrying its condition as “designed apparently to discourage travel.” Arguing that “the Vigilante Trail is so called because it requires constant vigilance to travel over it without breaking your neck,” Bill Hicks wrote to *The Madisonian* that if automobile manufacturers would simply come to Montana they would not need fancy trick roads as proving grounds, since “every automobile hazard” ever invented was “maintained at big expense on the Vigilante Trail where it enters and leaves Virginia City.”^445^ By 1930, citizens from Madison County were arranging meetings with county commissioners, and pleading for funds to improve the roads, but with little to show by way of results. As the Depression worsened throughout 1930–31, the associated decline in tourism to Yellowstone gave Madison County road supervisors even less reason to appropriate funds for the Vigilante Trail. The road was denied status as a federal project in 1931 because more than three thousand miles of roads in Montana had already applied for the allotted federal funds.^446^ Problematic maintenance persisted throughout the Depression and continued well into the 1940s.

When pleading and complaining proved futile, *The Madisonian* turned to humor. A January 1937 article entitled “Why Not Make the Best of it?” quipped that “to tourist minded supporters of the Vigilante trail came hope and solace Monday when, in the Montana Standard, they spotted the daily ‘Polly and Her Pals’ comic strip.” The cartoon depicted a family on

---

^445^ Ibid., March 29, 1929.

^446^ Ibid., July 24, 1931. To make matters worse, the Vigilante Trail ran through a part of the state that was not highly traveled, aside from tourism purposes. So called because it ran the length between Bannack and Virginia City where the Vigilantes had sought out members of the Road Agents in 1863, it did not pass through any of Montana’s most populous cities. When tourism was up because of good economics, the road received some notice—less tourists traveling during the Depression years gave even less incentive for the state to allot limited funds to fixing it.
vacation in a new travel trailer making butter by placing cream in a container and driving down bumpy side roads. “In the entire West, whose spacious panoramas, majestic mountains, ornate hot dog stands and scrumptious gas stations annually attract more and more visitors, can you find a better butter churning piece of so-called road,” the editor asked, “than that section of the Vigilante Trail extending from Ennis, through Virginia City?” The answer, of course, was no. Therefore, the story continued, all that was needed was a little publicity, a cream station at each end of the trail, and “a large billboard or two explaining that all the tourist has to do is fill any convenient container with high butterfat content cream, drive a few miles over the Vigilante trail and presto—butter.” For “the cooped up city dweller,” no doubt, “this would be the thrill of a lifetime, bringing back nostalgic memories of grandma back on the farm,” the newspaper assured.447

The article continued that it required “no stretch of the imagination to foresee the enthusiasm with which the tourist, always looking for the bizarre, the unusual, would greet this new diversion,” including a fictional letter home from a tourist named “little, dimpled Dorothy Demure from Detroit.” She wrote to her fictional “folksies,” describing a romantic combination of a gas and cream station run by cowboys who “carried guns to protect themselves from the cows they were milking.” Dorothy Demure’s letter described a dredging operation as a “house on wheels” that dug up worms for tourists since all the gold was gone. This operation could turn into one of the greatest tourist attractions on the continent, the news story continued, and all that was needed was “a permanent injunction to enjoin the state highway commission from doing further work on the trail and finishing it in 1953 as their plans call for.” That accomplished, an advertising fund supported by area dentists could be easily raised because surely “almost any

447 Ibid., January 22, 1937.
dentist would pay at least $50 for the privilege of being allowed to advertise that his upper plates stay in place even while riding over the Vigilante trail.”

The butter-making scheme was scuttled when serious work on the road began in 1941 and continued throughout the next year. Anticipating that the new road would improve the overall appearance of Virginia City, the planning committee approved the installation of new sidewalks and the construction of gutters along Wallace Street. Graveling took place during the winter of 1942, despite wartime restrictions and the fear that equipment would be requisitioned for wartime needs and recalled to other areas. Oiling the road surface, the newspaper correctly believed, would not be accomplished until the war had ended. Work continued on and off until a landslide occurred in 1944 that was big enough to swallow a two-ton semi truck and trailer. Virginia City lost a notable structure during the construction of the new

448 Ibid. The “Polly and Her Pals” comic strip was created by cartoonist Cliff Sterrett and debuted in 1912. Though the series ran throughout the 1930s in many local newspapers, only its “golden years” of the 1920s have been well documented. By the 1930s, Sterrett was afflicted with arthritis which made drawing impossible, and much of the cartoon was created by Paul Fung. Fung, incidentally, had earlier been an assistant to Chic Young, who created the “Dumb Dora” and “Blondie” comic strips—both of which were inspired by “Polly and Her Pals.” For more information, see http://www.animationarchive.org/2008/07/comics-cliff-sterretts-polly-and-her.html

449 The Madisonian October 10, 1941.

450 Ibid., November 27, 1942; June 16, 1944. The landslide wasn’t repaired until August, 1944. The highway was declared officially finished in August of 1945—it had taken nearly four years to complete section of the project that ran between Virginia City and Ennis, a distance of just 6,014 miles. The newspaper called it “a record which probably no one will hope to see completed” on August 31, 1945, and noted that the section of the road connecting Ennis to the paved highway at Madison Valley had not yet been started. In 1946, new arguments surfaced for altering the route of the road over the Tobacco Root Mountains to follow a historic trail that was better suited to “such things as economy, speed, and year-round accessibility.” The existing route had been begun a quarter of a century before as part of federal aid work, and was nicknamed “Buford Boulevard” after C. H. Buford—residents felt that the historic route was better suited for travel and also “more historically interesting,” as it had been used frequently by road agent Joe Slade. See The Madisonian May 3, 1946.
road when the massive Chinese Temple at the lower end of Wallace Street was torn down to accommodate the highway.\textsuperscript{451}

While limited preservation efforts in Madison County were undertaken during the 1930s, few took place in Virginia City. In 1937, after several failed attempts, the Madison County Oro y Plata Lodge No. 390, B. P. O. E., in combination with the Elks Club, succeeded in purchasing the historic building in the Ruby Valley known as “the Robber’s Roost.” The building, which had served as headquarters for Henry Plummer and the Road Agents during 1863, was considered a central point of interest on the Vigilante Trail.\textsuperscript{452} In Virginia City specifically, local citizens had managed to scrape together enough money to purchase an old structure known as “the Vigilante Barn,” which was in danger of being torn down. Money was scarce, however, and it seemed that little else could be done.\textsuperscript{453} Virginia City was proud to note the increasing

\textsuperscript{451} Ellingsen, “If These Walls Could Talk,” 24.

\textsuperscript{452} The Madisonian February 26, 1932; June 25, 1937; and October 8, 1937. Initial efforts to purchase the structure began in the late 1920s, but failed when the appropriated funds were lost with the failure of the Elling State Bank in 1930. Finally purchased in 1932, the building was still badly in need of repairs by 1937, and the new owners appealed to residents of Madison County to contribute the needed funds, estimated to be upwards of $700.00. Donations came in slowly, but it is interesting to note that the committee requested each contributor to “inclose a note expressing his attitude toward the preservation of these historic sites, and whether or not he is willing to contribute further small sums from time to time in an effort to make the Vigilante Trail more attractive to tourists.” In Virginia City, the organization called the “Vigilance Club” declared as its main purpose “the care and preservation of landmarks of such historic value, many of which [had] disappeared in the course of time, or under the heedless hands of some not realizing their incalculable value to future generations.” This is remarkably early for preservation efforts, and demonstrates the commitment of many residents to conserving early Montana history at a time when “progress” and “urban renewal” were more attractive ideas to most Americans.

\textsuperscript{453} The barn, also called the Kiskadden Barn after an early owner, was a structure that dated back to the gold rush days of 1863. Dilapidated and falling down, the building was owned by the Elling Estates Corporation in 1944. When reports surfaced that the floors were giving way, the corporation began to worry about being sued in case of injury, and decided the structure was too great a liability to leave standing. The Vigilance Club of Virginia City agreed to take on the liability, which kept the barn standing. Bovey later stabilized it, and used it for storing horse-
numbers of visitors to its museum—as many as 250 in July of 1937. By that time there was also enough demand for souvenirs for the museum to sell memberships in the Vigilance Club, as well as post cards depicting historical points of interest and books about the vigilantes, including Thomas Dimsdale’s *The Vigilantes of Montana.*\(^{454}\) By the time Charlie Bovey arrived, a popular diversion for tourists staying in Ennis was a trip to Virginia City.

The Bar – 7 Guest Ranch in Ennis where Charlie Bovey stayed in the summer of 1944 had a policy of bringing its guests to Virginia City. Charlie and his wife Sue arrived on the steps of the Thompson-Hickman Museum, where most tourists started out, and like many other visitors eventually wandered down the street to Rank’s Drug Store, which had a tiny museum with local artifacts in its basement. From that point, reportedly, Charlie Bovey left the rest of the group and sauntered down Wallace Street toward the end of town. By 1944, there were only a few remaining businesses—Rank’s Drug Store, a few small shops, Bob’s Place, and the McGovern Store among them. Bovey stopped at a building near the end of town where he spotted a man tearing wainscoting from the walls. When Bovey asked him what he was doing, the man told Bovey that he was “getting some winter firewood, if it’s any business of yours.” Bovey protested that he was destroying a fabulous old building, to which the man reportedly replied “well, these buildings aren’t good for anything. They’re at least good for some firewood.” Bovey walked away from the conversation determined that something had to be done.\(^{455}\)


\(^{454}\) Ibid., May 25, 1937; July 9, 1937.

\(^{455}\) Ellingsen, November 20, 1998. Much of the information on Charlie Bovey is taken from oral history interviews of John D. Ellingsen, conducted by Jeffrey Safford between 1998
The United States was still under wartime ration restrictions in 1944, and Bovey traded ration stamps allotted for his farm work in order to purchase enough gas to drive back to Virginia City. On October 20, 1944, he delivered a lecture to the Vigilance Club on preserving the town’s landmarks, proposing the “enlistment of state support in a post-war project for employment in the restoration and preservation of historic sites.” Bovey urged that a common ground on which all Montanans should be able to agree was the interest and preservation of the state’s exciting history. “That history is no less exciting because it is brief,” the newspaper agreed, noting that as the land had been “won from the Indians” less than a century before, Virginia City had “an opportunity open to few Americans in that many of the landmarks which figured in our history still stand.”\

Vigilance Club members were interested, but answered that they had limited funds and could do very little.

Bovey then addressed the City Council, attempting persuade its members to pass an ordinance that would promote the preservation of buildings instead of tearing them town. He received the same response. “We have no money…to repair old buildings, or to keep them from being torn down,” they answered. To the contrary, they “felt that if the whole area was cleared of buildings, like what had happened in some of the bigger cities, there would be a rebirth in Virginia City. New construction could come in, and new stores could be built.” Ultimately, Bovey concluded that the only way to save the buildings would be to buy them himself. He started immediately—the same newspaper article that reported on his lecture to the Vigilance Club between 1972 and 2001. Ellingsen served as Virginia City’s curator, working for the Bovey’s continuously from 1972 until the state of Montana purchased the Virginia City collection in 1997. The oral history interviews were conducted as part of this state acquisition of the Bovey properties. All are transcribed and available at the Montana Historical Society.

456 The Madisonian October 20, 1944.

457 Ibid.
Club noted that “Mr. Bovey spent several days in Virginia City and employed a crew in temporary repairs to the old Wells Fargo Express building here, with the idea of preserving it until funds can be secured for its complete restoration.” In December, Bovey was back again, “in connection with the preservation of local historic buildings.”

Bovey had always possessed an affinity for old things; however, while the rest of his family collected European tables and statues, young Charlie was more interested in American relics. Born on May 1, 1907, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Bovey was heir to the Washburn Crosby Company—a forerunner to General Mills. As a child, Charlie reportedly searched garbage cans and alleys for treasures other people had cast aside, and as an adolescent he began collecting old horse-drawn vehicles from neighbors as they made the transition to automobiles. Because his mother refused to keep anything the family did not use at the Bovey home, Charlie stored his treasures in his grandmother’s back yard. As a teenager, Charlie followed in his father’s footsteps, attending Andover Academy in Massachusetts. Because he was a lackluster student at best, Bovey’s father balked at sending his youngest son to Yale or Harvard without the boy’s commitment to being serious about his education. Given the choice between attending college and learning the milling trade, Charlie selected milling and was promptly shipped off to Great Falls, Montana, where he arrived in late October of 1926.

Bovey started in the lowest position the mill in Great Falls had to offer—sweeping floors. By 1928 he had worked his way up to millwright’s assistant, where he was responsible for building spouts. Unlike contemporary competitors, the company, which by that time was named Royal Mills, did not use tin, which some believed would pollute the flour. Bovey was therefore

458 The Madisonian October 20, 1944; December 15, 1944.

in charge of fashioning spouts out of sugar pine wood—a tedious and intricate process that involved mitering the spouts together at odd angles without glue, experience that would prove valuable to Bovey later in his life. Tiring of milling work, Charlie purchased a wheat ranch in 1928 and along with two hired hands, brothers named Joe and Slim Kerfliet, he began farming. A testament to Bovey’s talent for retaining employees, the Kerfliet brothers would remain in his employ for the rest of his life.\textsuperscript{460}

There are several striking examples from this period of Bovey’s life that illustrate his talent and commitment to saving old things. In 1929, the first building on his ranch was not new construction, but an old office purchased from the Barnett and Record Company, which he affectionately named “the shack” and turned into an oil shed. The little building was later incorporated into his home. In time, Bovey also acquired an Air Force Officer’s Club building which he converted into a horse barn, and he continued collecting antiques ranging from automobiles to slot machines. Something else Bovey saved in his own way was the farm’s original homestead, which he left filled with its cook stove, cabinets, and “various matter-of-fact type stuff,” making it a time capsule to the early owners of the land. There was no question that Charlie Bovey liked old things. Already in the 1930s, it was becoming clear that he wanted to build a little town, a testament of sorts to the idea of the old west that still existed in popular American memory. In 1936, Bovey bought a sheep ranch named Deep Canyon. The first things he built were two barns that were ordinary in every way, except for their fronts—Bovey built them to look like false-fronted general stores.\textsuperscript{461}

\textsuperscript{460} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid.
Charlie Bovey’s chance to build his own little town came in 1940. In Fort Benton, Montana, to attend a horse show, he was approached by the unmarried daughters of Fort Benton saddler Joseph Sullivan who had died several years before. The saddler’s little log building, sitting between a bank building and a drug store, looked out of place in the 1940 streetscape. Inside, the ordinary items that had not been sold at auction after his death remained where he had left them—saddle making tools, leather, harnesses, buckles, axle grease, an old wood stove—the things nobody had wanted. The Sullivan girls, Genevieve and Bernadine, “fascinated by Charlie for having liked their father’s things,” wrote a quit-claim deed for the building and Bovey promised to preserve it. His ideas, perhaps fostered by his travels in Europe, and to places such as Henry Ford’s Deerfield Village, were to preserve and restore old structures like the Sullivan Saddlery. Fort Benton’s officials had other ideas.

“We don’t know what this preservation stuff is,” the town’s fathers reportedly told Bovey. “We’re a progressive community here in Fort Benton, and we’ve waited with great patience for old Mr. Sullivan to die. You know, he was an old man here in the community, and we weren’t about to condemn his building during the time he was alive,” Charlie was informed, but “we’ve had the thought for many years of getting rid of that eyesore on our Main Street.”

Revitalization movements in the United States began developing during the 1940s, brought on by the desire to move past the dark years of the Great Depression and the critical shortages of housing that followed World War II. Urban revival movements swept across the country, promoting new buildings in modern architectural styles. Preservation was less desirable than progress. Bovey, whose intention was to provide something positive for the community, was confused. In Europe, reusing old buildings was a great compliment to their importance and

integrity. Disappointed but undeterred, Bovey did what the Fort Benton officials asked him to do and took down the building. He called in a group of his farmhands, including the Kerfliet brothers. Learning as they went, Bovey and his assistants removed the false front, numbered the logs, packed the pieces onto a truck, and drove the whole thing back to Great Falls.

Bovey’s first impulse was to reconstruct the building on his ranch, but he soon came up with another idea. “The fun of collecting anything is enhanced when one has a place where others can see and enjoy the collection;” Charlie wrote later, “to lock it up in a dark shed accessible only to myself would give me little pleasure.” The fairgrounds at Great Falls had an enormous Livestock Pavilion building. Constructed with the aim of attracting eastern stock buyers to Montana to reduce the need for shipping livestock to outside markets, the building had sat empty for most of its existence. Bovey asked the Fair Board for permission to reconstruct the Sullivan Saddlery inside and they agreed. By the time the Great Falls fair opened in August of 1941, the Livestock Pavilion was home to a full western main street, including a fire station from Boulder, a barber shop from Elkhorn, and a blacksmith shop from Augusta, all from Montana. The buildings were furnished, down to the player piano that tinkled out music from inside the saloon. Called “Old Town,” the little project was a triumph for Bovey—his own reconstructed western street. Buoyed by the success of Old Town, Bovey moved on to tackle his next project—saving an entire town.

Almost immediately after setting foot in Virginia City, Bovey founded an organization he called the Historic Landmarks Society of Montana. Though the group soon attracted a number of members, Bovey quickly tired of the time it took and the paperwork it required. It was easier, he decided, to spend his own money than it was to try and extract it three dollars at a time. He had a

---

463 Charles A. Bovey, “Old Town” Promotional Pamphlet 1941, PAM 655, MHS.
sense of urgency about him—Virginia City could not wait. The first purchase he made was a little house formerly owned by the famous Montana lawyer and judge, Henry N. Blake. He paid $100.00 for it, in cash. Word spread that the Great Falls politician would buy just about anything old that a person was willing to sell. Sometimes he bartered.

In February of 1945, while having coffee, Bovey happened to mention that he was on his way to Great Falls to have some windows made for a building he was restoring. A Virginia City resident named Fred Weingart, who happened to be present, asked Bovey to purchase two picture windows while he was there. “What on earth would you want picture windows for?” Bovey inquired. “I live in that old shacky [sic] building down there with the bay window in it,” Weingart answered. “I’ve read in home improvement magazines that the best thing you can do to add retail value to your house is to put in picture windows,” Weingart informed Bovey. The “shacky” little building under discussion was one of Virginia City’s original structures—the little log building occupied by the German immigrant saddlemakers, Julius and Frederick Kraemer. Bovey walked Weingart down to the court house and traded him deeds—the Kraemer building for another Virginia City structure that was in better shape, and had indoor plumbing. “Boy, I really took advantage of you on this one,” Weingart boasted. “It’s a wonderful thing,” Charlie replied, “when two people can make a deal and both of them think they got the better end of the deal.”

By July of 1945, several buildings were receiving new roofs, and Bovey had begun reconstructing the burned Montana Post building. He had begun collecting artifacts to fill the structures with. Striving to interpret buildings accurately to their historic uses when it was possible, Bovey filled the Montana Post with old printing machinery he had acquired and used it

Ibid., October 1, 1998.
as his office. A note appeared in the newspaper on July 20 that “an appeal for donations of clothing and household furnishings of the period of Montana history prior to 1900 was made this week by Charles A. Bovey of Great Falls, President of the Historic Landmarks Society.” Bovey informed readers that items were wanted “for display in the old New York Store” on Wallace Street—the building which had housed the Buford Store. Sometimes he struck gold—not the metallic kind, but pieces of Virginia City history that were priceless for Bovey and for posterity.

In the back room of the Buford Store, which had been converted to a mortuary during the 1930s, Bovey discovered Simeon Buford’s files. Wooden crates packed full of everything from receipts to letters to tin can labels remained in the dusty storage space where Buford had left them. Rather than reconstructing the New York Store, Bovey reconstructed Buford Mercantile using many of its original contents, along with those purchased at auctions or given to Bovey by friends. When Hannah McGovern died in 1945, Bovey struck a deal with Mary—he would pay her to lock the door of the little store and to leave behind its contents. The front room of the store remained, and still remains, a Virginia City time capsule.

By 1946, Bovey had stabilized, repaired, and reconstructed dozens of buildings in Virginia City. He filled them with artifacts, including displays of posed mannequins. At the end of the year, he opened the Fairweather Inn as a year-round hotel for tourists. Soon after a restaurant, the Wells Fargo Coffee House, was opened in an old wing of the Buford Store. A saloon called the Bale of Hay went into the building where Bovey had seen a man tearing down wainscoting on his first visit to Virginia City two years earlier. Bovey opened up the buildings of Virginia City for visitors to see. Protecting the contents by installing barriers in the doors that allowed visitors to go only a few steps inside, Bovey created something of a living ghost town.

Some buildings, like the Kraemer, became static displays. Others, like the Bale of Hay, became live settings, filled with music machines, functioning nickel picture shows, and a period dressed bartender, Harvey Romey, a long time resident. In 1948, two passing tourists named Larry and Dori Barsness stopped for a drink and ended up staying. They opened a theater company called the Virginia City Players that put on performances for visitors every summer beginning in 1949.

Ten years later, in 1959, Bovey was bluntly told to remove the Old Town exhibit from the Great Falls fairgrounds to make room for a modern Air Force display. “It’s nothing but a fire hazard,” Bovey was told, “it’s old and it doesn’t symbolize progress.” Great Falls, according to Sue Bovey, “didn’t care about anything but progress. All they wanted to do was show off progress.” Charlie Bovey was not committed to that kind of progress. While the rest of Montana fought hard to modernize, Bovey wanted to keep Virginia City the way it was—and that was exactly what drew tourists back to the place again and again. Charlie Bovey even accomplished something that Virginia City had given up on decades before—he brought a railroad to Virginia City. Laying a mile and a half of tracks and equipping it with cars from all over the country, Bovey established the Alder Gulch Short Line in the early 1960s and the Social City finally got its railroad.

By the 1950s, word of the remarkable living ghost town in Montana had spread throughout the country. The Family Circle magazine observed in 1952 that “if you were born around the turn of the century, it looks familiar; if you were born later, it’s probably like nothing you’ve seen before.” Even though Bovey cared little for advertising, it was not uncommon for the town to receive more than a thousand visitors per day, primarily attracted by word-of-mouth.

466 Ibid., October 1, 1998.

As *Collier’s* described it in 1952, the closest Bovey “ever came to advertising was to grind a hurdy-gurdy a couple of times to attract passing cars. People stared, stopped, came in—and spread the word.”

Bovey may have realized in 1952 that he had, as *Collier’s* put it, “a powerful—if playful—bear by the tail.” But even with the hotel, the café, and the Bale of Hay, Virginia City rarely made a profit. Reportedly, the only year Bovey ever made money from the town was the year of the Seattle World’s Fair in 1962, when the town netted a total profit of $47.50. Sue Bovey often said her husband spent two ranches keeping Virginia City afloat, selling property when he needed money to pay for his restorations. For Charlie Bovey, it was worth it to spend the money that transformed Virginia City “from a decaying mining boomtown to an ornately authentic frontier city,” even if it meant the money came out of his own pocket. What Bovey did meant more than making Virginia City a living relic. A short article in the *Ford Times*, which appeared in 1950, stated it best. Recalling the early history of Alder Gulch, the article noted that during the boom years, “gold seekers left history and carried away treasure.” Charlie Bovey reversed this pattern with his love for history that he could “see and handle” the article noted, and instead, by 1950, visitors brought revenue with them and departed with memories.

The propensity to view Virginia City as a ghost town became common during the second half of the twentieth century. In 1962, Jean Davis defined a ghost town thusly: “it is a huddle of

---


rotting cabins on a mountainside; it is the towering ruins of vast mills or smelters around which life once swirled; sometimes traces of rotting foundations alone are left of a busy ‘city;’ only the name may remain as a postmark on an old family letter or as a memory in the mind of a pioneer.\footnote{Jean Davis, \textit{Shallow Diggin’s: Tales from Montana’s Ghost Towns} (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1962), introduction.}

Chapter four of Davis’ book, titled \textit{Shallow Diggin’s: Tales from Montana’s Ghost Towns}, was about Virginia City, “perhaps the greatest of Montana’s mining camps.” In 1962, when the book was published, Virginia City was described as “the only ‘restored’ camp in the state.”\footnote{Davis, \textit{Shallow Diggin’s}, 64.} Another book on Montana’s ghost towns, published a dozen years later, also contained a chapter on Virginia City, combined with Nevada City and Bannack. It qualified its description of the town by explaining that “Virginia City is a popular place, along with its sister city a mile away, Nevada city; not so much for ghost town buffs, but more for those who would like to see what a western mining town really looked like.”\footnote{Don C. Miller, \textit{Ghost Towns of Montana} (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1974), 160.}

Bovey probably would have taken the remark as the greatest of compliments.

What most who looked in on the town from the outside failed to grasp was that even though conditions were growing increasingly challenging, Virginia City’s residents never viewed their community as something that was dying. Hope for revival was never abandoned. In November of 1945, even as the population continued to dwindle, its remaining residents continued to believe that prosperity was still a very real and tangible possibility. During World War II, when gold mining operations were frozen, Virginia City faithfully kept watch over meetings of the Madison Mining Association, and vowed protection for prospecting rights when
they were threatened by a General Land Office Law that proposed to eliminate the right to
prospect on public domain lands. In late 1945, when mining closures were lifted, The
Madisonian happily reported that “Alder Gulch, the mighty Midas of all ages, promises a
renewal of mining activity this coming year that may surpass its most active period,” concluding
that 1946 “may just be the beginning of a prosperous era for Virginia City.”

There were signs that people still believed in the Social City. In May of 1946 new owners
purchased the Tavern Café. A new store, the B. B. S. Market, operated by Harold and Jerry
Burgstrom and Mr. and Mrs. Harland Stephens, opened next to Rank’s Drug Store, advertising a
“complete line of Patrick-Duluth Woolens” among other goods. Some residents found their way
back after the war, including Mr. and Mrs. Ray Bullerdick, who had spent the war years in
Anchorage, Alaska. They returned in January of 1950. The couple moved into a house Charlie
Bovey had purchased on Idaho Street, and Mrs. Bullerdick managed a ladies’ beauty parlor.

Figure 19. When Walt and Mary Myers opened a Jack and Jill Tasty Freez in Virginia City in 1952,
other Virginia City merchants happily welcomed them with this advertisement. From The
Madisonian June 13, 1952.

---


477 Ibid., March 1, 1946; May 17, 1946; June 7, 1946.

It was not until the 1950s that Virginia City began describing itself as a tourist attraction. By 1952, it was noted as the third most popular tourist destination in Montana, and, according to *The Madisonian*, was “expecting the biggest tourist season since gold rush days.” That same year, Walt and Mary Myers moved to Virginia City and opened a Jack and Jill Tasty Freez, where, in addition to soft serve ice cream confections, they sold sandwiches, coffee, and curios.⁴⁷⁹ Walt and Mary Myers were given a Grand Opening welcome by the proprietors of Virginia City’s three bars, the Elks Club, a drug store, a market, a mercantile, a craft guild, and a newspaper. They were also embraced by the owners of a garage and a service station. The latter two businesses allude to the problems of identity and interpretation that continue to vex those engaged in the business of historical tourism. What may feel out of place to some who arrive with preconceived ideas about what “belongs” at a historic site might also be considered part of the traditional fabric of Virginia City business which kept the town viable. How such “modern” conveniences fit into a “historic” landscape is a complex question—what are the limits of such terms when applied to a place that has, sometimes in its own small ways, remained flexible and adaptive, holding on to a sense of its past while hoping for a future of growth and prosperity?

---

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., April 28, 1950; June 13, 1952.
Figure 20. Virginia City’s historic structures are as interesting to visitors today as they were when Bovey restored them. This map lists a number of the town’s most notable attractions. From Marilyn Grant, *Montana Main Streets.*
CONCLUSION

Huntington Smith’s description of Virginia City as the “Williamsburg of the West” is filled with meaning deeper than perhaps was evident in 1952. The parallels between the eastern city and the tiny Montana mining town are striking. Williamsburg, established in 1632, became the capital of Virginia Colony, retaining that position until 1779, when the capital was moved to Richmond. “Rediscovered” in the early twentieth century, magnate John D. Rockefeller, Jr. invested heavily in its restoration, including the removal and renovation of hundreds of buildings, leading some to call it “Mr. Rockefeller’s $14,000,000 Idyll.” After an initial land grab that garnered Rockefeller most of the central district, the tasks of conservation and restoration were turned over to a specially commissioned team of architects, engineers, landscape design specialists and planners. The town quickly became a popular tourist destination for those who were eager to experience a piece of American colonial history. The eventual grandeur of Williamsburg, and its establishment as a prominent place that speaks to American popular memory, was sparked by a vision to prevent its deterioration. Like Virginia City, Williamsburg was overshadowed by bigger, flashier, grander contemporaries that outgrew and outshined it, yet it managed to survive long after many of these had been reclaimed by time and sagebrush. Yet while Williamsburg had the financial backing of the Rockefellers and a standard corporate model with “highly rationalized and articulated management structure and separate departments headed by individual managers and supervisors,” Virginia City had much more humble support.


481 Ibid., 58.
Cast aside in 1875 when Helena surpassed it in size and prosperity, Virginia City spent almost half a century coming to terms with its rejection as a cornerstone of Montana’s growth and prosperity. From the metropolis of Montana Territory, Virginia City soon found itself slipping backward, falling behind its contemporaries as it struggled to survive. Its inability to fully catch up played out on multiple levels—instead of railroads and automobiles, Virginia City often had to rely on horses in the 1920s; movies came to the town years after their release date in other communities just a few miles away; the goods on the McGovern Store shelves were in many cases relics of another time. Yet against all odds and through challenges that had obliterated countless other western mining towns, Virginia City persevered. The tenacity and willingness of residents to stay when the community was virtually ignored by the rest of the state around it, abandoned by mining interests, and bypassed by the railroad, speak volumes to how deeply Virginia City’s remaining citizens were tied to their community. The conviction that with time, perseverance, and a few adjustments that Virginia City could catch up with the rest of the state was perpetual from 1875 on. Reiteration of the belief that Virginia City would find ways to survive on its own terms took on new meaning when Charlie Bovey began his work.

In 1952, nearly a century after the first gold was panned from Alder Gulch, new prospectors were still drawn to the place by the lure of fortune. The romantic lure of the west coupled with stylized memories of Virginia City to draw in what *The Madisonian* described in 1952 as “the last of a dying race.” Mr. and Mrs. Earl Pharmer, musicians from New York, first heard of Alder Gulch from an old miner in 1917. The old timer swore he had sunk a flume shaft on another man’s claim decades before, and extracted more than $30,000 working only at night. Intrigued, the Pharmers gave up their life as performers on the New York stage and moved to Alder Gulch during the Great Depression. In 1952, they were still working the claim. “With the
same dream in his heart that brought thousands to this vicinity 85 years ago, Earl Pharmer, among the last of a dying race, knows that the elusive fortune is at his finger tips,” the editor wrote. As in an age long since passed, there was a sense of optimism that “tomorrow, or perhaps the day after,” gold from Alder Gulch would make another rich man.\footnote{The Madisonian August 29, 1952.} Such a hope was natural for Virginia City, which had survived for decades on similar beliefs.

Indications that at least some residents were losing faith in Virginia City’s longevity may be what Charlie Bovey witnessed in the summer of 1944—fortunately, what one resident saw as firewood, Bovey saw as historical treasure. In a moment that might best be described as a historical epiphany, Bovey grasped the essential meaning and place of Virginia City as the cradle of Montana history—history that was tied not only to the graves of road agents high on a hill and the memories of pioneer times written down in books, but in the little, real, everyday things that residents relied on for survival—the cardboard in walls, newspapers in floors, piles of old magazines stitched together for preservation—were equally important. Virginia City had not survived on gold for most of its history—it survived on the willpower and endurance of people like the McGovern sisters, who found ways to manage, rather than giving up. Bovey’s vision was ultimately what saved the town from the fate that met many of its sister communities from the gold rush days. Instead of becoming an archaeological site, a ghost town visited by the occasional history buff, or a relic inhabited only by federal or state historical interpreters who closed it down at sunset, Virginia City remained a viable, functioning community that worked with the past to create its present. Though not endowed with Rockefeller’s nearly unlimited funding, Bovey was more than happy to invest his money, as well as his vision, in keeping the town alive. As he described himself, Bovey was a better starter than
he was a finisher—it has become the job of others to carry on where he left off, maintaining his historical ambitions.

As hopes of connecting railroad lines, oil strikes, and new gold discoveries began to wear thin during World War II, Bovey’s work brought the need for a unified community voice to the forefront. Growing debates on how the town could best survive in changing times rarely came to a consensus—except on the one, overwhelmingly-supported belief that keeping as much of the original fabric of the town as possible was of primary importance. Virginia City’s growth as a genuine tourist attraction in the 1950s spurred on renewed faith that this time outsiders would finally recognize its importance. If the town could not grow into one of Montana’s major population and trade centers, then perhaps it could fulfill a new role as a primary tourist destination—presumably one that others would see fit to invest in saving. Though the town’s reputation as a popular stop for tourists has continued to grow, its unified voice remains somewhat elusive.

When Charles Bovey died in 1978, Sue Ford Bovey took over the management of the Virginia City her husband had purchased and furnished. With her death in 1988, ownership passed to the Bovey’s only son, Ford. In less than a decade, Ford Bovey reached an agreement with the state of Montana to purchase the Virginia City collection—the buildings, the artifacts, and even the mannequin displays. Virginia City’s remaining one hundred and fifty or so residents were witness to the beginning of a new chapter in the community’s history as it changed hands, but once again, a unified voice was never fully realized. The importance of preserving Virginia City’s historic fabric as an important part of Montana and United States history is not in question, but many other issues arise from Virginia City’s unique role as a tourist attraction and functioning seat of Madison County.
Should new buildings be required to blend in as much as possible with the surrounding historical setting, for example, or should the town accept that any living town, a county seat, no less, has to make compromises with modern, practical, municipal realities? Should it possess a modern, functional county jail which would be in keeping with its historical past, or would a contemporary detention center in a tourist destination become an intrusion that would compromise the town’s identity? The town spent decades in the nineteenth century lobbying for a railroad connection which would certainly have altered the town’s cultural landscape had one connected Virginia City to the rest of the state, but that modern technological jewel escaped the city’s grasp. But in losing that prize, was an unintended consequence the preservation of the town’s nineteenth century character?

Whether considering a jail, a contemporary year-round motel, or a gas station, Virginia City wrestles with how to maintain its viability which is vitally connected to historical tourism. And in keeping with its past, it does not think and speak with one voice, but with competing visions of how to maintain itself. Was its failure to win a railroad connection a disaster which doomed the city or was it a serendipitous historical moment that now brings tens of thousands of tourists annually to a town whose population never exceeded 10,000? Will tinkering with its cultural landscape—a jail, a hotel, a gas station—enhance or threaten its existence? Put another way, will that process blow new life into its embers or threaten to extinguish them? These are questions that each generation of Virginia City residents will need to ask as new challenges find the town once again “crooning over the embers of departed glory.”
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES, UNPUBLISHED

Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana (MHS)

Albert G. Clarke Family Papers, 1857 – 1882, SC 496 Box 1, Folder 1.

Charles A. Bovey “Old Town” Pamphlet 1941, PAM 655.

Daniel Webster Tilton Family Papers, 1851 – 1976, MC 111.

Henry Blake Papers, 1867 – 1911, SC 438.

Henry Elling Papers, 1864 – 1911, MC 262.


Ichabod B. Borrer Papers, 1864, SC 2376.

Isador Strasburger Papers, 1867, SC 805 Box 1, Folder 1.

Jonathan Blanchard Papers, 1864, SC 442.

John Moore Records, 1865, SC 519.

John Jones Letters, 1863 – 1864, SC 912 Box 1, Folder 1.

John G. Overton Letters, 1865, SC 615.

John P. Rogers’ General Store Account Ledger, 1865 – 1866, SC 262.

Mary Kelly Reminiscence, 1920, SC 920.

Melville Mercantile Company Records, 1882, SC 1886.


Peter Herbert Account Book, March – April 1864 SC 275.

Samuel Leach, “Excerpts from the Autobiography of Samuel Leach, November 1, 1865 – October 1, 1870,” SC 369.


Solomon Content Records, 1869, SC 1642.


Virginia City Druggist Shop (Unidentified) Records, 1864 – 1880, Microfilm MF137A.

Virginia City General Store (Unidentified) Records, 1869, SC 274.

Virginia City Mercantile (Unidentified) Records, 1883 – 1890, SC 381.

Virginia City Tavern (Unidentified) Ledger, 1865 – 1866, SC 143.


William T. Tinney Diary, 1864 – 1867 SC 851.

Wilson Family Papers, 1868 – 1893, SC 2132.

**Madison County Courthouse, Virginia City, Montana**

Index to Deeds June 12, 1866 – December 30, 1868, Madison County, Montana, Vol. 2, Madison County Courthouse.


Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd., Virginia City, 1884, Madison County Courthouse.

**McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana**

Periodicals
Farm and Fireside McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

Farm Life, McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

Home Circle. McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

People’s Popular Monthly McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

The American Magazine McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

The Delineator McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

The Gentlewoman McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

The Ladies’ Home Journal McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

Women’s Home Companion McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

Other

Journal, Ladies of the Maccabees, Hive No. 7, McGovern Collection, McFarland Curatorial Center, Virginia City, Montana

Thompson-Hickman Library, Virginia City, Montana


PRIMARY SOURCES, PUBLISHED


Franchère, Gabriel. *Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America in the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814, or the First American Settlement on the Pacific.* Toronto, Canada: Champlain Society, 1969, edited by J. V. Huntington.


McKenney, L. M. *Business Directory of the Pacific States and Territories for 1867.*


**SECONDARY SOURCES, UNPUBLISHED**

**Dissertations and Theses**


**Articles**


**SECONDARY SOURCES, PUBLISHED**

**Newspapers**

*The Montana Post,* Virginia City, Montana, 1864–1869

*The Montanian,* Virginia City, Montana, 1870 – 1876

*The Madisonian,* Virginia City, Montana 1879 – 1910

*The Madisonian Times,* Virginia City, Montana, 1911 – 1945
Books


Ronda, James P. *Astoria and Empire.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.


**Articles**


**OTHER SOURCES**

**Reports**


**Oral Histories**

Ellingsen, John D., Curator of Virginia City Collections, interviews by Jeffrey Safford, Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission Oral History Project, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

______. October 1, 1998, OH 1872.
______. December 8, 1999, OH 1874.
______. January 13, 2000, OH 1876.
______. February 25, 1999, OH 2027.

**World Wide Web**


“Polly and Her Pals,” Viewable at

http://www.tenement.org/documents/Paint.pdf

“The Buford Families in America: Simeon R. Buford Letters” Viewable at
http://www.bufordfamilies.com/Page%20X.htm

“The Lemhi Shoshone and Their Struggle to Retain a Homeland.” Viewable at
http://www.lemhi-shoshone.com/shirley_stephens.html

“Who are the Lemhi and Where is Their Home?” Viewable at
http://www.lemhi-shoshone.com/svingen.html
APPENDIX A

Bertrand Cargo Inventory, 1865

The steamboat Bertrand was one of dozens plying the waters of the Missouri River between St. Louis, Missouri and Fort Benton in 1865. Setting out on March 18 with supplies for the Montana gold camps, it hit a snag and sank just twenty-five miles north of Omaha, Nebraska. Shortly afterwards, the boat’s insurers sent professional divers to salvage portions of the cargo, but their attentions were diverted when a second vessel sank nearby. By the time salvage crews returned, the river had already begun to deposit silt over the wreck and efforts were abandoned. The wreck was rediscovered and excavated in 1968 – 1969 after being submerged under 28 – 30 feet of silt for more than a century. More than 200,000 objects were recovered and preserved, and form the basis for our knowledge of the steamboat’s cargo. A number of basic and specialty items were on board, many of them bound for Virginia City merchants M. Kingman and Co., Vivian and Simpson, and G. P. Dorris, who were stocking their businesses with goods ranging from building, food and mining supplies to clothing, housewares and patent medicines. The following list is representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items found in Bertrand Excavation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Blacking; Brushes; Cigars; Cigar Boxes; Combs – Rubber; Combs – Wood; Match Safes; Pipes; Pipe Stems; Pocketknives; Shoelaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armaments</td>
<td>Black Powder; Gun Powder; Gun Worm; Howitzer Shot – Canister; Howitzer Shot – Hollow Shell; Lead Shot; Maynard Cartridges; Percussion Caps; Powder Flask; Shot Mold; Wadding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Ale; Essence of Coffee; Lemonade; Champagne; Wine – Red; Wine – White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Supplies</td>
<td>Lead – Bar Stock; Lead – White; Steel – Bar Stock; Tar Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Supplies</td>
<td>Account Books; Clipboards; Fairbanks Scales; Ink – Blue/Black; Ink – Green; Ledgers; Letter Clips; Paper Spindle; Pens; Pencils – Graphite; Pencils – Red Ochre; Rubber Bands; Stationary Styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Boots – Cavalry; Boots – Dress; Boots – Hobnail; Boots – Riding; Boots – Work; Coats – Suit, Black; Coats – Suit, Brown; Handkerchiefs – Silk; Hats – Broad Brimmed; Hats – Dress; Hats – Felt; Hats – Women; Long Underwear; Shaws; Shoes – Children; Shoes – Women; Slickers – Rubberized; Socks; Suspenders; Suspender Grips; Textiles – Burlap; Textiles – Cotton; Textiles – Silk; Textiles – Wool; Trousers; Work Shirts – Checkered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Tools – Agricultural Supplies</td>
<td>Axes; Axe Handles; Axle Grease; Cow Bells; Cultivator Frames; Forks – Garden; Forks – Hay; Harness; Hoes – Garden; Horse Tack; Plows; Plow Blades; Plow Frames; Tools (Assorted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixtures</td>
<td>Bolts; Escutcheons – Iron; Escutcheons – Steel; Hooks; Nails; Nuts; Screws; Shutter Screws; Spikes; Tacks; Washers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food – Bottled</td>
<td>Baking Soda; Brandied Cherries; Brandied Peaches; Catsup; Chow Chow (Table Condiment); Essence of Ginger; Honey; Horseradish; Jelly and Preserves; Lemon Extract; Lemon Syrup; London Club Sauce; Mustard; Olive Oil; Pepper Sauce; Pickles; Pie Fruits; Pineapple; Tamarinds; Worcester Sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food – Canned</td>
<td>Butter; Cherries; Cod Liver Oil; Cream of Tartar; Gooseberries; Jelly and Preserves; Lard; Lemon Sugar; Peaches; Pepper; Oysters; Powdered Yeast; Sardines; Strawberries; Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food – Dried</td>
<td>Cod Fish; Currants; Grapes; Mackerel; Meat – Beef; Meat – Tallow; Prunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food – Other</td>
<td>Candy; Flour; Nuts; Soda Crackers; Sugar; Syrup; Yeast Powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Butter Churn; Brooms; Candles; Candlesticks – Brass; Candlesticks – Porcelain; Candlesticks – Tin; Candle Molds; Caster Sets; Cauldron – Iron; Clocks; Coffee Grinder – Countertop; Coffee Grinder – Wall Mounted; Cooking Kits (Kettle, Coffee Pot, Tea Pot, Soup Pot, and Lids); Cookware – Baking Pans; Cookware – Coffee Boiler; Cookware – Cake Pans; Cookware – Frying Pans; Cookware – Griddle; Cookware – Teapots; Cookware – Vegetable Steamer; Copper Bucket; Cutlery – Butcher Knives; Flatirons; Flatware – Two-Pronged Fork; Flatware – White-metal Spoons; Flatware – Silver Teaspoons; Flatware – Silver-plated Teaspoons; Goblets – Glass; Ironstone; Lamps – Hanging; Lamps – Kerosene; Lamps – Reflectors; Lamps – Table; Laundry Supplies – Boilers; Laundry Supplies – Fire Hearth Irons; Laundry Supplies – Indigo; Laundry Supplies – Soap; Laundry Supplies – Starch; Laundry Supplies – Washboards; Matches; Mirrors; Saltcellars; Skillets; Soap; Stoves; Stove Parts; Water Tumblers; Whiskey Glasses; Wicks; Wine Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor</td>
<td>Bourbon Whiskey Cock-tail; Brandy Cock-tail; Gin Cock-tail; Schnapps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Equipment</td>
<td>Mercury Flasks; Mortars and Pestles; Pickaxes; Pick Handles; Powder Kegs; Shovels – D-Handle; Shovels – Straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Bull Whips; Rope; Shoe Repair Kits; Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patent Medicines</td>
<td>Bitters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing Equipment</td>
<td>Buttons – Bone; Buttons – Brass; Buttons – Fabric; Buttons – Hard Rubber; Buttons – Paper Mache; Buttons – Porcelain; Buttons – Shell; Buttons – Wood; Fasteners; Needles; Scissors; Thimbles – Closed Top; Thimbles – Open Top; Thread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools and Equipment</td>
<td>Gimlet (Hand Auger); Mauls; Pocket Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Goods</td>
<td>Beads – Black; Beads – Clear; Beads – Turquoise; Beads – White; Calico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The John P. Rogers General Store is indicative of the small, temporary establishments that sprang up early on in Virginia City and supplied the town with basic necessities. By late 1865, when this ledger is dated, the supplies available still represented the needs of a mining town.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverages</th>
<th>Coffee, Tea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Goods</td>
<td>Pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Beans, Blackberries, Oysters, Peaches, Sardines, Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Boots, Coat, Drawers, Mixed Hose, Pants, Under Shirt, Vest, Wool Shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments</td>
<td>Butter, Clove, Ginger, Honey, Lard, Mustard, Nutmeg, Pepper, Salt, Soda, Sorghum, Syrup, Vinegar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Envelopes, Paper, Pencils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Goods</td>
<td>Corn Meal, Crackers, Cream of Tartar, Currants, Flour, Hominy, Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Ball Twine, Chain, Nails, Rope, Shot, Shovels, Wagon Grease, Water Bucket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Blacking, Broom, Candles, Coal Oil, Concentrated Lye, Matches, Needles, Set Knives and Forks, Skein Thread, Starch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>Bacon, Ham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Apples, Beets, Onions, Potatoes, Turnips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Bitters, Blankets, Cheese, Hostetters Bitters, Pipes, Plug Tobacco, Smoking Tobacco, Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td>Bar Soap, Cake Soap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to paying in gold dust, paper, or coin money, customers could exchange services for goods, for example, resoling boots or sharpening tools.
APPENDIX C

Petchner Mercantile Company Records, 1866 – 1868

The Petchner Mercantile Company was one of many small, short-lived general stores that sprang up in Virginia City during the early years of settlement. Its records are notable for the appearance of William Cody—Buffalo Bill—who evidently frequented the establishment. The clerk for the store also noted when patrons closed their accounts, and sometimes why they did so, such as one instance where a customer named John Kiefer “Skedaddled to America.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Beer, Brandy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Herring, Oysters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments</td>
<td>Butter, Vinegar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Goods</td>
<td>Almonds, Crackers, Meal, Nuts, Raisins, Yeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Apples, Grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Cake, Candy, Cheese, Cigars, Cream, Milk, Pie, Sundries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of Merchandise on Hand for 1866:

March 26:
Merchandise on hand $2800.00
Merchandise from J. J. Roes Co. $583.05
Merchandise from Hannaner [sic] Salt $13.50
Eggs and Jelly $12.50
500 Cigars $55.00

March 30:
Eggs $24.90

March 31:
Eggs $15.00

April 2:
Citron $18.00
Eggs: $1.25
Soup: $8.50
Potatoes: $25.00
Beer: $80.00
Brains: $1.50

April 6:
Eggs: $21.25
APPENDIX D

Virginia City General Store (Unidentified) Records, 1869

A ledger for one of the many unidentified, temporary general stores that served Virginia City during its years as the territorial capital of Montana reveals many basic necessities, and a few specialty items. The presence of a comb, hair pins, and a looking glass, among other items, testify to the presence of women in the Social City.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Comb, Hair Pins, Looking Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Bitter Gin, Whiskey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Coffee, Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Goods</td>
<td>Butter Pickles, Relish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Beans, Corn, Peas, Peaches, Mustard, Oysters, Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Boots, Coat Liner, Collars, Drawers, Pants, Socks, Under Shirts, Vest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments</td>
<td>Butter, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Lemon Syrup, Pepper, Syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Envelopes, Ink, Paper, Pencils, Pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Goods</td>
<td>Barley, Crackers, Cream of Tartar, Currants, Flour, Raisins, Rice, Salt, Soup, Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Files, Nails, Pocket Knife, Quicksilver, Rope, Sacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Blacking Brush, Broom, Candles, Coal Oil, Cork, Bottled Blacking, Knives, Matches, Pins, Pipe Stems, Sieve, Spoons, Starch, Thread, Tin Cup, Wicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>Breakfast Bacon, Bacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Apples, Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Cigars, Plug Tobacco, Smoking Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td>Bar Soap, Shaving Soap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Bowie Knife, Fishing Line, Fishing Hooks, Hatchet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Pills, Powder, Sundries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Tilton and Barber Company Records, 1878

Tilton and Barber were grocers who operated in Virginia City during the late 1870s and 1880s. D. W. Tilton also operated the Capital Bookstore, the Virginia City newspaper, and various other enterprises.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Coffee, Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Goods</td>
<td>Exacts, Flavoring, French Pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Condensed Milk, Fruit, Mackerel, Sardines, Salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments</td>
<td>Allspice, Butter, Catsup, Cinnamon, Clove, French Mustard, Ground Spices, Honey, Jellies, Lard, Mace, Mustard, Nutmeg, Olive Oil, Pepper Sauce, Sugar, Syrup, Vinegar, Whole Spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crackers</td>
<td>Boston Butter, Farina, Ginger Snap, Pic Nic, Soda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Handles – Axe, Handles – Pick, Handles – Sledge, Lamp Chimneys, Lamp Shades, Lamp Wicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Brooms, Cake Ornaments, Candles, Matches, Pipes, Shoe Blacking, Starch, Stove Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>Bacon, Breakfast Bacon, Hams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Candy – Fancy, Candy – Stick, Pickles in Kegs, Snuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td>Soap, Toilet Soap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amanda Ellen Robinson arrived in Virginia City in 1879 and opened a ladies dry goods and millinery store. The following year she married prominent Virginia City merchant Oliver Drew French, thereafter calling her store “Mrs. O. D. French’s Ladies’ Bazar.” Mrs. French employed two unmarried sisters named Hannah and Mary McGovern for many years, and upon her death in 1908 Hannah purchased the store and all its contents. The McGovern sisters continued to run the store until 1941, and several years later the building with all the remaining contents was purchased by Charles A. Bovey. Much of the stock items had not changed; already outdated in 1908 when Hannah purchased them, they stayed on the McGovern Store shelves, where they remain today. In the listing below, the categories of items have been alphabetized, all remaining listings are given according to the original advertisement. All of the original spelling, grammar and capitalization has been maintained.

Mrs. O. D. French’s LADIES’ BAZAR Summer Announcement SEASON OF 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dress and Cloak Making</td>
<td>In the dress and cloak making department, under the supervision of Miss Mary McCarthy, of Chicago, special attention will be given to the making up of goods in the latest styles of fashion, and excellence of work guaranteed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Trimmings</td>
<td>Silk Fringes and Tassels in all colors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fancy Goods</td>
<td>Fans, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td>French and American—A complete stock. Bridal Wreaths, Roses, Buds, Pansies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnishing Goods</td>
<td>I carry in this department a good assortment of Hosiery, Gloves, Underwear, Knit Goods, Corsets, Ruchings, Collars and Cuffs, Ties and Bows, Laces, Imitation and Real, Hamburg Embroideries, Linen Handkerchiefs, Zephyrs and Yarns, Working Canvasses, and Novelties in Fancy Goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hats and Bonnets</td>
<td>Ladies’ and Children’s Straw, Silk, and Lace Bonnets and Hats, in great variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laces</td>
<td>Black and White Lace Edgings, Black and White Dotted Net. Infants’ Lace Dress Caps in new designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parasols</td>
<td>In Silk and Cotton, in great variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumes</td>
<td>Ostrich Feathers and Tips, Fancy Wings, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready-Made Dresses</td>
<td>I take pleasure in announcing that my new line of Spring Wraps is complete, consisting of Zephyr and Cashmere Shawls, Dolmans, Jackets, Ulsters, Havelocks, and Ladies’ and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misses’ Dresses</td>
<td>In all styles and varieties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribbons</td>
<td>I have the agency for the well-known Singer, White, Domestic, and Davis Sewing Machines, and will sell them at the lowest possible figures. Machine needles and attachments always in stock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silks and Satins</td>
<td>Buttons in all styles and quantities, Alpaca Braid, Cotton, Worsted, and Silk Star Braids, White Working Cotton, Scarlet Working Cotton, Welting Cord, Shoe Laces, National Pins, Mourning Pins, Belt Pins, Nursery Pins, Hair Crimpers, Hair Pins, Milward's Needles, Elastic Cords and Braids, Thimbles, Tape Measures, Hooks and Eyes, Whalebones, Belding's Spool Silk, in 50 and 100 yards, Belding’s Silk Twist, Coats’ Spool Cotton, Jno. Clark’s Spool Cotton, etc., etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Wares</td>
<td>Of all descriptions and new patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veilings</td>
<td>TAKE NOTICE! I would respectfully call the attention [sic] of the ladies to the fact that my goods are of the latest designs and superior quality, having been selected, this spring, by myself in the best eastern marts. A visit to my Bazar will also convince them that my prices are AS LOW AS THE LOWEST! THE LADIES’ BAZAR, Wallace Street, Virginia City.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mrs. O. D. French's
LADIES' BAZAR
Summer Announcement
SEASON OF 1881.

I would respectfully announce to the ladies of Virginia and its vicinity that I have just opened, and am receiving constant additions to, a splendid stock of Ladies' and Millinery Goods, of which the following is a partial catalogue:

PLUMES.
Ostrich Feathers and Tips, Fancy Wings, etc.

FLOWERS.
French and American—A complete stock: Bridal Wreaths, Roses, Buds, Pansies, etc.

RIBBON.
in all styles, colors, and qualities.

LACES.
Black and White Lace Edgings; Black and White Dotted Net; Infants' Lace Dress Caps in new designs.

FANCY GOODS, FANS, Etc.
Ladies' Back Comb, Dressing Combs, Round Combs, Pipe Comb, Hair Brushes, Tooth Brushes, Parasols, Pocket Books, Braided, Hair Ornaments, Bonnet Pins, Toilet Soaps, Perfumery, Lily White, etc., etc.

HATS & BONNETS.
Ladies' and Children's Straw, Silk, and Lace Bonnets and Hats, in great variety.

SILKS AND SATINS.

PARASOLS
In Silk and Cotton, in great variety.

FURNISHING GOODS.
I carry in this department a good assortment of Hosery, Gloves, Underwear, Knit Goods, Corsets, Bushings, Collars and Cuffs, Ties and Bows, Laces, Inimitation, and Real Hamburg Embroideries, Linen Huck-Cloths, Zeppelins, and Yarns, Working Embroideries, and Novelties in Fancy Goods.

DRESS TRIMMINGS.
Silk Fringes and Tassels in all colors.

VEILINGS
of all descriptions, and new patterns.

SMALL WARES.

Ready-Made Dresses, Etc.
I take pleasure also in announcing that my line of Spring Wraps is complete, consisting of Zephyr and Cashmere Shawls, Dolmans, Jackets, Ulsters, Huvilocks, and Ladies' and Misses' Dresses, in all styles and varieties.

Dress and Cloak Making.
In the dress and cloak making department, under the supervision of Miss Mary McCarthy, of Chicago, special attention will be given to the making up of goods in the latest styles of fashion, and excellence of work guaranteed.

Sewing Machines.
I have the agency for the well-known Singer, White, Domestic, and Davis Sewing Machines, and will sell them at the lowest possible figures. Machine needles and attachments always in stock.

TAKE NOTICE!
I would respectfully call the attention of the ladies to the fact that my goods are of the latest designs and superior quality, having been selected, this spring, by many of the best eastern marts. A visit to my Bazar will also convince them that my prices are

AS LOW AS THE LOWEST!
The LADIES' BAZAR,
Wallace Street, Virginia City.
APPENDIX G

Melville Mercantile Company Records, 1892

The Melville Mercantile Company was one of many dry goods stores that remained operational in Virginia City before the turn of the twentieth century. Fourteen volumes of ledgers and daybooks are archived at the Montana Historical Society. The items listed below appear in a representative sample of daybooks dating between June and August, 1892.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessories</td>
<td>Apron, Collars, Cuffs, Gloves, Hair Pins, Handkerchief, Hat, Hose Supports, Scarf Pin, Suspenders, Tie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Apricots, Baked Beans, Coconut, Cranberries, Oysters, Peaches, Salmon, Tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>Calico, Cashmere, Flannel, Gingham, Muslin, Silk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Drawers, Dress Goods, Hose, Ladies Skirt, Overalls, Shirts, Wool Socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments</td>
<td>Allspice, Butter, Cinnamon, Juniper, Lard, Lemon Extract, Mustard, Nutmeg, Pepper, Syrup, Vanilla Extract, Vinegar, Whole Pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Bottle Ink, Envelopes, Paper Brass Pins, Pencils, Pen Holder, Rubber Stamp, Stamps, Writing Tablet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Goods</td>
<td>Baking Powder, Candy, Chocolate, Coffee, Cookies, Corn Meal, Crackers, Flour, Gunpowder Tea, Macaroni, Nuts, Oatmeal, Oats, Prunes, Raisins, Rice, Salt, Soda, Sugar, Wheat, Yeast Cakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Barbed Wire, Barrel Bolts, Black Powder, Line, Nails, Pane Glass, Hinges, Rivets, Rope, Spikes, Staples, Twine, Wagon Sheet, Wire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Baskets, Blanket, Butcher Knife, Butter Cloth, Cheese Cloth, Chimneys, Clothes Pins, Coffee Mill, Coffee Pot Stands, Complete Lamp, Dishpans, Kerosene Oil, Kettle, Knives and Forks, Lamp Wicks, Matches, Milk Cans, Milk Pans, Napkins, Pails, Quilts, Sieve Holder, Spoons, Starch, Tin Dippers, Tin Pans, Tin Plates, Tin Stew Pan, Tub, Ticking, Wire Mattress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and Fish</td>
<td>Bacon, Beef, Codfish, Ham, Herring, Lobster, Salted Salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicinal</td>
<td>Cough Medicine, Lineament, Pills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Cheese, Corn, Fruit, Honeydew, Lemons, Milk, Oranges, Pickles, Potatoes, Tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Ammonia, Axle Grease, Bottle Blueing, Block Salt, Carbolic Salve, Cartridges, Cigarettes, Cigarette Papers, Cigars, Cosmoline, Drab Paint, Fishing Pole, Globes, Guards, Gum, Half Point Flasks, Harmonica, Hat Hooks, Horse Nails, Lunch, Machine Oil, Mob Stick, Mosquito Net, N. F. Oil, Oil Can, Pipe Mounts, Pipe Stems, Plaster of Paris, Plug Tobacco, Screen, Sheep Dip, Shoe Polish, Singletree, Tins, Tobacco, Turpentine, White Wash Brush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>Boots, Gum Boots, Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>Buttons, Corset Steels, Cotton Thread, Elastic, Hooks, Lace, Needles, Pants Buttons, Pearl Buttons, Ribbon, Safety Pins, Sewing Twine, Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td>Bar Soap, Cologne, Comb, Oil Soap, Toilet Soap, Tooth Brush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Garden Hoe, Granite Saw, Hay Rake, Horse Rasp, Mowing Machine, Sheep Shears, Shovel, Sickle, Sickle Head, Spade, Trowel, Wood Mower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H
Buford Mercantile Company Records and Advertisements, 1898 - 1922

The Buford Mercantile Company was founded in 1878 by Simeon R. Buford, who ran the store continuously until his death in 1905. The store was then operated by Simeon’s younger brother, Charles H. Buford, finally closing in the 1920s. S. R. Buford was a meticulous record keeper, and saved everything from ledgers and receipts to tin can labels and letters. A wealth of information regarding how he ran his business is thus available for research. A keen businessman, one ledger for Buford’s store dated December 10, 1883 – January 28, 1884, shows that Buford was open every single day in that time period—including Christmas and New Years—and also made sales every single day without exception. The following lists are partial and are intended to give a sampling of the various kinds of goods Buford kept on hand in his store. With most of Buford’s records available between 1875 and 1911, there is potential for a great deal more research on the topic.

1898 – 1903

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Apple Brandy, Brandy, Citron, Whiskey – Marshall, Whiskey, Wine – Barrel, Wine – Bottle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>Coffee – Arabica, Coffee – Ariosa, Coffee – Lion, Coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned Goods</td>
<td>Beans – Lima, Beans, Clams – Minced, Gooseberries, Olives, Oysters – Deer Head, Oysters, Peaches, Pie Fruit, Pineapple, Pork and Beans, Preserves, Prunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments and Baking Items</td>
<td>Apple Butter, Butter, Catsup, Cinnamon, Cocoa, Cream of Tartar, Extracts, Flour, Gelatine [sic], Honey – Castle, Honey, Jelly – Pail, Lard, Mustard, Olive Oil, Pepper, Royal Baking Powder, Royal Flour, Sage, Salad Dressing, Spices, Sugar, Syrup, Vinegar, Yeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crops and Seeds</td>
<td>Alfalfa, Grass Seed, Timothy Seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Fruits and Nuts</td>
<td>Almonds, Cacaoanut, Currants, Cr. Berries [Cranberries?], Dates – Stuffed, Figs, Nuts – Unspecified, Peanuts, Raisins, Walnuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewares</td>
<td>Blankets, Blueing, Brooms, Butter Paper, Candles, Coal Oil, Demijohns, Lye, Matches – Anchor Brand, Matches, Matches and Caddies, Paper Bags, Pins, Searchlight Matches, Toothpicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats and Fish</td>
<td>Bacon, Chip Beef, Cod Fish, Corn Beef, Ham, Herring, Lobster, Mackerel, Pigs Feet, Salmon, Sardines, Sausage, Tongue, Vienna Sausage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Biscuits, Bran, Buckwheat, Buckwheat Flour, Candy, Cheese – Hopp, Cheese – Swiss, Cheese, Chocolate, Cookies, Corn Meal – White, Corn Meal – Yellow, Crackers, Gingersnaps, Grape Nuts, Hominy, Hops, Macaroni, Malt Rice, Meal, Pearl Tapioca, Pickles, Quaker Oats, Rice, Rye Flour, Sioux Oats, Starch, Tapioca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Clothing</td>
<td>Cigars, Flasks, One Desk – for P. H. Gohn, Overalls, Slickers, Tobacco – Star Plug, Tobacco, Wool Socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified and Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Batavia, Caps, Castings, Cent Oil, Cushions, Elaine Oil, Escrue Oil, Linseed Oil, Kits, Oil – Unspecified, Paddles, Pearline, Pestum, Pipes, Polish, Powder, Quincy Oil, Red Oil, Register Supplies, Spring Seats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buford Mercantile Advertisement 1918

Buford Mercantile Advertisement 1920

Buford Mercantile Advertisement 1922
Buford Mercantile Advertisement 1910

Buford Mercantile Advertisement 1915
APPENDIX I

McGovern Dry Goods Store Photographs and Advertisements, 1912 – 1945

Packing labels on boxes used for insulation are still legible outside the store.

Surviving wallpaper shows the sisters were in keeping with the times around 1907.
The back rooms where the sisters lived are badly damaged.

A mop fashioned out of old socks and twine remains in the back room where the sisters left it.
Hannah McGovern in the McGovern Store front room, circa 1929

Mary McGovern in the McGovern Store front room, circa 1929
Much of the McGovern sisters’ merchandise was long out of date
This intricately beaded jacket was probably from Mrs. O. D. French’s original inventory.

Much of the merchandise remains in its original packaging.
Merchandise remains neatly folded and stacked on shelves.

This cardboard mannequin hangs in front of a ribbon display.
The Bazaar Advertisement 1912.

The Bazaar Advertisement 1913.

The Bazaar Advertisements 1913
APPENDIX J

Robert Vickers Company Advertisements 1912 - 1930

Robert Vickers Advertisements 1930

Robert Vickers Advertisement 1929
APPENDIX K

Jacob Albright Advertisements 1912 – 1930

Jacob Albright Advertisements 1930

Jacob Albright Advertisement 1929

Jacob Albright Advertisement 1920

Jacob Albright Advertisement 1919
Don’t Offer a Reward

Don’t offer a reward for the best dressed man in town.
Just step into our store and select one of our world famous

Suits for Men

You’ll save your money and have the reward, because there are no better suits made than those carried in this house.
Our brands of clothing are known the world over for their excellence in material, style, fit and finish. These popular brands of clothing are worn by the most discriminating dressers everywhere.

We want you to get acquainted with our clothing.

J. ALBRIGHT
THE CLOTHER

VIRGINIA CITY MONTANA

Style and Quality in Men’s Clothing

In All Good Company

We wish you to know these essentials in men’s clothing to have, we believe that we can depend upon receiving a very large percentage of your patronage.
We came to the realization long ago that the only way to win your confidence and patronage was through the merits of the clothing we offered you.

Today we challenge the world to offer clothing of an High a Quality at a Low a Price.
We want the man of the community to come and see for themselves. We won’t ask you to buy—just come and see the new fashions and the variety.

J. ALBRIGHT

VIRGINIA CITY MONTANA

Fall and Winter Clothes
A Treat for Value Lovers

I cannot tell you about my immense stock in this advertisement, but if you contemplate buying a suit or overcoat for this fall and winter, I cordially invite you to visit my store, look my stock through, get my prices, and then you will be convinced that I am the clothing man, in both quality and price.
In my store you will find Boots and Shoes, Hats and Caps, Gloves and Mitten, Underclothing and Rubbers, Overalls and Jumpers, Socks and Ties, Handkerchiefs and Scarfs, Blankets and Comforters, Trunks and Suit Cases.

J. ALBRIGHT
VIRGINIA CITY MONTANA

YOU may travel over the world for your clothes, but you will not find anything better than we’ll sell you right here in Virginia City.

Hart Schaffner & Marx

Clothes are the best in the world; there are no other clothes made equal to them.

Every fabric in wool; tailoring of the highest class known; perfect style.

Raincoats, overcoats, top coats all fabrics and styles.

$10.00 to $90.00. Hats in all the new models $20 to $40.

This store is the home of Hart Schaffner & Marx clothes.

J. ALBRIGHT

Virginia City, Montana

Jacob Albright Advertisements 1919

Jacob Albright Advertisement 1919

Jacob Albright Advertisement 1913
APPENDIX L

Handley’s Resources of Madison County Business Listings, 1872

James Handley’s *The Resources of Madison County* was a promotional pamphlet and guide written for the purpose of informing prospective settlers and investors about the resources that Madison County, Montana, had to offer. In 1872, Virginia City was the territorial capital and the largest settlement in Madison County. In addition to listing businesses, Handley’s directory provided descriptions of the territory, the major settlements, quartz lodes, placer mining districts, valleys showing great promise for farming and milling, routes of travel and social organizations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorneys</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry N. Blake</td>
<td>Attorney and Counselor at Law: Will Practice in all Courts of Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James E. Callaway</td>
<td>Attorney at Law: Will Practice in the Courts of Record in Montana and give prompt attention to all business intrusted to his care. Particular attention given to Collections, Drafting Deeds, Mortgages, Contracts, Powers of Attorney, Etc. Etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. A. Hosmer</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbur Fiske Sanders</td>
<td>Attorney and Counselor at Law: Will Practice in all the Courts of Record in Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Word</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bankers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boots and Shoes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. P. Armstrong</td>
<td>Manufacturer, Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Boots and Shoes, A Complete Stock Kept Constantly On Hand: All Country Orders Promptly Attended to. All Goods Sold by Me are Warranted as Represented, and Satisfaction Guaranteed in All Cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacroix &amp; Parker</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes to Order: Best Place to Get Custom-Made Boots and Shoes in the City. A Perfect Fit Guaranteed. Have just received a SUPPLY OF CORK SOLES and are prepared to get up to order all styles of Cork-soled Boots for winter. Their material is all of the first quality. If you want a fashionable and neat-fitting boot give them a call.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breweries and Bakeries</strong></td>
<td>Virginia City Brewery and Dealers in Brewers' Supplies: We manufacture a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reichter</td>
<td>prime article of beer, which we deliver throughout the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Mannheim</td>
<td>Montana Brewery and Bakery: Families and Bachelors will find it to their advantage to go to this popular place for their Breads, Pies, Cakes, and All Kinds of Confectionery. The Saloon is always supplied with the best of Liquors, Wines and Cigars. Lager Beer from the celebrated Montana Brewery always on hand, which will be delivered to all parts of the city and county, in bottles or kegs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herndon &amp; Donaldson</td>
<td>Builders: Will contract for work in the city or country. Keep for sale, Doors and Sash; also building paper, a thick, solid pasteboard, a good substitute for plastering, at half the cost. We keep a Lumber Yard in connection with our shop. All our work is warranted to give satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigars and Tobacco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Warmington</td>
<td>&quot;Capital&quot; Cigar Store: Wholesale and Retail Dealer in California and Havana Cigars, Virginia Smoking and Chewing Tobaccos, Pipes, Stems, Etc. I buy my Goods directly from the manufacturers, FOR CASH, and can therefore sell as low as the lowest. All Goods warranted as represented. Orders from the country promptly attended to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. Corbett</td>
<td>Civil and Mining Engineer and Practical Surveyor: Deputy United States Mineral Surveyor for the First District of Montana, and County Surveyor of Madison County. Being supplied with accurate and reliable instruments, and having had an extended practice and experience, is fully prepared at all times to execute surveys of Mineral Lodes and Placer Mining Claims, and the preparations of all papers required in application for Patents from the U. S. Strict Accuracy guaranteed with reasonable charges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. W. DeLacy</td>
<td>Civil Engineer, Surveyor, Draughtsman and Land Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and Furnishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Elling</td>
<td>Dealer in Clothing and Furnishing Goods: Hats, Caps and California Blankets, Canvass and Hydraulic Hose for Mining Purposes. Also a Large Assortment of Rubber Boots, Coats, etc. Great Bargains Offered to Wholesale Buyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. J. Walter</td>
<td>Overland Clothing Store Keeps constantly on hand a large and well selected stock of Gents' and Boys' Clothing, Hats, Caps, Gents' Furnishing Goods, California Blankets, etc. Which they offer at prices to defy competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druggists and Apothecaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levinius Daems</td>
<td>City Drug Store: Wholesale and Retail Druggist and Apothecary, Keeps Constantly on Hand Drugs, Chemicals, Perfumery and Fancy Articles. Also Keeps constantly on hand, a complete assortment of Patent Medicines, at the City Drug Store, Special Attention Paid to Compounding Prescriptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. W. Morris</td>
<td>Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Drugs, Chemicals, Patent Medicines, Paints, Oils, Window Glass, Stationery, Perfumery, Toilet and Fancy Articles, Coal Oil Lamps and Fixtures, And everything usually kept in a first-class Drug House. All of which I offer to the trade as low as they can be bought in the Territory. Physicians prescriptions carefully compounded at all hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dry Goods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Freight and Express</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isador &amp; M. L. Strasburger  Wholesale and Retailer Dealers in Staple and Fancy Dry Goods: Our Goods are First Class in Every Particular. Special Attention Given to Filling Orders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patton &amp; Lambrecht  Wholesale and Retail Grocers: Dealers in Every Variety of Groceries, Provisions, Miners' Tools, Hardware, Tinware, Queensware, Cutlery, Woodenwares, Iron, Steel, Horse Shoes and Horse Nails, and all kinds of Wagon Timber, Sash, Window Glass, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Brothers  Jobbers and Dealers by the Original Package in all kinds of Groceries, California Flour, Can Fruits, Dried Fruits, China Rice, Wooden &amp; Willow Ware, Brooms, Nuts &amp; Confectionery, Wines &amp; Brandies. We have in store, direct from the Pacific Coast, a large and choice selection of Japan and China Teas; also the Celebrated Cutting Brand of California Canned Goods. Cutting's Oregon Champagne Cider, in Pints and Quarts. We sell only by the package, and country traders will do well to give us a call.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Russell &amp; Company  Wholesale Grocers and Jobbers in Wines, Liquors and Cigars. Have just received and will continue to receive each week a large invoice of GOODS FROM THE EAST. They buy for cash from first hands, which enables them to give retail dealers in the city and surrounding camps Greater Inducements than any other House in the Territory. Cash Advances made on Consignments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. S. Screws  &quot;Shoo Fly&quot; Grocery: Dealer in Groceries, Provisions, Miners' Tools, Etc. Etc., Keeps constantly on hand a general assortment of goods in his line, which he is selling at the very lowest cash figures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. F. Stoer  Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Groceries, Liquors, Tobaccos, and Produce of All Kinds. Keeps a well-assorted stock always on hand. The Farmers' and Miners' trade made a specialty. Buys WHEAT, OATS, BARLEY, PORK, FLOUR, POTATOES, BUTTER, and PRODUCE of all kinds, and pays the VERY HIGHEST MARKET PRICE for the same. He is at his old stand. Give him a call before buying your goods or selling your grain or produce.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harness and Saddlery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eastern-made Harness, nor uses any but oak-tanned leather in manufacturing harness. Has also always on sale every style of California-made Saddles; also California plain and fancy Bridles, Canteeners, Saddle Blankets, Whips, Spurs and Halters. He is also prepared to do all kinds of Repairing to Harness and Saddles, at very low rates, and defies competition in the Harness and Saddlery line. Give him a call.

**Hotels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. R. Conway, Proprietress</td>
<td>Crescent Hotel: Pleasant Rooms, Good Beds, and the Choicest Edibles the Market Affords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Wakefield, Proprietor</td>
<td>Planters' House: Superior Accommodations in Every Respect Offered to the Traveling Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. J. Farrel, Proprietor</td>
<td>Belleview Station: Farmers and Travelers, Attention! Having purchased the property known as Eight Mile House, on the county road to Madison Valley, and thoroughly refitted the premises as a first-class stopping place, I desire to inform the public that I will hereafter be found at Belleview Station (old 8-mile house) ready to entertain the traveling public with good beds, palatable meals and something to refresh the inner man. Parties desirous of purchasing FINE AMERICAN STOCK consisting of suckling Colts, young Stallions, fancy matched, work and carriage teams, and No. 1 saddle horses, cannot fail to be suited on an inspection of my numerous herd of fine horses. I shall, for the benefit of travelers, keep sleighs for crossing the divide, which can be had on moderate terms. A choice stock of liquors and cigars will be kept behind the Bar of the Belleview at all times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jewelers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N. T. Butler</td>
<td>Manufacturer of Jewelry, Dealer in American and Foreign Watches, Yankee Clocks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. A. Pease</td>
<td>Jeweler and Dealer in Watches, Clocks, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Land Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. H. Lott</td>
<td>Probate Judge and Land Agent. Land Office &amp; General Land Agency. I have supplied myself with maps, and am prepared to attend all land entries for Southern Montana. Particular attention given to all business connected with the entries of mineral and agricultural lands, and general conveyancing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. B. Lyman</td>
<td>Late Register Land Office: To Settlers and Miners who Desire to Acquire Title to Their Claims Upon the Public Lands. I have established a Public Land Agency here, and make a specialty of any and all questions and business pertaining to the Public Lands or Reserved Railroad Lands. Possessing and extended and intimate acquaintance with the Public Land Laws, Rules and Regulations, and familiarity with the Land Office Records, and long practice as Counselor and Attorney at Law, I will now attend to any business for claimants before the local or general Land Office, relating to Claiming or Entry of Agricultural of Mineral Lands, Homesteads and Railroad Lands, much of which business may be transacted without personal attendance at the Land Office by the claimants. Contested cases will receive my personal and strict attention. For any information desired in reference to Public Lands, apply in person or by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livery Stables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Thexton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Stables: Horses Left at this Stable Receive Plenty of Feed and Best of Care and Attention: Charges Moderate, Number One Turnouts Furnished at Short Notice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George F. Cope, Proprietor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Montanian: News, Book and Job Printing Establishment. Subscription Price of Paper: $8.00 per year; $5.00 for six months. Where subscriptions are paid in advance, a States (Weekly) newspaper will be furnished gratis. The best Advertising Medium in Montana Territory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physicians and Surgeons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Mussigbrod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S. Examining Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. C. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician and Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. T. Yager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician and Surgeon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tanneries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. W. Morris, Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer Tannery: A Choice Quality of Leather for all purposes is constantly manufactured at this tannery. The Leather has taken the First Premium at different Exhibitions for Superiority. Orders from all parts of the territory and from abroad will receive prompt attention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printers and Engravers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis and Valentine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printers &amp; Engravers: All Country Orders Executed in the Best Manner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purchasing Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William B. Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing Agent, San Francisco. Merchants of Montana Buy Your Goods from San Francisco! Have a buyer who is acquainted with the market--then order as you want. Satisfactory arrangements for buying can be made with Wm. B. Lake who is always thoroughly posted in the markets, and will attend to buying GOODS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS for Merchants, at 2 1/2 percent commission, and guarantee to buy as low as can be bought west of the Rocky Mountains. Farmers, Families, Hotel Keepers, or anyone else who want Goods in LARGE OR SMALL QUANTITIES, can get them ON THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TERMS by sending to Wm. B. Lake. I am satisfied from the experience I have had in buying goods for INTERIOR MERCHANTS and others for several years, and continuance of their patronage and approval of the system, that it is one which meets with the general approval of country people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sporting Goods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Brundage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting Goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage and Express Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gilmer &amp; Salisbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana Stage Line Carrying the U. S. Mails and Wells, Fargo &amp; Co's Express Daily from Corinne Depot, C. P. R. R., to Virginia City, Helena, Deer Lodge and all other points in the Territory. Quick time and reduced fare. Tickets for sale at all principle ticket offices in the east.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Stationery and Books   |

<p>| 256 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. U. Driggs</td>
<td>Stoves and Hardware: Keeps on hand for sale at the LOWEST MARKET PRICES a large variety of Heating and Cooking Stoves. Also the largest and best assortment of Tin, Sheet Iron Ware, Brass and Copper Ware, Zinc, Bar, Lead and Lead Pipe, Cutlery, Silver Plated, Glass and Queen's Ware. The great Epicure Broilers, and the celebrated Brilliant Burner. Particular attention paid to Job work. Will be executed on short notice and in the neatest style, and warranted to give satisfaction. Quick Sales and Small Profits!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX M

Pacific Coast Business Directories Virginia City Listings, 1867 – 1915

### 1867

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armitage, Jessee</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, J. A.</td>
<td>Bootmaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, William</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barret, A. H.</td>
<td>Superintendent of Public Instruction / Governor's Private Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassett, J.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bears and Co.</td>
<td>Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becker, F. W.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Adelphi House (Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and Co., L. E.</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boice, A. R. and Co.</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocers and Commission Merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond, N. J.</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandt, George</td>
<td>Proprietor, Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bressler, S.</td>
<td>Liquors, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce, John P.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Montana Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler and Co.</td>
<td>Watchmakers and Jewelers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle, H. M.</td>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castne, J. M.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Idaho Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapin, J. B.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Planters House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiles, William H.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claggett and Co.</td>
<td>Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark and Mitchell</td>
<td>Furniture, Action and Commission Merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton and Hale</td>
<td>Druggists and Apothecaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochran, J. F.</td>
<td>House and Sign Painter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cody, John</td>
<td>Merchant Tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, E. A.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and Co.</td>
<td>Clothiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conway, M.</td>
<td>Grocer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooke and Newell</td>
<td>Auctioneers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooke, Justis</td>
<td>Auctioneer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell, F. C.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowan, Daniel</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creighton and Ohle</td>
<td>Commission and General Merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daems, L.</td>
<td>Physician and Druggist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis and Thoroughman</td>
<td>Attorneys at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Profession/Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Hausel and Co.</td>
<td>Storage and Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doughty, T. H.</td>
<td>Metallurgist and Mining Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas and Reed</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farwell and Co.</td>
<td>Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster and Culver</td>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frary, L. W.</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibson, James</td>
<td>Postmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert and Richter</td>
<td>Brewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert, D.</td>
<td>Assayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin and Mahan</td>
<td>Cigars, Tobacco, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith and Thompson</td>
<td>Contractors and Builders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salomon Hanauer and Co.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna and Co.</td>
<td>Groceries and Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Hellman and Co.</td>
<td>Gents Furnishing Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hersfield and Co.</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humamann, J.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Billiards Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holladay's Overland Mail and Express Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holter, A. M.</td>
<td>Lumber Dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and Co.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull, J. J.</td>
<td>Liquors and Billiards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussey, Dahler and Co.</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson and Magee</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyde and Peck</td>
<td>Storage and Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George W. Hynson and Co.</td>
<td>Storage and Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irwin, George W.</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James, M.</td>
<td>Merchant Tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jameson, H.</td>
<td>Merchant Tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, W. H.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Delevan House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice, A. L.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinna, John</td>
<td>Hardware and Mining Tools, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kleser and Schwartze</td>
<td>Proprietors, Billiards Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, J. M.</td>
<td>Groceries and Provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langford, N. P.</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LeBeau, J. B.</td>
<td>Manufacturing Jewlery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mannheim, John</td>
<td>Proprietor, Montana Brewery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marston, Lea F.</td>
<td>Watchmaker and Jewler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx and Heidenheimer</td>
<td>Groceries and Provisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation/Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathews, H. L.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormick, Ohle and Co.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCullough, J. L.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMatch, W. L.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merk and Co.</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming, J. H.</td>
<td>Groceries, Stationary, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana Democrat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana Post</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore, F. V. P.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musenbrocht, M.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nolan and Weary</td>
<td>Bankers and Assayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. J. Oliver and Company</td>
<td>Proprietors, Oliver's Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Paitras and Co.</td>
<td>Blacksmiths and Wagonmakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peck, L. S.</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petchner, Frank</td>
<td>Confectioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfoutenhauser and Kibler</td>
<td>Butchers and Purveyors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfouts and Russell</td>
<td>Wholesale Grocers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piquette, Edward</td>
<td>News Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renshaw and Co.</td>
<td>Furniture Dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritchie and Lovell</td>
<td>Attorneys at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockfellow, John S.</td>
<td>Commission Merchant and Wholesale Grocer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers, W. H.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Missouri House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell, T. V.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Sabolsky and Co.</td>
<td>Billiard Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shappel, B.</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shonmaker and Stadler</td>
<td>Butchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpson, A.</td>
<td>Manufacturer, Fur and Buckskin Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slater, John S.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavin, Barnard and Co.</td>
<td>Wines and Liquors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, A. B. C.</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer, Harrison and Co.</td>
<td>Lumber Dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford, W. H.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, F. F.</td>
<td>Cigars and Fancy Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strasburger and Co.</td>
<td>Fancy Dry Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. W. Tilton and Co.</td>
<td>Books, Stationary, etc. / Proprietor, Montana Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toole, Leech and Co.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetter, John G.</td>
<td>Boot and Shoemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Wark and Co.</td>
<td>Bootmakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weston, D. R.</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitford, O. B.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word and Spratt</td>
<td>Attorneys at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yager, E. T.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1878

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Armstrong, W. P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Baker, O.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Blake, Henry N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Clark, George H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Dahler, Charles L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Davis, M. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Deyarmon, Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Edsall, A. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Elling, Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Farrell, Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>French and Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Gilbert, Henry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Harrington and Baker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Herndon and Donaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Hinchman and Crockett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Ketchum, W. S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Largey, P. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Morris, W. W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Morris, William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Muffley, Theodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, W. P.</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, F. K.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, T. T.</td>
<td>Surveyor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett, E. H.</td>
<td>Blacksmith and Machinist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake, Henry N.</td>
<td>Associate Justice Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake, H. N.</td>
<td>District Judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buford, S. R.</td>
<td>General Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Mrs. N. F.</td>
<td>Jewelry, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. M. Cogswell and Sister</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark, G. H.</td>
<td>Furniture and Undertaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crockett, S. H.</td>
<td>Saddlery and Harness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaway, J. E.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deimling, F. C.</td>
<td>Postmaster and Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglass, William</td>
<td>Variety and Notions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denn, Joseph</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elling, Henry</td>
<td>Banker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1880 – 1881

Bankruptcy

Patton and Lambrecht

Groceries and Hardware

Pease, H. A.

County Coroner

Pfouts, William G.

Groceries

Raymond Brothers

Groceries

Schratt, J. G.

Territorial District Attorney, First District

Smith, O. G.

Probate Judge

Strausburger, I.

Dry Goods

The Madisonian

Tilton and Barber

Groceries

Vetter, John G.

Boots and Shoes

Warmington, Harry

Drygoods, Sewing Machines and Druggist

Wheat, G. B.

County Assessor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French, O. D.</td>
<td>Grocer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiler, Anthon</td>
<td>Proprietor, Glasbey House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galen, H. F.</td>
<td>Stage Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genzberger and Kohlberg</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasbey House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gohn, George</td>
<td>Meat Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhood, Bohm and Co.</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington and Baker</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herndon and Donnelson</td>
<td>Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. J. Herring</td>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinchman</td>
<td>Druggist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howell, S. H.</td>
<td>Agent, Overland Stage Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohls, J.</td>
<td>Wagon Maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, A. B.</td>
<td>Surveyor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchum, W. S.</td>
<td>Saddlery and Harness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largey, P. A.</td>
<td>Hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madisonian, The</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris, J. W.</td>
<td>Grocer and Liquors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris, W. W.</td>
<td>Druggist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morritz, G.</td>
<td>Barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyer, Herman</td>
<td>Groceries, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muffly, Theo.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law / Clerk, First District Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Creek Mills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metzel, Alex</td>
<td>Stock Dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, J. P.</td>
<td>Soap Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Donnell, H.</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patton and Lambrecht</td>
<td>Grocers and Hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfouts, W. G.</td>
<td>Groceries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfiel, J. H.</td>
<td>Wagon Maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pease, H. A.</td>
<td>Jeweler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodgers and McCarry</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Brothers</td>
<td>Grocers and Breeders of Blooded Stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond, Harrington and Co.</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond, M. H.</td>
<td>Physician and Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosendtein, H. D.</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenstein, Sol</td>
<td>Druggist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, I. C.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spratt, James G.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer, J. A.</td>
<td>Groceries and Grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strasburger, I.</td>
<td>Dry Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanland, J. H.</td>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosensteinhausen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's Hospital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford, Mrs.</td>
<td>Dry Goods and Millinery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thexton, George</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilton and Barber</td>
<td>Grocers and Stationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner, C. W.</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talbott, Dr. A.</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. O. Trask and Son</td>
<td>Sawmill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vetter, John G.</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wekken, Henry</td>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimmer, J.</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmington, H.</td>
<td>Dry Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, William</td>
<td>Meat Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warfield, C. P.</td>
<td>Tinsmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward, Samuel</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yager, E. T.</td>
<td>Physician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1886 – 1887

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adkinson, F.</td>
<td>Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker and Gilbert</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. W. Barber and Co.</td>
<td>Druggists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber, O. B.</td>
<td>Groceries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett, E. H.</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett, Alden J.</td>
<td>Banker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake, Henry N.</td>
<td>District Attorney and City Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buford, S. R.</td>
<td>General Merchandise / Agent, Virginia City and Bozeman Stage Line / Agent Wells Fargo and Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttermore, W. A.</td>
<td>Fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callaway, J. E.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburn, J. C.</td>
<td>Judge, District One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conway, J. R.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Madison House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook, R. T.</td>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deyarmon, Thomas</td>
<td>Editor and Proprietor, The Madisonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deimling, F. C.</td>
<td>Notary Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deimling, Mary</td>
<td>Books and Stationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elling, Henry</td>
<td>Banker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elling, Knight and Buford</td>
<td>Stoves and Hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrell, T. J.</td>
<td>Auctioneer and Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French, Mrs. O. D.</td>
<td>Millinery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galbraith, W. J.</td>
<td>Judge, District Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert, H. S.</td>
<td>Brewery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gohn, George</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Harrington and Co.</td>
<td>Bankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper, Joseph H.</td>
<td>U. S. Claims Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison, Theo.</td>
<td>Proprietor, Pullet Springs Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herndon, J. M.</td>
<td>Furniture, Carpenter and Builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickman, R. O.</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Barclay</td>
<td>County Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohls, Julius</td>
<td>Wagonmaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langhorne, S. W.</td>
<td>Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madisonian, The</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mead, Charles W.</td>
<td>County Surveyor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, Henry</td>
<td>Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muffly, Theo.</td>
<td>Attorney at Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble, Charles G.</td>
<td>Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albright, J.</td>
<td>Clothing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buford Mercantile Co.</td>
<td>Grocery, Lumber and Implements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clem, J. Z.</td>
<td>Confectionary, Stationary and Cigars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley and Kohls</td>
<td>Garage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy Power and Company</td>
<td>Electric Lights, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elling Hardware Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elling State Bank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emslie, James</td>
<td>Contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis, W. A.</td>
<td>Dry Goods and Boys Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Brewing Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herndon, R. R.</td>
<td>Undertaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGovern, Hannah</td>
<td>Dry Goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1915
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business/Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank McKeen and Co.</td>
<td>Saloon and Restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison State Bank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madisonian Publishing Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Meat Market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikalson, C. R.</td>
<td>Jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moritz, G.</td>
<td>Notions, Cigars, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel, R. F.</td>
<td>Hotel, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. L. Potter and Co.</td>
<td>Saloon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. W. Rank and Co.</td>
<td>Drugs and Stationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauerbier, Charles F.</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Publishing Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vickers, Robert</td>
<td>Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots and Shoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>