

GARNET

M O N T A N A



Montana's most intact ghost town wasn't built to last. Enterprising hardrock miners were more interested in extracting the riches below ground than building above. As a result, buildings grew quickly, most lacking foundations. They were small and easy to heat.

Yet, more than a century after Garnet emerged in 1895, remnants of the town stand, hidden high in the Garnet Mountain Range east of Missoula. It was named for the semi-precious ruby-colored stone found in the area.

Garnet was a good place to live. The surrounding mountains were rich in gold-bearing quartz. There was a school. The crime rate was low. Liquor flowed freely in the town's many saloons. The bawdy houses did brisk business. Missoula and Deer Lodge were just close enough for necessary supplies.

Thirty years before Garnet's heyday, placer miners discovered gold in the same mountain range. Placer mining took only an investment of a gold pan, rocker, or sluice box.

Placer mining of gold or other minerals is done by washing the sand, gravel, etc. with running water; but by 1870 most area placer mining was no longer profitable. Although miners had located gold-bearing quartz veins, the lack of decent roads and refined extracting and smelting techniques made further development unfeasible at that time. Silver mines elsewhere drew the miners out of the Garnets.

In 1893, the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act set off a panic throughout the region. Silver mines closed, and within weeks, thousands of unemployed miners were on the move. This event, combined with improved technology, led to a renewed interest in gold mining in the Garnets. Miners began a steady trickle back.

At the head of First Chance Gulch in 1895, Dr. Armistead Mitchell erected a stamp mill to crush local ore. Around it grew the town of Garnet. The town was originally named Mitchell, but in 1897 became known as Garnet.

Soon after Mitchell erected his mill, Sam Ritchey hit a rich vein of ore in his Nancy Hanks mine just west of the town. The "boom" began. By January 1898 nearly 1,000 people resided in Garnet. The school had 41 students. Four stores, four hotels, three

livery stables, two barber shops, a union hall, a school, a butcher shop, a candy shop, a doctor's office, an assay office, and thirteen saloons comprised the town. Eager miners and entrepreneurs built quickly and without planning. A haphazard community resulted. Most of the buildings stood on existing or future mining claims. About twenty mines operated.

After 1900 many mine owners leased their mines out, the gold having become scarcer and harder to mine. The Nancy Hanks yielded about \$300,000 worth of gold. An estimated \$950,000 was extracted from all the mines in Garnet by 1917.

By 1905 many of the mines were abandoned and the town's population had shrunk to about 150. A fire in the town's business district in 1912 destroyed many commercial buildings and dealt a death blow to the remnants of Garnet. The entry of the United States into World War I in 1917 drew most remaining residents away to defense-related jobs. Cabins were abandoned, furnishings included, as though residents were merely vacationing. Frank A. Davey still ran the store, however, and the hotel stood intact.

In 1934 when President Roosevelt raised gold prices from \$16 to \$35 an ounce, Garnet revived. A new wave of miners moved into abandoned cabins and began re-working the mines and dumps. By 1936, 250 people lived here. During this era, miners constructed several new log cabins.

World War II drew the population away again. Wartime restrictions on the use of dynamite made mining almost impossible. The post office closed for the last time in 1942. Only a few hardy residents remained, including Frank Davey. Soon after his death in 1947, the store's contents were auctioned off. Much remained however, and souvenir hunters soon stripped the town not only of loose items, but of doors, woodwork, wallpaper, and even the hotel stairway.

The future of this historic town now depends on the work of volunteers and contributions from the public.

#1 The Dahl Saloon, often called "The Joint" by locals, was built by Ole Dahl in 1938. It stands on the site of a log saloon/restaurant that was run in the late 1800's by Mel Stairs. When Mel left, Charlie Davis, a teamster who owned a livery stable and drove ore wagons, took over. His saloon was lit by showy but dangerous gas lamps that resembled slide trombones. However, it was a fire that burned down the saloon, not his gas lamps.

Ole Dahl's Saloon operated until the middle of the 1960's. It was run on electricity generated from the Dahl's electric light plant. It is now the *site of Garnet's Visitor Center*.

#2 Kelly's Saloon is a two story frame building constructed before 1898. The owner at the time was Robert Moore and it was called the "Bob Moore Saloon." On October 21, 1898, L.P. Kelly purchased the saloon from Moore for \$1,500. Part interest in the business was sold to Thomas Fraser and it became known as the "Kelly and Fraser Saloon." In 1907, Nellie Fraser sold it to Ward Mulleneux who resold it to the Montana Liquor Company in 1908, but Kelly continued to operate the saloon. It was one of the thirteen bars in Garnet during the "boom period" that offered male oriented entertainment.

#3 The exact founding date of Frank A. Davey's Store is unknown; however, it was one of the earliest in Garnet, built about 1898. Typical of western general stores of the time, Davey's Store sold dry goods and shoes in the front, groceries and canned goods further back, and meat in the rear. The store boasted a hardware section, an office that weighed gold, and in the 1910's functioned as a post office. The meat and other perishables were stored in an ice-house which also contained three secret compartments built into the back wall. There gold would safely await shipment down the hill. The annex was added to the east side of the store to keep a supply of essentials such as flour and sugar. These items were only sold in emergency situations, a policy that angered many of the townspeople. Frank Davey operated the store until 1947. Before moving to Garnet, Davey worked in the grocery department of the Missoula Mercantile which is now the Bon Marche. Davey had received the patent for the Garnet Claim, so a majority of the town was built on his land. But it never made him rich. When he died in 1947 while out walking to one of his mining claims, it was the Elk's organization that buried him because his assets could not cover the cost. His belongings, along with the store items, were auctioned off in November of 1947. This officially marked the passing of Garnet into a ghost town.

#4 The J.K. Wells Hotel was erected in the winter of 1897 and was the most impressive building in Garnet. Mrs. Wells designed it after one she owned in Bearmouth. With its elaborate woodwork, it was equal to the luxurious buildings in Helena. Before weather and vandals took their toll, one would have entered through beautifully carved doors with stained glass

windows. To the left was the ladies parlor, on the right stood the hotel office, and moving forward the guest would enter the grand dining room. Such events as the Grande Masquerade, the Hard Times Ball, and the St. Patrick's Day Calico Ball were held in this room.

Although this was a very modern building, there were no plaster walls or insulation. The walls were covered by cloth backed paper. Heating a large building required two stoves in the dining room. Upstairs rooms were heated by rising warm air. Access to these rooms was by an oak staircase. Miners who could not afford a private room would rent floor space on the third floor. Lines on the floor divided it into spaces for the men to lay out their bedrolls under the sky lights.

The outhouse was behind the hotel and could be reached by descending a few steps from the second floor. The interior of the lower regions was heavily white-washed for the ultimate in sanitary conditions.

After the Wells Hotel closed in the 30's, Frank Davey moved into the kitchen. Davey maintained several rooms for visiting friends, but in unkept rooms mushrooms grew out of the still-made beds. When Davey died in 1947, everything left in the hotel was sold at auction.

#5 This is the *site of the Miner's Union Hall*, completed in the summer of 1898. The Hall boasted one of the finest dance floors in Montana, made from maple spring board. The stage had a grand piano and an Edison cylinder phonograph

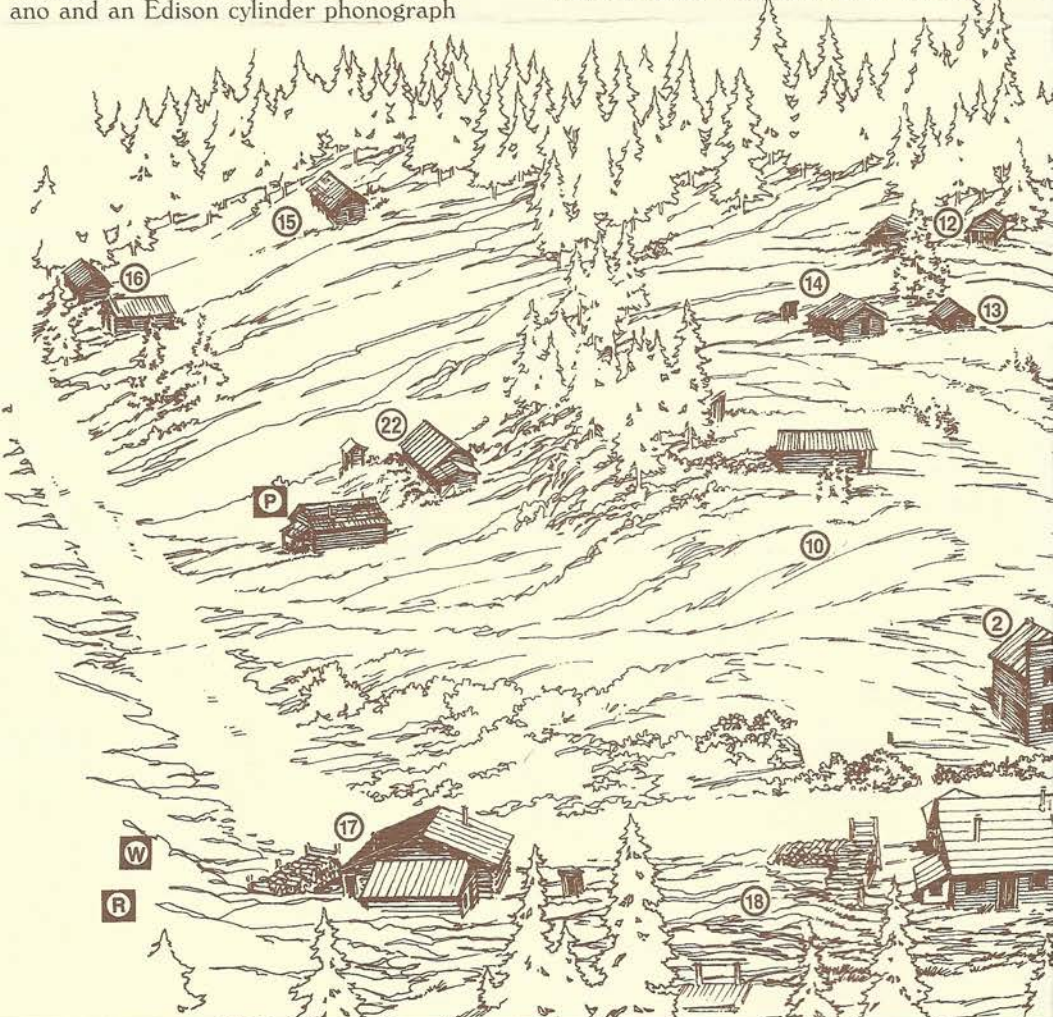
when no one was up to playing. The ceiling was high, with flags and buntings hanging from the rafters. Community dances every Saturday night and three or four social functions a week were held there.

The union in Garnet was strong and dealt effectively with mine owners when negotiating demands, so there were no major strikes or labor disputes in the Garnet area. No one worked in the Garnet mines unless they were a member of the union.

#6 The jail was erected in 1897 but never received much use. During the early days there were shootings and problems with claim jumpers, but people generally would work out these messes without using the jail. Supposedly the only person to be seen in the jail was Frank Kearns, a miner who killed someone's dog when he was drunk. It wasn't unusual for someone to be carrying a rifle in town but they were only used for hunting game - whether in season or not. In the 1960's Mr. Stoddard lived in the jail while collecting weather data.

#7 This building is now *privately owned*. It was built in 1938 and served as the Garnet School. The original Garnet School was constructed near this site in 1897, facing the road where there was a high footbridge leading across the gulch.

#8 The blacksmith shop opened between 1896 and 1900. The best blacksmith in town was Billy Liberty. He made horse-shoes and common forged items as well as ore wagons. Billy worked for the mines



twofold by also driving ore wagons to the mills. He also drove the stage to Bearmouth for Frank Davey in the early 1920's.

#9 This log barn was built between 1896 and 1900 and used to be a stable. There is a loft above the stables for storing feed for the horses.

#10 This is the *site* of a false front building that was built between 1896 and 1900. It was a carpenter's shop owned by Samuel Adams until 1927 and later became Link's Cigar Store. The stagecoach would stop here on its trips through Garnet. The building collapsed in the 1970's.

#11 Built between 1896 and 1900, the Honeymoon cabin was constructed by a miner on Frank Davey's land. Davey acquired the cabin when the miner left and he began letting newlyweds live in it rent free in 1917. They could stay until a new couple got married and needed a place to stay.

#12 These cabins were the homes of miners. They built their cabins quickly using whatever material was most easily obtained so more time could be put into mining. Logs notched at the corners fit closer together requiring less chinking to fill the spaces. Chinking material came from whatever was on hand, usually mud, grass and moss. Despite this attempt to keep heat in, the cabins were still very cold in the winter.

The board roofs leaked badly, so later corrugated iron was used to make them more waterproof. Glass windows were so expensive that putty was used to put broken pieces back in the hole. Occasionally miners put too much wood into their woodstoves, causing them to become red-hot. Several cabins were known to have burned down in this manner.

#13 The Post Office was built between 1896 and 1900 as a miner's cabin. In the 30's, Nels Seadin was a Postmaster when he moved into the Adams's house. After his death in 1939, Walter Moore took over.

#14 The Adams house was built between 1896 and 1900. It was among the nicer homes in Garnet, although constructed from logs, not boards, as it appears. A covered passageway led to the woodshed and outhouse. Mrs. (Jennie) Adams filled her parlor with plants, which further added to its fine appearance. They lived there from 1904 to 1927. Mrs. Adams had the Post Office in the house until 1910. A second family Nels & Lena Seadin moved in in 1927.

#15 The Wills cabin was built by the Hall brothers in the early 1930's instead of the late 1800's since it doesn't have the board-on-board roof typical of the earlier cabins. *This cabin can be rented in the winter.*

#16 This cabin was a rented residence of the Joseph & Catherine Fitzgerald family. They later built a permanent residence up Dublin Gulch in 1911. Their son, Frank Fitzgerald, currently occupies this home in Dublin Gulch. Joseph operated a saloon with a rooming house upstairs on main street until it burned in the fire of 1912.

#17 The Bill Hebner cabin was built in 1949 and now serves as the guard's quarters. *Please do not enter.* Hebner and his son planned to live there but never did. They had rebuilt the Mussigbrod mill which ran for a short time.

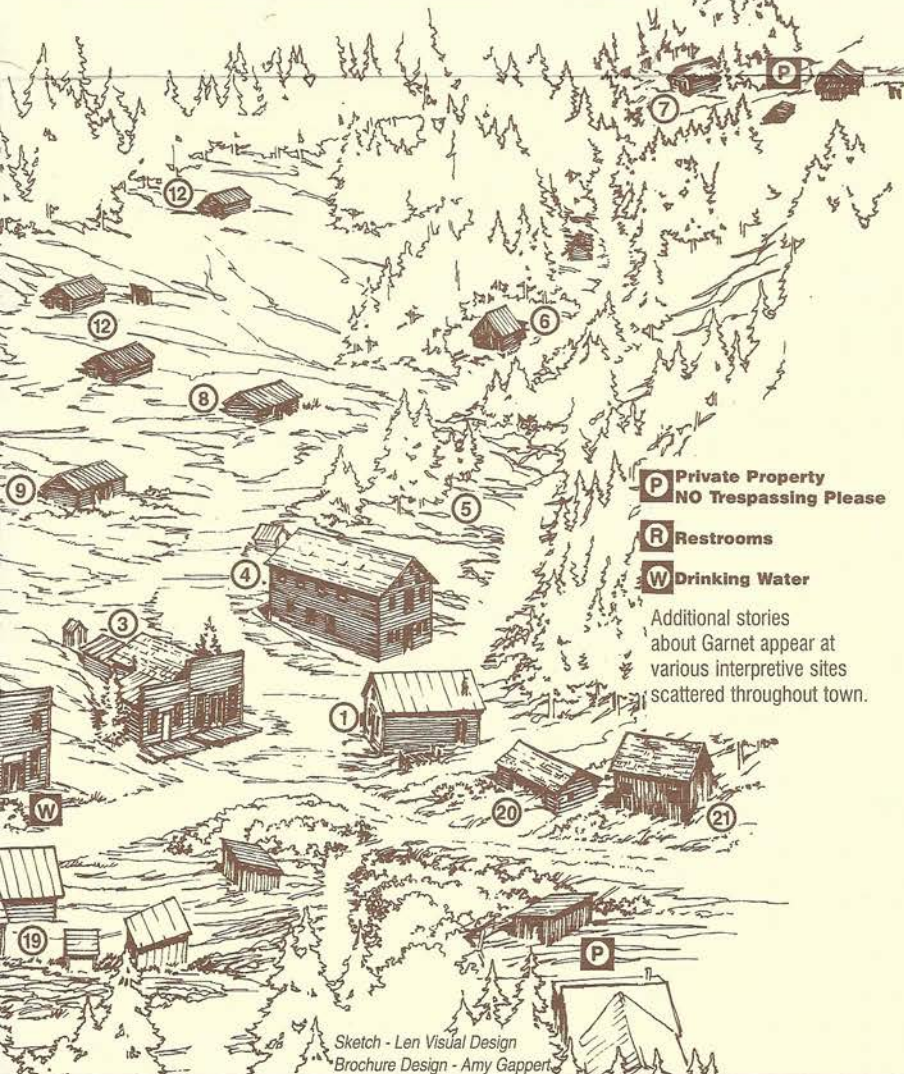
#18 This is the site of H.M. Stringham's general grocery store constructed in 1897. Originally it was called Adams and Shipler Grocery. Samuel Adams operated the store until the early 1900's. Stringham bought it and began spreading out by delivering goods. He would load his wagon and travel the rough mountain trails to miners who didn't want to leave their claims unattended. Stringham stopped doing business in the 30's and in 1971 the store was destroyed by arsonists.

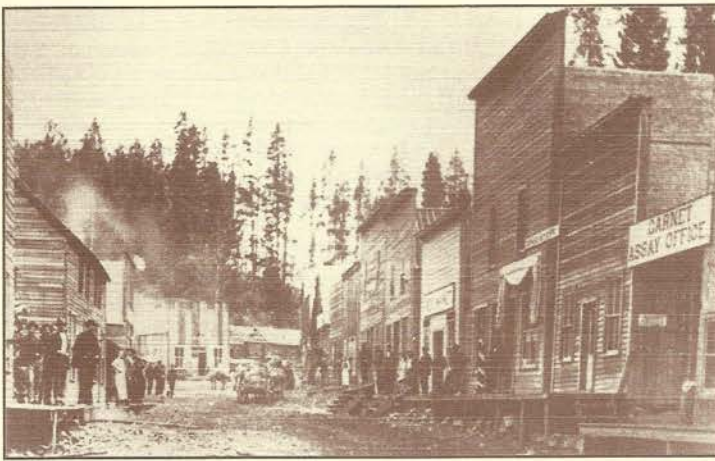
#19 This log and frame cabin was the residence of the Ole Dahl. Ole and Marion Dahl moved into this building in 1938 and built their own saloon down the road, Dahl's Bar. They added a kitchen to the rear of the cabin, a garage, and a generator shed that provided electricity to the house and saloon. Marion Dahl was living in Garnet as late as the 1960's. *This cabin can be rented in the winter.*

#20 This log building was constructed between 1896 and 1900. It originally was quite a nice cabin, but during World War I, Frank A. Davey acquired it and turned it into a livery shed. By removing a few logs, Davey could store his stage coach inside. Known as a "democrat," the coach was actually a spring wagon with two seats and a fancy name. Charlie Moore operated this business for Davey for four years.

#21 The Hanifen house was a 1 1/2 story board and batten unique structure which was built in the early 1900's by Hugh Hanifen and he lived in it until 1916. Mrs. Cleary, a school teacher, lived there in 1926. It represents one of the nicer homes in Garnet, being built with vertical boards instead of the typical logs. The house also has a ten foot ceiling in the kitchen - a mark of a fine home during the Victorian Era. This kind of construction made heating the home expensive.

#22 After President Roosevelt announced a price increase for gold and it became profitable to mine again, people returned to Garnet. Glen and Edith Hawe lived in Kelly's Saloon while they built this frame house in 1937. This structure has three rooms; a bedroom, a kitchen, and a front room used as a living room. In their home they had modern conveniences such as radio, a washing machine, a sink, and a kerosene powered refrigerator.





Looking up Main Street Garnet in early 1900's

Society in Garnet differed from that of earlier mining camps. While single males were predominant in the early mining camps, Garnet had a larger number of families. Social life therefore, was quite different. Although drinking, gambling, and houses of prostitution were still enjoyed by men, married women were far more numerous in Garnet. They rarely visited the saloons and only went to the business district to shop for necessary food and clothing. Also, unlike earlier camps, a school house was established in Garnet soon after its founding.

A variety of social activities were available to the residents of Garnet. Family-oriented activities, such as dinner parties, card games, and hay rides were common. Family picnics, fishing trips, and shopping trips took place during the summer months. Sleigh rides, sledding parties and skiing were favorites in the winter-time.

One of the largest community celebrations in Garnet was the annual Miners Union Day gathering held at the Miners Union Hall. Many of the social functions were held at the Hall which was completed in June of 1898. Community dances were held there every Saturday night, and in the early years of Garnet's history, there were often three or four social functions a week. The Hall with its one large room and small stage often "was scarcely large enough for the crowd."



Garnet School - 1902

Pearl Woods taught at the Garnet School in 1902. Some of the other teachers were Mr. Ralston, Claude Moss, Maggie Ryan, Katherine Anderson, Hazel (Charley) Brown, Nettie McPhail, Roy McPhail, Rose Winnighoff Brogran, Mrs. Terry, Elsie Seadin, Mrs. Prader, Mrs. Cleary, and Jennie McDonald.

Garnet is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Garnet Preservation Association, a non-profit organization. This cooperative effort is preserving the town for the enjoyment of the public.

Several buildings are privately owned and private land is common in the Garnet area. Please respect private landowner's property rights by not trespassing.

Mining and logging activities exist on both private and public lands in the Garnet area. Be careful and watch for heavy truck traffic on some roads. Open mine shafts, trenches, and other safety hazards exist in areas where old mining as well as current mining activities occur.

Other co-operators contribute to the use and management of Garnet. Granite County and Missoula County actively participate to enhance the use, safety and management of roads in the Garnet area.

Please observe the following rules when visiting Garnet:

- NO smoking in the buildings**
- open campfires or camping**
- firearms or fireworks**
- metal detectors or digging**
- removal of artifacts**
- unleashed pets or littering**

To join GPA: just pick up an application at the Visitor's Center or print your name, address, and phone number on a piece of paper. Mail this information to: Garnet Preservation Association

3255 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, Montana 59804

For information on the Winter Cabin Rental Program, write or call:

Cabin Rental Program
3255 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, Montana 59804
Phone: (406) 329-3914

Partial funding for this project was provided by a legislative grant from Montana's Cultural Trust.

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