

EARLY HISTORY OF SILVER STAR

MADISON COUNTY, MONTANA

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In the year 1866 a man by the name of Greene Campbell who was prospecting in the hills west of the Jefferson River about 40 miles north of the rich gold placer diggings in Alder Gulch near Virginia City, Montana, made a discovery of gold in an outcrop on a side hill about one and one half miles west of the present site of Silver Star. He located a mining claim, covering the gold discovery, which he named after himself, Greene Campbell, and bears no. 1 in Montana patent records. Mr. Campbell employed several men on the property including: Richard Pascoe, John Eads and William Gilbert with Charles D. Everett in charge of operations.

In 1867, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Barkell with their boys Richard and James, moved from their homestead on the Beaverhead River where for two years their crops were destroyed by grasshoppers, to Cherry Creek about one-half mile from the present site of Silver Star. At that time, there were no houses on the present site of Silver Star but the news that there was gold in the hills brought in prospecting miners, and a few more families within the next few years.

In 1868, Mr. and Mrs. Benedict Weingart and son Albert, located near the present site of Silver Star; and in 1869 Mr. and Mrs. George Noyes settled here. It may be noted in passing that Mrs. Noyes was the first woman who died in Silver Star

Among the early settlers at this time, were Charley Hineman, Billy Horner, George Brown and Jim Slavin.

Some time between 1867 and 1868, the first log cabin was built on

the present site of Silver Star. A great many of the early settlers were transient as they were prospectors looking for gold mine~~s~~s, some of them built cabins on the site of Silver Star in order to be near water (Cherry Creek and Jefferson River) going up in the hills every day and back to the camp at nite.

A number of good mining claims were located and some developed into good producers. Among these early mine~~s~~s in the vicinity of Silver Star were mentioned: The Iron Rod mine discovered in 1867 and later operated by Dahler and Largey - Iron Rod is about three miles south of Silver Star; The Broadway Mine, founded by a Mr. Taylor and a few years later, the Hudson Mine was located by John Stock and the Aurora Borealis discovered by Charley Hineman.

Two brothers, George and Bill Boyer, had a mining claim in one of the canyons in the mountains east of the Jefferson River, which they called Silver Star. These brothers, as well as prospectors and miners working around in the hills, used to gather together especially Saturday nights in a general merchandise store which had been established at the largest camp by Smith and Greater of Bannock. There had been some controversy as to what the camp should be named. At one of these meetings, the men decided to name the two main camps. One of the Boyer boys said, "We'll call this one 'Silver Star' and the other 'Rag Town.'" The present Iron Rod went by the name of 'Rag Town' for a long time.

There were some hot springs situated about one-half mile from the store in Silver Star. These springs, coming out of the ground at a temperature slightly below the boiling point, were known and used by the Indians for generations. In 1873, Mr. Joseph Barkell located the Hot

Springs and piped the water a short distance into a pool for hot baths. At a later time, the water was piped into a two story house for heating purposes and from the house to a larger swimming pool, which is patronized by many people from miles around.

The production from the various mines is said to have been very high estimates ranging from several hundred thousand dollars in gold. The Broadway alone is said to have produced over one million dollars in gold.

To handle ores from these early producers a stamp mill was built by Charles D. Everett near the river in Silver Star; and three arastra's were built and operated in the district.

At this time hundreds of men were working in the mines and in the hills. The towns developed into a booming mining camp with some 2,000 inhabitants in the district.

Silver Star, the third oldest town in Montana, had its Drug Store owned a Mr. Osler. This was in a two story log building - the upper was used as a Masonic hall. There was work for those who wanted it and a grub stake for the prospector by the stores, and this continued for a number of years. Then when the rich oxidized, surface ores were worked down until they changed to a lower grade of sulphide ore and the deeper mines had a higher mining cost - some with water to pump - the owners became discouraged and within a few years none of the larger producers were operating; however, the smaller operations some leasing, some working their own properties, have kept the Silver Star district on the map.

Silver Star is found in Madison county on Montana State Highway #41, about 35 miles southeast of Butte, on the Vigilante Trail. The principal

attractions are the "Barkell Hot Springs and Plunge" is on the south side of town close to the highway. The town has one store and Post Office. The Post Office was established June 15, 1869 and John Conner was appointed the first post master. The present postmaster is George Bryant. At the old town of Iron Rod, the post office was established September 20, 1869 and Lucius D. Porter was the first post master. Today Iron Rod has no post office. Today Silver Star has a service station, two bars, a rock shop and a population of about one-hundred and fifty people. School buses take the children to Twin Bridges for school.

At the present time, the mining operations are few and the main industry is farming, cattle and potatoes but we all know "There's gold in them there Hills."

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