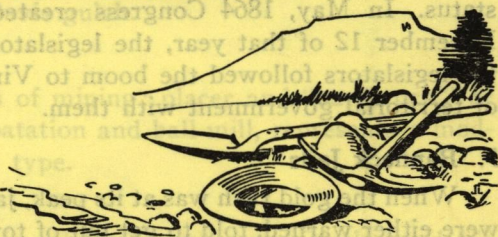
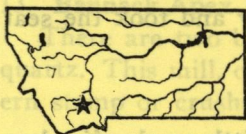


PROSPECTORS TRAIL



1. Introduction to the Trail

As you stroll Bannack's streets, you will find numbered stakes or signs, keyed to numbers in this leaflet, which hold points of interest. Let's step back about 100 years when this gulch was a beehive of activity.

2. Court House

This was one of the first county courthouses in Montana. After suffering rule by the lawless, the miners built this structure dedicated to law and order. Later it was modified and became a hotel.

3. Gibson House

A pioneer family residence which, like several others in town, was also operated as a rooming house to accommodate prospectors in from the diggings.

4. Skinner's Saloon

At best, the saloons provided a rather rough social life; a momentary escape from loneliness and the hard work of grubbing for gold.

5. Goodrich House Site

Rooming house, now in Virginia City.

6. First Territorial Legislature

Law enforcement was an increasingly burdensome problem. The first prospectors in Grasshopper Gulch needed no law, but as their numbers increased, the miners organized mass meetings to decide rules for staking claims and to establish other regulations.

As the gold rush became a stampede, gamblers, desperadoes, and other low types flocked to Bannack. Before long, the rogues ruled and the infamous Henry Plummer, leader of the outlaws, became Sheriff. (We'll meet him later in Hangman's Gulch.) The mass meeting proved ineffectual for law enforcement. As a part of politically unorganized Idaho Territory, the miners could look for no law

enforcement assistance from that direction. Even when Idaho Territory became organized, "the law" would still be on the wrong side of the mountains. Montana miners demanded separate territorial status. In May, 1864 Congress created Montana territory and on December 12 of that year, the legislators met here. The next year, the legislators followed the boom to Virginia City and took the seat of territorial government with them.

7. Bannack Jails

When the gold rush was at its peak, jails were little used; offenders were either warned, told to get out of town, or hung. No one wanted to sit around guarding prisoners when gold was outside the door waiting to be dug. Construction of a jail meant considerable progress on the road to civilization. Note the rings on the floor to which prisoners were chained. Also of interest is the notching of the logs. "Mother lode" architecture offered little variety from place to place, but since miners came from all directions, various methods of notching log corners were used. Four distinct types of notching are represented in Bannack. See if you can locate them, but first let's go up Hangman's Gulch.

8. Sheriff Plummer's House

On January 10, 1864, his rule as sheriff and leader of the outlaws terminated abruptly. Tired of being victimized by the gang, a number of miners and merchants formed a vigilantes committee and went a-calling. They stopped here and "invited" Plummer along. Let's walk a short distance up Hangman's Gulch with him.

9. Plummer's Gallows

The vigilantes believed a few illustrious hangings would encourage those with "queasy" consciences to leave quick-like. There were a number of techniques for hanging a man. Plummer's last request was for a good drop. Tradition says he was lifted as high as possible and then dropped. Two of his gang received similar treatment that night. Burying a man in frozen ground in January created some problems and it is believed these men had shallow graves close by. The actual site of burial has not been determined.

10. Bachelor's Row

Prospectors usually lived on their claim and not in town. Wickiups lined the gulch. This site got its name from a row of bachelor huts which paralleled the miners' ditch that once flowed here.

11. Roe House

Tradition says this was one of the earliest frame houses erected in Montana.

12. Yankee Flat

Gold was discovered in Bannack during the Civil War. Miners indicated their feelings by naming this area Yankee Flat. Confederate sympathizers had their Jeff Davis gulch.

13. Bannack Apex Mill

There are two basic types of mining: placer and "hard rock," or quartz. This mill, called a floatation and ball mill, represents a modern stamp or crusher-cyanide type.

14. Placer Mining

A prospector staked a claim along Grasshopper Creek, used his pan to find color (gold), and then developed a hand made "cradle" so he could wash more earth. Several miners might get together to make a small ditch and a slotted sluice box or "long tom" to separate the gold even faster. All placer operations needed water. The more soil washed, the more water and capital needed. A miner's ditch was dug to Bannack in 1866 and later the Bannack Mining and Ditch Company dug a 30-mile ditch. (see sign) When operations got beyond the meager resources of the prospector, he either became a miner for wages or continued his prospecting in the next gold-bearing gulch rumors told about. Dredging represented a profitable but final stage in placer operations here. This pond was formed to float the dredge boat.

15. Placer Diggings

Note the "diggings" on both sides of the creek and right up to the road. Care to try your pan—"there's gold in them thar hills."

16. Gold Leaf Mill

Operations first started here about 1894 and then again in 1916. There's a lot of hard work and high hopes between a prospector's pan and a mill like this, yet the gold from the hills meant much to a rising America. Travel at your own risk beyond this point or return to the Court House (leaflet stand). Just past it is number 17.

17. Druggist and Assay Office

Here the gold was analyzed and its weight and value assessed. This building eventually became a butcher shop. The meat racks are still on the walls.

18. Masonic Temple and School

Schools, churches and lodges, courthouses and jails; these represent the more permanent hallmarks of civilization.

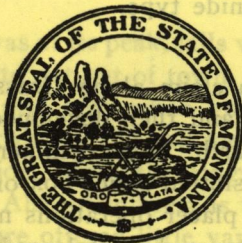
19. Governor's "Mansion"

Until a school was constructed, students learned ABC's in one room of the Governor's house.

20. Lewis and Clark

Since Clark passed just west of here in 1806, men have trapped furs, mined hills, ranged herds or become pioneer farmers. The furs, the gold, the grass might make them rich, but they also gave man an excuse for adventure. These frontiersmen created a rough type of civilization but left behind islands of settlement upon which the west was built.

So long—come back again.



STATE PARKS DIVISION
MONTANA HIGHWAY COMMISSION
HELENA, MONTANA

