

MAIDEN: A MINING CAMP'S STRUGGLE FOR
PERMANENCE ON THE MONTANA FRONTIER

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The decision to undertake this project was made a year ago and the road to completion a long and tedious one. As I look back over the long hours and endless trips to the library, I realize that I have learned a great deal both about history and my abilities. The fulfillment of this opportunity was made possible through the help of many people. Their advice and encouragement have given me most of all, a belief in myself. I extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. Robert Swartout, whose guidance, knowledge, and commitment to students have proved invaluable. To Dave Walters, the research librarian of the Montana Historical Society, a special thanks for your footwork and patience. To John Foster of Lewistown, whose time and help have aided me greatly in understanding Maiden, thank you. My sincere thanks to Reverend Jeremiah Sullivan and Dr. Donald Roy for their time and advice. Finally, I wish to express a special gratitude to my mother, whose expertise and love of history helped bring this paper to completion.

INTRODUCTION

The mining camp was the center of attention during an era in which men struggled to build something lasting in a strange and hostile environment. The camp reflected well the transitory and exploitative nature of the mining frontier in that there was always the speculation concerning the unanswerable question of how long prosperity would last. Would the cost of living decline and wages remain high? Could the merchant gamble with an expensive inventory, hoping the economy would remain on the upswing?¹ Life was exciting, yet many wanted it to be more stable. Those who adhered to this attitude, like the merchant, newspaper editor, businessman, mine owner, and others, did so for a good reason. Stability meant a camp was maturing and prospering, thus ensuring itself of some sort of future permanence. Permanency eliminated much of the risk involved with investing in a particular camp. This group of people, then, realized that settling in a community which might not exist tomorrow was chancy business. Thus they would do what they could to develop and promote the camp in its task to achieve or maintain stability.²

¹Duane A. Smith, Rocky Mountain Mining Camps: The Urban Frontier (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967),

²Ibid., pp. 59-77.

But stability was not a characteristic of the mining frontier. Mines, camps, life in general were in a constant pendulum motion. When times were good the camp prospered and appeared stable. When the mines declined and stopped producing, the camp, which existed primarily to serve and be served by the mines, similarly declined. With this decline the population pulled up stakes and moved on to more promising areas.³ Yet there was much more involved in the cycle of a camp which affected its development and stability. The camp did not exist within the shell of the frontier, sheltered from outside interference. Rather, it was an institution affected by all forces, both local and national. The camp was nineteenth century America and in most respects reflected the country's needs, strengths and weaknesses.

Usually, mining camps materialized wherever rich minerals existed. They first arose in the 1850-60s with the great placer booms. Later, when quartz mining (underground) picked up momentum, many would flourish in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. Generally, the first camps began in California and then spread eastward. Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska, and South Dakota all had their booms. Most were short-lived, as each camp spent its hour on stage and then disappeared. A few, though, continued to hang on to permanency and flourish today, defying the philosophy of the mining frontier, "easy come, easy go. . . ."⁴

³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 247.

With the advent of quartz mining in 1870-1880, Montana mining entered a new phase. No longer was it a simple economy where mining was done by an individual or partners who, with a rocker or sluice, could work a bench and make enough money to live on.⁵ No, mining was now entering a new phase; corporations with great capital replaced individuals; stamp mills and smelters replaced sluices; and mining towns with hotels, banks, billiard halls, and newspapers superseded placer camps. Great commercial prosperity invaded isolated regions and later left them as scarred, desolate ghost towns. This was the Gilded Age; the rise of the prominent businessman who identified "exploitation of natural resources with progress, . . . a kind of law of the jungle, . . . of lust for speculation, of huge wastefulness of natural wealth, of bustling materialism, of splendid audacity. . . ."6

The period 1850-1900 saw tremendous growth throughout America. The entrepreneurs of the East, the men of the Gilded Age, were rapidly changing the social, economic, and political values of our country. They reached out and grasped the West

⁵A bench is a gravel deposit in an ancient stream bed which lies above the present stream.

⁶Merle Curti, Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), p. 510, as cited in Robert L. Romig, "Stamp Mills in Trouble: Quartz Miners Learned the Hard Way on the South Boise Ledges," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 44-5 (October, 1953): 166-76. The Gilded Age was a generation of transition, a time of growth and change (in the form of progress) in all aspects of life: labor, investment, geography, politics, and society itself. For further information see H. Wayne Morgan, The Gilded Age (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1963).

through railroads, capital, manufactured goods and more. The West resembled an Eastern colony and more and more came to depend upon the power of the East.

One way the West depended upon the East was through railroads. The need for railroads was espoused by communities and local capitalists. Newspapers advertised incessantly the benefits railroads would bring: "With railroads come population, industry, and capital, and with them come the elements of prosperity and greatness to Montana."⁷ The railroads hauled people, manufactured goods, raw materials and so forth, all necessities vital to the Montana economy. Yet they also were large land holders in Montana and elsewhere through massive land subsidies, and their grip on the West tightened.⁸ Many of the Western lines were built on the principle that costs could be covered and profits realized through promotion and demand. With completion of the tracks, intense promotional campaigns for the settlement of the West followed. Railroad land sales commenced, often times dictating the line of settle-

⁷Robert G. Athearn, "Railroad to a Far-Off Country-- The Utah and Northern," in Montana's Past: Selected Essays, ed. by Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder (Missoula: University of Montana Press, 1973), p. 214.

⁸Excluding the Great Northern Railway Company, the other railroads received large land grants from the government to help cover building costs. The Northern Pacific received twenty alternate sections on each side of the track in Montana territory, amounting to roughly fourteen million acres. Carl F. Kraenzel, The Great Plains in Transition, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. 127-28; K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), p. 92; Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), pp. 130-35.

ment.⁹ Railroad control of Western lands was evident in other ways. Finances for the lines came from Eastern entrepreneurs, who often hoped to control the raw materials of the West. Western natural resources were sacrificed to bring railroads. For the West to gain anything, then, it had to accept its role as a colony and be at the mercy of the East.¹⁰

The railroads also exemplified the powerful Eastern corporations forming in the late 1800s. These corporations and other wealthy partnerships exercised control of the West through capital. Capital investment so crucial to the West's development was always in short supply. Even powerful Montana capitalists like Samuel T. Hauser, T. C. Power, Marcus Daly, I. G. Baker and others had to get finances from such places as St. Louis, New York, and Montreal. True, they were wealthy individuals, yet their resources could not cover all investment demands. Local capitalists were constantly returning to the East in order to expand in Montana. Eastern corporations extended their control over Montana in other ways. Consolidation through stock transfers were common in the 1890s. An example occurred in Butte when the powerful Anaconda Company was absorbed and later emerged as the Amalgamated Copper Company, owned by Standard Oil and financed by the First National Bank of New

⁹J. W. Smurr and K. Ross Toole, eds. Historical Essays on Montana and the Northwest (Helena: The Western Press, Historical Society of Montana, 1957), p. 218; Clark C. Spence, The Sinews of American Capitalism: An Economic History (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 157.

¹⁰Karl F. Kraenzel, The Great Plains in Transition, p. 128.

York.¹¹ Montanans resented their role as an Eastern colony, yet at the time choices were limited.

This aggressive exploitation of resources brought American industrialism to the doorstep of the Montana frontier. The quartz mining period ushered in the capacious stamp mills whose production and profits in many cases justified their existence. This rapid development in mining resulted from industrial need. The great entrepreneurs of the East who put their investments into large enterprises such as railroad building needed mining to support and make profitable these investments.¹² Hence capital, which fed the larger industrial machines, was poured into the mining industry, developing and making it prosperous.

The mills required tremendous amounts of capital, scrupulous management, experienced labor, extensive development, and large ore reserves.¹³ They provided a market for large quantities of chemicals, quicksilver, blasting powder, candles, lumber and machinery.¹⁴ Transportation facilities were a key to survival, and isolation would destroy the entire enterprise.

¹¹K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, pp. 157-166.

¹²U. S. Geological Survey, Mineral Resources of the United States (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1882-93), p. 49.

¹³The Montana Historical Society Staff, comps. and eds., Not in Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 1976), p. 122; K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, pp. 81-83.

¹⁴Clark C. Spence, Montana: A Bicentennial History (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 38.

The quartz mines acted as a stimulus for other industries such as banking, lumber, overland transportation, the legal profession and more. And these industries called for technicians, mill hands and bookkeepers.¹⁵ Thus, quartz mining greatly expanded and complicated Montana's simple economy whose growth depended on Eastern capital.

The early placer mining period had attracted vast numbers of people into the Montana Territory. Quartz mining, with its stamp mills and smelters, later drew even more people into the immediate area of its operations. Directly and indirectly, it provided an economic base for the area. Mining camps like Maiden sprang up and their existence rested on diverse factors. Capital was necessary to develop the region and operations needed to be a success once in the district. Mining camps also depended upon agricultural products to supply foodstuffs for the community.¹⁶ Ranchers' and farmers' necessities were then provided by the camp. This urban-rural relationship was successful when both fulfilled each other's needs.

Thus, the survival of a mining camp rested on delicate premises. Many other components would enter the picture, exerting subtle forces upon the community. To survive, the camp had to overcome all obstacles, and if it failed, was

¹⁵K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, p. 83.

¹⁶Malone and Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries, p. 65.

bound for an inevitable destiny--the ghost town. This study will trace the history of Maiden, Montana, from 1880 to 1905, and will serve as an example of the forces at work in the mining camps of Montana during the Gilded Age.

CHAPTER I

THE LONG ROAD TO PROSPERITY

Discovery of gold in Maiden Gulch, 1880, marked the introduction of placer and quartz mining into the region. Located near Lewistown in the Judith Mountains, the early camp of Maiden materialized quickly. A group of five prospectors--"Skookum Joe" Anderson, C. C. Snow, Eugen Ervin, Pony McPartland, and David Jones--entered the area in the spring of 1880 and found gold.¹ News of the discovery circulated throughout the region and eager prospectors rushed into the district immediately. The gold deposits in the area lay in zones of mineralization and were quite extensive. The gold ores were not found in veins or well-defined shoots but rather in pockets, thin seams and cavities of decomposed and crushed limestone near the porphyry contact.² This fact compiled by the United States Geological Survey in 1896-97 conflicted with the common belief that rich veins and lodes

¹Anna Zellick, "A History of Fergus County from 1879 to 1915" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1943), p. 2.

²The porphyry contact marks the area where sedimentary and porphyry (igneous) rock meet. The gold was found in angular masses of purple fluorite and quartz near the contact zone. For more geological information see U. S. Geological Survey, Geology and Resources of the Judith Mountains of Montana, by W. H. Weed and L. V. Prisson, Economic Geology, 18th Annual Report, pt. 3, 1896-97 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), pp. 589-97.

existed in the area,³ a misconception which, years later, would have great impact on the camp's development.

The camp prospered in 1881-82. Maiden's growth depended upon a steady and liberal cash flow coming from the great influx of people into the region.⁴ Superficial placers aided in supporting the camp's economy, since it was not uncommon to take out forty dollars a day.⁵ Yet all too soon the tide of people looking for employment and other economic opportunities ceased. The placers alone could not carry the camp because lack of capital and water prevented their further development.⁶ Saloon keepers, barbers, blacksmiths and mercantilists looked

³U. S. Geological Survey, Geology and Mineral Resources of the Judith Mountains of Montana, p. 589. This mutual belief arose out of fancy rather than fact. The townspeople, newspaper, and miners all held to this belief in hopes that it would bring further development to the area.

⁴Rocky Mountain Husbandman (White Sulphur Springs), July 27, 1882, p. 2.

⁵James Brisbin to eastern newspaper (n.p.), "The Maginnis Gold Mines" (2 August 1882), James Brisbin Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 39, box 2, folder 10, Archives Division, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana. James Brisbin, prolific writer and novelist, is best known for his works The Beef Bonanza and Belden. He shared a great love and respect for the West gained through his cavalry service in various army forts throughout the West. He was also an active publicist and brought news of the Western frontier to the East, through his articles and letters to newspapers.

⁶Though the area is blessed with large amounts of precipitation from winter snows and summer rains, the streams carry little or no water. This scanty supply of water is due to the geological structure of the area. The stream beds are composed largely of limestone which causes the water to sink, thus passing beneath the beds of limestone. As the water sinks it reappears as springs only in the areas of shale. The result is that running water is difficult to come by because of the prevalence of limestone in the area. Later, this would account for the great expenses incurred in flume building and pumping units. U. S. Geological Survey, Geology and Mineral Resources of the Judith Mountains of Montana, p. 452.

forward to the introduction of capital into the area. Activity slowed down and times were dull as Maiden impatiently awaited the capital to pay laborers "who give promise, life, and business to the town. . . ." ⁷

Capitalists had entered the district as early as 1881, yet their cautious, slow approach allowed them to go unnoticed until 1882. Samuel T. Hauser and Anton M. Holter purchased the Montana and Oro Cache mines from Anderson and Jones, the original prospectors, and exploratory work on the properties occurred in the summer of 1882. Sufficient development work followed which led to the erection of a 5-stamp mill that season. ⁸ More extensive work was taking place on the Collar mine where miners were busy tunnelling, crosscutting and drifting the property to ascertain its wealth. That year the Collar Company was drawn up with a capital of \$600,000 in Eastern stock. The company planned to use \$300,000 to develop the property further in order to employ a 20-stamp mill. ⁹

⁷ Rocky Mountain Husbandman, July 27, 1882, p. 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid. Stamp mills were invaluable in large mining operations where tons of ore needed to be crushed in a single day. The most common was the California stamp mill which worked much like a piston in a car engine. A mill generally contained anywhere from five to sixty stamps, ten and twenty being the most common in the Maiden area. The stamp was similar to a pillar with a shoe or stamp at one end. The stamp was moved up and down by cams attached to a drive shaft. The shaft was powered by steam. Ore was placed under the stamps on a heavy iron trough, the battery, which enclosed all the stamps. In the battery were iron dies, each matching their appropriate stamp. Corn-kernel size ore made a lateral pass under the stamps and over the dies and was crushed into fine particles. From here the crushed ore departed out the front side and passed

The camp buzzed with excitement and a building boom started. In 1883, the businesses of Maiden included thirteen saloons, three general stores, two hardware stores, two hotels, two barbershops, a clothing store, bakery, meat market, restaurant, drug store, dance hall, newspaper, school, blacksmith shop, and a livery stable.¹⁰ The developmental work and erection of the 20-stamp Collar mill kept the camp busy in 1883. Business was good and miners, merchants and artisans looked forward to a prosperous year.

But trouble lay on the horizon and in late 1883 the Collar mine closed after a run of only nine days. Following the collapse of the Collar Company Maiden was "wrapped in a dark gloomy vail [sic] of uncertainty."¹¹ The failure of the Collar property is a classic case of corporate ineptness.

⁹(continued) over filtering screens. Operations of this sort required vast amounts of ore, maintenance, capital, and water to continue running. Great care had to be taken to make sure all these requirements were fulfilled. If not, the company stood little chance of making money. For more information see Otis E. Young, Jr., Western Mining: An Informal Account of Precious-Metals Prospecting, Placering, Lode Mining, and Milling on the American Frontier from Spanish Times to 1893, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

¹⁰John N. DeHaas, Jr., ed., Central Montana Ghost Towns (Bozeman: Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society, 1975), n.p.

¹¹Mineral Argus (Maiden), February 7, 1884, p. 4.

The company had failed to explore the property sufficiently and later realized it had overestimated the value of the mine and underestimated expenses. The Eastern capitalists quarreled among themselves and ensuing delays in operation continued.¹² The Company eventually folded without ever reopening the mines. This incident was repeated throughout the West during the quartz mining period. An example occurred in the South Boise ledges of Idaho and led to the collapse of the mining camps there until revived in the 1880s.¹³

The effects of the Collar failure on Maiden were enormous. The labor debts of the Collar Company went unpaid until a sheriff sale could be arranged. Cold, hungry miners wandered throughout the camp eventually finding refuge at Ft. Maginnis four miles east. Bills for materials and articles of consumption resided in the debit columns of merchants' books, never to be paid off in full. The action of the Collar Company also frightened away would-be investors and investment capital became scarce. The cash flow dwindled, there was little work in camp, the population declined. Maiden appeared to be dying in the winter of 1883-84.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., January 4, 1884, p. 4.

¹³Robert L. Romig, "Stamp Mills in Trouble: Quartz Miners Learned the Hard Way on the South Boise Ledges," pp. 167-76.

¹⁴Mineral Argus, November-May, 1883-84.

The existence of the Ft. Maginnis Military Reservation did not help matters as Maiden existed within the Reservation's boundaries. A dispute arose in April 1883, when a military order called for the vacating of the area within sixty days.¹⁵ The citizens protested immediately and through citizen committees and the territorial delegate, Martin Maginnis, the battle carried over into 1884. The Maidenites demanded a bill to limit the Reservation's boundaries, thereby excluding the mining area in and around the camp.¹⁶ The result of the dispute was critical. If capital was to enter the district, Maiden would have to be cut from Reservation boundaries. The fact that mining property lay inside military boundaries prevented the possibility of securing perfect titles. Parties owning mining property in the area deferred further development ". . . for fear of losing both claim and money expended thereon."¹⁷

In the wake of Maiden's depression, the citizens engaged in activities to attract capital. Pressure on Congress to cut Maiden from the Reservation increased. On June 7, 1884, the Secretary of War issued an order to the commander at Ft. Maginnis not to interfere with the mines and citizens of

¹⁵John N. DeHaas, Jr., ed., Central Montana Ghost Towns.

¹⁶Mineral Argus, February 7, 1884, p. 4.

¹⁷Ibid.

Maiden while the reservation bill was pending in Congress.¹⁸
The bill passed later that year. Maidenites also began seriously to advertise the resources of the district in the camp's paper. This advertising often exaggerated the mineral values of the district:

Throughout the Judith range, running in a north-easterly and south-westerly direction, and traceable into the Snowy range of mountains, has been found what may properly be termed the mother lead of quartz. Numerous spurs have been discovered on both sides of the main vein, but the bulk and wealth of the deposit of nature's precious metals . . . have been found in this parent vein. Nearly every mine in the Judith Mountains showing a superior degree of richness or large body of ore are on this vein. . . .¹⁹

Yet extensive surveying by the USGS in 1896-97 revealed no indications of a "main vein." In fact (as previously noted) no vein existed at all. The mineralization in this area occurred in pockets and thin seams along the contact zone of the porphyry mass.

Along with advertising the wealth of the region, citizens threw their support behind the tax issue of the 1885 Constitutional Convention. This issue evolved from section 4 of the Convention's proposed amendments which called for exempting taxation on ". . . mines and mining claims, both placer and in rock, in place containing or bearing gold, silver, copper, coal or other valuable mineral deposits. . . ." ²⁰ In other words,

¹⁸ Ibid., June 12, 1884, p. 4.

¹⁹ Ibid., October 23, 1884, p. 1.

²⁰ Ibid., October 30, 1884, p. 3; July 17, 1884, p. 3.

the unknown mineral wealth inside a mine would be exempt from taxation.²¹ Maidenites supported the section on taxation strongly, for as they saw it, if the bill failed, it would discourage capitalists and retard development. Furthermore, they believed the section would aid farmers as well. To the people of Maiden, it was quite logical that the taxation clause would encourage capital investment and thus help an area to develop and prosper. That area, presumably Maiden, would provide a local market for the products of farmers and they in turn would profit. Thus, any farmer who opposed section 4 was really endangering his own vital interests. Yet not everyone supported the taxation clause. Cattlemen and woolgrowers believed they were not dependent upon the mines for a market and thus criticized the section on taxation. Their position was well represented in the Rocky Mountain Husbandman (White Sulphur Springs) and editorial back-stabbing was common between this paper and Maiden's Mineral Argus.²²

Maiden also attempted to help herself out of depression by forming the Maiden Reduction Company. This incorporated stock company was organized by Maidenites for the purpose of building and operating reduction works, thereby furnishing a market for ore. By doing so, Maiden would attract ore from

²¹Section 4 also stipulated that all machinery, property surface improvements, and annual net proceeds of mining claims should be taxed. For further information on taxation see Louis Levine, The Taxation of Mines in Montana (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919).

²²Mineral Argus, 1884; Rocky Mountain Husbandman, 1884.

surrounding regions, treat it, and make a profit. Eventually, railroads and capital would enter the area and Maiden would be on the road to eternal prosperity. The Maiden Reduction Company never achieved its goals.

The company's chief problem was a lack of capital. When the necessary resources proved elusive, the founders built the reduction works with their own money and with IOUs. These investments were to be paid off with profits. Yet the project flopped after a year of operation, largely due to inexperience. Perceived profits became real debts and the camp as a whole suffered from the adventure.²³

Maiden's efforts to rise out of her economic slump, however, were not fruitless. On June 3, 1884, Samuel T. Hauser and Anton Holter formed the Maginnis Company and filed articles of incorporation in Maiden district.²⁴ Initially intending to sell out to an English syndicate, Hauser and Holter changed direction in mid-stream.²⁵ Satisfied with prospective developments in the Montana and Oro Cache mines, the Maginnis Company initiated a vigorous mining adventure in the spring of 1884.²⁶

²³Mineral Argus, May 8, 1884, p. 1; January 4, 1885, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., June 12, 1884, p. 1. The articles of incorporation were filed in the office of the territorial secretary by the following trustees: S. T. Hauser, A. M. Holter, George A. Hill, Ashton K. Barbour, and A. M. Esler.

²⁵Mineral Argus, April 24, 1884, p. 5.

²⁶In the fall of 1883, the Maginnis Company shipped 1,800 pounds of Oro Cache tailings from their 5-stamp mill back East to be run through a concentrating process. The tailings proved richer than expected (55.9 ounces of gold). Consequently, the company decided to stay in the area and develop its prospects further.

With a capital stock of \$500,000 the company intended to build a new custom 10-stamp mill and fifty men were employed immediately. Transportation delays followed and the mill was not completed for another year. In October 1884, the Maginnis Company purchased three mines in the area for \$100,000: the Kentucky Favorite, the Keystone, and the Comet, the first a gold-bearing mine, the other two underdeveloped silver and gold producers. Miners were put to work extracting ore and building roads.²⁷ Meanwhile, another mine in the district, the Spotted Horse, was beginning to produce. Its ores were worked through arastras which were capable of crushing one- and-one-half tons of ore per day.²⁸ Jones and Davis, the owners, cleared \$441.00 on thirty-two tons and a month later \$787.00 on twenty-three tons.²⁹ The Spotted Horse proved to be the most valuable mine in the area and one of the top producers of gold in Montana.

With gold in sight, activity picked up in Maiden and once again she attained her role as the cultural, mining, and commercial center of the surrounding area. Balls were held in

²⁷Mineral Argus, June 12, 1884, p. 4; October 16, 23, 1884; June 18, 1885, p. 1; July 23, 1885, p. 5; August 6, 1885, p. 1.

²⁸Mineral Argus, August 2, 1884, p. 4. Arastras were crude, rock-surfaced mills constructed from local materials. A three- or four-foot hole in the ground was lined with flat stones. A horse strode the perimeter, dragging a large stone over the ore. The ore was crushed and later amalgamated with quicksilver. Water power often replaced horse power.

²⁹Ibid., July 17, 1884, p. 5; August 2, 1884, p. 4.

her International Hotel again; Maiden's coronet and brass band found new life; the town boasted of an amateur baseball team and was a common focal point for traveling minstrel troupes. Her importance as a commercial center led to a change in freighting routes in 1884. Maiden now became the terminal for the Southern Stage Route and the Junction City Route, which had originally terminated at Ft. Maginnis and Andersonville respectively.³⁰ All appeared well on the surface, but inevitable problems common to the quartz mining industry lay ahead.

In 1885, a bill was drawn up to create the county of Fergus in central Montana. Maiden at the time was part of Meagher County, yet she was included within the new boundaries of the proposed county. Rivalry between Maiden and Lewistown emerged as to who would obtain the county seat. Maidenites boasted of room for 50,000 people, immense resources, a favorable location, and the camp's glorious destiny. The great numbers of people in her camp provided a local market for farmers who were unable to compete on the foreign market. Maiden stores carried German socks, leather slippers, Cardigan jackets and more. The camp even had a ladies' bazaar. But cattlemen proved to be more powerful than miners at the convention in Helena, and Lewistown received the county seat in August 1886.³¹

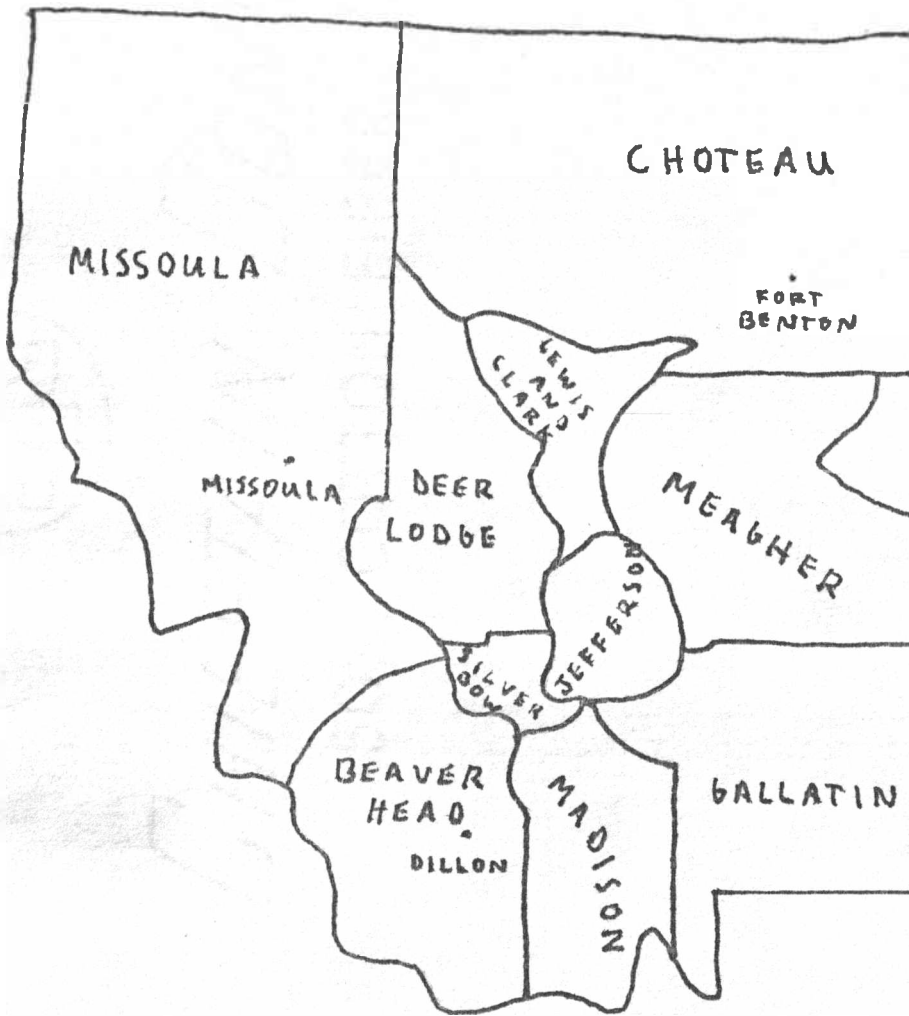
³⁰Anna Zellick, "A History of Fergus County," chapter on mining.

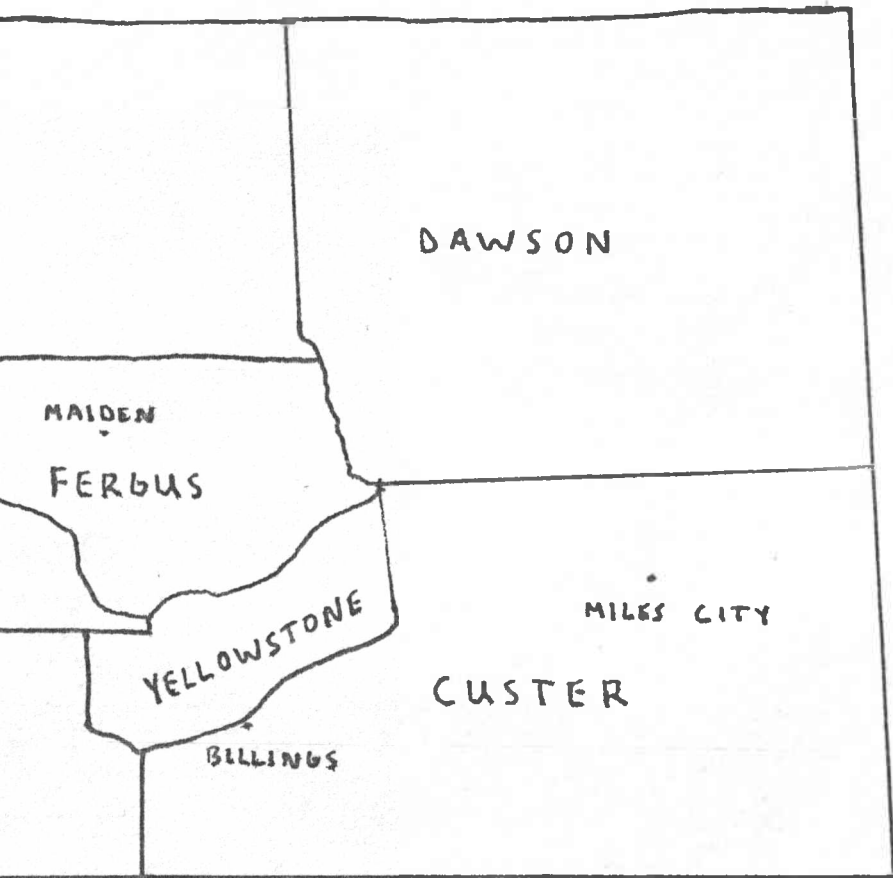
³¹Mineral Argus, August 6, 1885, p. 1; October 29, 1885, p. 1; November 26, 1885, p. 3.

The choice of Lewistown indicated that in central Montana mining was secondary to cattle and wool interests. Mining camps like Maiden were not as important as they believed themselves to be. Maiden's newspaper moved to Lewistown under the name of the Fergus County Argus and news about Maiden was restricted to a third page column.³²

By the summer of 1885, the camp appeared to be experiencing an economic recovery. The Maginnis 10-stamp mill finally reached completion and employment picked up. Yet throughout 1885-87 the company was plagued with numerous problems that impeded progress. Developmental costs had soared due to a water shortage. Thus, the company was forced to expend large amounts of time and money building flumes and a reservoir, installing a tramway, and putting in pumps. This lack of water plagued the entire area, dictating when mills operated and when they did not. Water scarcity had forced the company to pump the slum from the slum tanks back into the battery and pans. Consequently, the plates became coated with foreign particles which interfered with the saving of flour gold. The entire mill

³²Though on the surface the move of the camp's newspaper to Lewistown seems insignificant, the ramifications were far reaching. The existence of a newspaper showed the owner had faith in a particular camp--a belief that the camp and mines would grow sufficiently to support the costs of running a paper. A newspaper indicated that a camp was established and had future stability. Through its services the paper promoted and publicized the district's resources, thereby helping the camp create an aura of permanence. When the Mineral Argus left Maiden it demonstrated that the owner's faith in the camp was wavering in favor of more prosperous areas like Lewistown. Duane A. Smith, Rocky Mountain Mining Camps, pp. 65-68.





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was then overhauled and some machinery remodeled. Extensive flume building followed in order to flush fresh water into the system.³³ Labor costs complicated operations as well. Experienced miners were scarce and novices demanded the same high wages. Inexperience led to errors in mill and mine operations, often resulting in increased expenditures. Moreover, transportation facilities were poor and mill operations suffered further. Freight outfits from Junction City had to contend with steep grades, lack of bridges, and a gruelling two-day journey traversible only in the dry season. Freight rates were high and depended upon various factors: local demand, season, and availability of equipment, men and animals.³⁴ All these problems led to sporadic mining activities in the Maginnis Company's mines. In June 1886, the mill closed down. Books were unorganized, bills destroyed, and enormous quick-silver loss occurred. The company pondered abandoning the entire operation. Managerial weakness had caused much of the problem; thus H. J. Brothers, the general manager, was replaced immediately and the mill fired up later that summer.³⁵

³³Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), August 26, 1886, p. 3.

³⁴Mineral Argus, February 26, 1885, p. 1; June 11, 1885, p. 1; Malone and Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries, p. 60.

³⁵Anton M. Holter Papers, Manuscript Collection no. 80, box 1, folder 14, Archives Division, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana; Fergus County Argus, August 16, 1888, p. 3.

Troubles in development plagued the Spotted Horse mine also. In late 1885, the three arastras used by McAdow, Anderson and Jones were losing gold because of their inefficiency. Debts accumulated and the mine was to be sold at the sheriff sale. In May 1886, McAdow acquired the mine again for \$11,000 and made clear his intent to develop the property thoroughly. Within a year the mine's bonanza of wealth was revealed and McAdow erected a small 3-ton capacity mill. Good results followed and McAdow believed he had struck a true fissure vein. A 10-stamp mill was erected in October 1888.³⁶

By 1889, favorable developments in the mines found Maiden on the upswing. Indications of prosperity were evident throughout the camp. Merchants offered wide selections of goods, attracting both Maidenites and outsiders. Enrollment in the Maiden school showed thirty-two students present with an attendance rate of 96 percent. Maiden now had a jeweler and a resident physician and even the burned-down Maiden brewery was rebuilt. The cash-flow was good, indicating that when mines and mills were operating, money was plentiful. New families were entering the area and a slight building boom was occurring.³⁷ Mines in the area were looking good. The Maginnis Company was employing fifty men in its mines and mill and ore reserves were favorable. The Spotted Horse was improving with every blast and its 10-stamp mill paid \$4,000-6,000 in

³⁶Mineral Argus, December 1885; Fergus County Argus, August 1886-October 1888.

³⁷Fergus County Argus, 1887-89.

wages every month. In February 1889, the gross monthly output of the mine was \$25,000-35,000 depending upon water availability.³⁸

In May 1889, McAdow bonded the Spotted Horse for \$500,000 to the Jay Gould Company. A new company was formed, incorporating the Maginnis Company's property as well. The new company under Jay Gould representatives planned extensive development in the area and Maidenites talked of railroads, capital, and endless employment. Granville Stuart arrived in Helena that year with \$100,000 in gold from the company's Maginnis and Spotted Horse mills.³⁹ The company also planned to build a superior 20-stamp mill behind the present Spotted Horse mill, a move which was completed in the spring of 1890. Events indicated a prosperous year. But in the summer of 1890, problems in the company and with the mines beset the Jay Gould Company and it backed out of the area. The owners declared that the mines simply did not meet expectations. Thus, the period 1880-90 was a decade of ups and downs for the camp.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., May 2, 1889, p. 2; May 30, 1889, p. 3; November 28, 1889, p. 2. Granville Stuart was one of the true pioneers of Montana. In 1858, he and his brother James discovered gold at Gold Creek, the first strike in Montana. From gold mining he went into the mercantile business and then on to bookkeeping for the First National Bank of Helena. In 1879, he became manager of the powerful DHS (A. J. Davis, Samuel T. Hauser, Granville Stuart) Ranch in then Meagher County. His interests with Hauser at the First National Bank of Helena and the DHS found him as general manager of the company in Maiden. Later, he entered politics, serving in the territorial legislature (1872, 1875, 1879, 1883), and as U. S. Minister to the Republics of Uruguay and Paraguay. A man of varied interests, he died in 1918. Granville Stuart Papers, Manuscript Collection no. 61, Archives Division, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

Maidenites had fought hard to make the camp permanent yet success was often elusive. Though mining was sporadic, the existence of large organizations like the Maginnis and Jay Gould Companies demonstrated that the district had potential. To Maidenites, then, future stability seemed inevitable once the district was thoroughly developed. When this goal was attained, capital and railroads would rush into the district and Maiden would prosper indefinitely.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Fergus County Democrat (Lewistown), May 7, 1896, p. 2.

CHAPTER II
ECONOMIC BLUES AND A DYING CAMP

P. W. McAdow reassumed ownership of the Spotted Horse and in the fall of 1890 embarked upon a vigorous campaign to develop the property in preparation for a future sale. In October, the ore bins were full and the mill fired up for a forty-day run, producing \$50,000 in gold.¹ Through the winter of 1890-91, shifts of miners with burley drills opened up new ore bodies under the supervision of Mr. Sager while McAdow enjoyed sunny California.² But work slowed down in January when the hoisting works of the main shaft were destroyed by fire. Then in March, cracks in the hoist's boiler were discovered, causing further delays. Necessary repair parts were difficult to acquire because of winter snows and operations slowed until spring.³

Through the spring and early summer, further improvements were made to entice prospective buyers. Electric lights for the mill and mine were installed, a fancy machine shop with

¹Fergus County Argus, September 11, 1890, p. 2; December 25, 1890, p. 3.

²Ibid., September 25, 1890, p. 3; October 30, 1890, p. 2.

³Ibid., January 22, 1891, p. 3; January 29, 1891, p. 3; February 5, 1891, p. 3; March 12, 1891, p. 3.

new tools was added, and thirty-five men were employed drifting into ore bodies and sinking the main shaft. The stamps commenced dropping in late June and ran through the fall with good results.⁴ Little work occurred in the winter of 1891-92. McAdow concentrated upon business negotiations with prospective buyers and preferred to let the mine lay idle. Maidenites were disgusted with McAdow's egocentric mannerisms and attitudes, believing he showed a lack of concern for the camp's fragile economy. McAdow, however, had more important things on his mind. He was growing weaker with age and the responsibility of owning a mine was too great a burden. Thus, he intended to sell the property and enjoy a wealthy life before his time ran out.⁵

An aura of uncertainty fell over Maiden in the spring and early summer of 1892. McAdow had not returned from his winter home in Detroit and inactivity still plagued the Spotted Horse. In July, McAdow returned, putting a force of men to work and later that summer news of a rich strike circulated throughout the camp.⁶ Yet McAdow was content with continuing developmental work only and the mill did not fire up. Company labor expenses per month remained minimal, between \$1,000 and \$1,400. When

⁴Ibid., April 23, 1891, p. 3; May 7, 1891, p. 3; July 9, 1891, p. 3.

⁵Ibid., February 25, 1892, p. 2; May 5, 1892, p. 3; July 18, 1895, p. 3.

⁶Ibid., July 28, 1892, p. 4.

both mine and mill were operating at full force, wages usually exceeded \$5,000 per month. Negotiations for the purchase of the mine by a wealthy Chicago syndicate neared completion and later that year the Consolidated Double Eagle Gold Mining Company purchased the property.⁷

The Maginnis Company reclaimed ownership of their properties following the Jay Gould adventure and immediately began assessment work on their unpatented claims. Throughout the period 1890-93, Hauser and Holter, the principal owners of the company, followed a bonding and leasing policy of their properties.⁸ This was a common practice for companies and wealthy individuals because generally it proved to be a fruitful practice. Often times the owner or owners made money on the deal as well as being freed of demanding responsibilities. This practice allowed time for various interests and commitments in other investment areas. For Hauser and Holter, this procedure proved lucrative because of their diverse investments throughout Montana.

This practice benefited Maiden as well. Individuals who leased the Maginnis properties showed a greater interest in daily activity of the mine. They were constantly on the job supervising production, management, repairs, and costs. The

⁷Ibid., July 14, 1892, p. 2; July 21, 1892, p. 3. McAdow retained an interest in the Spotted Horse property through large holdings of Consolidated Double Eagle Gold Mining Company stock.

⁸Ibid., October 30, 1890, p. 2; May 21, 1891, p. 3; May 28, 1891, p. 2; November 19, 1891, p. 3; July 21, 1892, p. 3; August 11, 1892, p. 3; October 6, 1892, p. 4.

result was a highly centralized operation evolving around the individual whose money was on the line. His interests were usually not as far reaching as the large company or wealthy individual and hence loose ends were quickly patched up. A well managed operation of this type produced more consistent output, thus aiding the camp's economy greatly. This was clearly shown in the early 1890s when the Maginnis properties proved to be Maiden's chief economic support. Though the Spotted Horse was obviously the best mine in the area, it was controlled by a self-centered individual whose greatest concern was making more money.⁹

During the late 1880s, Maidenites had looked forward to a prosperous future because of increased mining activity in the district. But these hopes diminished considerably with the folding of the Jay Gould enterprise, and once again Maidenites resorted to newspaper advertising to attract capital and transportation. As in years past, the district's resources were exaggerated to such a point as to appear incredible:

. . . In some respects Maiden is one of the most remarkable mining camps in the world. Maiden is in the midst of . . . the Judith Mountains . . . all of them are literally covered with vast quantities of good float¹⁰ . . . intersected with numerous veins of rich ores. The Judith Mountains are . . . the

⁹Ibid., June 22, 1893, p. 2.

¹⁰"Float" refers to mineral particles and scales eroded from a lode and carried away by water action. Prospectors were always on the lookout for float which indicated ore bodies in the vicinity.

paradise of prospectors . . . the valleys and gulches and mountain slopes are strewn with fragments great and small, rich in gold and silver. So abundant is the float from the veins of these mountains that it will be gathered up with great profit at no distant day.

. . . ¹¹

Maidenites' dreams of prosperity were interrupted by the development of several factors. The severe winter of 1891 dropped heavy snowfalls in the Judiths, leaving Maiden isolated from the outside world. Large and small scale mining activity slowed considerably, fuel and food shortages were common, the Lewistown newspaper (Fergus County Argus) had little information on Maiden, and access was limited to snow shoes and toboggans.¹² Winters were hazardous to all mining communities and generally brought camp activity to a near standstill. During 1890-91, the Ft. Maginnis Military Reservation was abandoned and Maidenites took the loss personally. The effects of the abandonment were mostly confined to a loss of saloon business. Yet to Maidenites the Fort had stood as a symbol, signifying the importance of the area. Maidenites believed the abandonment demonstrated the government's loss of faith in the area.¹³

¹¹Fergus County Argus, March 6, 1890, p. 1.

¹²Ibid., November through April, 1891.

¹³Ibid., April 17, 1890, p. 1; May 8, 1890, p. 2. The abandonment of Ft. Maginnis was ordered because the fort had outlived its purpose and was no longer necessary. Indian troubles and rustling had quieted down by 1890 and abandonment of numerous forts took place throughout the West. Note simultaneous abandonments of Fort Bridger, Wyoming; Fort Sidney, Nebraska; Fort Crawford, Colorado; Little Rock Barracks, Arkansas; Fort McDowell, Fort Thomas, and Fort Verde, Arizona.

A further problem was the decline in population. More and more people were leaving in the fall and fewer returning in the spring. The Maiden school which had enrolled twenty-two pupils in 1890, counted only sixteen in 1892.¹⁴ By 1892 many Maidenites were pessimistic about the camp's future. In March the Fergus County Argus published an article from a Maiden correspondent who was so disenchanted with the present that he fantasized about the camp's future:

. . . The electric railroad is a complete success. The cable road running from the Spotted Horse has added some very attractive and handsome cars to their line . . . The Commodious hotel erected on the site of the old International hotel . . . is one of the finest in the state. It is equipped with an array of employees, 100 girl waiters of the most beautiful type being in attendance. . . The banking firm of Poland and Son are doing a good business. . . Ex-Mayor Dougherty and family will spend the summer in Alaska. . . Phil Sanders, general manager of the transfer company, received last week two handsome cabs from the East, which will be placed on the line running from the depot to the hotel. . .¹⁵

Maidenites, then, were experiencing an economic crisis that threatened to undermine the camp's chances of permanency. An editorial in the Fergus County Argus understated the requirements for an economic revival: "Maiden will boom with a little more work on mining claims, a few more experts, and not so much blowing."¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., October 30, 1890 through October 27, 1892.

¹⁵Ibid., March 24, 1892, p. 3.

¹⁶Ibid., June 30, 1892, p. 3.

In the spring of 1893, activity picked up at the Spotted Horse mine and Maidenites looked forward to a healthier economy. Between fifty and sixty men were now employed in the mill and mine under the skillful management of J. W. Provard. The Double Eagle property appeared to be in first class shape. The main shaft of the mine descended 400 feet and six different levels showed promising ore bodies. The mill continued to run throughout the summer on \$20-30 ore with a capacity of sixty tons per day.¹⁷ Development work continued through the winter and in the spring of 1894, Maidenites again foresaw another prosperous summer. Yet assumptions were quickly shattered when the Double Eagle Company ran into financial difficulty. In July, the company began to accumulate debts for labor and materials. J. W. Provard kept creditors at a distance with limited payments in gold bullion, but by December 1894, even his skills could not prevent attachments from closing the Spotted Horse property. Attempts to bond the property to raise capital and start operations again proved fruitless and in April the property sold at the sheriff sale.¹⁸

The attachments and liens on the property were from a variety of sources and provide good insight into the relationship

¹⁷Ibid., June 22, 1893, p. 2; August 10, 1893, p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., May 24, 1894, p. 2; July 5, 1894, p. 3; September 27, 1894, p. 2; December 20, 1894, p. 3.

between mine owners, powerful creditors, local creditors, and miners. The closing of the Spotted Horse was due to the wage claims of workers (\$2,758.45), mechanics' liens (\$4,465.59), and attachments by powerful creditors like the Bank of Fergus County (\$2,758.45) and the Power Mercantile Company (\$1,327.71).¹⁹ All of these creditors were using Maiden and its miners as a possible source of income. When instead it appeared that they were losing money because of lagging payments, they quickly settled their claims, caring little for the effects upon the community. Local creditors, usually Maidenites themselves, allowed credit to be extended over longer periods because it was in the best interest of the camp. Local creditors like Mrs. Belanger, Charles Lehman, Ernest Kies, Vincent Gies, and others refused to state their claims in regard to the Spotted Horse litigation.²⁰ This demonstrates that local merchants, proprietors, and other creditors were well aware of the relationship between mine operations and goods on the shelves. Thus they attempted to help the company as best they could. Miners, mechanics, and laborers, though, cared slightly for the camp's existence. Maiden or any other mining camp was simply another place to pick up a necessary paycheck. If a mine slowed down or folded there was always another over the next hill.

The Power Mercantile Company, Bank of Fergus County, and M. C. Poland held the title to the Spotted Horse in a trust,

¹⁹ Ibid., May 2, 1895, p. 3.

²⁰ Ibid.

and chose to sell the property rather than work it.²¹ P. W. McAdow and John Green of the Consolidated Double Eagle Gold Mining Company visited Maiden later that summer intending to reacquire the property. But the project was quickly abandoned when they discovered that the creditors (Power Mercantile, Bank of Fergus County, and M. C. Poland) had allowed the lower levels of the mine to fill up with water. This resulted in massive cave-ins that buried ore bodies, thus necessitating large expenditures and considerable time to uncover them. The problem was further complicated when McAdow and Green learned that the remaining stockholders of the company were either unable or unwilling to put up additional finances. Finally, in October 1896, J. C. Bright of Columbus, Ohio purchased the property at a price considered to be "very low."²²

Small-scale mining in the district was quite extensive, yet was of marginal help to the camp's economy. Most of the smaller claims were worked by individual prospectors or partnerships whose main objectives were to develop their properties in hopes of realizing a future sale. Occasionally, when ore reserves had accumulated, they would have them worked through the Spotted Horse and Maginnis mills. Others, who had richer ores, would have them processed elsewhere.²³ Profits after

²¹Ibid., November 7, 1895, p. 3.

²²Ibid., July 18, 1895, p. 3; October 1, 1896, p. 3. The Spotted Horse operated at sporadic intervals under various owners throughout the 1890-1900s. Never again would it support Maiden as in years past. Today the mine continues to operate, long after Maiden has become a ghost town.

²³Ibid., January 1892 through January 1893.

expenses were marginal and often this money went back into the mine to further development. Silver production which had helped bolster the camp's economy through the 1880s and early 1890s dropped off in 1893. The valuable silver mines in the district, among them the Collar, Florence, War Eagle, Comet, and Keystone, suffered from the repeal of the Sherman Silver Act and could no longer be worked profitably.²⁴ By 1894-95, the camp's future did not look good. The Double Eagle and Maginnis mining companies were smarting from the repeal of the Sherman Silver Act and could not afford to work their properties. Much of the small-scale mining was now

²⁴ Ibid., July 6, 1893, p. 1; August 17, 1893, p. 1; July 11, 1895, p. 1. The repeal of the Sherman Silver Act in the summer of 1893 produced a nationwide panic. The U. S. government which had been purchasing 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month with gold had kept the price of silver up, thus making it profitable to mine. But by spring of 1893, federal gold reserves were severely depleted and President Cleveland called upon Congress to repeal the act. The country had anticipated the repeal beforehand and silver prices began dropping sharply even before the repeal was made law. Suddenly, financial distrust was everywhere. Numerous money institutions like the First National Bank of Helena were suspended because they could not meet the demands of frightened depositors. Corporations, wealthy individuals, and others who usually were anxious to loan money now kept it in hand. Businesses who offered securities as collateral in obtaining loans found them no longer acceptable. Fixed values became conjectural and loss of faith invaded every branch of business. The effects on silver mining and related industries were enormous. High operating costs could not be met with low silver prices and one by one they closed down. By July 1893 silver mines and operations in the Coeur d'Alenes of Idaho, the St. Louis Smelting and Refining Company of St. Louis, mines in Aspen, Colorado, the Granite-Bi-metallic Consolidated Mining Company of Philipsburg, Montana, and others were in the process of closing down.

handled by Lewistown residents or other outsiders who either worked the mines themselves or hired others to do so.

Generally, they tended to work the mines in the summer and leave them idle in winter.²⁵

In 1893, the mining camp of Gilt Edge sprang into existence about six miles south of Maiden and soon replaced her as the darling of the Judiths. Gilt Edge was one of the new mining camps on the mining frontier. Her economy was supported by a unique form of ore reduction which used the cyanide process to extract gold from ore.²⁶ The existence of Gilt Edge hurt Maiden's economy considerably. It attracted portions of Maiden's waning population and also replaced her as the focal point of central Montana mining. Maiden now received little attention

²⁵Ibid., 1894-95.

²⁶Ibid., August 17, 1893, p. 2; November 30, 1893, p. 2; July 11, 1895, p. 1; December 5, 1895, p. 1. The cyanide process at Gilt Edge involved first crushing the ore into fine particles with two five-ton rolls. The crushed ore was then placed in a vat or settler where it was mixed with the cyanide solution. The solution which at the end of 24 hours contained gold particles was then run over zinc boxes containing zinc shavings. Later, these shavings became impregnated with gold. Assays of the gold after the process were then determined by the weight and color of the zinc shavings. The process was complete when the solution was bottled up in flasks and sent away for further refining. Initially, the cyanide process at Gilt Edge did not prove successful as only fifty to sixty percent of the original assay value (before the ore underwent the cyanide process) was saved. Later the process became so perfected that cyaniders descended upon every tailing dump throughout the West, ran it through their vats, and left with the goods. This was one of the last great gold rushes and what it did was double the world's annual production of gold. For more information see Otis E. Young, Jr., Western Mining: An Informal Account, pp. 267-88.

in the Lewistown newspaper and therefore could not advertise her resources. By 1896, Maiden's population had dwindled to 200 and for the remaining few it was very hard times.²⁷

Maiden continued to struggle into the early 1900s and in 1902 the camp experienced somewhat of a revival with the arrival of the railroad in Lewistown. Mining activity made a brief surge and Maiden appeared to be on the upswing. But in August 1905 the camp was destroyed by fire. More than twenty buildings went up in flames as the fire raged down Main and Montana Streets. Saloons, barber shops, hardware and dry goods stores, the hotel and others carried no insurance and suffered more than \$150,000 in damage.²⁸ The fire was a final blow to a camp whose economic supports had long ago rotted away. Maiden's purpose for existence was now gone and in time only memories remained.

²⁷ John N. DeHaas, Jr., ed., Central Montana Ghost Towns; Fergus County Argus, 1895-96. During 1883-85, the population was near 1,000.

²⁸ Fergus County Argus, August 15, 1905, p. 1.

CONCLUSION

Maiden's decline and eventual collapse exemplified characteristics which were prevalent in many mining camps. Among Maiden's shortcomings isolation was the most destructive. This was illustrated by high freight rates and lack of a railroad. Without a railroad connection (Maiden was 112 miles from the nearest railroad), Maiden attracted little outside attention, a key obstacle to her growth.¹ Deep mining in the district developed very slowly since insufficient transportation facilities discouraged outside investors. Capital investment gave a community life by stimulating the economy. The capital investment in the area came chiefly from Hauser and Holter's Maginnis Company, P. W. McAdow's Spotted Horse, and later the Jay Gould Company. In all three cases the investors had persistent troubles in operations, thus slowing development. Furthermore, these individuals had numerous investments in other locations and industries outside of Maiden. Their interests in Maiden, though important, were not crucial

¹U. S. Geological Survey, Geology and Mineral Resources of the Judith Mountains of Montana, p. 589; Malone and Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries, p. 141; James A. MacKnight, The Mines of Montana: Their History and Development to Date (Helena: C. K. Wells Co., Printers, 1892), p. 121. Though the railroad arrived in Lewistown in 1902, Maiden could not recover. The large mining companies had folded, most of the population had drifted away, and the mines were largely worked out by 1900. The railroad, then, simply arrived too late.

enough to demand their undivided attention. Thus development in the district did not receive as much attention as Maidenites would have liked. True, these capitalists were concerned with the prospects of the district, but not to the point where they would use (if they could) their influence to bring in a railroad, thereby solving the community's isolation. The district was not important enough to warrant the building of a railroad to Maiden's front door. This lack of resources was exemplified in 1890 when the Jay Gould Company, after extensive development, left the area. The mines did not measure up to company expectations.

The existence of Lewistown proved to be a key obstacle to Maiden's growth as well. Throughout the period 1880-85, Maiden and Lewistown competed for the business of the Judith area. Maidenites enjoyed the advantage of a larger population, a better developed community (businesses, newspaper, etc.), and the attraction of her mines. Lewistown, though, had the advantage of a more consistent economy propped up by farming, cattle, and wool interests and also a superior location. By 1886, Lewistown's economy and location proved to be the keys to her success. This was clearly demonstrated when the town received the county seat in 1886 and also Maiden's newspaper, the Mineral Argus. Lewistown was also aided by a steady growth in population which reached close to 1,000 by 1895 as contrasted to Maiden's which constantly fluctuated.² These

²Mineral Argus, August 6, 1885, p. 1; October 29, 1885, p. 1; November 26, 1885, p. 3; Fergus County Argus, July 11, 1895, p. 1.

advantages proved to be more important than those of Maiden in the late 1880s and the 1890s.

A comparison of economies illustrates why Lewistown exists today and Maiden does not. As we have seen, Maiden's economy was that of a typical boom-bust cycle, oscillating between prosperity and depression. Her economy was highly sensitive to local and national forces which exerted tremendous pressures on the camp. These pressures were intensified by the fact that her economy relied so heavily on mining for support. Lewistown, sustained largely by agriculture and related interests, was much more resistant to these same pressures. When the severe winter of 1886-87 wiped out three-fourths of the cattle and wool populations, the town recovered remarkably. Lewistown quickly bounced back from the repeal of the Sherman Silver Act as well, with cattle, wool, and horse industries showing increases within two years.³ This resilience amid economic depressions was due in part to the urban-rural relationship between Lewistown and the surrounding area. The town's ideal location near range and farmland country made her an obvious supply-consumption center. Lewistown met the needs of the surrounding agricultural industries by providing a home market for wheat, hay, flax, oats, all types of vegetables, eggs, hogs, and a portion of the cattle, sheep, and horses. Furthermore, the town provided the surrounding area with goods like barbed wire, fence posts, wagons, saddles,

³Fergus County Argus, August 7, 1890, p. 1; July 11, 1895, p. 1.

rope, household luxuries, and services such as banking, newspaper advertising, and professional services (physicians and lawyers).⁴ The agricultural industries in turn contributed to a mature and well-developed business community.

In the 1890s, Lewistown's expanding community boasted of a flour mill which consumed local wheat crops, a bank (The Bank of Fergus County), a court house, a board of trade which furthered community expansion, general contractors and builders, a lumber company (The Judith Lumber Company), and churches of the Methodist, Catholic, and Presbyterian denominations.⁵ This compatible relationship allowed Lewistown and the surrounding area to stand firm against obstacles such as severe winters, economic depressions, and isolation. No doubt these forces affected and at times hurt the town's economy. Yet this broader-based economy helped Lewistown survive when mining camps like Maiden were unable to. Maiden's lack of crucial ingredients like accessibility, services, and a consistent economy furthered her eventual decline and led to the death of the camp.

Another problem relating to Maiden's collapse was the geology of the area. Though bonanzas like the Spotted Horse existed (thousands of dollars to the ton), in general the gold

⁴Maiden provided a home market as well but could not meet the demands for services and materials as well as Lewistown. This was due to both a lack of many of these resources and also because of her poor location.

⁵Fergus County Argus, August 7, 1890, p. 1; May 23, 1895, p. 1; July 11, 1895, p. 1.

ores in the district were low grade, about ten to twenty dollars per ton.⁶ Quartz veins and mother lodes simply did not exist in the area. This fact, along with high labor costs, water scarcity, and transportation difficulties, found investors making less money than desirable. This affected the population of the camp as well. Slow activity in the mid-1890s found many inhabitants moving away. The potential of the new camp of Gilt Edge with its cyanide mill attracted some of this unhappy group. This was common throughout the mining frontier. Why stay where claims were taken, wages declining, and the cost of living increasing, when a new camp provided much more?⁷

Maiden's economy, then, depended upon operations in the mines, and when companies faced obstacles in the area, so did Maiden. Other mining camps, like Marysville, experienced this same relationship with companies in their districts. When the Drumlummon prospered, so did Marysville. When it faltered, Marysville faltered. As in most mining camps, the companies provided the economic supports that kept the town alive. All inhabitants were dependent one way or another on mining operations.⁸ If other industries existed in the area, such as

⁶U. S. Geological Survey, Geology and Mineral Resources of the Judith Mountains of Montana, p. 592.

⁷Duane A. Smith, Rocky Mountain Mining Camps, p. 204.

⁸Clark Spence, Montana: A Bicentennial History, p. 38; K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, pp. 80-81.

cattle, wool, and lumber, and if they could carry the town's economy, the town would survive. But if economic dependence rested solely upon one industry, the camp's chances for survival were slim. As we have seen, another factor in survival was a town's usefulness to the surrounding area. This was a key component in the urban-rural frontier relationship. Though Maiden did supply the area with some of its needs, she could not provide all of them. Consequently, Maiden was overshadowed by Lewistown, which fulfilled the requirements of this urban-rural relationship much better. Though camps like Maiden were important in providing a stimulus for settlement of the West, their existence afterwards was not crucial. The cattle and wool industries were much more important in central Montana.⁹

Maiden, then, was inevitably destined to become a ghost town. Yet in retrospect, could the people of Maiden have done things differently to prevent this collapse? Was there a lack of organization and planning? Maybe the district could have been further developed, and the extent of mineralization better understood. Why the reliance on a boom-bust industry that obviously failed to give the community permanence? In analyzing this situation, I have come to the conclusion that Maiden's extinction was indeed inevitable. The mining camp was inherently a precarious and unstable institution. An economy dependent upon something as unpredictable as gold mining could never hope

⁹Fergus County Argus, October 25, 1888, p. 2.

for a continued existence. The people of the time were aware of this and accepted it. Why organize and plan for a permanent community when the mines might fail the following week? Yet many hoped and strove for Maiden's stability in spite of all this. To contemporary society it might seem absurd to rely solely on such an unsteady industry for existence. But for some, a life of transience was not that bad, especially if one could meet daily needs by wandering from camp to camp. Those who sought more consistency welcomed prosperity and feared depression and when bad times arrived they fought to overcome them. If they failed there were always opportunities in different areas or other lifestyles. Finally, the collapse of Maiden was due to events out of Maidenites' control. They could not change the geology of the area, the lack of capital investment, the isolation, or the national economy. Thus, Maiden and many other camps exist now only as memories.

Despite the short-term existence of most mining camps, directly and indirectly they aided in the settlement and growth of the West. The camps attracted large numbers of people whose needs were serviced by mercantilists, bankers, doctors, and lawyers. Communities developed to meet the needs of the people. Schools, churches, and newspapers were abundant. Cultural events like drama troupes and lectures developed. Mining needed transportation routes, which brought in more people. Quartz mining also expanded the use of coal and timber, and encouraged agricultural development in the surrounding valleys by creating markets for rural products.

Agriculture flourished and provided security for a more permanent settlement. This gave the assurance necessary for building the territory and state.¹⁰ Therefore, mining camps were an integral part of a long process that transformed the Montana wilderness into an industrial society, a process that involved time, money, and exploitation of natural resources.

¹⁰Merrill G. Burlingame, "The Mining Frontier in Montana," in Montana's Past: Selected Essays, edited by Malone and Roeder, pp. 114-15.

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