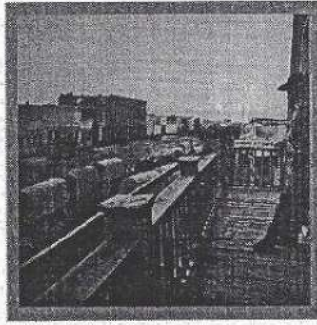


Bozeman the Town



Main Street in Bozeman, looking east, circa 1873.

chapter



T W E L V E

Most wagon trains from the Bozeman Trail came down into the Gallatin Valley, rumbling past what looked like a desolate outpost at the base of the pass. They saw a few settlers building cabins and stores, but their eyes looked farther west. Single men rushed by to see if any gold was left at Bannack and Virginia City. Others were moving fast, too, anxious to leave the Civil War and conscription behind. Families had their eyes on the rich farmland to the west. By the fall of 1864, however, Bozeman City began to look like a settlement.

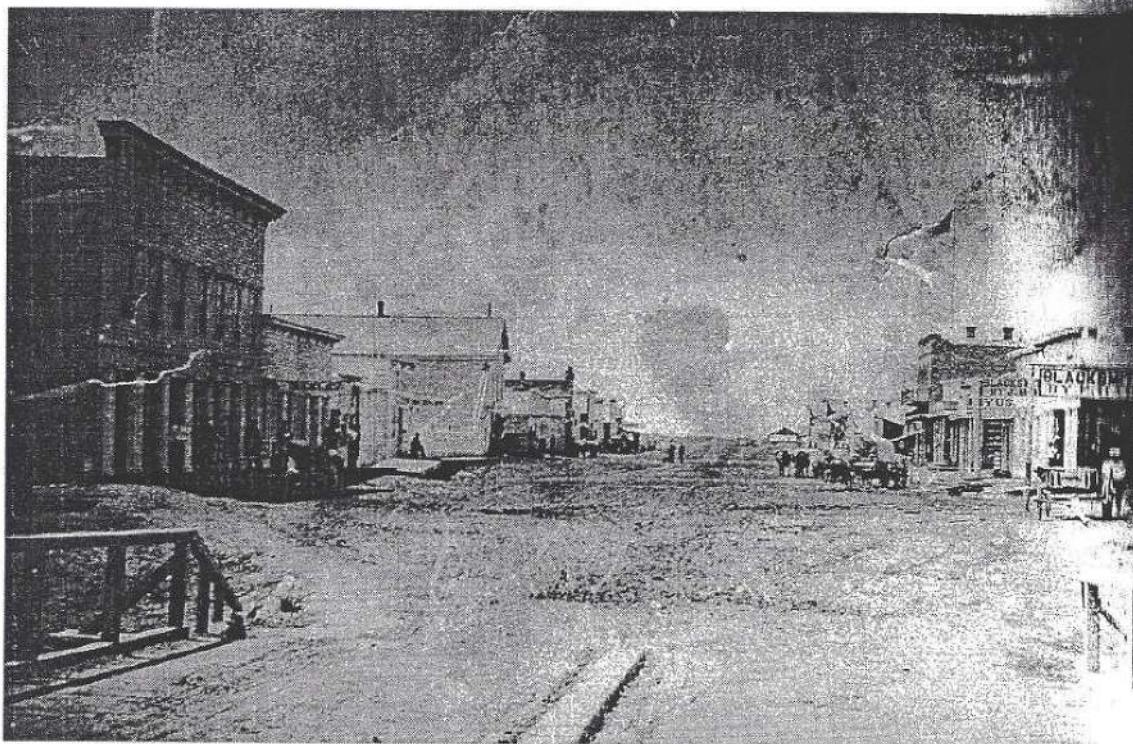
New arrivals John Stafford and W. S. Rice saw the need for a hotel and quickly put together a tiny one-and-a-half-story structure at the northwest corner of Main Street and Bozeman Avenue to accommodate those who didn't want to live in a tent and could afford not to. Rice soon found he was not meant to be an innkeeper. He left for Diamond City almost immediately to try his hand at the new gold diggings there.

On Christmas Eve, 1864, before the hotel room partitions were up, a "grand ball" was held at the Stafford building to celebrate the founding of the new community. As was usual with "first" western dances, the men lined up to dance with the few women in the settlement. Romance bloomed for hotelkeeper Stafford and Sallie Smith, who were

married two weeks later on January 11 by Reverend Alderson.

Stafford later sold out to Caleb D. Fitz, who, in turn, passed the little building on to J. J. Parham, who had brought forty thousand dollars' worth of merchandise from the States. It was not long before the newly formed Masonic Lodge No. 6, A.F. & A.M., used the building's upstairs for meetings; membership in Lodge No. 6 was more or less restricted to those men or their sons with Confederate ties. The Masons bought the building in 1866 for five hundred dollars, renting the first floor to the Empire Corral and then to Osborn's Drug Store.

Before the winter of 1864's first snow, six or seven log cabins defined the new settlement. William Beall finished his first home on the site of the present Carnegie Library building; Elliott Rouse built a small cabin on John Bozeman's claim, located on the south side of Main Street, east of Bozeman Avenue, then put up another cabin for himself, on the north side of Main, east of Bozeman Avenue. French-Canadian John Richard, Jr. (also spelled Reshawe or Richau), guide for the Townsend wagon train along the Bozeman Trail, moved into another new home. Mexican immigrant Joe Merraville and his Sioux wife built a double log cabin on the southwest corner of the present Bozeman Avenue



Early Main Street, facing west, in the late 1860s. Note wooden bridge over Bozeman Creek, lower left.

and Mendenhall Street, which would later be used as a school.

Caleb Fitz and his son Payne lived in the back room of their new general store at 130 East Main. And Frederick F. Fridley invited everyone to inspect his Main Street cabin, which boasted a floor covered with real wood planks. His wife America would be pleased when she arrived.

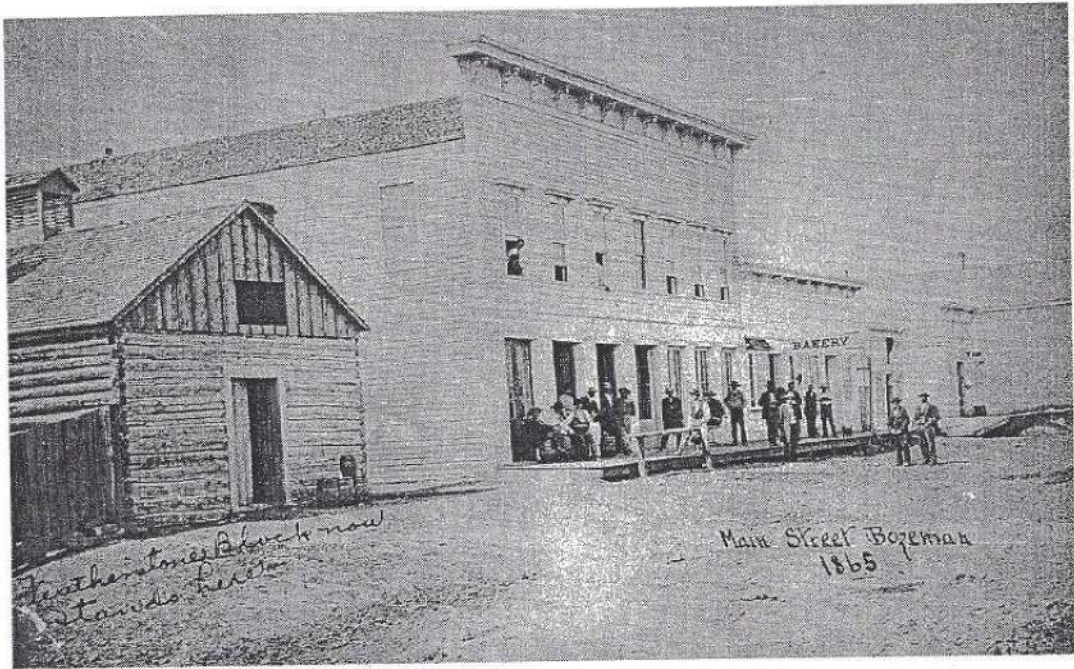
John S. "Jack" Mendenhall opened Bozeman's first saloon, which also featured canned peaches and sundries, at 27 East Main. When Dr. Achilles Lamme arrived, he decided not to practice medicine; instead, he joined forces with Springhill man Lewis M. Howell to open another general store; later he became partners with Mendenhall. After trying the Stafford building location, J. J. Parham moved to a new spot but soon sold out to Charles Rich and Loren W. Tuller in 1866. Rich and Tuller had first brought their goods to the Penwell Ranch, operating from a tent, but moved the merchandise into Bozeman while they were waiting for their third partner to arrive—General Lester S. Willson.

The former New Yorker had enlisted in the Union army in 1861 as a private; three years later,

he was a brevet brigadier. General Willson heard his friend Horace Greeley exhorting men to come west; he did, despite Greeley's apparent change of mind, for he told Willson he was a damned fool to settle in Montana Territory. Tuller sold out to the general when he arrived in April 1867.

With encouragement and help from John Bozeman, Perry W. McAdow and Tom Cover started to build a grist and flour mill north of town on October 1. When they opened for business in the fall of 1865, one thousand wagons had come along the Bozeman Trail.

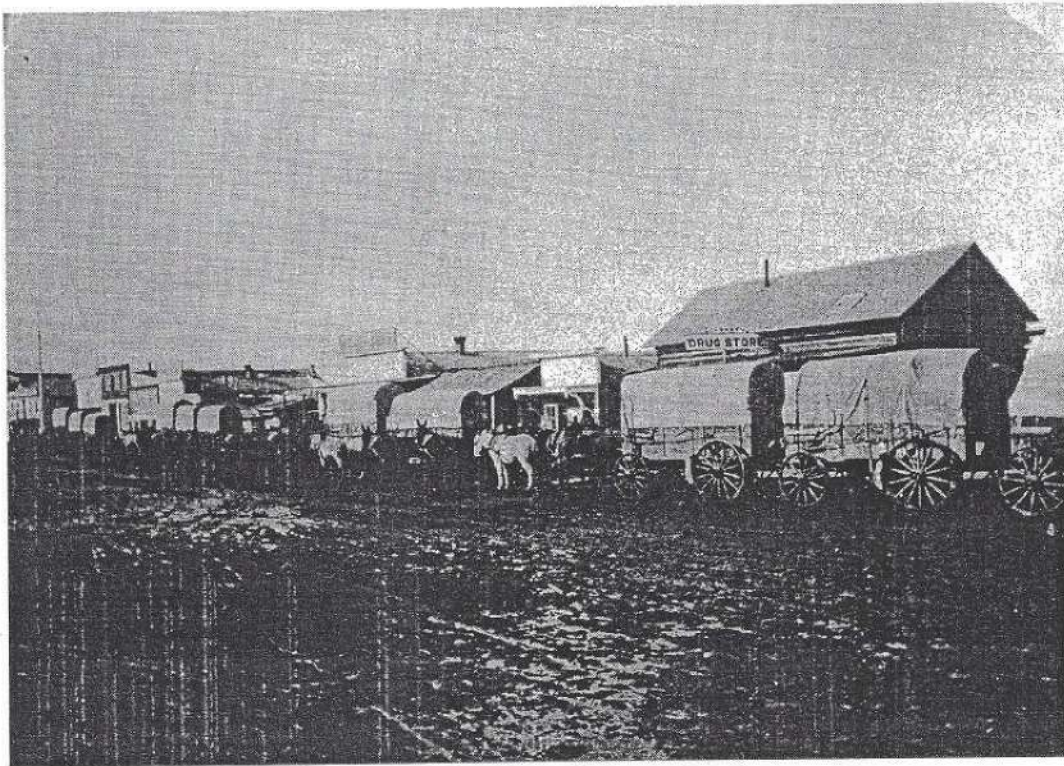
During the summer of 1865, word spread through the settlement of a buildup of Sioux warriors east of Bozeman Pass. Rumors said the Indians were preparing to descend upon the valley pioneers. Rosa Beall remembered midnight knocks on the door of her cabin: "Get up and go to town, the Sioux Indians are just over the divide, and they have killed Colonel Kimball and another man, and are coming at daybreak to attack the settlers."¹ Women and children were herded to the former Stafford hotel for safety for a few days while men marched over the pass to fight. Despite stories of Sioux on the



*Main Street lined with wood frame buildings in the late 1860s. (The 1865 date may not be correct).
Brick will not be used as a building material until another five years have passed.*

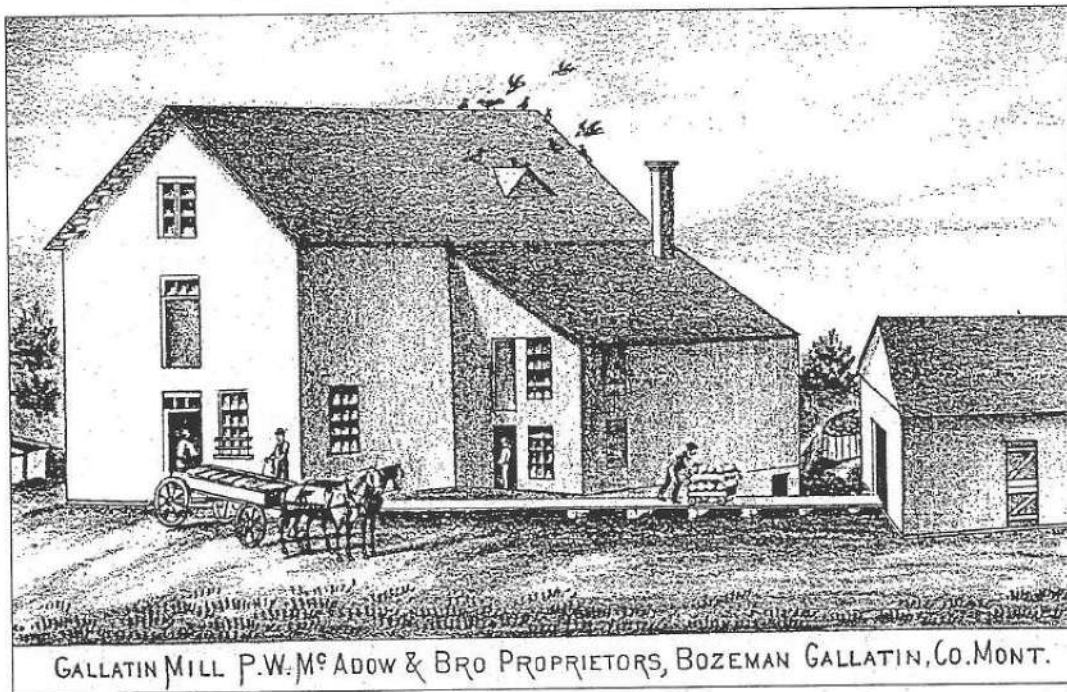
Loaded mule trains on muddy Bozeman streets. Note the new trees along the boardwalk.





Wagons line muddy Main Street, c1867.

*Bozeman's first flour mill was a simple structure north of town, built to take advantage of water power nearby.
The mill opened for business in the fall of 1865. ETCHING FROM MICHAEL LEESON, HISTORY OF MONTANA, 1885.*



march, the men could not find them.

More hotels were constructed. George Washington A. Frazier, who fled Georgia in 1865, and his wife Elmyra enlisted the help of John Bozeman in 1866 to build a hotel. The building would eventually display the town's first commercial sign "ever swung to the breeze": CITY HOTEL.² Elmyra's maiden name was Bozeman but neither she nor John could determine if they were related. The Fraziers reserved rooms upstairs, one for Bozeman and one for his friend William McKinzie; the men took their meals at the hotel and could come and go as they pleased. The Fraziers would build a new hotel in 1871 called Frazier House on East Main Street and Bozeman Avenue.

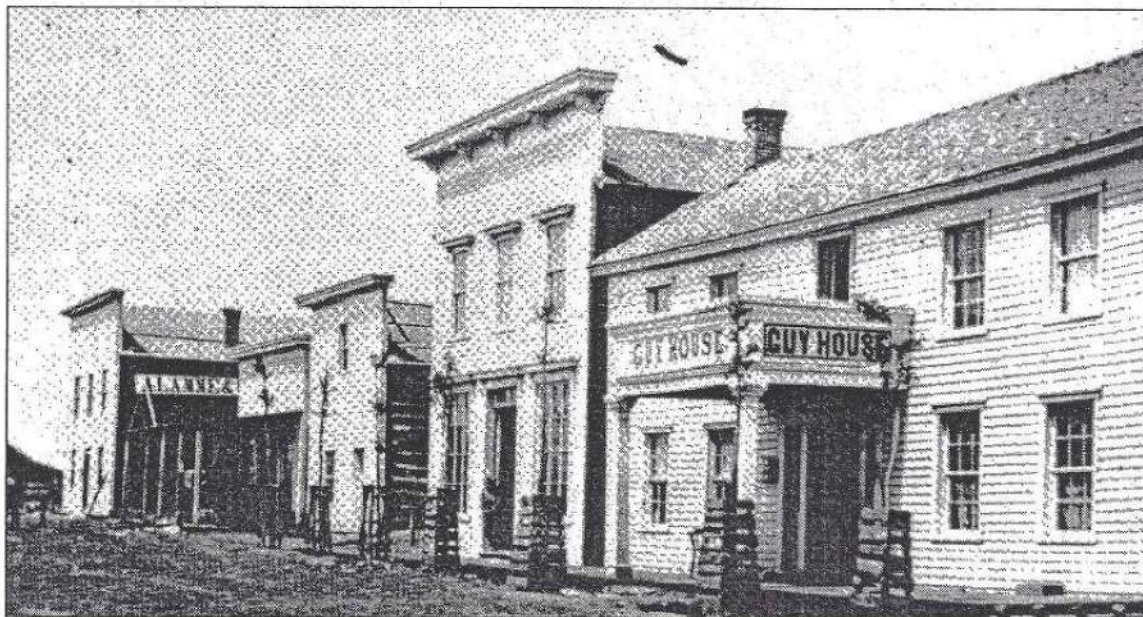
John C. Guy, sometime sheriff and former resident of Gallatin City, built the two-story Guy House in 1868 on the northwest corner of Main Street and Black Avenue. Guy House quickly became the social center of town. Bozeman bachelors were marrying, one by one, and brought their brides to live at Guy House while proper accommodations could be finished. Sarah Jane Bessey Tracy remembered her first meal at the hotel on June 5, 1869:

When supper was served . . . Mrs. [Sophia] Guy insisted that I take a seat by her at the table. Every stool around the two long tables was occupied—Mrs. Guy, Mrs. [Ellen Trent] Story and I being the only ladies. It did look somewhat like curiosity . . . and Mr. Guy told me later he had seventy-five extras for dinner. I wonder if they thought Mr. Tracy's investment was a good one—I was then just a young girl of seventeen.³

Nelson Story and his new wife Ellen also stayed at Guy House, awaiting completion of their first home on the southwest corner of Main Street and Tracy Avenue.

Within a few days, Sarah Jane Tracy regarded herself a veteran as she welcomed General Lester Willson's new wife. Emma Weeks Willson did not have to meet Bozeman's male population all at once; the general took her to their new home at 224 Main Street. When her piano arrived—the first in town—she took up her old habit of singing a bit in the afternoons; one by one, lonely bachelors and wandering Indians stopped to listen to Emma Willson's remarkable voice. (In the 1880s, the Storys would build a showy mansion on West Main Street,

Two-story Guy House on the northwest corner of Main Street and Black Avenue welcomed newly arrived settlers' wives while their residences were being completed. Note the saplings with protective fencing.



From: Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley:
a history

by Phyllis Smith

chapter



F I F T E E N

By the mid-1870s, Bozeman was on its way to becoming a progressive community, despite residents' complaints that Main Street was unbearably dusty in the summer, muddy in the winter, and always smelled of pig. One could cross the street by guesswork on wooden walkways or mere planks, seldom seen under the mud. After a heavy rain, four-horse teams were required to pull a coach or wagon through the puddles and gumbo. Some wag could be counted upon on these occasions to post a sign stating, "No fishing allowed." Women sewed a black dust ruffle to the hems of their long dresses, which trailed in the mud and could be taken off now and then for cleaning.

Since each merchant built his own wooden sidewalk, the heights of the walkways were not standard; hence, pedestrians bobbed up and down as they traveled down Main Street. Small boys, and some adults, fished for coins or a lost gold watch dropped through the slats of the sidewalks. Again, women's voluminous skirts were a hindrance, the hems ripping on loose nails along the way. Crude wooden bridges crossed Sourdough Creek (called Bozeman Creek where it ran through town) and another small stream to the west, now underground. Loaded sixteen-mule trains crowded the thoroughfare, on their way to Helena or Corinne, Utah. In order to reach Helena in one day, freighters

packed their goods and left a dark Main Street at 3 A.M.

Stage coaches bucketed into town "with four horses on the lope . . . the stage driver cracking his whip . . . with great style."¹ A ticket to Central Park cost two dollars; the trip to Three Forks cost four dollars; a ticket to Helena and back cost twenty; one way to Miles City was an exorbitant forty-two dollars.

With the establishment of William Tracy's brickworks just outside of town, followed by that of Carey and Lewis a few years later, business blocks made of brick began to replace a number of frame stores, giving an air of permanence to the town. Construction was made difficult on the swampy ground due to a high water table. The Metropolitan Hotel (later called the Grand LaClede) was one of the first brick buildings on Main Street. In 1872, gunsmith Walter Cooper astounded all with his elegant brick building at 118 East Main Street, south side. Each of the eleven doors of the Cooper Block was outlined with a gigantic Romanesque bay. Nearby, Spieth and Krug added a brick brewery to the east of their frame saloon in the 200 block of East Main, south side.

Architect Byron Vreeland designed and completed by July 11, 1880 a substantial brick county courthouse on West Main, at a cost of \$24,750; also



Walter Cooper
BOZEMAN.

Walter Cooper's business interests were centered both in the Gallatin Canyon and town. ETCHING FROM MICHAEL LEESON, HISTORY OF MONTANA, 1885.

built to the east of the courthouse was a small and separate clerk and recorder building. Two years later, Vreeland completed another brick building for Smith's Palace Saloon.

As yet, no trees of any size grew in town. Cottonwoods and other saplings would soon be planted. Householders fenced their lots to keep wandering cattle and sheep from trampling their gardens. Family milk cows were tethered in backyards. On the front door of many homes hung a small decorative basket to hold calling cards from those stating their intention to pay a formal social visit. New Year's Day was particularly busy, with families calling on one another, the children fresh from a rare bath, women in their best dark wool, a few of the men in silk hats and dusters. Food and refreshments lined every table; by the end of the day, everyone was pleasantly stuffed. Fred F. Willson remembers that the custom "made for good feeling among citizens, and neighbors and friends, it preserved contacts."²²

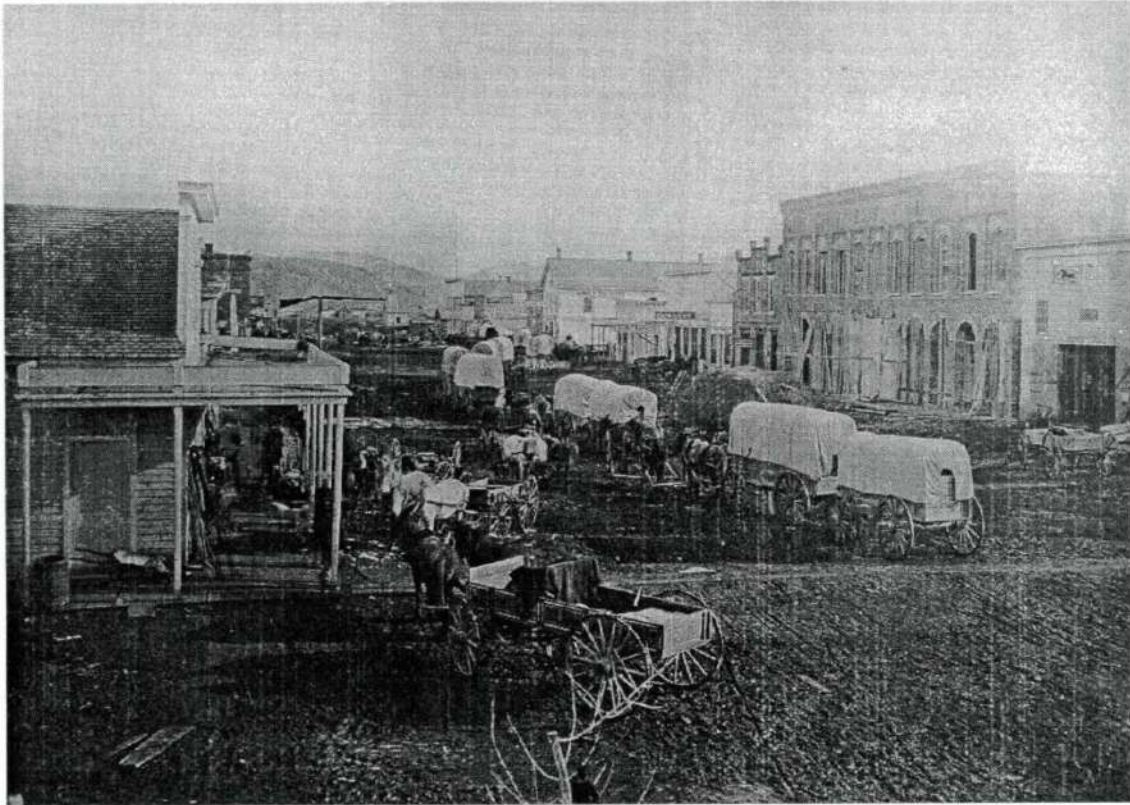
Everyday tables could offer cuts of either buffalo, antelope, bighorn sheep, moose, venison, bear, or wild fowl—a heavy meal, its gamey flavor cut by hanging or freezing the meat. Isabelle Randall wrote from the Three Forks area during one late July: "We have about twenty acres of peas to feed the pigs in winter but at present we are the pigs. We also live on fish, eggs and milk; meat won't keep a day in this weather; besides it is too hot to eat meat."²³ For special occasions—a wedding, a housewarming, a midnight supper at a ball—oysters highlighted the meal, at \$1.35 per can.

Vegetables came from the garden and included peas, beans, cucumbers, potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, and cabbages, which were often "put down" in kegs for winter sauerkraut. Fruits were harder to come by and might be dried peaches or apples. Isabelle Randall remembers a sheepherder complaining about both the food and the weather: "Confounded country where it snows every month and dried apples are a luxury."²⁴ A can of peaches from the East might cost \$1.25.

Sugar had to be shipped in and could be very expensive. Coffee beans came whole and green and required roasting. Eggs were often expensive in town, according to Bertha Clow's notes: "One dozen will get three pounds of coffee or four pounds of sugar. One egg will buy a glass of lager; six will get a square meal at Dutch John's; Brother Iliff will marry a nice couple for two dozen and the *Avant Courier* for one year can be had for five dozen eggs."²⁵ Yeast could be made from flours newly milled in the valley or from potatoes or hops. Some tried a yeast starter from corn meal.

Thirsty traveler A. K. McClure asked for a drink of water on his way through Bozeman to Helena in August 1867 and was told: "Water is all very well in its place—very good for baptizing babies where they have such things, and excellent for sluicing; but it don't do for a steady beverage up here where the air is so thin." After his wine, McClure wryly reported that "I could not deny the theory that sparkling wine refreshes the horses when imbibed by the driver or the rider."²⁶

In winter, children brought their sleds and toboggans to careen down Peet's Hill, below the cemetery, and Church Avenue. They skated on the pond next to the McAdow flour mill from



This 1872 view shows Walter Cooper Armory, front left, and his just-completed Cooper Block, near right, on the south side of Bozeman's Main Street.

November through March, unless a chinook wind melted the ice and snowbanks as if by magic. An indoor roller skating rink opened on West Main Street, which later became the first building to house the small classes of a fledgling college. Sleighs not only provided entertainment but often transported children to school and delivered milk and the mail. Both adults and children wore red woolen underwear through the winter, complaining of the itchy garments but unwilling to face cold weather without them.

In summer, young men on horseback raced one another down Main Street, although it was against the law. Youngsters learned to swim in a fifteen-foot-square wooden pool at Jerry Mathews's Hot Springs (now Bozeman Hot Springs) west of town. Fourth of July celebrations were splendid affairs. Catching a greased pig became an important athletic event. So, too, was another contest involving a greased pole where the victorious scrambler plucked

a five-dollar bill from the top. Bozeman's Silver Cornet Band, under the direction of A. P. Charpie, played throughout the day, their busiest holiday, although they came out to perform on any civic occasion.

Whether or not Bozeman saw the first bicycle in Montana, Davis Willson claimed that honor for the town in one of his dispatches to the *Montana Post*. Shelby Dogget constructed the first velocipede, but it did not work properly and he had to make adjustments:

Your correspondent can testify as to its locomotive powers by having mounted and tried the same, but owing to his inexperience or the bucking qualities of the creature, he was only enabled to perform certain rotary motions . . . by successive sommersaults and headlong plunges, much to the amusement of the small boys and apparent satisfaction of the older ones.⁷