

Adventure Through Time

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[Home](#) [Bozeman Historic Preservation Events](#) [Cemetery Stories](#) [Group Reservations](#)

[Murders, Madams, and Mediums Tour Photos](#) [About](#) [Your Tour Guides](#) [Walking Tour Schedule](#) [Sponsors](#)

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Cemetery Stories – Mary Blackmore

POSTED ON JANUARY 13, 2016

George Eliot wrote "Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them." The Extreme History Project hopes to remember some of our dearly departed in Bozeman and surrounding region by sharing with you the stories of people buried in our local cemeteries. Watch this space to learn just who those people are in the cemetery. They all have lifetimes of stories to tell. We begin this blog series with the story of Mary Blackmore, a woman whose death brought about the creation of Bozeman's Sunset Hills Cemetery.

Mary Blackmore: From England to Sunset Hills

We begin this blog series with the story of Mary Blackmore, a woman whose death brought about the creation of Bozeman's Sunset Hills Cemetery.

— Mary Blackmore. Photograph courtesy of The Salisbury Museum

Mary Sidford, born 1822, married William Blackmore in 1851 at the church of Saint John the Baptist in Bishopstone near Salisbury, England. Purportedly a confidant of Queen Victoria, Mary was described as a, "kind and friendly individual" and a prominent social leader, who entertained such 19th century celebrities as Mark Twain and Charlotte Bronte at their extensive country estate. William was a frequent traveler of the American West and had made quite a fortune promoting the frontier. As a wealthy

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BOZEMAN THROUGH TIME



Bozeman History Museum



man with interests in anthropology and Native American customs, he helped to fund explorers and photographers like William Jackson and Ferdinand Hayden. In 1872, William and Mary decided to travel to the United States with their nephew to visit Yellowstone National Park during its inaugural year. Before they left, the Blackmores agreed that if either died on their journey, the other would arrange for the burial at the place where the death occurred.



William Blackmore, Mary's husband

Unfortunately, while travelling by stagecoach from Helena to Bozeman, Mary fell ill. As hotel accommodations in that day were not abundant, the Blackmores stayed with the Willson family in their log cabin on Main Street. Mary stayed behind with the Willson family, while William and their nephew travelled on toward Yellowstone. Soon after they left, Mary took a turn for the worse, a messenger was sent for William Blackmore, and he quickly returned to Bozeman, but there was nothing that could be done, and Mary died soon after. Her death was likely caused by peritonitis, the inflammation and infection of a layer of connective tissue that surrounds the bone. At the time, there was no cemetery in Bozeman, so William bought five acres on a hill overlooking the town for \$250. This tract where Mary is buried is now known as Sunset Hills Cemetery.

William left instructions and money with the Willson family for an elaborate triangle shaped mausoleum to be constructed over her grave. It is believed that the gravestone is shaped like a triangle to look like Mount Blackmore, which is named in memory of William and Mary Blackmore. Mount Blackmore can be seen from Mary's grave in Sunset Hills Cemetery.

After Mary was buried, other citizens of Bozeman began to bury their dead in this area, but it was also used as a place to graze cows. The cows knocked down gravestones and the Please join us next week for our next installment of Cemetery Stories, when we feature **Charles Hoffman**.



BLOGROLL

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- City of Bozeman Historic Preservation Advisory Board
- Downtown Bozeman
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ADVENTURE THROUGH TIME

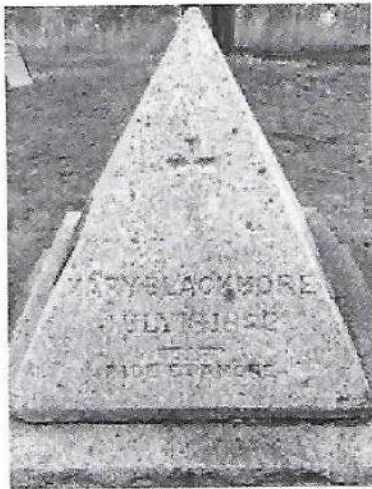


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- March 2016
- February 2016
- January 2016
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- April 2015
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— Mary Blackmore's Grave Marker
in Sunset Hills Cemetery

Do you have a suggestion for future installments of this blog? Please contact us at info@extremehistoryproject.org.

Sources:

"Collecting the American West, The Rise and Fall of William Blackmore"
"Facts you should know about Sunset Hills Cemetery"

Relevant links:

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=gr&GSln=Blackmore&GSfn=Mary&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=28&GSsc=1](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Blackmore&GSfn=Mary&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSst=28&GSsc=1)
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March 2014

September 2013

RECENT TOURS



65

THE DEMOCRATIC RATIFICATION MEETING.
 —It having been announced that Major M. Maginnis, the Democratic nominee for Delegate to Congress, would address the people of Bozeman on the political situation, a number of "unterrified" organized a party to escort the Major and his companions into the city with due *colat*, accordingly some sixty or seventy persons went out to meet them on the way. The party, on their arrival, were greeted with an enthusiastic reception, and in the evening Speith & Krug's spacious hall was filled to its utmost capacity by an expectant audience, among whom we noticed a goodly sprinkling of the fair sex. The Chairman, Judge S. W. Langhorne, in a few pithy remarks, stated the object of the meeting and introduced Major Martin Maginnis as the Democratic Candidate for election to the 43d Congress, which announcement was the signal for an enthusiastic round of applause, from the assembled multitude. Maj. Maginnis, then, in a speech of about two hours duration, delivered an able and carefully prepared review of the political situation, the present position and standing of the contending parties; examined the acts of the past Delegate, Hon. Wm. H. Claggett, declaring that he had shown an inability or disinclination to impartially represent the entire interests of the Territory; that by the fusion of the Liberal Republican element with the Democratic, an equitable and honorable conduct of public affairs was insured; denounced the nefarious practices of the Indian Ring, which he stigmatized as a "magnificent swindle;" endorsed the position taken by the National Democratic Convention in subscribing to the platform and nominees adopted at Cincinnati; said the coalition between the Democrats and Liberal Republicans did not destroy the individuality of the Democratic party, but had been made for the purpose of arresting the onward march of centralization, and to procure the overthrow of an oppressive military despotism, and finally promised if elected, to devote his energies to a faithful representation of the interests of the Territory, without regard to sectional distinctions, and to use every effort to secure the advancement thereof in the halls of Congress. He was frequently interrupted during the speech—which, as an oratorical effort, was far ahead of our expectations—by the applause of the audience, and at its close, was greeted with prolonged cheering. Hon. Harry Comly then briefly addressed the meeting, confining his remarks chiefly to the acts of the present administration, and the state of the national affairs. Major Maginnis made a decidedly favorable impression on the audience, and the meeting is characterized by old residents of this place as the most enthusiastic demonstration ever held in Gallatin County.

DOLLY YARDEN HEARD FROM!

We take pleasure in informing all our friends that we have just

DEATH OF MRS. BLACKMORE.

On Thursday evening, about 5 o'clock a gloom was cast over our city by the announcement that Mrs. Blackmore, who had arrived here a few days before with her husband, Mr. Wm. Blackmore, of London, England; for the purpose of accompanying Prof. Hayden's geological surveying party to the Upper Yellowstone, had died in a very sudden manner from the effects of a congestive chill. The circumstances of her decease, coming so suddenly, in a strange land, far from the associations of home, and kindred, invested the sad occurrence with a more than usual mournful solemnity, and created in the hearts of our citizens a feeling of sorrow and sympathy for the afflicted husband who had thus had the partner of his life so rudely torn from him, by the hand of death, while she was apparently in the enjoyment of the full and vigorous faculties of life. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Sir William, who was absent making the necessary arrangements for the journey, with the mournful tidings, and he at once hurried back to the city, to find that the wife whom he had left in the morning full of health and life; or at least suffering only from an apparently slight indisposition, was in the evening clasped in the embrace of the grim and ruthless destroyer, death. The deceased had, by her amiability and peculiarly happy talent of gracefully adapting herself to the trying circumstances of a journey over our rugged mountains, endeared herself to the limited circle of acquaintances she had formed during her brief sojourn in our midst, and her sudden demise caused an universal expression of sorrow at her loss, and sympathy for him whose cup of happiness had been so rudely dashed to the ground. They had, during their stay, been the guests of Messrs. Willson & Rich, and although the loving hands of kindred were not there to close the dying one's eyes, kind hearts were not wanting to perform the last sad duties for her who now sleeps the sleep that knows no earthly waking, and consign her remains to their last resting place with fitting obsequies. The deceased was buried on Friday evening according to the rites of the Episcopal Church; the Rev. W. S. Frackleton conducting the service, and it needed not the gift of language to convey to the bereaved husband the expression of heartfelt sympathy on the part of the stranger friends who attended to pay the last sad tribute of respect to the departed one. May the Angel of Peace comfort him in his affliction, and console him with the reflection that "she is not lost, but gone before," and that a happier meeting will yet take place where "griefs and partings are unknown."

East Gail—Come Down with the Stamps.

All persons indebted to the undersigned are requested to come up and settle without further delay. This is the last call. If you would save cost pay up. T. BRUNET.

AFFRAY.—An affray, which came near be-

"Bro Sioux," the correspondent of the Helena Herald, had evidently taken too much "pepper and salt in his" when he wrote that account of the Maginnis meeting in Bozeman. Considering the fact that Maginnis and Comly did not arrive till the day after "Big Sioux" says the meeting was held, we think his report of the proceedings exceedingly good. Write again, Little Injun, you're doing bully.

New Postal Route.—The new postal route is now established to Emigrant Gulch, and the mails are now being carried regularly to Boteler's, leaving Bozeman Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and Boteler's Tuesdays Thursdays, and Saturdays of each week. It is to be hoped that the service will soon be extended to the Mammoth Hot Springs.

LIVELY.—Bozeman has been over-run with distinguished visitors during the week. We would give you all a "personal," gentlemen; but our brain is so bewildered with the multitudinous titles crammed therein, from Grand Duke to Corporal, that we have got things "slightly mixed." In review, you can see us when you can't stay very long.

GOING TO THE GYPSERS.—If somebody does not put a stop to the exodus of ladies from Bozeman to the Hot Springs, we shall soon be deprived of the presence of the "gentler" sex entirely, and petticoat—no, we mean Dolly Yarden's will be as scarce as bananas in Alaska.

COMING.—W. H. Claggett, the silver-tongued orator and West-side representative, with the dulcet-toned warbler, Church, will be here on Saturday.

SAMUEL ORR, the inconstant, whom a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Congressman, is now stumping the Territory for Claggett. Consistency, thou art a jewel.

The Gazette, speaking of Bishop Marvin, says: "We are not at all incredulous of the great population he enjoys in the States." Is he a polygamist, or what?

HON. JAS. M. ASHLEY, ex Governor of Montana, is stumping the State of Ohio for Greeley and Brown.

RETURNED.—Col. L. M. Black arrived at home on Thursday last, looking hale and hearty after his Eastern trip.

FOR THE HOT SPRINGS.—A. J. Pierstorff and wife, and J. N. Benham and wife left on Sunday for a visit to the Mammoth Hot Springs.

CROPS DAMAGED.—Considerable damage was done to crops last week by the heavy hail storm.

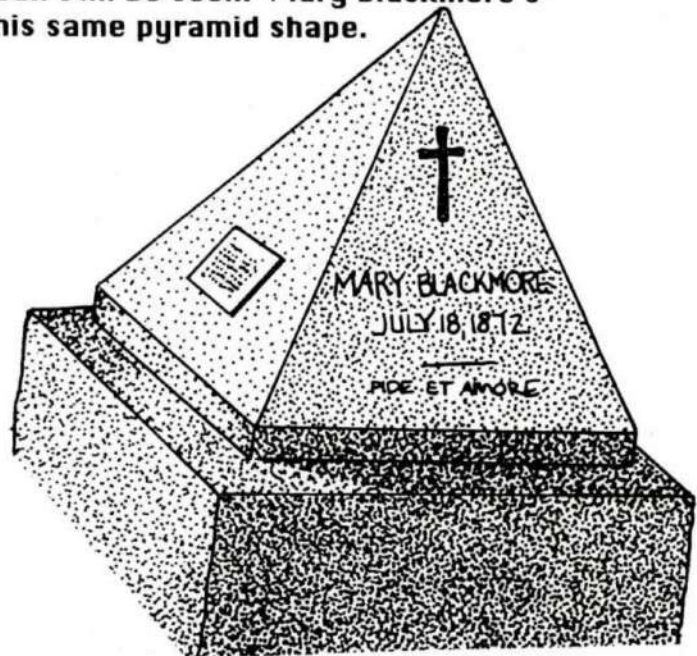
DIED.—**BLACKMORE.**—At Bozeman, on the 18th inst. of congestive chills, Mary, wife of Mr. William Blackmore, of London, England.

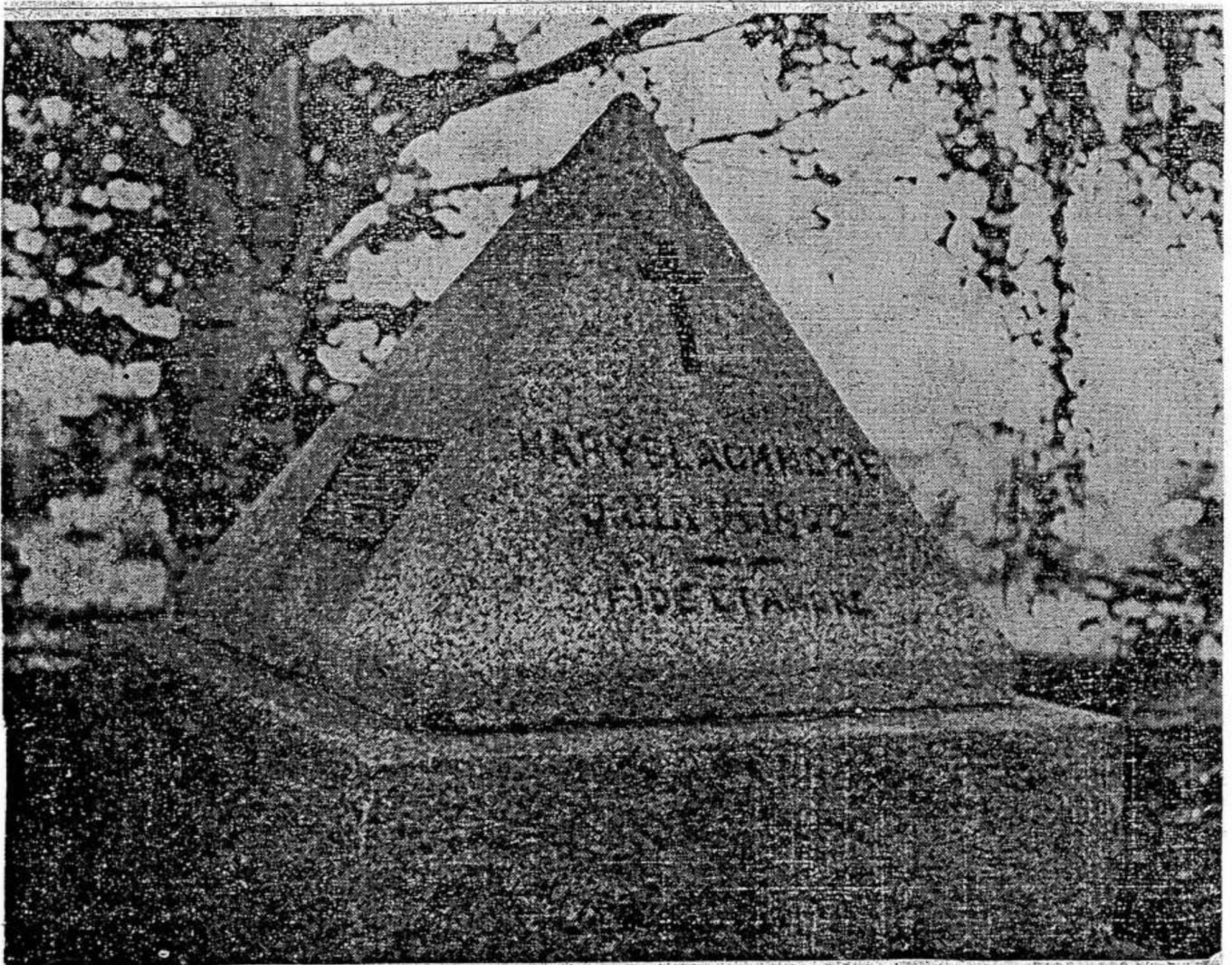
“Lady” Mary Blackmore

born in England
died 1872

The sad story of “Lady” Blackmore and her husband William is part of Bozeman’s lore. In 1872, they came from England to visit Yellowstone which had just been officially discovered as a national park and reserve. The news of its discovery with its many unusual features fascinated the Blackmores. On July 17, they stopped in Bozeman on their way because Lady Mary had become suddenly ill. She died at General Lester Willson’s home, probably of an appendicitis, and was buried on five acres of land purchased by Lord Blackmore from the Rouse brothers. The land was given by Blackmore to the town to be used as a cemetery as he did not feel that the cemetery currently being used was fitting for his wife. The land was given with the promise from the city that the grave would always be cared for. The cemetery was called Sunset Hills, and this agreement has been faithfully honored to this day.

“Lord” Blackmore was in fact not a lord. It was Emma Willson who started referring to them as “Lord” and “Lady.” Blackmore was a very wealthy gentlemen from England. He had made many trips to the U.S. On this trip the couple had agreed that if either should die on their travels they would be buried where they died. Mt. Blackmore is named in Mary’s honor. Looking south from the gravesite the mountain’s pyramid-shaped peak can still be seen. Mary Blackmore’s granite gravestone was made in this same pyramid shape.





ORIGINAL SITE OF BOZEMAN CEMETERY—When Lady Mary Blackmore died July 18, 1872, while she and her husband were in Bozeman during a tour of this country, Lord Blackmore purchased and presented a five acre plot to the city, which has since developed into the present Bozeman Cemetery. The monument (above) which he had erected later is aptly described by the engraved copper plate shown at left of stone, which states: "This monument was erected by Lord Blackmore of England in memory of his wife who died in Bozeman July 18, 1872, while traveling in Montana. This original cemetery plot was purchased and presented to Bozeman by Lord Blackmore to show his appreciation of the kindness of the citizens to him and his wife."

(Chronicle staff photo)

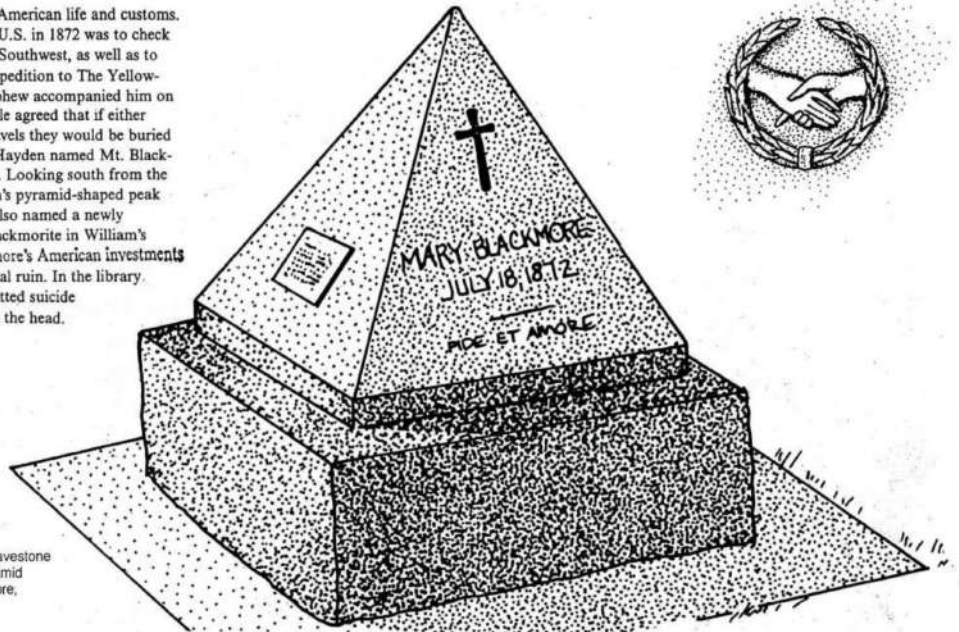
"LADY" MARY BLACKMORE

b. in England d. 1872

The sad story of 'Lady' Mary Blackmore and her husband William is part of Bozeman's lore. In 1872 they came from England to visit Yellowstone, stopping in Bozeman on their way because Lady Mary had become suddenly ill. She died of peritonitis at General Lester Willson's home and was buried on 5 acres purchased by 'Lord' Blackmore and given to the town for use as a cemetery.

Further investigation reveals that 'Lord' Blackmore was in fact not a lord, although he did expect to be knighted. It was Emma Willson who started referring to them as 'Lord' and 'Lady.' William Blackmore was, however, an extraordinary man. He had become quite wealthy working as a middle man between English investors and promoters in the American West. He and Mary lived on an extensive estate where they entertained a dazzling array of guests including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charlotte Bronte, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and "Mark Twain". The beautiful Mary was a London social leader and an intimate of Queen Victoria. William had made several trips to the U.S., and from all evidence he loved the West. He had provided generous financial assistance to photographer William Jackson, artist Thomas Moran, and explorer Dr. Ferdinand Hayden. He had a deep interest in anthro-

pology and in Native American life and customs. His fourth trip to the U.S. in 1872 was to check on investments in the Southwest, as well as to join Hayden on his expedition to The Yellowstone. Mary and a nephew accompanied him on this trip, and the couple agreed that if either should die on their travels they would be buried where they died. Dr. Hayden named Mt. Blackmore in Mary's honor. Looking south from the gravesite the mountain's pyramid-shaped peak can be seen. Hayden also named a newly discovered mineral Blackmorite in William's honor. In 1878 Blackmore's American investments brought him to financial ruin. In the library of his estate he committed suicide by shooting himself in the head.



Mary Blackmore's gravestone was made in the pyramid shape of Mt. Blackmore, named in her honor.

The Blackmores of England



BY B. DEREK STRAHN

An unusual, pyramid-shaped tombstone stands near the western boundary of Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman. On the gravestone's south face is

an engraved copper plate that reads:

"This monument was erected by Lord Blackmore of England in memory of his wife who died in Bozeman July 18, 1872, while traveling in Montana. This original cemetery plot was purchased and presented to Bozeman by Lord Blackmore to show his appreciation of the kindness of the citizens to him and his wife."

The marker is only partly true. The Blackmores did experience tragedy in Bozeman; and they left an indelible imprint upon an impressionable young community, but they were not members of the British nobility.

William Henry Blackmore was a successful attorney and venture capitalist who married Mary Sidford on May 14, 1851. At Shepley House in Carshalton the fashionable couple entertained such luminaries as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Charlotte Bronte, and Mark Twain. With connections like these, Blackmore developed and eventually lost huge speculative fortunes in real estate, mining companies, and railroads, especially in Colorado and New Mexico.

Blackmore was also deeply interested in geology and ethnography. The *New York Times* described him as "a gentleman of varied and extensive culture, who takes great delight in all matters pertaining to the natural sciences." He possessed "a strong desire

to study the Indian character," the newspaper noted, and was "firmly impressed with the belief in the capacity of the Indians for civilization." Blackmore's large collection of Native American artifacts — one of the finest collections of prehistoric antiquities in England — formed the basis of the Blackmore Museum in Salisbury.

Financial and personal interests attracted the Blackmores to the American West in 1872. "A most comprehensive route has been planned," the *Times* reported, "having for its objects the study...the manners and customs of the Indian tribes, and also a careful study of the flora and fauna of the country traversed."

Noted explorer Ferdinand Hayden invited the Blackmores to accompany him on his second expedition to the Upper Yellowstone during the summer of 1872. Blackmore's financial assistance extended the work of Hayden's survey by augmenting what author Herbert O. Brayer called "a totally inadequate Congressional appropriation." Blackmore also provided essential equipment for photographer William Henry Jackson and the landscape painter Thomas Moran, who together documented Hayden's "discoveries."

Anxious to explore the wonders of the world's first national park, the Blackmores traveled to Bozeman, where they met Hayden in mid-July. Here, things took a turn for the worse.

While staying at the home of Lester and Emma Weeks, the 40-year-old Mrs. Blackmore took ill with "a congestive chill." A few days later, she suddenly died. Far from home, Mary Blackmore was buried on July 19, 1872, on a promontory above the original town site.

Mary Blackmore's tragic fate profoundly affected the small community of Bozeman. According to the *Avant Courier*, her sudden death "caused a universal expression of sorrow at her loss, and sympathy for him whose cup of happiness had been so rudely dashed to the ground."

A grieving Blackmore rejoined the Geological Survey Team after his wife's burial, traveled with them to the Firehole Basin, where he departed in mid-August and eventually returned to England.

In gratitude to Blackmore, Hayden's team named a newly discovered mineral Blackmoreite. In addition, the expedition named Mount Blackmore, a 10,154-foot peak which rises from the Hyalite Range, south of Bozeman, in memory of the deceased.

Before leaving this part of the country, Blackmore sent a letter to Lester Willson from the Yellowstone River. Dated July 26, 1872, the heartfelt correspondence expressed Blackmore's "most cordial thanks for the very great kindness and sympathy you have shown me in the greatest affliction of my life."

In the letter, Blackmore confessed that he had discovered that his wife was buried on private property. "[I]f the ground can be purchased for a moderate sum," he continued, "I should like to buy it and present it to Bozeman." Through this gesture, Blackmore hoped to "have but a slight opportunity of expressing my sense of the deep sympathy which was extended to me by all the principal inhabitants."

The cemetery — now known as Sunset Hills — was purchased for the sum of about \$300, pursuant to Blackmore's wishes.

William Henry Blackmore never revisited the site of his wife's burial. Indeed, his life turned increasingly unfortunate after her tragic demise. When the Panic of 1873 brought ruin to one of his principle investments — the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad — Blackmore lost much of his fortune. On April 12, 1878, he shot himself in the study of his London mansion.

In 1913, Lester Willson's son, architect Fred Willson, designed the Blackmore Apartments, which still stand at 120 South Black Avenue in Bozeman.

B. Derek Strahn is a historic preservation consultant and teaches social studies at Bozeman High. He can be reached at DerekStrahn@msn.com.

PRESERVATION

BISHOPSTONE CHURCH AND MOUNT BLACKMORE, USA

I have always been intrigued by the plaque in the 'Farmers Aisle' of Bishopstone Church which reads:

MARY BLACKMORE, JULY 18th 1872, FIDE ET AMORE
SHE WAS THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF JOHN AND MARY SIDFORD
AND DIED AT BOZEMAN, MONTANA, IN THE UNITED STATES NEAR MOUNT BLACKMORE
WHICH WAS SO NAMED IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DECEASED.

So what was the big deal that led to a woman from Bishopstone having a mountain in America named after her? Curiosity got the better of me and I decided to find out.

The story is not as factual as I would like and was obviously coloured from the outset by journalistic license and half remembered facts. This immediately became apparent from the report of Mary Blackmore's death in the Helena (Montana) Weekly Herald of 25 July 1872 which described her as the wife of 'Sir William Blackmore, an English gentleman eminent for his scientific attainments'. William Blackmore was indeed noted for his knowledge of natural history and his obituary in the Salisbury and Winchester Journal claimed that his zeal in pursuit of geological science...stood almost unrivalled. He was also a solicitor by profession and had commercial interests in America where, after giving up his legal practice, he took a leading part in some extensive land speculation in Colorado. In particular he was the founder of the Blackmore Museum in Salisbury. But he was never a 'Sir'!

What is quite factual from the newspaper reports of Mary Blackmore's death is that she and her husband, William, were visiting Helena, Montana, mainly as tourists and were invited to join a party travelling into Yellowstone Park. The party left Helena for Bozeman so as to meet up with a United States Geological Survey team in Yellowstone. The ride from Helena to Bozeman was a very long 125 miles and, according to Oliver Wilson, an American lawyer who was one of the group, Mrs Blackmore already seemed tired at the outset. As the rocking motion of the stage coach was affecting her head, she and her husband moved to the more comfortable middle seat of the stage for the last small part of the journey. Three miles from Bozeman, Mrs Blackmore seemed to 'sink and show signs of collapse. She recovered somewhat and stayed at the mansion of General and Mrs Wilson in Bozeman. The next day she was so much better that William Blackmore decided to go ahead with the party leaving his wife in Bozeman. However, he very soon returned when a messenger brought news that Mary was much worse. She died shortly after, 'from congestive' chill, brought

on from over fatigue and the sudden change in the weather'. Mary Blackmore was buried on 19 July 1872 on a promontory far out from Bozeman overlooking the entrance to the beautiful Yellowstone country. According to Oliver Wilson, William Blackmore rejoined the Geological Survey team in Yellowstone, and later returned to England.

One newspaper report claimed that Mr Blackmore, unable to reconcile himself to his wife's death, 'wandered in strange lands and took his own life'. But Oliver Wilson discounted this possibility. He had found Blackmore a person who loved the practical side of life who seemed to have quickly come to terms with his wife's death.

So why was Mount Blackmore named after Mary Blackmore from Bishopstone. A Montana State guidebook from 1939 states that 'In 1872 Lord and Lady Blackmore stopped at Bozeman...Lady Blackmore died. Her husband bought five acres of land here and gave it to the City as a cemetery. Here he buried his wife, and placed a pyramidal monument over the grave, Mount Blackmore (10,196 alt), which rises in the distance, directly south, is said to have been so named because its form resembles that of the monument'.

The erroneous further upgrading to 'Lord and Lady Blackmore' of course gives the entry in the guide book an extra cachet, but the entry seems like a chicken and egg situation. My guess is that the naming of the Mountain was a lovely gesture made by the Geological Expedition which William Blackmore rejoined after his wife's death. Furthermore, if you take a second look at the memorial in Bishopstone Church, you will notice that the words 'Mary Blackmore, July 18th 1872, Fide et Amore' are deliberately set in a separate pyramid-shaped piece of different stone, purposely reflecting the monument on her grave and the shape of Mount Blackmore. This piece of stone must surely have come from Mount Blackmore itself!

And what about the suggestion that William Blackmore took his own life? With comfortable Victorian sensitivity, the Salisbury and Winchester Journal of 20 April 1878 simply says that he died at his residence after 'a very short illness'. Tragically, the death certificate says more. William Blackmore shot himself in the head with a pistol on 12 April 1878. He was 51 years of age.

Stuart Muirhead.

My thanks are due to Mrs Sandra Selm of New York; the Governor of Montana; the Montana Historical Society; the USIS; Jean Reeve of the Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum and Victoria Coombs of the Salisbury Journal for much help with the research for this article.