

Samuel Lewis

Avant Courier April 4, 1896 p.3

BIOGRAPHY OF "THE BOZEMAN BARBER."

Sam W. Lewis--His Remarkable Personal History--Life and Death of a Colored Pioneer whose Friends Were Legion.

All that was mortal of Sam W. Lewis, "the colored barber," as he was familiarly called, was tenderly laid away in the silent cemetery on the hill, on Tuesday last. His illness was very brief, lasting only from Monday afternoon, the 22nd inst., to the following Sunday evening; but his sufferings were so intense that almost a life time of painful experience must have been crowded into that brief period. He had fallen away so little, however, that those who viewed the breathless form in the casket could hardly realize that their old time, familiar and deservedly respected friend was "sleeping his last sleep," and that he would never on earth again greet them with his cherry smiles and words of undissembled friendship.

Although he was generally known as "the colored barber" Sam Lewis was very much of a white man. He was white in his entire make up--physically, socially, intellectually, morally--and the best citizens of Bozeman were his firm friends and constant patrons. He came and located here in the very early days of Bozeman's history and has always borne a full citizen's part in all the material struggles and burdens incident to the development of the country's resources and the permanent growth and beautifying of our beautiful little city. A man of indefatigable industry, excellent judgment and refined tastes, he left the lasting impress of those admirable traits of character upon every material enterprise in which he personally engaged. His shop was always a model of neatness and elegance; the cottage houses he constructed for rent were the neatest and most commodious of their day; while the home in which he lived during the past dozen years or so, and in which he surrendered a life that showed no stain, was the embodiment of stability, neatness and comfort. The surroundings were also in keeping with the handsome edifice--the shade trees, fruit trees, shrubbery, flower borders, fences and out buildings, being arranged with perfect precision and kept with the most scrupulous care.

Through all those years of patient toil and unceasing industry Mr. Lewis intelligently and generously invested all his savings in permanently improving and beautifying some piece of ground within the limits of the city. He invested his money where he made and earned it, because he had faith in the permanency and future prosperity of the town. He was pleasant and clever with every one and our citizens appreciated his manly bearing, his thrifty nature, his scrupulous honesty, and they reciprocated with friendly patronage, feeling satisfied that directly or indirectly they were always getting

in the territory and which he never permitted to become either dilapidated or get out of modern style. He has also erected several neat residences, principally in the southwest portion of the city, besides purchasing and improving several business structures. Not satisfied, however, with the mere acquisition of valuable property Mr. Lewis was constantly improving his own mind by diligent reading and study, as well as by association with the best informed people in the community. For many years also he contributed generously of his means for the education of his sister, Miss Edmonia Lewis, who has achieved more than a national reputation as a sculptress. Miss Lewis, it will be remembered by many of our citizens, was present at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, in charge of her own exhibit, where she received medals, diplomas and flattering notices by the press.

About 12 years ago Sam Lewis was married to Mrs. Bruce, a widow woman with five children. One son, a bright little fellow of 11 years, is the result of that union. Sam has been all that a father could be to all of the children. Though nothing, of course, can compensate for such a provident and affectionate husband and father, they are left well provided for in a material way, with a handsome and most comfortable home and an estate estimated to be worth at least \$25,000.

ITEMS FROM SALESVILLE.

It is thought by some that the recent frosts have injured winter wheat.

Mr. Brock has moved with his family onto the Benepe ranch, formerly owned by J. G. Lane.

School in this district will begin on April 20th instead of May 1st, as previously stated.

Mr. Lawman has rented the Lynde place and will put in something over 200 acres this spring.

Charles Orvis has added a stock of gentlemen's furnishing goods to his stock of merchandise.

The dance at the Spanish creek school house on Friday night was well attended and a very enjoyable time is reported.

Ed. Silverthorn has been visiting friends and relatives in this vicinity during the past two weeks. He will return to the Judith country soon, where he has been employed with one of the large cattle companies for the past two years.

The fishing season has begun at the dam, from where fish have been taken by the wagon load during the past two springs. This reminds us that we now have a game and fish warden. Wonder if he won't bring some influence to bear upon the ditch company to compel them to put in a fish ladder, as required by law?

Peter LeBeau with a crew of men and teams has just completed an extensive job of riprapping at the bridge across the main river here. Over fifty loads of timber and brush and a greater amount of rock were used in the work, and it was completed by piling driven

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vested his money where he made and earned it, because he had faith in the permanency and future prosperity of the town. He was pleasant and clever with every one and our citizens appreciated his manly bearing, his thrifty nature, his scrupulous honesty, and they reciprocated with friendly patronage, feeling satisfied that directly or indirectly they were always getting their money's worth. Mr. Lewis was prompt and systematic in his work, and economical in his business methods, yet he was kind and generous to deserving needy persons and meritorious objects. He was a firm friend, an enterprising, public spirited citizen, a pleasant neighbor, a kind husband and affectionate father. He will be greatly missed by hundreds of old time friends and acquaintances—and the hitherto beautiful and attractive home will appear almost like desolation to the bereaved family.

The funeral services were conducted at deceased's late residence, on Bozeman street, on Tuesday, March 31st, Rev. Llewellyn of the Baptist church and Rev. Loy of the M. E. church officiating, and a quartett composed of the best singers in the city furnished the music. The funeral was very largely attended, hundreds of our citizens going to the residence to pay their sincere respect to the memory of the very worthy old-time citizen, and a large number of our citizens in carriages joined the sad procession to the "silent city of the dead."

The pall bearers were Mayor Benepe, Col. R. F. May, Daniel Maxey, Marsh Nelson, Lewis Kreuger and J. D. McCamman.

Samuel W. Lewis was born on the Island of Hayti on the 19th day of May 1832, consequently he was well along in his 64th year at the time of his death. When a child his parents moved to the United States, locating at Newark, N. J. His mother died in 1844, and his father in 1847. In the spring of 1852 Sam went to California, locating in San Francisco, where he opened a barber shop and remained with it two years. He then went to Sierra Co., Cal., opened a barber shop and also engaged in mining until 1862, meeting with good success. He then spent two years in traveling, visiting Europe and the West India Islands, returning in 1864 to San Francisco. Finding business dull there, he went to Portland, Oregon, thence to Idaho city where he engaged in business and in 1865, lost two fine buildings there by fire. He rebuilt in 1866, and during that year came to Montana, visiting Virginia City and Helena, finally locating at Elk Creek where he erected a building. Later in the same year he returned to Helena where he remained until 1869. The same year he went to Radersburg, in Jefferson Co., where he opened a shop, also visited the various surrounding camps plying his trade.

In the fall of 1868 he came to Bozeman where he permanently established himself in the business that he continuously followed until his death. In 1870 he built his present barber shop on main street, which at the time was one of the neatest and most attractive

if he won't bring some influence to bear upon the ditch company to compel them to put in a fish ladder, as required by law?

Peter LeBeau with a crew of men and teams has just completed an extensive job of riprapping at the bridge across the main river here. Over fifty loads of timber and brush and a greater amount of rock were used in the work, which is supported by piling driven last winter. The work has been well done and will no doubt be the means of preserving the bridge this spring.

Thomas Michener is down from Galatin basin, where he spent the winter with four other men engaged in running a tunnel upon a mining claim on the West Fork. The party expects to return soon and cross-cut the lead which is supposed to be over 80 feet in width, assaying rich in copper. Mr. Michener says there is less snow in the mountains this spring than for many years before.

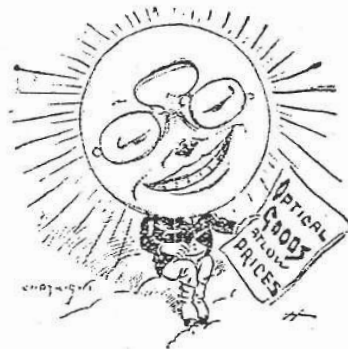
Senator Carter's Great Hit.

The Washington correspondent of the Minneapolis Journal says: "Another western state has sent a new senator to congress who made a great hit at this session. That is Senator Carter of Montana. The speech of the Montana silverite against the position his eastern associates took on the silver question and the tariff bill was one of the most remarkable made in the upper branch at this session. There were very few people who agreed with Mr. Carter, but every senator remained in his seat from the moment Mr. Carter arose until he closed. His speech was a set one, some of it being read from manuscript, but he afterwards displayed a great deal of readiness in debate and at once became a man that some of the sharpest and best debaters in the east decided it would not always be safe to cross swords with."

BORN.

At Bozeman, March 30, 1896, to Rev. and Mrs. J. F. Squires, a son—William Haygood Squires.

At Bozeman, March 29, 1896, to Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Randall, a daughter.



If your eye sight is poor or can not see well, glasses you must have. If that is so have them fitted by a practical optician.

LESLIE E. GAGE,

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History Museum

[IMMEDIATELY WEST OF THE MCDONALD PLOT ABOUT TWENTY FEET AND TO THE NORTH IS A TALLER LIGHT GREY RECTANGULAR STONE WITH THE NAME BRUCE CLEARLY VISIBLE. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SAME STONE IS THE NAME LEWIS.]

18. SAMUEL LEWIS: b. 1832, d. 1896

Another person of color who had a more profound influence in Bozeman's history is Samuel Lewis, who is buried here with relatives by the name of Bruce. Born in the West Indies, Samuel Lewis followed the gold rush to California in the Spring of 1852, where he successfully practiced barbering and mining for a decade. Between 1862 and 1864, Lewis visited various cities and other points of interest in Europe, the West Indies, and America before settling in Idaho City, where he engaged in business and developed properties. Following a devastating fire, which consumed two of his buildings, Lewis toured Montana Territory in 1866, mining, barbering, and making extra income "an expert slight-of-hand performer and a first class musician."

When Lewis arrived in Bozeman in the autumn of 1868, the town consisted of forty dwellings, three stores, a hotel, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, and two saloons. Having faith in Bozeman's steady growth and development, Lewis established a tonsorial

business in 1868. By 1872, Bozeman had grown to a thriving community of roughly 800 residents, including a small, but influential population of local African Americans. As early as November of 1874, the *Avant Courier* noted that the barber had renovated his salon, which was "always in apple pie order." From the proceeds of this successful venture exerted a profound and lasting influence on the town's built environment.

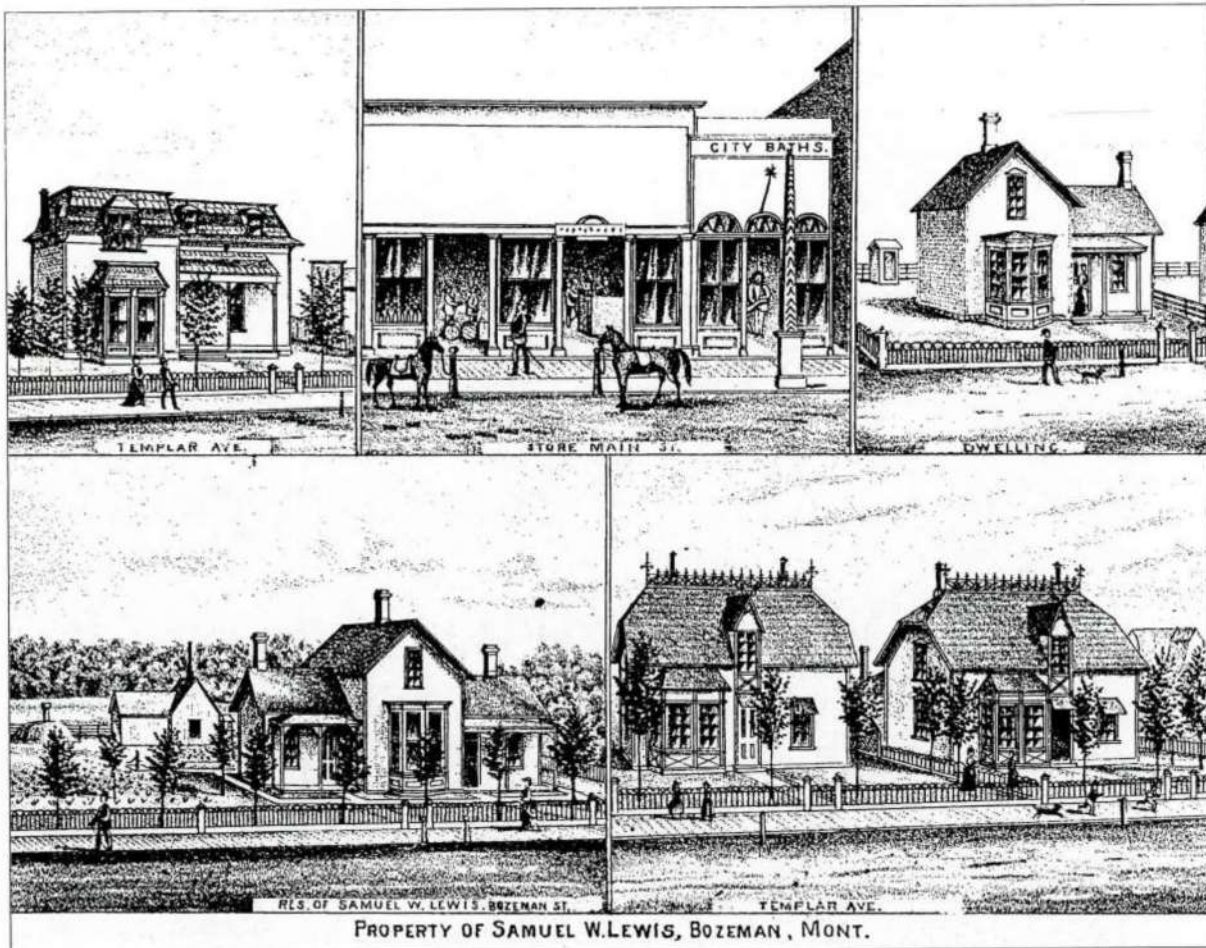
Samuel Lewis died in 1896 as one of Montana's wealthiest African Americans. His obituary recalled that Lewis "intelligently and generously invested all his savings in permanently improving and beautifying some piece of ground within the limits of the city."

Samuel E. Lewis traveled to many places before he decided on Bozeman in 1868. A black native of Haiti, Lewis spent several years traveling in Europe, then investigated gold camps in California, Oregon, and Idaho where he earned his living as a barber. He cut hair in Elk Creek, Radersburg, and Helena as well. After he arrived in Bozeman, he built the Lewis Block on the south side of East Main Street, which housed a number of businesses, including his barber shop and bath house. The genial Lewis participated in Bozeman civic affairs, often singing at public events, accompanying himself with a harp, banjo, or guitar. His son took up the guitar and accompanied his father on these occasions. Lewis built twin houses at 209 and 211 South Tracy Avenue and a residence for his family at 308 South Bozeman Avenue.

When his half-sister Edmonia was sixteen in 1859, Lewis encouraged the talented girl to apply to Oberlin, one of the few American colleges that would accept a black woman. After Oberlin, Lewis sent Edmonia abroad to study art in Florence, where she became a noted sculptor. When Lewis died in 1886, one hundred mourners attended his funeral; Mayor Frank L. Benepe gave the eulogy.

A few other American black families also sought refuge in the West from an uncertain future during the Civil War years. Richard and Mary McDonald left their home in Saint Joseph, Missouri, in 1864, and traveled by covered wagon with their three children to the new Montana Territory. They bought land near Sourdough Creek on what is now 308 South Tracy and built a cabin. The family fished the creek for summer meals; in

Successful barber and builder Samuel Lewis owned a number of private and commercial structures in town.
(Templar Avenue is the present Tracy Avenue.) ETCHING FROM MICHAEL LEESON, *HISTORY OF MONTANA*, 1885.



winter, the children enjoyed skating on the frozen stream. McDonald began freighting goods from Bozeman to Virginia City; by 1872, he was affluent enough to build a two-story home around the original cabin.

Years later, Melinda M. Rich described her first impressions of the settlement:

Back of everything else is a confused picture in which are mule trains, and ox trains, emigrant wagons and cowboys with bucking horses, and the welcome arrival of the stage coach that brought to us the letters which told us of all the dear ones left behind in the old home. Not infrequently numbers of Indians would camp near town, coming every day to the dwellings, standing outside the houses with noses flattened against the window panes. At times whole tribes passed through, the chiefs in advance often dismounting to visit the stores. Squaws and papooses followed mounted upon all sorts and sizes of horses, which were otherwise laden with pots and kettles and

other articles belonging to the household, with lodge poles trailing behind. The sounds of murderous pistol shots were often heard at midnight or in the early morning hours. Then followed the measured tread of men's feet as they bore some dead or wounded body away from the midnight revel. The deadly thing that usually instigated the murders and the angry shouts and curses which so often rang out upon the midnight air, was sold in low board houses.⁴

The "deadly thing," of course, was liquor, which Melinda Rich, a founding member of the local Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), abhorred.

What Melinda Rich heard as bumps in the night quite possibly were men dragging drunks or other hapless law-breakers to the edge of town. It was customary in many western communities for a judge to fine the miscreant or banish him from the territory; there was no need for a jail building. O. D. Loutzenheiser, the county's first sheriff,

Members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows line the street before the J. W. Tilton building and a photograph gallery.



on the 13th day of July, 1882, to Miss Kate Martin, formerly of San Jose, Cal.

S. W. LEWIS, P. O. Bozeman, is a native of the West Indies, born on the 19th day of May, 1832. When a child his parents moved to the United States and located at Newark, N. J. His mother died in 1844 and his father in 1847, and leaving Newark he traveled during the intervening years until 1852. In the spring of that year he went to California, and locating in San Francisco opened a barber shop on Commercial street, continuing in business there two years. He then removed to Sierra Co., Cal., opened a barber shop, and was also engaged in mining until 1862 with very good success. His health becoming much impaired at that time, he spent two years in traveling, and visited Europe and the West India Islands, returning in 1864 to San Francisco. Finding business very dull there, he went to Portland, Ore., and from there to Idaho City, where he engaged in business, and in 1865 lost two fine buildings by fire. He rebuilt in 1866, and during that year came to Montana, visiting Virginia City and Helena, and finally locating on Elk Creek, where he bought a lot and erected a building. In the latter part of 1866 he changed his residence to Helena, where he remained until late in the season of 1867, then opening a shop at Radersburg, also visiting the various camps in the vicinity plying his trade. In the fall of 1868 he came to Bozeman and established his present business. In 1870 he built the shop he now occupies on Main street, and since then he has constantly followed his vocation, not having been three miles from the city of Bozeman for the past seven years. He has erected several fine business buildings and residences in Bozeman. Mr. Lewis, after the death of his parents and prior to his going to California provided a home for his sister with Capt. S. R. Mills, paying her board and also her tuition while in attendance at day school, afterward sending her to the schools at McGrawville, N. Y., and thence to Oberlin, where she graduated. He continuing to pay her expenses sent her to Boston, where she took instructions under Mr. Brackett, the sculptor. Under the advice of Harriet Hosmer, the sculptress, Mr. Lewis sent her to Florence, Italy, having, through the courtesy of the Hon. Wm. H. Seward, then secretary of state, been provided with letters of introduction to the American consul at Paris and Florence, from whom she received every possible courtesy, attention and kindness, and arduously pursuing her studies as a sculptress succeeded in thoroughly mastering the art, and secured for herself a position in the profession.

C. LEVERICH, Bozeman, was born in Tipton, Cedar Co., Ia., August 4, 1846, and is a son of Ira and Jane Morgan Leverich. His father was a native of New York state, and his mother of Virginia, near Wheeling. His parents are both living and recently paid their son a visit in Montana. Ira Leverich was a farmer, and our subject worked on the farm until he was twenty years old. On the 20th day of May, 1866, he started to cross the plains for Montana, and was sixteen weeks *en route*, coming *via* Omaha, North Platte, and the Bozeman route. His time was spent for two or three years in work by the month and visiting the different mining camps. In 1872 he located on his present place of 240 acres at the mouth of Leverich cañon. He took out the first timber that was ever cut. The location is a picturesque one at the foot of a beautiful mountain range. There is an abundance of water and Mr. Leverich is always sure of a crop. In 1882 his crop averaged 41 bushels of wheat to the acre and 74 bushels of oats to the acre. April 27, 1875, he married Miss Kate Shney, who was born in Wisconsin, to which state Mr. Leverich returned after her. Both paid a visit to the states in 1881-82. They have one child, Fred Shney, born at the present home, November 16, 1878. Mr.

Leverich came to Montana poor, but by industry combined with temperance he has accumulated sufficient to enjoy life. He experienced the usual ups and downs in the early days of the settlement in the territory.

J. LIBBY, Northern Pacific Hotel, Bozeman, was born in Maine, and attended day school until 14 years old, when he began labor to sustain himself, attending school at night. He engaged in a grocery and meat market in Milford, Mass., in 1872, and two years later was interested in a large co-operative store in Michigan, of which he was secretary and treasurer. In 1873 he was engaged in the boot and shoe business in Michigan, but closed that out in 1877, afterward going to Minnesota, Dakota and Massachusetts, and finally to Montana. After spending about three years hunting, boating and fishing, he opened a first-class restaurant, which he operated until 1883, when he became proprietor of the Northern Pacific hotel, and he now conducts one of the best houses in the Territory, being especially adapted to the business. He was married to Miss Belle Blackett, of Roseville, Mich. Three children were born to them: Stella (now deceased), Grace and Belle B. In 1876, subsequent to the death of his wife, he was married to Miss Catharine McArthur, by whom he has one child.

JOHN W. LOCKEY, of Lockey Bros., Bozeman, was born in Dubuque, Iowa, October 19, 1850, and commenced mining and farming early in life. At the age of twenty-one he was lead mining in Iowa. In 1871 he came to Helena, M. T., and clerked in a general store until 1876. He then returned east to visit his parents, also to attend Baylies' commercial college at Dubuque, Iowa, remaining two years; he then returned to Montana, clerking till 1880 in Helena, and until 1881 in Butte City. In company with his brother, G. W. Lockey, he bought an interest in the present business, and in June, 1882, took \$1,000 stock in the Wisconsin and Montana Cattle Co., being then organized. He built a residence in 1882, having on the first of February in that year married Miss Winnie Anderson. Mr. Lockey at one time owned considerable real estate in Helena, which he sold in the spring of 1884.

A. L. LOVE, P. O. Livingston, was born in Iowa City, Ia., in August, 1853. He was educated in the State University of Iowa; learned the tinner's trade, and engaged as merchant's clerk. He next traveled two years as salesman for Pitkin & Brooks, of Chicago, afterward spending one summer on the plains for his health, and finally bringing up at Deadwood, Dak., where he engaged in the lumber business. He came to Billings in August, 1882, and entered the banking house of Stebbins, Mund & Co., as collecting clerk. In April, 1883, he was sent to Livingston to organize the bank of which he is cashier and manager.

TIMOTHY L. LUCE, P. O. Bozeman, was born in Vermont, on the 21st day of November, 1826. He is a son of Joshua and Rebecca (Boxter) Luce, and remained at Montpelier, his birthplace, until he was 21 years old, when he traveled to Grand Rapids, Mich., and after working for a time at his trade, which was that of baker, he went to Milwaukee, Wis., about 1840, remaining there about one year, when he went to Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Superior, staying there through one summer, next going to Boston and Lowell, Mass., also to Keene, N. H., his stay in those places occupying a period of about three years. Returning to Montpelier for a short time, from that city he went to Fort Atkinson, Wis., staying there some four or five years, or until the stamped to Colorado took place in 1858-9, when he with other parties started for that section. The other parties gave up the trip, and he was obliged to abandon it until the next year, when he went on alone. Arriving at Denver he proceeded to the mountains, staying there for a year or more and thence going to the San Juan mines in New Mexico. Returning to Colorado he went

SAM LEWIS

"The Bozeman Barber"

1832 - 1896

Referred to by many as "the colored barber," Sam Lewis became one of Bozeman's most respected businessmen. Despite the color of his skin, he was admired and respected by all, and was considered very intelligent, industrious, and generous.

Sam Lewis was born on the Island of Haiti on May 19th, 1832. When a child, Sam and his parents moved to New Jersey, where his mother died in 1844 and his father in 1847. In 1852 Sam went to San Francisco, where he ran a barbershop for two years. He then moved to Sierra, Colorado, where he opened a barbershop and also tried his luck at mining. He used his "diggings" to finance a two year trip to Europe and the West Indies, after which he returned to San Francisco in 1864. Sam moved on to Portland, Oregon and then to Idaho City, where he was a successful businessman.

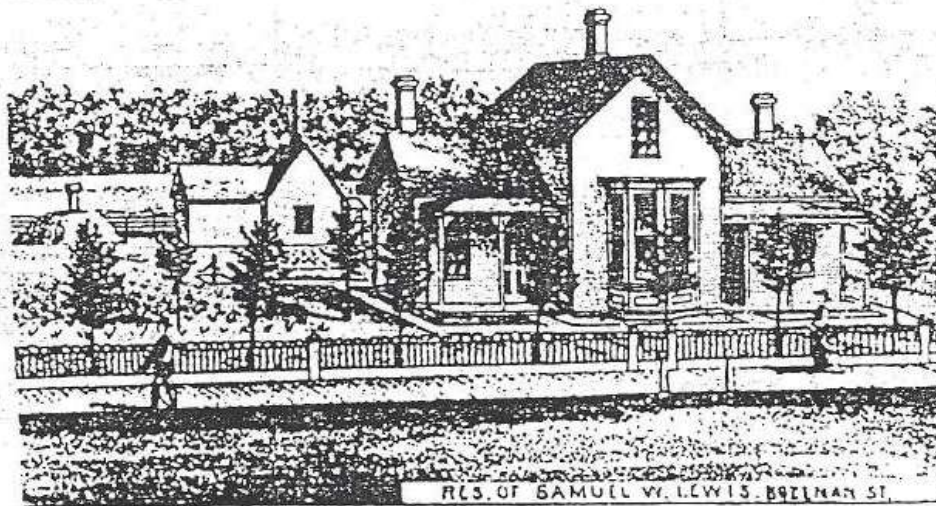
Sam first came to Montana in 1866 and opened a barbershop in Helena. Two years later, in 1868, Sam moved to Bozeman, where he built a barbershop on Main Street in 1870. Sam also invested in real estate, and was owner and landlord of several buildings on Bozeman's south side.

In 1884 he married Melissa Bruce, a widow with five children, and together they had a son, Sam jr., who was born in 1880. Sam also paid for his sister Edmonia's education, and she went on to become a world renowned sculptress.

Sam Lewis died on March 28, 1896. Melissa passed away April 10, 1927

The Lewis home at 308 South Bozeman is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Source: Bozeman Avant Courier



This was the home of Samuel W. Lewis. From his obituary, dated April 6, 1896:

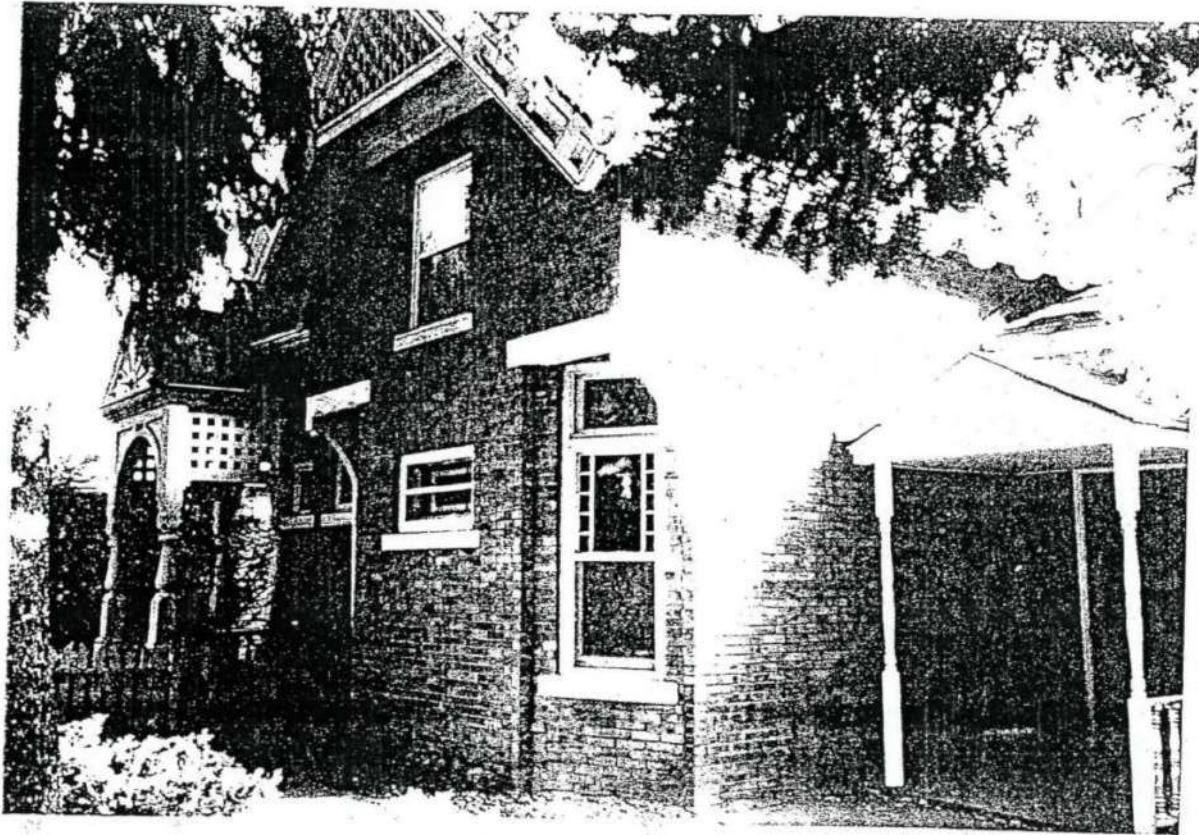
"All that was mortal of Sam W. Lewis, 'the colored barber', as he was familiarly called, was tenderly laid away in the silent cemetery on the hill, on Tuesday last.... Samuel W. Lewis was born on the Island of Hayti (West Indies) on the 19th day of May, 1832 In 1852, Sam went to California, locating in San Francisco, where he opened a barber shop In the fall of 1868 he came to Bozeman where he permanently established himself in the business that he continuously followed until his death.... For many years also he contributed generously of his means for the education of his sister, Miss Edmonia Lewis, who has achieved more than a national reputation as a sculpturess About 12 years ago Sam Lewis was married to Mrs. Bruce, a widow woman with five children. One son, a bright little fellow of 11 years, is the result of that union they are left well provided for in a material way, with a handsome and most comfortable home and an estate estimated to be worth at least \$25,000." (The obituary entitled , ' Biography of "The Bozeman Barber - Sam W. Lewis - His Remarkable Personal History - Life and Death of a Colored Pioneer Whose Friends Were Legion", is about 20 column inches long.)

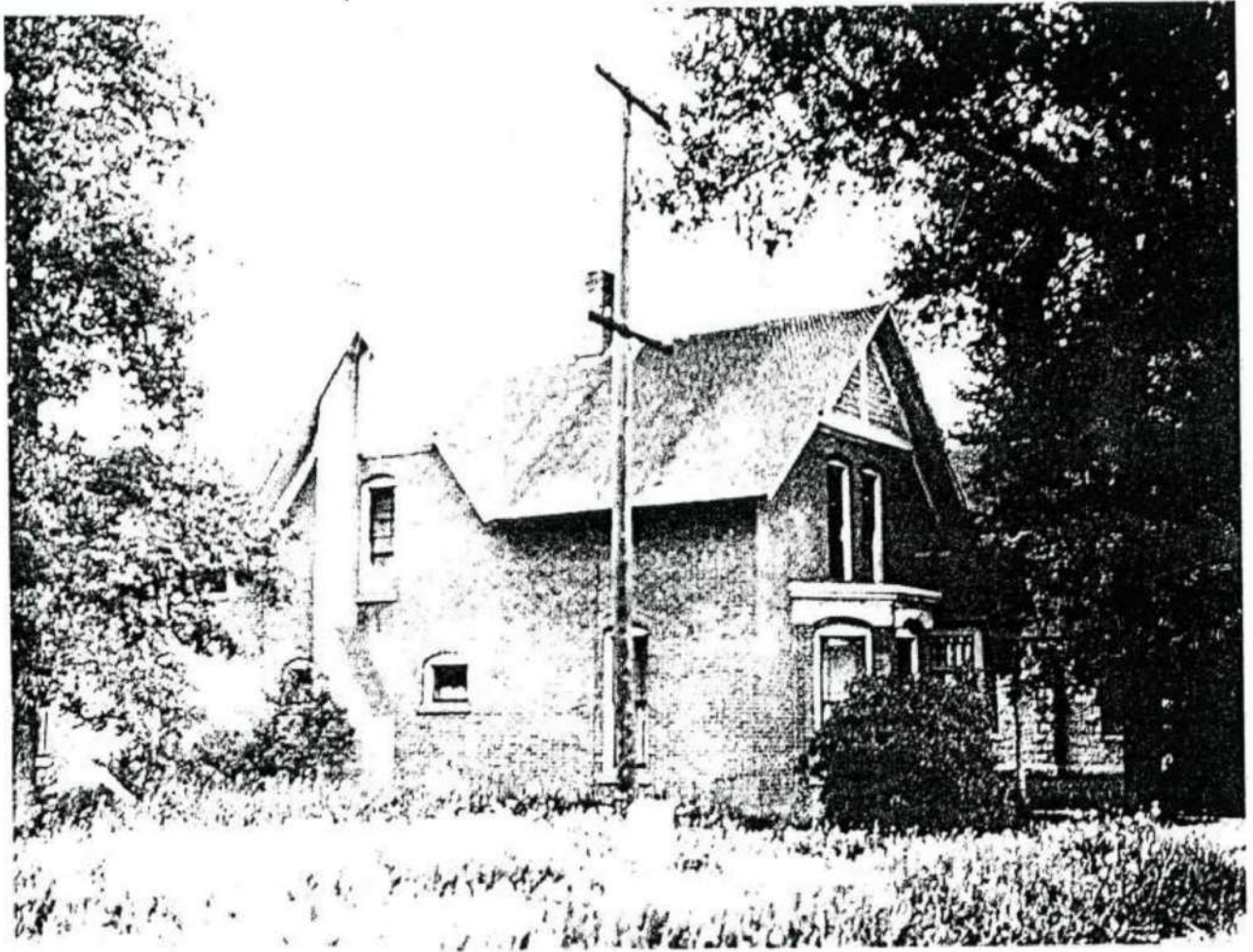
The house has been restored. Note the ceiling in the 'front room'. The antique pieces furnishing the house are not original to the home but have been accumulated by the Tenney's in their travels.

by Derek Straun

SAMUEL LEWIS HOUSE

Samuel Lewis settled in Bozeman in 1868, joining a small but growing population of African Americans who came to Montana after the Civil War. Lewis, a native of the West Indies, was a skilled barber, an expert sleight-of-hand performer and first-class musician. He established a thriving tonsorial parlor and bath house on Main Street that he kept in "apple pie order." Wisely investing his business profits, Lewis constructed several rental properties; two still stand at 209 and 211 South Tracy Avenue. Lewis shared his success with his younger sister, Edmonia, financing her studies in the East and abroad. Highly acclaimed as one of the most gifted African American sculptors of the nineteenth century, Edmonia's work was displayed at the 1894 Chicago Exposition. In 1881, the wealthy barber built a simple frame gable-front-and-wings house on this site. Eight years later, Lewis transformed his modest home into a fine Queen Anne style showplace. Brick veneer, lovely stained glass and exuberant Eastlake ornamentation including heavy carved brackets, abacus-like spindlework and a sunburst applique highlight the dramatic makeover and reveal a high level of architectural sophistication. The equally grand and beautifully maintained interior features a frescoed parlor ceiling, tin ceiling in the kitchen and ornate woodwork. Completed in 1890, the Lewis residence was considered one of Bozeman's "most delightful homes." When Lewis died in 1896, he left an estate valued at \$25,000. It was a well-deserved fortune likely unparalleled by other contemporary African American Montanans.





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RESIDENCES (Bozeman)

The old Lewis house--Bozeman
308 So. Bozeman--June 21, 1929

Donor: Carla Wright

RESIDENCES (Bozeman)