The following index lists the major topics in the audio recording and the approximate point when they occur in the recording according to an analog cassette recorder’s tape counter. This tape counter index (TCI) has not been edited for accuracy by Archives and Special Collections.
Virginia City to some is not a ghost town. Virginia is about 74 miles from Butte and Bannack is about 103 miles from Butte. There is a great deal of information known about this area. The mining district of Alder Gulch is considered to be the state’s richest district ever. Virginia City now has about 120 people but used to have 10,000 people. The story of this area starts with Bannack, located Southwest of Virginia City by 45 miles, map view. In 1862 the White and McGavin party made a strike on grasshopper creek thus bringing the town of Bannack into existence, which was named after a tribe of Indians.

The rode between Bannack and Virginia City is famous because of all of the crimes committed by the notorious outlaw group, the Innocents. Their leader was Henry Plummer and ironically he was elected the sheriff of the whole area. Plummer was caught and hanged in Bannack January 10, 1864. The Congress created the Montana Territory in 1864 and the territorial assembly, made up of 20 men, met in Bannack and approved the charter for the territory. There is still some disagreement as to whether Bannack or Virginia City was the first territorial capital.

Some people believe that Bannack was the first capital and Virginia City the second, while other contend that Virginia City was the first capital. Bannack reached a peak population of 5,000 in 1862. Discoveries in Alder Gulch in 1863 and Last Chance Gulch in 1864 created stampedes that reduced Bannack’s population. Bannack was the site of operation of the first electric dredge in North America in the 1895. The dredge was somewhat successful, it took out $60,000 worth of gold in two weeks. A few fragments of the dredge remain in Bannack.

Moving to Virginia City we see the discovery of gold by Fairweather and company in 1863. At first the six men working there only made about $18 a day panning. However, the profits soon picked up and it is said that over $100 million has been taken out of the area in gold. Another notable event took place in Virginia City. Slade was hanged by the Vigilantes for simply keeping bad company. The first recognized Montana newspaper was published in Virginia City in 1864. It was the Montana Post and cost $.50 a copy. The newspaper was a sell out. The Montana Historical Society was organized in 1865. Virginia City has been
restored and is more of a museum than a ghost town.

201-250 Turning to the Bearmouth-Garnet area a person may be disappointed. There is so little to see at Bearmouth that the site is practically unmarked. Garnet does have buildings and a caretaker. Bearmouth was more shipping point than town. It was located at the beginning of Bear Gulch. As one drives up the Gulch you see the remains of Beartown, Garnet and Coloma.

251-300 Garnet outlasted all other towns in the area and may experience another boom as evidenced from the recent mining activities in the area. Ore was discovered in Garnet in 1892. One of the mines produced about $1 million in 1896. There was an auction in the town in 1948 and the school survived a few years beyond the auction. The town produced mostly gold with smaller deposits of silver, copper and lead. This district had 50 producing mine at one time. The boom was during the 1890s and the population peaked then at 1000 people. There were seven saloons and three hotels as well as two stamp mills at that time. The town suffered a fire in 1912 that destroyed at least half of the buildings. The town takes its name from the brown garnet rock in the area.

301-345 The area may produce more ore in the future but it is now certainly one of the more interesting ghosts in the state. This concludes tape three. Highland City and Pony are the next towns to be considered.

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