

Maureen and Mike

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Oral History Number: 038-005

Speakers: Terrence McGlynn, Elaine Hardy, Dr. Jack Goebel, Marlys Hansen

Date of Interview: circa 1975

Project: Ghost Towns of Montana Audio Recordings Collection

[introductory music; "Old Settler's Song"]

Terrence McGlynn: Castle is a true ghost town, but there is little left to see and the distance from Butte is some 160 miles. It is interesting to note that Marcus Daly invested some money in Castle's future and that the Montana Railroad once ran there. The town has been a true ghost town for the last 37 years; it boomed in 1891. Here is part of the story.

[transition music]

Elaine Hardy: Castle was discovered in 1877 and gasped into death in 1938. Today, it is a true ghost town, although at one time there were 2,000 people who called Castle home. That was in 1891. It wasn't gold in the hills that brought people to Castle; it was lead and silver, and the Panic of 1893 spelled the beginning of the end of the town. The four Hensley brothers named the place "Yellowstone" after their discovery, but the cliffs above the city caused it to adopt a more picturesque name of "Castle" or "Castle City."

The town was, at one time, a rich mining camp, and it is said that Marcus Daly invested money here. One mine produced more than \$3 million worth of ore. In 1891, Castle had 14 saloons for its population of 2,000, along with 9 stores, 2 butcher shops, 2 hotels, and various other buildings. The town site included 80 acres to allow for plenty of expansion and the road was busy toward White Sulphur Springs with stage lines, freighters, and other assorted traffic. There was a ready market for groceries, especially milk and butter. One rancher, reportedly, had 250 goats to provide a unique kind of dairy product.

Castle received a railroad, but too late to do much good for the town. A man named Richard Harlow promoted the Montana Railroad, which was finally completed in about 1900 after delays and problems, especially concerning the price of silver and lead. But, people were glad to work on a railroad when there was a shortage of other work. The railroad, which ran about 60 miles, was completed to Castle for a sum not much in excess of \$25,000 and was finally sold to the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company [Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad]. There were two men in Castle in 1936. Most of the property had been sold to a man from Red Lodge and the town was approaching the true ghost town stage. Today, there is little remaining of the town.

[music plays]

TM: Neihart is 170 miles away from Butte, but relatively close to Great Falls. It is not a true ghost town; in fact, it is a kind of resort town. But, there is enough history to make a town of 109 people interesting. Let's go to Neihart.

Dr. Jack Goebel: Neihart, named after a relative of a poet, is located southwest of Great Falls and has become something of a resort town, as well as a church camp town. A most interesting transition for a mining town to undergo. It is by no means a ghost town; today, there is a population of at least 109 people.

The original discovery in the Neihart area was made by O'Brien and Harley in 1881, and such minerals as silver, lead, gold, iron, zinc, copper, antimony, arsenic, platinum, tellurium, and manganese have been mined there. Total production amounts to as much as \$16 million, with the bulk of that from silver-producing ore. The town was, at one time, larger than Great Falls, and narrowly escaped being named Farragut. In 1885, there were two restaurants, two saloons, post office, store, butcher shop, some 50 residences—some of which were in the process of construction and had no roofs—and various other tents and dirt and log dwellings. It was suggested at that time that the town would soon be larger than either Virginia City or Butte. In 1886, a \$200,000 concentrator and smelter, serviced by a flume a mile long, was finished. The location was two miles below Neihart, a suburb called Jericho. Shortly afterward, people began to move away as the mines did not produce to expectations and the town was nearly deserted in 1890.

A railroad was completed into Neihart in 1891, and it was during the celebration of that event that "Jew Jake," the one-legged man who later ran a saloon in Landusky, managed to become drunk and disorderly with the result that the marshal of Great Falls shot Jake in the leg. Thus, it was that Jake lost his leg and used either a Winchester rifle or a shotgun for a crutch. The railroad closed down in 1945, but Neihart continues to be a mining camp, a church camp, a resort town, a town that has gone through at least three revivals, and a town that occasionally makes the news with reports of a new strike. The history of the early town is partly recorded in the booklet accompanying this tape.

TM: The last town on the list is Landusky, and the farthest away from Butte: some 350 miles. A few people live in Landusky, and there is a post office there, as well as some renewed mining activity. But the fiery ghost of "Pike" Landusky must be there yet today. Let us look at Landusky and talk about Pike.

Marlys Hansen: Landusky retains a post office and a few people. It is not, therefore, a ghost town, unless one considers the ghost of its famous citizen, Pike Landusky. It was Landusky and his son-in-law, Bob Orrman, who discovered gold in 1893, thus causing a stampede to the area that resulted in the town becoming incorporated in the late spring of 1894. Pike Landusky, whose name was Powell, became Pike when he mentioned that he was from Pike County, Missouri, and he was tough. His nationality was Polish and French, and he once, reputedly, was

captured by Indians and escaped after attacking them with a frying pan. The Indians suspected Pike of being crazy and stayed away from him.

After Landusky began to grow, it became a rendezvous for all sorts of bad men, including the famous Curry Gang, who operated in the Little Rockies area. Several run-ins were reported between Landusky and the Curry people.

At the height of mining operation, the town had a payroll of as much as \$10,000 per month, and most of it was probably spent in the local saloons. The main saloon in town was run by a one-legged man called "Jew Jake." Landusky had built the bar. It is reported variously that Jew Jake used a gun for a crutch. Some authorities state that the gun was a shotgun, while others state that a .30-.30 was the prop.

Landusky almost lost his life in 1880 when he was hit in the jaw by the slug from a buffalo gun fired by a Blackfoot brave. Pike pulled out four teeth and some of the loose flesh of his jaw and threw that part of his jaw away. He was persuaded to go to Lewiston for medical help and, reportedly, lived on whiskey while his jaw—which had to be rebroken—healed. It was Kid Curry who killed Landusky in 1894, but only after Landusky's gun jammed, and Pike was buried a mile away from the town named after him on his ranch land.

Today, Landusky survives with the post office yet in operation and with renewed mining activity in the area. The ghost of tough old "Pike" Powell Landusky must be in the area. There are, too, some old-timers who might be persuaded to talk about the old days in Landusky. It is a most-interesting semi-ghost town, located in the Little Rockies, south of Harlem, and north of Lewiston. The country is rough, but very much worth seeing. There are many stories to be mined in this country today.

TM: This part of the story draws to a close, but this is only part one. Part two will consider not only the then-to-now of ghost towns, but the who, what, where, when, and why. The author wishes to thank all who have helped with this project.

[music plays]

Unknown Speaker: Ghost Towns of Montana was funded by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare through the Center for Continuing Education and Summer Programs at the University of Montana, Dr. Patricia Douglas, director. Ghost Towns of Montana was produced and narrated by Terrence McGlynn, from the Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology in Butte, Montana. Sound mixing by Dave Edelman of Montana Tech and the production staff of the Center for Continuing Education. Songs are traditional American and Irish folk songs, sung by Walt Robertson, Sisco [?] Huston, Pete Seager, and the Almanac Singers. The stories of Elkhorn, Granite, and Marysville were told by Dick Maney with an additional story of Marysville by Joe Boyle, both from Butte. The story of Pioneer, by Dr. Dennis Haley; Rimini, Dr. Charles Wideman; Red Lion, Dave Edelman; Virginia City, Leo Maney; Garnet,

Bill Black; Highland City, George Lubick; Pony, Rick Gleason; Castle, Elaine Hardy; Neihart, Dr. Jack Goble; Landusky, Marlys Hansen, all from the Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology.

[End of Recording]