Neighbors| A portrait of Philipsburg

Scott T. Crandell

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NEIGHBORS:
A PORTRAIT OF PHILIPSBURG

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This thesis examines the small Montana community of Philipsburg and its inhabitants. The historic mining town dates back to the 1860s and has survived a past full of boom and bust to emerge in the 1980s with a population equal to a century ago.

Research was conducted primarily through personal interviews with residents of Philipsburg, with background research touching on sociological and historical studies of the town.

This thesis concludes that Philipsburg, although buffeted by numerous negative influences, particularly economic ones, is likely to continue to survive. The town's longevity can be attributed to the hope, resilience, tenacity, versatility and faith of its inhabitants, and those traits will serve it well in the future.

The community faces many challenges, from the pervasive outside forces which it cannot control to internal social dilemmas. Yet the closeness of people to each other, the small-town social fabric, and the natural attractions of the town's mountain site combine to make Philipsburg a place in which people are willing to sacrifice and struggle in order to live there.
"A Portrait of Philipsburg" has been produced as part of a larger project of the University of Montana School of Journalism.

The text and photos in this thesis are designed to be incorporated with photographs taken in a documentary photo project begun in May 1987. During a six-day period that month, 13 students and two instructors from the School of Journalism focused their photographic attentions on Philipsburg and its people.

The thesis text is envisioned as a complement to those photographs. Interviews on which the text is based were conducted in late 1987 and early 1988, with additional photographs taken by the author during those periods.

The aim of the combined projects: to produce a lasting rendition in both photographs and words of life in the small town of Philipsburg.

The author is grateful for the support and encouragement of the UM School of Journalism, in particular Dean Charles Hood and instructors Patty Reksten and Bob Cushman, and to the people of Philipsburg for their cooperation and understanding.
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INTRODUCTION

Philipsburg, Granite, Cable, Black Pine, Hasmark, Rumsey: a century ago all were bustling mining communities around Western Montana's Flint Creek Valley; today all but Philipsburg are only ghost towns.

They boomed, they busted, they disappeared as viable communities, leaving behind largely memories and a few physical vestiges of their glory days.

Philipsburg grew up at the same time as these towns of memory, suffered similar hard-rock heartaches, and yet avoided going the way of its sister towns. Philipsburg rode out the regular lean times, basked in the less-frequent good years, and is still alive today, a Montana survivor in many ways defying the odds that conspire against the existence of the small, remote resource community.

Silver, manganese, timber and gold have in succession been the resources to which the little town on the hills tied its fortunes. The resources ebbed and flowed, jobs came and went, dreams soared and were shattered, but Philipsburg always remained, sometimes battered but still viable. The town has stayed around the same population for a century now.

Philipsburg's boom-and-bust history is mirrored by many other Montana small towns, resource towns in a resource state. But Philipsburg's ups and downs have perhaps been more tempered than many in Montana, and the swings between good and bad times not as severe as elsewhere.
In the late 1980s, Philipsburg is a town with one foot rooted in its mining past and the other stretching forward to secure a future. It's not much of a mining town any more, but it thinks it still is.

The town faces many of the challenges today that are widespread in Montana communities. It can do little to control the external forces that dictate many aspects of life, particularly economically. At turns, its citizens feel isolated, ignored, or used by the outside world, and as a result a bit fearful. It watches a growing exodus of its youth and an increase in elderly residents. It is surrounded by stunning scenery, yet enjoying it comes at the price of a trying struggle to make a living.

It wants to grow, but not so much as to effect a change in its character. Its inhabitants grapple with the social dilemma of drinking for youth and adults. It alternately resists and embraces the yoke of social control imposed by neighbors and the community. It bristles when criticized and falls back on a blanket defense: "It's no worse here than other towns."

Through the social pressures and challenges, however, Philipsburg and its denizens persevere. There are still families to raise, work to pursue, activities to join, and small-town life to be lived.

How the residents of Philipsburg live their lives is the focus of this book, a documentary look at a piece of small-town Montana. This book is about hopes and dreams, reality and realizations, coping and concern. Above all, it's about people.

This is not meant to be a complete and detailed record of Philipsburg, but rather a portrait in pictures and words of the way of life in the community of the 1980s.
This little Montana town is not easy to classify. People are open enough—some more reluctantly than others—to the inquisitive journalist, but their stories differ. One resident's vision of paradise in Philipsburg is another's image of problems. The reality often lies somewhere in between.

The elements of paradise are here—a scenic, secluded mountain location, the caring of a small community, a rugged, pioneer demeanor. On a cold winter morning, with chimney smoke stretched out horizontally in dozens of lines and the vintage buildings shrouded in backlit haze, the town seems mystically ensconced in its mountainside niche.

And the people move slowly this morning, as they do most mornings—there's usually no reason to rush very much here. Both the pace and the peace are pervasive and particularly inviting.

But it's not quite paradise with a mountain view. Balancing the beauty are the frequently harsh difficulties faced in trying to make a living, the plethora of social problems spawned by low or intermittent incomes, the gradual graying of the population.

The town is full of paradoxes. It extols itself as the prototypical friendly community, but that warmth is hardly overwhelming at some venues. For this feeling, try walking into a cafe sometime and facing the sudden turning of every head at the counter.

What the visitor sees are not quite the friendly visages one might expect, but the gruff, glaring attention of almost surly stares that seem to say, "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

Some people say it takes two years of residence to be accepted here. In that sense the friendliness may be
largely superficial until you've proven yourself to be worthy of the townspeople's approval and not disdain. Perhaps this acquaintive caution is a defense against too-swift adoption of transients who may be gone tomorrow; perhaps it's simply an inherent long-standing requirement of residence. Either rationale doesn't simplify the process of fitting in.

There also is an unusual contradiction expressed in pride over the past and present Philipsburg. Townspeople love to talk about the storied past; they're much more reluctant to discuss today or tomorrow. There's a strong tendency to steer the interviewer toward the oldtimers "who can tell you some great stories." Rare is the resident who recommends you talk to someone about the town today.

It is as if living in the past is more reassuring than dealing with the more unsettled present, or perhaps that modern times will seem mundane and colorless compared with history, and subsequently that the town presented in print will not be appealing and positive enough. And yet the town is far from uninteresting or uninviting in the 1980s--what may simply be lacking is enough faith by inhabitants that it will compare well with the past glory days.

A sharp dichotomy emerges in the relationship of youth and adults. Youths, particularly teens, are wedged in a double bind by the demands of town society and the reality of adult life. The message to youths comes from a variety of sources: don't abuse alcohol or drugs. Yet all around them the targeted teens see that forbidden activity widespread among their parents and other adults.

And the town is not exactly in the front line of the progressive movement when it comes to women's roles. It has a woman mayor and the usual female complement of teachers,
nurses, secretaries and waitresses, but neither the concept nor the presence of the professional career woman has taken root. This situation is not inherently a flaw—the traditional role for women is not a drawback per se—but it provides precious few role models for youths to observe or strive for.

Beyond characteristics such as these, however, there is much for the observer to admire in the town and its people. Perhaps most striking is the resilience of these residents—their ability to survive economically and psychologically when buffeted by nearly constant setbacks. They have learned to adapt and get along with less, perhaps, but get along nonetheless. And they bounce back time and again from adversity both personal and financial.

In this process, they have managed, for the most part, to maintain honesty and dignity.

A measure of admiration is in order, as well, for those able to cope with the myriad social pressures that are manifested both blatantly and subtly in a small community. To remain neighbors in this social vortex is no simple feat.

One critical overriding element for Philipsburgers is that, in spite of the sacrifices required and the uncertainty that often prevails, people are by and large happy and satisfied to live there. If that is the case, why should anyone else's perspectives matter very much?

The greatest lesson that can be learned from this small town, however, may be one of survival: a lesson in how a town that by many standards—economic, demographic and social—should be dead or dying. Yet Philipsburg resolutely refuses to do that, and quite likely will continue to stand its ground well through its second century of existence.
The Philipsburg recipe for longevity is a mixture of hope, resilience, tenacity, community, versatility and faith. And it works.

Over 50 years ago, one vision of the town was foreseen by sociologist Albert Blumenthal. Concluding "Small-Town Stuff," his book on Philipsburg, Blumenthal wrote that booms and depressions were likely to be normal as long as the community depended on "fluctuating values of metals and hidden bodies of ore."

He further foresaw that the town "does not promise ever to be larger than it has been in the past."

Blumenthal ended his book with this prophecy:

"On the human side, it would be strange were not 1981 to find 25 or 50 of Mineville’s (his cover name for Philipsburg) present residents within its midst. And there is no reason for supposing that ‘small-town stuff’ will not be very much the same as it is today aside from the changes occasioned by further and further participation of the people in the activities of the larger world by such means as general use of airplanes, television, and other products of man’s inventive genius."

To Blumenthal, "small-town stuff" meant the main characteristics of little communities: the close acquaintanceship of everyone with each other, the dominance of personal relations, and individuals continuously observed and controlled by the community.

Those same mainstays are present today in Philipsburg, to a strong degree just as Blumenthal described in 1932 and predicted for decades later. They are perhaps the glue that binds the community together.
CHAPTER I: VIEWS OF THE PAST

But for a polysyllabic obstacle, the town could have been called Deidesheimerburg.

It was back in 1867, when an unnamed mining community was beginning to build itself along Camp Creek at the eastern edge of the Flint Creek Valley. Philip Deidesheimer was supervisor and builder of the Hope mill, the first silver mill of its type in Montana. Deidesheimer built the mill near the east end of a gulch on a road that was to become the town's main street. Casting about for a name for the fledgling community, townspeople wanted to honor Deidesheimer, but "Deidesheimerburg" was too much a mouthful, so his first name became the town's and Philipsburg was titled.

By December 1867, the town had a population of 1,500 and about 250 houses—a swift start for a community that hadn't existed two years earlier.

The first recorded evidence of white man at what was to become Philipsburg was in 1858, when Granville Stuart camped nearby.

But it was in late 1864 or early 1865 that Philipsburg had its true mining genesis. Just above the town's future site, prospector Hector Horton discovered silver-bearing material sufficiently rich to stake a claim, and later in 1865 he located the Cordova lode, a larger strike. Horton apparently had little interest in developing his claims, but he spread the word of the silver strike, and Philipsburg's mining days were ignited.
The finds of the Comanche lode, Hope lode, and Speckled Trout lode fueled the boom (and samples of ore were assayed to contain 10,000 ounces of silver to the ton). Miners converged on the area, and outside investors, particularly from St. Louis, took a financial interest that was to continue for 60 years.

After construction of the Hope Mill to process ore on site, the town of Philipsburg was laid out west of the mill on June 15, 1867. The town was soon growing at the rate of one house per day, according to early newspaper reports.

 Barely two years later, the mill shut down, the town dwindled, and Philipsburg now knew its first bust as well as its first boom. Neither would be the last.

The town was relatively empty—one report said its population dropped to three—until a resurgence in 1872 with new silver mills operating. After a less serious downturn in the late 1870s, Philipsburg and a growing complement of sister mining towns entered the glory days of the 1880s.

By this time, however, Philipsburg had advanced a step beyond existence as solely a mining camp. It served as a major supply and trade center not only for the mining operations but also the agricultural enterprises growing in the Flint Creek Valley, and the arrival of the Drummond-Philipsburg Railroad line in 1887 boosted the town's growth and security.

Underlying the boom years of the 1880s and 1890s was the rich silver strike on Granite Mountain, a high-elevation site about four miles east of Philipsburg. Two productive lodes here spawned the town of Granite, which hit a population of 3,000 at its peak, and a pair of mining
companies, Granite Mountain and BiMetallic, which each built mills to process the ore.

The two companies produced $28 million in silver bullion between 1883 and 1898, making the Philipsburg area a leading silver-producing center.

While Granite and nearby camps such as Rumsey were sprouting, Philipsburg was building as well, with masonry buildings replacing frame structures and tents, residential areas sprawling out beyond the original townsite, and the town finally incorporating in 1890. Three years later it became the county seat of newly formed Granite County.

Philipsburg got a complement of four churches in six years, with all the steeples arrayed on the north hill of town. Just on the other side of the main street, a two-block-long lineup of red-light houses provided a different service for miners. The town was also an assembly of livery stables, ice houses, barns, hotels, saloons, warehouses, lumber companies and brick yards. There was even a brewery. The central business district (which encompassed the brothels) was concentrated on a three-block section of the main street, Broadway.

The silver boom that boosted Philipsburg and was the sole reason for existence for towns such as Granite, however, was not to last long. Previously buoyed by government silver purchases, the silver market collapsed as a result of the Panic of 1893 and subsequent repeal of silver-purchase legislation.

The impact on the town of Granite was immediate and devastating: both the Granite Mountain and BiMetallic operations closed and the population of the town disappeared virtually overnight. The miners departed
almost without packing, deserting furnished homes. What had been a robust town was empty.

Philipsburg, too, suffered deeply, but survived the crash. The Hope mill still operated and ranching and farming provided some stability. Moreover, a new discovery, sapphires, beckoned miners.

The town of Granite was to rebound briefly, after 1898 when the Granite Mountain and BiMetallic companies merged to form the Granite BiMetallic Consolidated Mining Company. Operations resumed until 1905, when silver prices dropped and the company shut down. Granite town then dwindled steadily until it was empty again, this time to remain that way.

Philipsburg, meanwhile, held its own in the years until World War I, relying on an increase in agriculture plus the remnants of mining: the Hope mill operated until 1910 when the ore ran out, shutting down the seminal mine after 40 years of operation.

Tourism, driven by the advent of the automobile, began to manifest itself around Philipsburg with a small influx of visitors geared for camping and fishing.

It was war, however, that would ignite the next big boom for Philipsburg. This time the mineral was manganese, not silver, but the impact was similar.

Facing dwindling foreign sources of manganese during World War I, the U.S. government protected domestic producers. Philipsburg, whose mining district happened to hold the largest manganese deposits in the country, found that this previously useless byproduct of silver mining was suddenly in demand.

Manganese meant money for the Philipsburg Mining Company (a consolidation of Granite BiMetallic, Hope Mining
and others), the Courtney Brothers and the Moorlight Mining Company. The boom also meant a surge in Philipsburg growth and construction, as the town swelled to 3,000 people in 1917 and 1918. New mills were built and new miners flocked to the town.

Even after the war, manganese remained the mining byword into the 1920s, although production was destined for batteries rather than steel and iron manufacturing as before. During this decade, 90 percent of the U.S. output of manganese dioxide came from Philipsburg.

Not all was rosy and roaring during the 20s in Philipsburg, however. Farm fortunes plummeted with the downfall of homesteading, the town's two banks folded—one in 1924 and the other in 1930—and Philipsburg felt the impact of the Depression in the 1930s. One resident recalls the Depression wasn't all that bad for Philipsburg. "Mining towns are used to being depressed," she says.

The demand for manganese and silver was renewed with during World War II, and Philipsburg prospered once more.

After the war, the demand for U.S. manganese waned, and so did manganese mining prospects in Philipsburg. Many of the mining operations changed hands in the postwar years, and mining dwindled steadily in succeeding decades.

But while mining was on a downward slide, periodic upturns in the ranching business and an increase in timber operations picked up some of the economic slack around Philipsburg. At one point several sawmills operated in the area, but all those firms closed by the end of the 1970s.

Sapphire mining, which had ended commercially in the 1940s, rebounded in the 1980s with a twist—it became a tourist venture, with visitors sifting gravel to seek sapphires.
Silver mining was not finished, either. The Black Pine mine west of Philipsburg has been an on-again/off-again operation from the 1970s until 1988, when the most recent closure took effect. The last of the mine's frequent reopenings was in May 1987, but less than a year later the price of silver had dropped $2 an ounce, the doors shut again and the mine went up for sale.

Milling of ore also has survived in Philipsburg. The original BiMetallic mill site is still the location for a mill built in 1981 by Contact Mill and Mining Co. and operating in 1988.

Miners in the late 1980s turned to gold as the primary objective, and several small Philipsburg-area operations were actively drilling for gold. Apart from actual extraction, a variety of exploration projects have been under way in the area.

In sum, the history of Philipsburg from its 1860s inception (Philipsburgers like to call 1864 the town's origin—that way they can say it's older than Butte) to the 1980s has been a busy century and a quarter. Locals are keenly aware of the roller-coaster past of the town, but point out that somehow at least one element keeps the economy—and therefore the town—rolling.

When mining has been down, timber has been good, they say. Or when mining and timber both plummeted, ranching was successful enough. At any one time, at least one of the legs of this economic support has been healthy enough for Philipsburg to bank on. And tourism, whether in the form of sapphire hunters, ghost-town visitors, fishermen or hunters, has crept into the picture as a welcome although intermittent boost.
The town's past is perhaps most colorfully (and appropriately) summarized in the words of early druggist M.E. Doe:

"Philipsburg is like a whore's drawers at a miners' picnic: up and down and up and down."

(Note: Historical information for this chapter was drawn from "Philipsburg Historic Resource Survey," "Small-Town Stuff" and interviews with Philipsburg residents).
CHAPTER II: THE TOWN TODAY

Philipsburg sits just far enough off of Highway 10A (the Pintlar Scenic Route) that a fast-moving traveler might zip past with hardly a glance at the town that rises up against the mountains to the east.

But by following the invitation of a brightly painted billboard, which points the way to and extols the elevation (5,280 feet) of Philipsburg, drivers find the town's main street, a roadway that curves twice before straightening into the community's downtown after less than a mile.

Broadway bisects Philipsburg's three-block-long business district, and from that centerline the town stairsteps steeply up hills in both directions. The hill to the north contains a jumble of houses, churches and the glittering dome of the county courthouse; the slope on the south is more open and leads to the schools.

Arrayed on one side of Broadway are businesses ranging from a garage to a computer business, plus a church, the bank and newspaper. On the other side of the central street, one finds an alternating pattern of bars (five of them) and stores, plus the post office and town hall. There is one grocery store on each side of the street, and the town's two cafes are similarly situated.

The architecture is a combination of old, ornate masonry buildings and some more modern facades. Many of the buildings were constructed in the late 1800s or early 1900s. Their survival and the town's history led to the
designation of much of Philipsburg as a National Historic District.

The appearance of Philipsburg probably hasn't changed all that much in 100 years. Neither has the number of people living there.

Philipsburg is home to 1,240 people, according to a 1986 census update (the population was 1,138 in the 1980 head count). The town numbered 1,128 in 1970 and 1,107 in 1960, and even in 1890 had 1,058 people.

This consistency in population can be viewed either as a sign of stability or stagnation—or, as some in Philipsburg see it, a combination of both.

"This isn't the town for some people. There's no growth," says Bill Antonioli, mill supervisor for Contact Mill and Mining Co. He adds, however, that neither do people in Philipsburg expect much growth.

Philipsburg's modern-day population, according to the census breakdown, is almost entirely white, has a median age of 35 years, and is about equally split among males and females. A higher-than-normal portion of its populace—17.5 percent—is over 65 years old. Real-estate agent and County Commissioner Frank Waldbillig provides a different spin on the latter figure. By his estimate, Philipsburg contains 40 widows, most of them elderly, living alone in houses.

But statistics and architecture reveal little of Philipsburg in the 1980s. The town is more than just a mere compilation of age categories and vintage buildings.

Philipsburg (known more prevalently as simply "P-burg") still views itself as a mining town, despite the fact mining plays a much less important role than it did in the past. At times, mining still surfaces, but not much and not
for long. In May 1987, the nearby Black Pine silver mine reopened, but it was shut down and 80 people were out of work nine months later. In that short time span, Philipsburg gained and lost its largest employer.

It is a town whose residents put down deep, deep roots. Jim Patten, age 100 in 1988, lives in the house in which he was born. The town's centenarian still makes regular walks downtown and occasional stops at bars. Heinie Winninghoff, whose auto dealership has been in business 60 years, has lived his life in two houses in Philipsburg—one across the street from the other. The living history of the town is found in lives like theirs. Second- and third-generation Philipsburgers are not uncommon, and some families' fourth generations are continuing traditions in Philipsburg.

Those roots can hold fast even during the frequent dismal economic days: It's a relatively common practice for a worker's family to remain in Philipsburg while he leaves town for a job. Larry and Veronica "Ronnie" Bolstad know that particular experience. When the mine shut down, Larry, a miner for 20 years, found work in Lewistown—280 miles away—while Ronnie and their son stayed in Philipsburg.

"As of right now, our roots are here," Ronnie says of Philipsburg. "We like it here. This is it."

And there is an allure to Philipsburg that attracts former residents back to it. The major stumbling block to their return is the lack of a job.

In one family with a long tenure in Philipsburg, the McDonalds, the children all went off to college but returned to their home town, taking jobs as waitresses, bartenders and bank tellers. But that clan is more the exception than the rule.
Dolly Page, a local historian and an unabashed booster of the town, describes Philipsburg's lure as a "sort of magic." Although she can't quite define that magic, she cites the freedom and peace that pervade Philipsburg as elements of the hold the town can have on people.

"I always tell everyone, 'Don't ever move here and stay longer than six months, because if you do, you'll never leave or you'll always come back,'" Page says, "and I have never missed on anybody."

What is it about small towns--Philipsburg in particular--that engenders this sort of admiration and adulation? Perhaps the mystique can be attributed to the small town's social closeness, extended feeling of family, and almost womblike comfort that makes it easy to call "home."

Too, there is at least the perception that the isolated town is secure from the craziness and problems of bigger cities and the outside world. In this sense, the small town is an escape from urban reality and its attendant evils. The simple amenities of the smaller community--the ability to go from one end of the business district to the other in a short walk, the nearness of outdoor recreation--also contribute to small-town allure.

Winninghoff provides one example of the town's attraction as he recalls one time when a group of out-of-town hunters stopped by for gas and the men expressed amazement that anyone would stay in one place for all his years. One of the men, however, glancing around the town and the mountains, said to Winninghoff, "What a nice place to spend your life."

To some, Philipsburg's biggest advantage is its location. Opportunities for hunting, fishing, camping,
snowmobiling, hiking and skiing are close by the mountain town. "If you’re an outdoor person, this is the place to be," says Mike Winninghoff.

Others echo that sentiment, often with a slight disclaimer. Rick Barkell, who runs the hardware store, cites the multitude of outdoor recreation around Philipsburg, but notes, "There’s a few sacrifices you have to make to live in a small town--like money."

High school teacher Sandy Wattula calls Philipsburg an "outdoorsman’s paradise" with both big attractions such as skiing and smaller ones such as mushroom hunting. "My son can get on his bike and in three minutes he can be fishing in Flint Creek; in five minutes he can be climbing a hill, and downhill skiing is only 20 minutes away."

Camera-shop owner Steve Neal offers a similar assessment: "In 10 minutes you can walk out of town away from everybody and there’s still clean air and mostly clean water."

Philipsburg is isolated from urban life, sitting 75 miles from Missoula and 56 miles from Butte, the two nearest Montana cities. Those distances are comfortable separations from cities for many in Philipsburg, yet still short enough a drive for shopping trips.

Bank President Zane Murfitt points out Philipsburg is not only "close to all the things we like to do outdoors," but also "close enough to go to Missoula to see a football game or basketball game."

People are also close to each other in Philipsburg, not always by choice but by the simple social stickiness of a small town. "Everybody knows what everybody else is doing in this town" is an oft-heard description of neighborliness and nosiness in Philipsburg.
"Everybody knows so-and-so's pregnant or so-and-so's fooling around," says Mike Kahoe, the administrator for both the hospital and the county. "People know all your business, or they think they do, but they're with you when the chips are down."

Living in what some term a goldfish bowl is not always pleasant for those in Philipsburg, but, as Wattula says, "You just kind of learn to go about your business and not worry about it."

Philipsburg holds seven churches of varying size and devotion, but it's a town where a regular paycheck is likely to be worshipped as much as more spiritual rewards.

The town proudly boasts its own 10-bed hospital and 13-bed nursing home. Given the percentage of elderly citizens in town, the nursing-home section often is expanded in capacity. Uniquely for a hospital that small, the Philipsburg facility offers respiratory therapy, a need based on mining-related afflictions.

Downstairs from the hospital and nursing home, children play in Philipsburg's day-care center. A block away, the elementary school (built in 1896 and now the oldest operating school in Montana) sits in contrast to the much newer high school next door.

Philipsburg even has its own airport, Riddick Field, named after one of its most famous residents. Merrill K. Riddick, known for his three Presidential campaigns which he conducted via Greyhound bus, died in March 1988 at the age of 93. He also was a teacher, prospector and pioneer aviator who barnstormed with Charles Lindbergh before his epic flight.

And the town has achieved fame of sorts in other ways. Philipsburg was the subject of the 1932 sociological study,
"Small-Town Stuff," by Albert Blumenthal, as well as a Richard Hugo poem, "Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg."

"Small-Town Stuff," with its detailed and not always complimentary portraits of people and life in Philipsburg, was not warmly received. More than 50 years later, some people are still rankled by the book and its exposure of private lives, even though all names were changed and much of what Blumenthal wrote was apparently common knowledge.

Hugo's poem, which said of the town, "One good restaurant and bars can't wipe the boredom out," also is not the most popular reading by townspeople who consider it too unflattering a portrayal. The poem's gray and somber outlook, however, may be more reflective of the poet's state of mind than just the town as subject.

Some of what both authors wrote of Philipsburg is still accurate today, but not apt to be embraced by boosters of the town. As Hugo wrote, "...You walk these streets laid out by the insane, past hotels that didn't last, bars that did, the tortured try of local drivers to accelerate their lives. Only churches are kept up..."

Attitudes among Philipsburgers toward their town seem to range between two ends of the spectrum. Supporters like to say, "It's a great little town. We have everything we need and there is plenty to do." At the other extreme are the naysayers who complain, "Nothing every happens in Philipsburg."

There is truth in both perspectives. It is, as small towns go, a generally good town, and usually not much earthshaking happens there. Those with a need for constant intellectual stimulation or frequent cultural happenings are likely to be bored. Those with simpler tastes and an
appreciation of the outdoors and small-town sociability may
find just what they want in Philipsburg.

There is also more color to be found there than Hugo
portrayed: color in the surrounding environment, from the
green hues of forested hillsides to the ambers of the
valley ranchland, plus the frequent bright blue of the
Philipsburg sky; color in the architecture, from reds to
yellows and dozens of variations in between; but most of
all, color in the townspeople, whether venerable longtime
residents or recent immigrants. There is, too, the colorful
history of the town.

There are plenty of grays in Philipsburg—gray days,
gray prospects for the future, gray areas—but there are
just as many brighter spots that shine through.

Some of the local color, plus a variety of viewpoints,
is likely to be encountered at Philipsburg's primary social
centers: the bars. "I think people congregate naturally
there [bars] to socialize as much as anything. It's a
social event," Kahoe says.

They also congregate at school functions, since the
schools and youths' activities are not only entertainment
for the town but also a major focus of concern.

That concern is nowhere more evident than when a
controversy brews in the schools. As Jim Waldbillig puts
it, "Schools are really a touchy area. I've found people
will lose all touch of rationality when it comes to
schools."

Pat Brooks, who manages the liquor store, agrees.
"People are friendly here, unless there's a controversy
about schools."

For example, in the spring of 1988, a bitter and
divisive controversy has been raging over whether to oust
the boys' basketball coach. Letter-writing campaigns, petitions, secret school board meetings, parental pressure and a lot of talk around town characterize this battle, which has vocal leaders on both sides.

School board Chairman Mike McCann says some people won't speak to him because of his stand on the school flap. "You learn people's true colors real fast," he says of the controversy.

Other levels of government, while they might not receive the same scrutiny or public involvement as do schools, face their own difficulties.

The Philipsburg Town Council in 1987 adopted a controversial ordinance banning dogs from downtown. It was an ordinance prompted by complaints "about dogs downtown doing their thing," says Mayor Nancy Owens. While the canine control produced some public resentment, the new law had its lighter side. One of the first canine offenders belonged to Dennis House, who dutifully paid his fine. House, a mechanic, also happens to serve on the town council. After relating the tale of his errant dog, he wryly remarked of the new law, "And I voted for it."

Beyond the local economy and the constant struggle to survive, both by now historically ingrained in the Philipsburg psyche, the town and its denizens face other troubles.

Drinking, particularly by youths but to a similar, albeit more legal extent by adults, pervades the town. One emigre from California describes teen drinking there as paltry compared to Philipsburg. And one of the industries which flourishes is the sale of alcohol, with a fourth of the businesses downtown centered on alcohol sale and consumption.
The town also loses many of its young people after high school, since there's little available employment to hold them, and even fewer opportunities after college. As Bob Winninghoff says, "The biggest thing, like all of Montana, is there's really nothing for young people to do to find a job and make a living. It's hard to keep young people, but they like to come back."

Dolly Page agrees, "This is a town for old folks, mainly, because we haven't anything here for young people when they get out of school."

Prospects aren't that much brighter for women in Philipsburg. Jobs for them are scarce, too, and, as Wattula observes, "I've never seen more downtrodden women than here in Philipsburg."

And simply from an aesthetic perspective, Philipsburg is not overly attractive. Once a visitor looks beyond the historic architecture, the town is, as one resident describes it, "a series of houses in between junk cars."

One tour of town in March 1988 reveals 95 obviously disabled and unusable vehicles littering yards, driveways and streets.

One defense of this practice is that since people are poor they need the cars for spare parts. A visitor once answered this by asking, "How many 1947 Studebakers do you own that you need those parts for?" There's not much response to queries like this. Perhaps the town's version of an antique-auto show is some subtle attempt at preserving vehicular history. There are vintage ruins and mining relics all around, why not a few cannibalized monuments to transportation?

Some houses and yards are tidily maintained; many others tend toward the run-down approach. The Rev. Derf
Bergman of St. Paul's United Presbyterian Church notes, "Walk around, it looks like it's been neglected: yards are run down, junk in the backyards, paint on buildings peeling." He adds, "Maybe that junky upkeep reflects what people think about their own lives."

Philipsburg also faces the continual challenge which besets many small communities: much of what happens which has grave impacts on the town is far beyond its control.

Philipsburg can't dictate the price of silver which determines whether mines open or close. It can't influence timber demand. It is helpless to regulate the beef market.

When power companies in 1987 protested taxes on utility lines, the Philipsburg school district was powerless to recoup 27 percent of its revenues which became inaccessible. The town also is facing a government mandate to filter its water supply.

All of these add up to a sense of helplessness in the face of external influences. As one high school senior sums it up, "Just like anywhere else, we have outside forces working against us."

At the same time, notwithstanding the unalterable outside influences, Philipsburgers persevere and do what they can to endure in their own town. In spite of all that could steer one toward a gloomy outlook, there is a stubborn optimism among many that the most pressing of problems or setbacks can't supersede.

This upbeat demeanor manifests itself in what may be a uniquely Montanan attitude that is part gallows humor and part facing reality. "If I'm going to be broke and starve," the saying goes, "I might as well do it in a beautiful place."
Overheard: The Three W’s

Listening to conversations in Philipsburg, whether in cafes, stores, bars, club meetings, the bank lobby or on the sidewalk, familiar refrains are heard.

Beyond the social chatter and exchanges of information about neighbors (both of which are constants) there are three common themes that are overheard: weather, work and wilderness.

Weather influences a lot of what the outdoor-oriented citizens do, so it’s a prime topic of discussion. The conditions of roads after a sudden morning snowfall, moisture amounts for ranching, the water level for fishing in Rock Creek, weather hindrances to woods work, tracking snow for hunting, sunshine for softball, winds expected for the weekend football game—all these are woven among the conversations in Philipsburg.

In this town, weather is a watchword for a wide variety of recreational and occupational concerns, not just as a conversation starter. There is equally as much serious discussion as small talk about weather.

While weather is important in Philipsburg dialogue, work is a critical topic. In a community where jobs in full swing one day may be gone the next, there’s often an urgency when the talk turns to work.

Talk of which outfit is hiring or laying off, or is rumored to do so, can produce turned heads and attentive ears 20 feet away, or evoke a comment from across the room. The subject may be as big as Black Pine mine on the brink of closing, or as small as a logging operation adding one
sawyer. Whether it involves 80 jobs or one, it's important here.

If a new company is exploring mineral holdings, it's cause for hopeful conversation. If an out-of-work laborer is leaving town and family behind to find a job elsewhere, it gives rise to muttered condolences and sympathetic words of support.

A new job that's available, whether it's in county government or as a store clerk or a salesman, is likely to be discussed.

The nature of work itself is a topic for talk, too. Over an afternoon beer and a shot, a construction worker will trade tales of his day at work with a rancher's litany of labor or a shopkeeper's stories.

"How's business" is more than a simple salutation in Philipsburg, but rather marks an earnest interest in what's going on with others in the working world.

While the mention of work can often pique conversational curiosity, the word wilderness is almost sure to make people in Philipsburg bristle.

Several areas around Philipsburg, from the Flint Creek Range to the Sapphires, are being studied for Congressional designation as additional wilderness. The prospect of additional land being precluded from development and motorized vehicles does not sit well with Philipsburg's people, and they frequently vent their anger and anguish over the subject.

Over breakfast at a town cafe, one elderly resident reading the morning paper scoffs over an article about wilderness.

"I sure don't want any more wilderness," he says to the stranger next to him. "What do they want it for? You can't
take a vehicle in there, you can’t cut any timber and you can’t do any mining work."

There is strong opposition voiced to new wilderness, usually in the context of jobs. "You can’t take 100,000 acres out of a resource-based county and not lose jobs," says County Commissioner Bob Ivie.

Wilderness opposition often is paired with vilification of those who support it. Often targeted in conversations are the hated Missoula environmentalists who push for wilderness. Similar excoriation is reserved for the Congressional delegation working on wilderness legislation. At one Philipsburg service-club gathering, a heartfelt and only half facetious motion was made to declare one Montana Congressman an "asshole." It didn’t reach a vote, but it drew acclaim and support from those present.

And in another conversation, when one businessman tells a resident he should write a letter to Congress expressing wilderness opposition, the response is, "Why? They don’t read them letters. It wouldn’t do any good."

One Philipsburg man theorizes it would be difficult to find 50 people in the entire county who favor more wilderness. The depth of antagonism expressed when the conversation turns to wilderness indicates that estimate may not be inaccurate.

One interchange at a county commissioners’ meeting is a case in point. A resident says to the commissioners, "We ought to go snowmobiling up there [proposed wilderness] before they lock it up." A commissioner responds, "We’ve decided we’re going to go up there anyway."
CHAPTER III: YOUTH

Natural resources—their extraction and development—have always been the mainstay of Philipsburg.

A different approach to Philipsburg's resources, however, is voiced by one local teacher who proclaims, "Youth is the only resource that really matters in this town."

Although this assessment might not be universally shared, the youth of Philipsburg are an important focus for both family and community.

Philipsburg has 300 students of school age, and their activities are a main attraction, not only for parents but others in town. Whether it's little-league baseball, youth wrestling, school music shows or high school sports events, townspeople are likely to take a deep interest.

The schools, of course, are the center of activity. According to former school board member Davee McGuire, "What goes on there in the school with the kids is the heart of the community and the whole town revolves around it."

The size of the town is considered by many parents to be a bonus for their children. Doug Morrison sees much greater opportunities available for his two children, particularly in sports, than they would find in a larger community. "Everybody pretty much can participate," he says. Longtime resident Dolly Page adds, "You can only be 120 pounds and play football in Philipsburg, and the kids all can make the team and do."
Beyond school, children can participate in everything from scouting to sports to church groups, but not all the opportunities for children are necessarily organized. There are still plenty of chances for simply playing, as well as the area's many offerings in outdoor recreation.

Younger children seem to have no problem occupying themselves in Philipsburg. Many of the venues which used to occupy teen-agers, however, are gone. Philipsburg's movie theater, soda fountain, bowling alley and pool hall have all closed. "Those were a big part of social life for teens," says Gordon Shepherd, who frequented those places in his youth.

High school teacher Larry Veis echoes that sentiment. "There isn't anything for students to do in this town except sports, music and camping," he says.

The Class of 1988

Youth often may be seen as the future of a community, but if Philipsburg's Class of 1988 follows its announced path, its future and the town's may diverge widely.

With graduation two months away, most of these high school seniors say they're aiming to leave their home town and don't plan to return, except to visit. An interview with 16 of the 24 seniors produced a near-unanimous chorus of career plans that didn't include Philipsburg.

"There's nothing here to offer kids our age," one senior laments. According to another, "It's nice if you're married and you have a good job, but if you're single, there's really no jobs or anything for you."

The shortage of jobs is one reason behind the planned exodus, while boredom with Philipsburg and an interest in the outside world also contribute to the restlessness.
"They tell us there's real life out there. We're going to go find it," one student says.

Individual destinations vary, but one senior says that her classmates, in contrast to other classes, at least have places to go. "We have almost 100 percent going to college or going into the armed forces, or already having a job lined up--just having something to do."

They express an interest in enjoying the amenities Philipsburg can't offer, including movie theaters, shopping malls and fast-food restaurants. They also say they want to get out of the ever-present community observation. "We want to have our own identity," one says. From another: "You want to be kind of a secluded person." They say both of those are difficult, if not impossible, given the close surveillance people give one another in Philipsburg.

Teachers and townspeople note that these students' desire to leave isn't unusual, but not all those who plan to will escape Philipsburg. In addition, many would come back if they could find work, the adult observers note.

High school counselor Harvey Carter says that on average, half of Philipsburg's high school graduates go on to college, others go into the armed forces and some get jobs in the area. "But some of them just fall through the cracks," Carter says. "They don't really have a goal." These are the ones, he notes, who after a year are likely to be regular patrons down at the bars.

One of the seniors' chief complaints about Philipsburg is the lack of things to do outside school. "You have to make your own fun," one says. That fun may mean four-wheeling in the woods, video parties or simply cruising the main drag of Philipsburg (all three blocks of it).
Drinking and other drug use (although alcohol is the chemical of choice for most youths) are hardly uncommon youth phenomena in Philipsburg. To some adults, teen drinking is the biggest problem facing the town; others consider it a normal part of growing up and aren't concerned.

The seniors aren't shy about admitting their partying ways. Friday, Saturday, Sunday night—they tick off the recent memorable parties they say they have enjoyed. One student points out, though, that the party scene diminishes during sports seasons. "We're in between seasons now, so everyone's going to go crazy now and then it's going to calm down," she says.

Party-bound students also play a continual game of cat and mouse with sheriff's deputies. The lawmen earnestly try to ferret out the location of teen-age drinking festivities; the youths do their best to obscure the sites or send deputies on false alarms. Sometimes the subterfuge succeeds, but the number of seniors who have been busted—a handful admitted to it at the interview—is evidence that's not always the case.

Student drinking was a major factor behind the establishment in 1987 of a "chemical-free youth center" in downtown Philipsburg. The center, open only in the summer, offers darts, pool, pinball and foosball. Its inaugural season had mixed results—there was some vandalism and chaperon staffing was a problem.

Seniors generally favor the center, but complain about the lack of chaperons. According to one student, "Parents want us to keep off the streets, but none of them came down and chaperoned."
In spite of their professed urgency to leave the town, the members of the Class of 1988 say they like many aspects of Philipsburg. They cite the scenery, outdoor recreation, education they received and the people as advantages they appreciate. "If you grew up here, you grew up with everybody, and you’re like a big family," one student says of the closeness of the senior class.

The youths also are concerned about the future of the town. "It’s kind of a ghost town now," one boy says. Another notes, "If people aren’t careful, this town is going to end up like Granite," referring to the nearby mining town which is empty.

Other students foresee a future Philipsburg populated largely by older people. One girl says the town could end up composed only of "retirement and drunks."
CHAPTER IV: SOCIAL LIFE

Gossip, rumors, the grapevine—in many ways word of mouth establishes the social pattern of Philipsburg.

In his 1932 sociological study, Albert Blumenthal cited gossip as the fuel that ran the town and kept people in line with community standards. That may be no less true 50-plus years later, and in fact some would say the role of gossip has expanded.

Word travels fast in this little town. "We have a grapevine that's absolutely colossal," says Dolly Page. "Something can happen and in 20 minutes it's all over town."

In a town where everybody knows everybody, residents keep a curious eye and ear on what their neighbors are doing. "People keep pretty close track of what's going on," says Jim Waldbillig. "There's a 12-hour turnaround time on anything that happens. We can't wait for the Philipsburg Mail [the town's weekly newspaper] to come out. We have to know right away."

Rick Barkell notes that the swift-traveling news sometimes tends to be exaggerated. "You can go from a sprained finger to an amputated arm overnight."

High school students are keenly aware of the information system. "You can do something and before you even get home, your parents know about it," one girl says.

How accurate is the community's oral news service? One estimate by youths figures about 50 percent is true. As one
teen-ager says, "The next day it's pretty true, but then a week later it's got a lot on it."

Not all the interest or information is necessarily prurient or personal. "In spite of it all, there's a genuine concern for people," Mike Kahoe says. "If you break your leg or somebody dies," neighbors want to know so they can help, he notes.

The hospital administrator relates that many people call him whenever the helicopter ambulance from Missoula sets down at the hospital. He attributes this not to nosiness, but a real concern about whom the patient might be.

Residents point out ruefully that not all the interest in others' affairs is so altruistic, but they've learned to take it in stride. Living in a "goldfish bowl" was the hardest adjustment Sandy Wattula had to make when she moved to Philipsburg 10 years ago. While the observation isn't blatant, she notes, it's always there. She terms people-watching an "avocation" in Philipsburg.

Ronnie Bolstad considers the gossip game to be a form of entertainment for townspeople.

Wattula says the response is simply not to worry about being in the public eye. Even though Waldbillig notes, "You can't get away with anything" because of the scrutiny, "It just makes you a little more creative. It's a fact of life."

The oral tradition also plays a role in defining prevailing opinions toward town issues. An informal yet undeniable "coffee-shop consensus" often is produced which can serve as a determinant of public policy. Agencies of government, whether the school board or town council, may conduct discussions in formal meetings, but their
constituents and some participants could well be molding their viewpoints in the public forum of a cafe or bar.

It is the bars of Philipsburg that make up the dominant social center for adults in the town. It's widely agreed that most of Philipsburg's social life is found there. Everyone from town leaders to laborers can be encountered in Philipsburg's half dozen drinking establishments (five in a two-block span of main street and a sixth out on the highway).

Some people are such regular patrons that they practically could be considered as having office hours on the barstool. Others merely stop by for a quick drink and some conversation.

The bars are by no means always crowded, although quitting time for workers usually means a surge in bar patronage. The "aftershifter"--a beer and a shot--is still a Philipsburg tradition that derives from past mining days.

Other liquid traditions survive as well. Ronnie Bolstad, the wife of a miner, notes, "It seems like they [miners at Black Pine] always have a reunion down at the White Front Bar, whether the mine's opening or closing."

The town's watering holes also lean toward tradition in decor. There are no stained-glass/fern bars here, just the standard furnishings: the telltale neon beer banners in the windows, mirrored bar backdrop, pool tables, occasional pieces of arcane memorabilia (one establishment has a memorial to John Kennedy encased in glass), the come-hither flicker of electronic gambling machines, the wall-mounted oversight of elk heads.

The interior lighting, of course, is de rigueur dim, and would not quite meet Hemingway's parameters for a clean, well-lighted place. But then, who wants to imbibe under the
glare of spotlights? Of these social centers, the winner in the name category (and loser in hygiene) is the Thirsty Dog, although the Hungry Buzzard (now retitled the more jangly Silver Spur) used to stand out. The White Front, Antlers and Club House round out the sites for rounds.

It's in the bars where almost a second language prevails—the knack of nicknames. Against the background of the relentless chirping and burping of poker machines, a host of male monikers is heard: Thunder, Lightning (unrelated), Popeye, Godfrey, Heinie, Bubba, Wild Meat (he's not as wild as the name would indicate), and the usual assortment of Shorty, Doc, Tiny and so on. Proper names are, it seems, kept to a minimum.

Whether drinking is a problem or simply a traditional social exercise in Philipsburg is a matter of some disagreement among residents. One lifelong resident notes he's never seen a town with as much drinking as Philipsburg, but in the next breath he adds, "It's not a problem in Philipsburg. It's normal."

Davee McGuire, who is involved with CORE, a community intervention program which deals with youths' drug and alcohol problems, says, "According to most of the adult population of Philipsburg, there's no problem and there are no alcoholics here, even though there are." She says, however, that she doesn't think Philipsburg's drinking is any more severe than other towns'.

Sheriff Morey A. Cragun observes that drinking in Philipsburg is simply part of the nature of Montana. "It's as much a social gathering as anything else," he says of the bar scene, noting that everything in Philipsburg but the bars closes up by 8 o'clock every night.
While the barrooms may be the leading destination for entertainment and socializing, schools are second. "The school basically is the entertainment for the community," says teacher Larry Veis. The choices for somewhere to go often are "go to the game or go to the bar," Veis says.

The schools not only offer a variety of activities for people to attend, but school facilities also are frequently used for community functions.

The schools' value was pointedly noticed in 1985 when the high school gym and cafeteria burned down in a spectacular fire. For two years, until a new gym was finished, school teams played home contests in either Anaconda or Drummond.

Community groups also were affected. Activities ranging from Boy Scout meetings to aerobics classes suddenly were without facilities. Organizers turned to church community rooms or the bank basement as alternatives. "We were real pinched for space for groups that sponsored suppers or meetings," school superintendent Ed Longin says.

"After the gym burned, the town realized how much of a focal point it was," says Mike McCann, a day-care operator and school board member.

Philipsburg's social life also involves a host of service and community organizations. Business alliances such as the chamber of commerce, service groups such as Rotary or Lions Club and fraternal organizations such as the Elks provide opportunities for social interaction.

The Christian Women's Club, which meets monthly, follows a simple rule: participants agree not to talk about weight, religion or politics. The senior citizens' center on a corner of Broadway is host to a busy schedule of activities for the town's elderly. And the various churches
each have their own service and social groups and gatherings.

Sports also serve a social role in Philipsburg, with intramural basketball and summer softball topping the list. A couples' pool league that competes in the winter, hopping from bar to bar, is "one of the winter anti-depressants," according to the Rev. Derf Bergman, a member of the pool troupe.

The Philipsburg Public Library—4,000 books in all—offers another social service for the town. The library, open nine hours a week, has a good following of readers, almost entirely adults, according to librarian Beverly McDougal. The library produced a community cookbook, "Philipsburg Prospects Its Pantry" in 1987 which sold almost 900 copies in four months.

The 120-page cookbook details local culinary favorites ranging from wild-game jerky to Chinese dishes. Some recipes sport creative titles such as "Hell of a Mess Casserole" or "Impossible Cheese Burger Pie."

Interspersed with the food fare are geographic and historical trivia questions about the town. Sample: "In 1873, how many men, women and children were in Philipsburg? Answer: 600 men, four women and four school-age children."

The cookbook, a source of pride for the town, also highlights the artistic talents of an array of artists whose efforts grace divider pages in the book.

The town's sites for socializing have dwindled over the years. The movie theater, which opened only briefly in the summer of 1987, may not screen any films in 1988. The town's four-lane bowling alley, which still had hand-set pins, is shut down. Residents must travel to Anaconda or beyond to bowl.
Social prospects for young adults aren't always promising. Jim Waldbillig, 26, says, "You've got to travel" to find women. "I've always said this would be a nice place to put a monastery."

Travel to the bright lights, shopping malls and sporting events of the big cities--particularly Butte or Missoula--is one social outlet. "If having a cocktail or two is one of the favorite pastimes, one of the next favorite is getting out of town," says Mike Kahoe, "so you go to Butte or Missoula or Anaconda."
CHAPTER V: FAITH

The quartet of steeples that rose in a surge of spiritual construction almost 100 years ago still stands tall on the skyline of Philipsburg.

The town’s original four churches are arranged along the same street ("church row" to some) on the northern hill of Philipsburg. Today three remain houses of worship; the fourth, largely unused except as a pastor’s office, is for sale.

This trio of active churches—Episcopal, Catholic and United Presbyterian—has been joined over the years by four others: Baptist, Mormon, Pentecostal and Community.

Philipsburg residents point proudly to the fact that they have as many churches as bars. In fact, religion leads by one on this score. Whether attendance is greater in the pews or on the barstools, however, is not quite so clear-cut a comparison, with the latter apparently holding sway. Philipsburg does manifest a geographic separation of church and watering hole, with the secular spots all on the south side of Broadway and the spiritual sites on the north side.

The townspeople’s attitudes about religion range from devotion to indifference and from tolerance to apathy. One pastor estimates about one fourth—a normal fraction for a small town—of the population goes to church regularly.

For some, religious involvement is critical. Debbie and Sonney White’s devotion to Flint Creek Baptist Church is a primary factor that keeps their family in Philipsburg.
At another congregation, Joe and Agnes Strejkal have long been deeply involved with St. Philip's Catholic Church.

Mabel Beattie took her faith afar. A member of the Mormon Church in Philipsburg, Beattie went on an 18-month church mission when she was 79 years old. She spent 65 hours a week proselytizing on the streets of Salt Lake City, and was so enthused by the experience she extended her mission four months.

Congregations wax and wane in Philipsburg. When the Rev. Roger Foust came to the town 15 years ago to re-start the Baptist church, it had one member. The church grew steadily to around 30 members until loss of jobs forced some families to move away in 1988.

A relative newcomer, pastor Derf Bergman (who has a Presbyterian ministry in Philipsburg but oversees Methodist churches in nearby Hall and Drummond) has pushed attendance at services upward at St. Paul's United Presbyterian Church.

Phyllis Patten, the oldest member of the Presbyterian Church, notes that "The churches aren't as strong as they used to be."

Foust, the most veteran religious leader in Philipsburg, says the town is not overly religious, although he terms it a "good, decent community." He said most people in Philipsburg profess to a religious affiliation even if they don't attend church, and there are good people who are not religious.

He finds increased reliance on religion -- to a point -- during tough economic times. "I get called into situations where people want counsel, want to talk, but they're still not committed to going to church."
Foust notes one obstacle to attending his church could be its location. "This building was not built for church purposes," he says, relating that the 1876 building on the town's main street has served as an assay office, harness shop and newspaper office in the past.

The various churches tend to take separate paths and cooperation across religious boundaries is rare. Philipsburg is no stranger to church schisms, with the Presbyterian church twice having split up, with each separation spawning a separate church. Bergman notes that memories of the division are still strong 28 years later.

Parish Priest

Engaged in serious conversation on his wireless telephone, the Rev. Malachy Beatty doesn't give in when it's a matter of religion.

Beatty, pastor of St. Philip's Catholic Church, is resolute as he speaks to one of his parishioners who is leaving town for a few days. "Get to Mass down there. Don't come up with the idea you can't find it (church)," Beatty says. As he closes the conversation, the veteran priest notes, "Have fun and get to church."

That could well stand as a sort of slogan for the bald, bespectacled Beatty, whose sometimes stern facade when he's talking religion is likely to break into his wide grin during a lighter moment.

Beatty, 63, has led the faithful of Philipsburg's Catholic congregation for 10 years. An Irishman from Anaconda ("just over the hill"), Beatty has a quick, self-deprecating wit and a hearty laugh, and visitors are always
welcome at his rectory. But when it comes to the church and religion, Beatty brooks no nonsense.

Citing one of his church members who is pregnant, Beatty points out she hasn’t been coming to Mass. "I suppose she’ll be coming around for a Baptism soon. They’re liable to run me out of town when I won’t baptize their baby."

One of his parishioners, Ronnie Bolstad, sums up his directness: "He doesn’t pull any punches." The pastor, though, is well appreciated by his Philipsburg flock, and his absence was felt for several months in 1987 when he was gone with health problems. Beatty suffered five aneurysms and had one foot amputated, but recovered and returned to the Philipsburg pulpit in December 1987.

Now he maneuvers on an artificial foot, which has only slightly slowed him down on his rounds, which range from main street to the county nursing home. "I get around as much as before--maybe a little slower--but I get there," Beatty says."I think I could go anywhere, and I still do."

Beatty recounts that he sometimes has lay people deliver Communion to sick parishioners, "but some people don’t like that, especially the old died-in-the-woolers. So I get in my little, old, merry Oldsmobile, and take my crutches, and I head out. Every Friday I bring Communion around to the sick."

He also goes to the nursing home on Fridays, and has been working to get Mass scheduled there. He was facing some minor difficulties arranging that Mass. "Some people want it at four and some people want it at one, and some people say the patients are asleep," Beatty says, but adds, "I figure if I caught them in front of me, they wouldn’t go to sleep too fast."
He doesn’t worry much about somnolence during his sermons, in part because of the volume of his voice. He doesn’t use a microphone or sound system, except at outdoor summer services at nearby Georgetown Lake. Even when he says Mass in Anaconda, he pushes the microphone away. "I don’t need it. Thank you, Lord, I can up and down the volume myself," he says with a laugh.

He is quick to note, however, that his vocal skills don’t extend to singing. "Singing is not my cup of tea," he says. "At church here, I warned them right off the bat that I would intone the introduction to the 'Our Father,' and if one of them didn’t take off singing, then I would, and they sure did."

Beatty offers Mass every day of the week in Philipsburg—weekdays in his living room and Sunday services in the Philipsburg church proper as well as at Georgetown Lake.

The pastor has one regular patron at religious services and everywhere else he goes: his 12-year-old German shepherd, Nibby. "She goes to Mass in Philipsburg every day but Sunday," Beatty says, and notes that at summer services at the lake the dog attends Sunday Mass.

The pastor’s summer sojourns to Georgetown Lake, a popular vacation area 10 miles south of town, are among his favorite pastimes, although he deeply enjoys his work and the people in Philipsburg.

He takes in stride the economic changes that affect his parishioners, recalling that no sooner had he arrived in Philipsburg than the mill closed down. "Then since I’ve been here, this Black Pine mine is up and down, and everything else is up and down, so there are the usual small-town problems with people," Beatty says.
Tough times have been the norm for the town, Beatty says, so people have learned to take them for granted, and he, too, tries not to worry unnecessarily. He smiles broadly as he notes somewhat facetiously, "As far as jobs go, I can get a job anywhere in the country. No job, I mean no mine or anything, worries me."

He has noticed a more transient population in Philipsburg: "Every time I go downtown, I see about 40 new faces. I don't hit the joints, but if I did, I'd know everybody in town."

His congregation of about 80 families at St. Philip's remains fairly stable. "Very few Catholics bounce in and out of town," Beatty says.

Beatty points proudly to the increased cohesiveness of his congregation resulting from the new parish hall built at St. Philip's. "In a small town, you have these little groups who do things together and function together and get things going. Since we got our hall, there's more chance for activity than there was before."

The parish hall--two floors' worth--is the site for a wide range of activities, including youth religious-education classes, anniversary celebrations, funeral dinners and church bazaars.

Beatty would like to offer more activities for the youth in his parish, but school and related activities in a small town already occupy much of the children's and parents' time. With some resignation, Beatty says, "You can't work a horse to death."

He cites one conflict on a weekend when the state Catholic youth convention is being held in Helena but the state basketball tournament was in Billings, so none of Beatty's youths were going to the convention.
"I always laugh, because my God, as far as anything goes, comes in fifth, after four or five other things, and some people are trying to shove my God into sixth place, and I'm trying to hold him in fifth," Beatty says.

He is quite willing to keep up that fight, and plans to continue to do so in Philipsburg until he retires at age 70. Although he has opportunities to move on--one option is Columbia Falls, where he began his priesthood 35 years ago--Beatty plans to stay put.

"This is my territory now, I would never leave around here."
CHAPTER VI: MAKING A LIVING

In May 1987, spirits are high in Philipsburg as the Black Pine Mining Co. reopens its mine west of town. Some 80 jobs are involved, including those for miners at the site, truckers to haul the ore and workers at the processing mill.

For miners like Larry Bolstad, Black Pine’s rebirth—after an eight-month shutdown—means the chance to return to Philipsburg with his family. They had lived in Troy, where he’d gone to a mining job after Black Pine closed. Now the mine and the Bolstad family are back.

"I was raised mining and that’s all I’ve ever done," says Larry, who has been a miner for 20 years. "As soon as a mining company shuts down, I go right to another one."

That means a somewhat itinerant lifestyle, but the Bolstads—Larry, his wife, Ronnie, and now a 3-year-old son—settled down in Philipsburg in 1981 and left only for that stay in Troy.

Mel Wattula also heads back to work with Black Pine’s renaissance, taking a job as a surveyor and moving back to Philipsburg from Billings. His wife, Sandy, returns to a teaching job at the high school.

Prospects appear bright for Philipsburg. The price of silver is over $8 an ounce, the county’s largest employer is mining again, and optimism flourishes.

It doesn’t last long.

By late February 1988, the price of silver has dropped $2 and the doors of Black Pine swing shut again. The
announcement comes on a Wednesday, and the following Monday miners are out of work. 

The latest closure is greeted with an air of resignation. Most residents thought it was coming, and the town is used to the vagaries of the mining industry. After all, Philipsburg has been through 120 years of similar ups and downs.

It doesn’t take Bolstad long to find another job, although it’s in Lewistown, 280 miles away. He and another miner, Larry Baldwin, work in Lewistown during the week and return to their families in Philipsburg on weekends.

Mel Wattula begins searching for surveying jobs outside of Philipsburg. He and his wife plan to separate for about a year, and, if he finds a good permanent job, she’ll join him.

Not all those who lose their jobs will be move. Some will, in the words of one businessman, "hang around here and live on welfare and unemployment."

Such is the life of the Philipsburg miner in the 1980s. In truth, Philipsburg isn't really a mining town any more, even though the mystique and hard-rock history prevail and the town continues to think of itself as a mining community.

Black Pine isn’t all there is in mining around Philipsburg—several smaller operations are in business, with most drilling for gold, and the solo miner still has a place in the area.

"Gold is where it’s at now," says Bill Antonioli, manager of the mill which processes both silver and gold. But silver prices are down below the level where the resource is marketable.
Plenty of exploration for minerals goes on around Philipsburg, but actual extraction is minimal compared to the glory days of the past.

And mining is far from the only job opportunity in Philipsburg. Often overlooked, public services contribute a substantial and stable job base to the town. The school system, county and city government, the Forest Service district office, the hospital and rest home, and even the state highway maintenance crew provide steady employment that is rarely noticed in comparison with the appearance and disappearance of mining jobs.

Logging offers another job base, both with small local outfits and the large sawmill at Hall, north of Philipsburg. Ranching, while it doesn't produce bushels of jobs, is a contributor to the economic and employment situation.

Retail and service businesses are another corner of the town's economy, although they feel fairly direct effects of major layoffs.

Outdoor recreation also provides jobs for outfitters and guides for hunting and fishing or tourism-related jobs in the summer.

Longtime County Commissioner Frank Waldbillig says those who envision catastrophe when a mine closes fail to consider one important factor in Philipsburg. "Social Security and retirement checks that come into this county every month lend to a stability people don't realize."

Economic survival in Philipsburg does rely on a certain amount of versatility. The Gallery Cafe is also a floral shop and the town bus stop; the Philipsburg Mail office doubles as a travel agency; and hardware-store owner Rick Barkell does plumbing on the side.
Sandy Wattula says that versatility is the key to the survival of Philipsburg. "To stay here, in order to breathe this clean air and see the sights, people have had to trade generalization for specialization," she says. "They have to be jacks of all trades."

When a person in Philipsburg is asked what he or she does for a living, a common answer is, "Anything I can."

Jim Waldbillig, for instance, is working to build up his ranch stock, runs a small sawmill, and does construction work on the side.

Adele Knudsen's schedule tells a similar story. She works 40 hours a week as a dispatcher at the sheriff’s office, 25 hours at her gift shop, Grandma’s Parlour, and another 16 hours free-lancing commercial artwork and doing sign-painting jobs.

All that is undertaken in order to support her three children, but that hectic agenda doesn’t leave much time to spend with them. Since she can’t always go to her children, they come to her and are allowed to spend time at the sheriff’s office and watch television there.

"It’s hard to make it in a town like Philipsburg, but I feel fortunate that there are so many things I can do," she says.

Hard work has been a cornerstone in Philipsburg. As Dan Black, reporter for the Philipsburg Mail, puts it, "One thing that is really admired in this town is hard work."

The only qualifier to this admiration is there isn’t quite enough opportunity for everyone to be able to work hard.

Making a living in Philipsburg can mean doing business in a wide variety of fields, from cameras to computers and from haircuts to hardware.
In a cluttered storefront on Broadway, Steve Neal runs the camera shop he’s operated for seven years. His father was a chemist with an assay office in the same building, and during slow times was a photographer. Neal has lived in Philipsburg all his life and appreciates its outdoor amenities.

Across the street from the camera store is a somewhat atypical business for a small town. Automation Software Consultants Inc. is a computer business run by Gordon Shepherd.

His specialty is computer control hardware and software for pneumatic-tube systems for hospitals, so he doesn't have customers in Philipsburg (or Montana, for that matter). From his Philipsburg base, however, he travels across the country for clients such as the Mayo Clinic or Cedars-Sinai Hospital.

Shepherd, a Philipsburg native, returned to his home town after 25 years in California. "We just wanted to get to the outdoors. There’s more access here, my kid has a horse and I like to fish."

Another Philipsburg native who returned, although it was after only a four-year absence, is Doug Morrison. He and his wife run The Headquarters, the only hair-styling shop in town.

He likes Philipsburg as a place in which his children can grow up, and he scoffs at those who call teen drinking a problem. "Occasionally, kids will get into trouble drinking, but the thing is, they’re doing the same thing their parents did," Morrison says.

Nancy Owens, who was the first woman on the town council and now presides as mayor, finds employment as a
substitute schoolteacher and also works part time in a real-estate office.

She describes her husband LeRoy as a "jack of all trades," who is educated as a secondary schoolteacher and has been working as an electrician on a drilling project, but also has faced extended periods without work. "We just get by month to month, like a lot of people in this town," she says.

Owens had her own struggles in the political arena being accepted as a woman in leadership in a historically male-dominated town. She downplays the controversies now, but there were tense confrontations at previous meetings where, she notes, "I guess you'd say I had to prove myself." Speaking of the doubts of some people about women and politics, she says, "I don't think that will ever fade away."

She is more concerned currently with the town's water predicament: state tests revealed giardia in the Philipsburg water. Although no illnesses have been documented, the town has been ordered to treat its water, a mandate that could cost over a million dollars.

Mike and Susan McCann share duties in operating a day-care center in the basement of the hospital, but their business's days are numbered. After four years of running the day care, they're closing down in June, the victim, he says, of state regulations which would require that they hire additional help.

"You couldn't really support yourself with it anyway," McCann says of the business. "We don't make enough to hire people." McCann, who has an easy touch with children, can often be seen taking his young charges on walks through the town and to the parks.
It was a challenge starting the day-care program in Philipsburg, McCann says, because the center had to overcome the tradition in Philipsburg that children were taken to grandparents or friends for care.

He also coaches the growing AAU wrestling program for youths and is an avid skier who recently began downhill racing, undeterred by the use of only one leg after a war injury. McCann also is active in a variety of other endeavors, including school board, where in his first year he was an iconoclastic dissenter and in his second year became chairman.

One veteran of school board duty is Zane Murfitt, who spent 14 years on the board and was town mayor for over a decade. The president of Flint Creek Valley Bank, Murfitt is distinguished by his trademark cigars.

Behind the veil of cigar smoke lies an optimist who in his 27 years in Philipsburg has seen constant ups and downs. "When I first came here, there was a big sawmill being built, and the mines were going really good," Murfitt recalls. "Then the mine closed down, and the sawmill took up the slack. Then another sawmill opened up and the phosphate mine opened up and created jobs. The sawmill closed and the phosphate mine closed and made it tough for a few years."

From a banker's perspective, down times economically can be difficult, Murfitt says. "You try to work things out." He notes, however, that it's important to keep personal feelings aside as much as possible. "Just because they're your friends doesn't mean you make a bad business decision."

From a ranch outside of Philipsburg, Russell Smith Jr. operates Big M Outfitters, which guides 40-50 hunters a
year. Most of those hunters hail from the eastern United States, and a third of them bag a bull elk, Smith says.

Sheriff Morey A. Cragun, Knudsen's boss in the vintage jail (a refinished piece of history complete with a noose hanging in a tower window), works full 12-hour patrol shifts the same as his deputies.

Cragun, three full-time deputies and one part-time officer have the task of patrolling all of Granite County, including law enforcement for Philipsburg. The town used to have its own policeman but relinquished that job in favor of county protection.

The sheriff says Philipsburg has the same lawbreaking problems as metropolitan areas such as Tacoma, Wash., from which he moved. Drugs, alcohol abuse by youth, burglaries, car theft, even an occasional homicide are all found in Philipsburg, although on a scale comparable to population.

Cragun has made youth one of the primary emphases of his department, and his crackdowns on keggers have stirred controversy. The sheriff's office also helped start the teen center. One of the obstacles Cragun says he has encountered is a lack of adult cooperation, as in the shortage of chaperons. "For the most part, it's 'We like what you're doing, but don't bother us,'" Cragun says.

Mike Kahoe wields power from the top of both hills in Philipsburg. On the south side he wears his hospital administrator's hat; when he crosses to the other side and enters the courthouse he becomes the administrative assistant for Granite County.

A third-generation Philipsburger, Kahoe subscribes to what he calls the "Wizard of Oz theory"—if you can't find happiness in your own back yard, where will you find it?
The county and the hospital face a similar challenge: money. In a county with only 2,800 residents, revenue isn't overflowing, but Kahoe figures neither are controversies as intense in Granite as in larger counties.

Kahoe says people in Philipsburg don't necessarily live on hope as they did in the past, but instead are more practical. "They're sensible enough to know these are the good old days."

There is a common assessment of the town that Philipsburg has always been "going to boom," and that underlying assumption still prevails today. A more realistic interpretation is put forth by one resident: "It wouldn't be Philipsburg if it had a lot of jobs and growth."

A Century of Milling

Just as Philipsburg has survived since the 1800s, so has the mill south of town.

At its inception in 1889, it was known as the BiMetallic mill. Later it became Granite BiMetallic, then Philipsburg Mining Company, and today its latest revival is as the Contact Mill and Mining Co. In the early days, its stamps and presses processed tons of ore and the end product was millions of dollars in silver and manganese.

The site is still milling in the 1980s under the ownership of the Antonioli family of Butte. A new mill was built in 1981 on the historic site that contains many remnants of the past century of operation, including distinctive twin smokestacks visible from a distance.

The mill's biggest customer, Black Pine Mining Co., closed its doors in early 1988, but mill supervisor Bill Antonioli isn't overly concerned.
"We didn’t build it predicated on Black Pine," Antonioli says. "We’ll be here long after Black Pine is gone." He notes that the mill still has several smaller customers, notably gold mines in the area, and Black Pine’s output was an on-again, off-again phenomenon. The mill itself has been shut down periodically since it was built, a trait Antonioli ties to the nature of the business.

Mining and milling are boom and bust operations, he says. "It’s like the oil business, only it doesn’t boom quite as good and maybe it doesn’t bust quite as hard, either."

The job loss from Black Pine’s shutdown, including around 10 workers at the mill, is significant, Antonioli says. "Those aren’t BS jobs. They don’t pay a fortune, but $11 an hour or so is still important."

At full bore, the Contact mill employs 17. Without Black Pine’s contribution, that drops to five workers. The mill is idle this week, Antonioli says, but another shipment of ore is due next week and the mill will run.

The mill is mainly a concentrator, using a flotation process and a gravity circuit, that produces a concentrate usually sent to a smelter for further refining.

On occasion the incoming ore yields more complete results, Antonioli recalls. "We ran ore for the Gold Coin Mine and extracted actual gold nuggets."

A customer needs to have at least a thousand tons of ore for a mill run. With the silver ore from Black Pine, Contact was averaging 1,000 tons a day, running 24 hours a day seven days a week. The mill can normally handle about 300 tons in an eight-hour shift.

While he’s talking about the mill at an interview in a Philipsburg cafe, Antonioli is interrupted by a man who
says he knows a prospective mill customer. "How about a big tonnage for a big price?" Antonioli asks with a laugh.

The Antonioli family not only acquired the mill but also extensive mining claims, although it's doing no mining now.

The family business is planning a new venture along with Granite County. The county is negotiating with Montana Power Co. to acquire the hydroelectric dam at Georgetown Lake, with an agreement that the Antoniolis would operate the dam. Antonioli says a million-dollar reconstruction of the dam is planned if the deal goes through. The dam was built in the early 1900s primarily to provide power for the mill.

Antonioli foresees a steady future for the mill as well as for Philipsburg. "There's a lot of inertia here," he says of the town. "I'd expect it would continue."

"I like it around here and I'm going to stick around as long as I can provide for my family."
CHAPTER VII: LIVING HISTORY

Heinie Winninghoff

A swift spring snowstorm has dumped a wet blanket of snow on Philipsburg, so E.R. "Heinie" Winninghoff fires up his tractor and sets to work plowing snow.

He clears first the driveway and walk at his Ford dealership and service station, Winninghoff Motors, and then proceeds down the street, scraping the sidewalk for a block in either direction of his business, crossing the street and performing the same service on the other side of Philipsburg's main street.

"It's the neighborly thing to do," Winninghoff says of his tractor toil, explaining that among the beneficiaries of his efforts are one man who is crippled and another in a wheelchair.

After he clambers off the tractor, Winninghoff, dressed in blue coveralls with "Heinie" stitched in script across the chest, heads into Winninghoff Motors, a business he's run since 1928. At any given time, he might be found there pumping gas, helping customers at the parts counter, or just engaged in neighborly conversation.

Most of the time, too, he does this with a wide grin on his face. "Have you ever seen anybody who smiles as much as Heinie does?" one Philipsburg resident wonders with admiration.

Winninghoff turned 81 years old in 1988, and although
his sons Bob and Mike now run the business, Heinie is still very active.

"When I'm not doing anything else, I help out," Winninghoff says. "My wife's dead and I'm not going to stay home and twiddle my thumbs."

Winninghoff laughs as he gives a brief summary of his life. "I was born and raised in Philipsburg and got in the automotive business and don't know enough to get out."

But Winninghoff never really wanted out. Philipsburg has always been home and will stay that way. As an indication of how deeply planted his roots are, Winninghoff has lived in Philipsburg all but four years of his life. "I've lived all my life in two houses, and one's across the street from the other. I was born and raised in one house, and when I got married in 1931, I bought the house across the street."

He points out he's not alone among his contemporaries in lifelong devotion to the town. "Quite a few lived their whole lives here," he says, citing Jim Patten, the Huffmans, the Gillises, Charlie Carp and Tex Crowley.

Winninghoff says Philipsburg has been a comfortable town in which to live, and he's happy he stayed.

Winninghoff's family has been part of Philipsburg since 1883, when his father arrived during mining boom times, liked what he saw in Philipsburg, and never left.

In those days, ore was hauled in horses and wagons (and via sleds in the winter), so his father set up a blacksmith shop until the World War I era. Trucks and automobiles came on the scene then, Winninghoff recalls, "and that put an end to the horse-and-buggy days, and put an end to the blacksmith business."
The blacksmith shop was converted to a service station in 1927 by Winninghoff's brothers, and the next year he joined them in establishing a Ford dealership. Winninghoff, who eventually took over sole ownership, says business has been up and down over the intervening 60 years.

"In 1929 we sold 99 cars," Winninghoff says of the early Model A days, "then it was down to two in 1932. Now we sell about 50 to 75 units a year."

When Winninghoff was growing up, vestiges of the silver glory days in Philipsburg and Granite still abounded. Winninghoff notes that when silver was demonetarized in the 1890s, "everybody walked out of Philipsburg and Granite. In that day and age, when the mines closed down, there was nothing for them to do. They just walked off and left everything up there."

Somewhat ruefully, Winninghoff recalls of his youth, "There were all kinds of houses left intact in Granite. We broke more windows and dishes than I could remember."

As he gazes out the window of Winninghoff Motors, he is touched by other memories, as he watches children sliding down the hill below the school. "When I was a kid, we slid down that same hill, the same old hill for 75 years now."

Winninghoff remembers the big manganese mining surge in World War I in Philipsburg. "Single miners coming in here had a hell of a time finding a place to stay," Winninghoff says, noting that the town swelled to 1,500-2,000 people. "One boarding house had to run shifts. One shift would get up and go to work and the other would come in and go to bed."

A similar boom boosted by manganese enveloped the town in World War II. "Outside of them two times, the town
remained about 1,100 people—pretty stable," Winninghoff says. "I think the overall picture of Philipsburg has been a little bit more stable than most."

He’s not sure exactly where that stability comes from, nor is he certain why Winninghoff Motors has survived so long. The dealership is the second oldest in Montana.

Some of the business’s success may derive from Winninghoff’s ever-smiling optimism and his satisfaction in making Philipsburg his home.

That optimism can be contagious. As high school teacher Sandy Wattula puts it, "Heinie Winninghoff epitomizes everything good about this town." She says Philipsburg’s oldtimers, particularly Heinie, "have enriched my life beyond belief. They’ve given me insight that Philipsburg will be here forever."

Winninghoff’s legacy may be, too. His sons are following him not only in business, but also in Philipsburg residence: both Mike and Bob have been lifetime Philipsburgers except for years spent in the service or at college.

What Heinie Winninghoff has built, both on business and family levels, could well continue as an integral part of Philipsburg’s future.

Dolly Page

One acquaintance of Dolly Page, upon hearing that a visitor had been talking to her, says, "You don’t really talk to Dolly—you listen."

That’s at least partially correct, particularly when Dolly is discussing her favorite subject, Philipsburg. It’s not that she is overbearing in conversation, but rather
that her enthusiasm and knowledge of the town give her plenty to say.

Whether it's Philipsburg's history, social life, personalities or simply community characteristics, Dolly will regale the listener with stories, reflections and anecdotes for hours.

Dolly has been a state legislator, teacher, bookkeeper, author, historian and civic volunteer among other activities in her busy life. She also raised a family and battled multiple sclerosis.

At 73, she is far from sedentary. In her house on a hill just east of Philipsburg (close by the site where Hector Horton first found silver), she has tall stacks of volumes of the Philipsburg Mail and crowded files of stories and notes from which she is compiling a history of Philipsburg.

Dolly also is a leader of a yearly Christmas program to provide toys for needy children, is involved in the nursing home auxiliary, and attacks a variety of other endeavors. "I'm never bored," she says. "I've always got a project going on. "I'm working on a 48-hour day. There's just not enough time to get everything done."

She's rarely too busy, however, to talk about one of her biggest loves, the town of Philipsburg. She compares her relationship with the town to a marriage. "If you don't like the person you're married to, you sure as hell can't love them very long," she says. "I get irritated with the town, just like in a marriage, but I love it and respect it."

Dolly loves the relaxed pace of life in Philipsburg, the cohesiveness of the community when someone needs help,
the pride and tradition of older families, and the "magic" she perceives that makes the town special.

"Caring is what cements the community," she says, and although she admits townspeople don’t get along all the time, "If anybody has a problem, everybody in town will rally around them."

She finds Philipsburgers to be forgiving as well. "They're like elephants. A lot of them never forget, but they are forgiving."

They are also survivors, Dolly says. "We're just tough," she explains about why the town has endured through periodic difficult times. "They called it the Hope Mill and I know the hope is what kept everybody going and still is."

"The years I've been here the town has been up and down, so it's just like a yo-yo," she says. She adds that something always seems to save the town, pointing to upswings in ranching or logging that supplanted mining when that mainstay faltered.

Booming one day and flat the next is simply the nature of a mining community, she says. She describes mining as "a disease, not a job. You get into it and make a ton of money and the next thing you do is put it into another hole."

Reflecting on another aspect of mining history, Dolly says of Philipsburg, "It's always been a drinking community, but most mining towns are. The whole temper of this town was different than a lot of mining communities. We had a lot of ladies of the evening here, but they were not allowed in the bars, they were not allowed on the streets. They stayed in their little alley. In other places, the women were part of the bars and everything else."
She ascribes this difference to the town having "a little bit of dignity that you didn't have in other places."

Dolly admits there are drawbacks to Philipsburg's small-town existence, primarily the inability of the community to keep its young people. She is buoyed, however, by residents who left town to seek careers elsewhere who are now returning to retire in Philipsburg. "They may have left home, but they took it right with them and they always come back."

A trend toward a retirement community is something Dolly sees as a future option for Philipsburg. Of those who retire there, she says, "They like the fishing, they like the hunting, they like the freedom, and they know they don't have to keep up with the Joneses. Nobody cares—we have very few Joneses."

Dolly is characteristically upbeat about the future for the town, regardless of the vagaries of mining or other industries.

"I think Philipsburg will be here for a long, long time, because there's always going to be someone who loves this place."

Henry Hull: Still Hoping

When he was only 12 years old, Henry Hull was playing music for dances in the Philipsburg Band. Not long after that, he got his first taste of mining work alongside his father.

Both those beginnings were a long time ago, but today Hull, age 90, still keeps in musical tune and still pursues a miner's dreams.
In the old wooden house on Sutter Street that’s been his home for almost 30 years, Hull is quick to entertain guests with music or invite them to go into a mining venture with him.

The wall of his music room is adorned with a Bavarian guitar, balalaika and four-string guitar, each of which he can play. Stacked unassumingly in one corner are boxes containing violins. One is an Amati from the 1800s; another bears the inscription, "Stradivarius 1762."

These "fiddles" are his favorites. Cradling the Amati comfortably under his chin, he sits at the center of the room and performs pieces ranging from polkas to country-western. Deftly maneuvering the bow and working the fingerboard, his strong, sure fingers look out of place at the end of his thin, bony arms. Hull is frail and bowed, with a white T-shirt hanging limply on his frame, but his hands move steadily on the violin, and all the while his brightly shining eyes give testament to his love of song.

Hull says music always came naturally to him, which led to proficiency on a variety of instruments—all of which he plays by ear. "I don’t know one note from another. I know chords and a few things, but those things they put on paper don’t mean nothing." He says he just listens to a song and figures it out from there. "If I take a liking to a tune, I can play it inside a few minutes."

Just as music was a natural talent for Hull, so was mining. His father was one of the first white men to live on Rock Creek west of Philipsburg. Hull was born there in 1898 and "from the time I was a little kid I was raised up in mining," with his first jobs helping his father.

They were far from his last, and Hull proudly points to the 70 years he spent in mines all over the world. He
pursued silver, gold and sapphires in Montana, copper in South America and Butte, opals in Australia. "I mined all over the world, every place but Africa, and I don't want to go there because of those damned cannibals," Hull says.

"I've mined for everything imaginable," he says. "You name it and I mined for it."

Mining in Butte gave him silicosis, a chronic lung disease, from which he has suffered since 1957. "They sent me down from Butte to die with silicosis, and I almost did," he says. "Now I suffer all the time. You get tired of suffering." In every room of his house, Hull has milk cartons which he uses for spittoons when he draws up mucus from his lungs.

He holds no grudges against mining or the Anaconda company, for which he was working when he contracted the disease. He is, instead, proud to have worked for the company for 22 years and proud to have been able to mine. He even worked for the company in South America during World War II "teaching those Indians down there how to mine copper."

Hull, who says he was always interested in rocks, was trained in mineralogy and geology by Joe Pardee, who took him all through the mines around Philipsburg. Later he went to the school of mines in Golden, Colo., "for about three months. I passed everything they had and even had to tell them some things they didn't know."

During his long mining career, Hull claims, "I owned lots of mines of my own and opened up lots of mines for other miners." He still professes to have mineral holdings in several places in the United States.

Along his travels, Hull says he married five times and
had several other female "partners." He also fondly recalls the days of the red-light district in Philipsburg.

"It run down here where the White Front Bar is today, back of the Opera House—all red lights clean over this way about two blocks," Hull remembers. The brothels, he notes, were "a necessary evil. Them girls that worked in those days were honest girls, not crooks like these girls today.

"In them days it was legal and they had to be examined, not like today with those girls on the streets and that goddamned AIDS going around."

Hull says he was quite a connoisseur of brothel services. "I chased around whorehouses all the time in my life. When I didn’t have a woman, I went to a whorehouse." Although he now lives alone, Hull says he’s still looking for another female partner.

The longtime miner curtailed some of his travels and moved back to Philipsburg in 1960. "This was my home town and I knew there was mines here," he says. "Something drawed me back here, I don’t know what."

At his house, he has all his "gatherings" of musical instruments, mining inventions, and, to a certain degree, hopes.

He’s never stopped prospecting, and says his most recent mining activity was six months earlier, but he’s still working at it. "All these bars are my offices. That’s where you find the mining men and the miners. I do lots of mining business in the bars."

Hull adds, "Right now I’m going to try to start two more gold mines if I can make it that long." He says he’s trying to enlist help but can’t find anybody. He’s asking his nephew to get involved, and even asks one visitor, "Would you like to get out and make $50 a day mining?"
Hull is always hoping and trying to find one more strike and one more chance to mine.

"I'm never happier than when I'm out someplace digging up gold or something."
APPENDIX

PHOTO CUTLINES

Coach
AAU wrestling coach Mike McCann intently observes one of his young wrestlers competing in a tournament in Philipsburg.

Fan
Watching her son Adam struggle through a wrestling match is a tense time for Robbie House. The youth lost this match but went on to place in the Philipsburg AAU tournament.

Night lights
Philipsburg's main street, Broadway, brightly bisects the town in this December view from a lofty vantage point on the road to Granite.

Long haul
Bringing in another load, a trucker hauls ore to be processed at the Contact Mill and Mining Co. This roadway borders the southern edge of Philipsburg. Highway 10A is at the top of the picture.

Room to move
This young couple enjoys a peaceful spot in the bleachers while watching a boys' basketball game in the Philipsburg gym.
Snow job
Heinie Winninghoff wheels his tractor along downtown sidewalks to clear the morning’s snow accumulation in Philipsburg. "It’s the neighborly thing to do," Winninghoff says of the snow job.

House and steeple
Pieces of architectural history stairstep up the hills on which Philipsburg is built. The house in the foreground, built in 1917, is owned by attorney Allen Bradshaw. The steeple on top of the hill belongs to St. Philip’s Catholic Church, which dates back to 1894.

Hillside houses
The rooftop pitches and gables of a multitude of houses angle upward on the north side of Philipsburg in this telephoto view from the south hill.

Pedestrian
Sansome Street heading south takes a steep route upward from Broadway.

Winter walk
Light snow cover paints a bright background for a couple taking an afternoon stroll through the park on the south side of Philipsburg.
Grade school
Among the unusual architectural structures in Philipsburg are the vintage fire-escape tubes which protrude from the upper floors of the grade school, an edifice built in 1896. The tubes have been criticized by insurance officials, but remain viable escape devices for the school, which is the oldest school building still in use in Montana.
SOURCES CONSULTED

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Carter, Harvey, counselor, athletic director, vice principal of Granite County High School, at Philipsburg, Mont., March 1, March 25, 1988.


Foust, Rev. Roger, pastor of Flint Creek Baptist Church, telephone interview, May 13, 1988.

Hayes, Mike, bank officer, at Philipsburg, Mont., Dec. 11, 1987.


Winninghoff, Mike and Bob, managers of Winninghoff Motors, at Philipsburg, Mont., Dec. 11, 1987.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS


UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Hendrickson, Claire. Photo caption notes; interview information, Philipsburg, Mont., May 1987.


Smith, Jeff. Photo caption notes; interview information, Philipsburg, Mont., May 1987.