



During the winter of 1894-1895, a bill was introduced in the Montana Legislature recommending a new county by the name of Carbon, since at the time, the Red Lodge Coalfield was one of the largest producers of coal in the state.

A 1907 history stated "The county of Carbon has a brilliant future assured. No county in the state has so many and varied resources. It has the best defined and the best developed beds of high grade semi-bituminous coal west of the Missouri River, many fertile valleys where crop failures are unknown and the yield is always surprising large, a good home market for all produce, and, above all, a good healthful and invigorating climate and industrious and law abiding citizens."

Enjoy this driving tour; while a great deal has changed, much of Historic Carbon County is waiting to be discovered by you.

THE BEARTOOTH HIGHWAY

The highway was constructed for about \$1.1 million in 1931-36 (over \$15 million in 2005) as part of a nationwide series of National Park approach roads. The route, first surveyed in 1927, was chosen for maximum scenery in terms of both panorama and variety. Red Lodge leaders, including Dr. J.C.F. Siegfried and newspaper publisher O.H.P. Shelley, had been promoting its construction for nearly a decade, but others called the road "Red Lodge's pipe dream." When the federal bill providing funding passed in January, 1931, "The announcement touched off the greatest celebration this mining town has ever known," said the Billings Gazette.

SMITH COAL MINE

When mining first began in the Bearcreek and Washoe valleys in 1888 (tapping the eastern edge of the Red Lodge Coalfield), coal had to be hauled to Red Lodge by horse and put on railcar. In 1906 the Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad added a Bearcreek line, opening those valleys to greater

production and population. In the early 1900s approximately 3,000 people lived in the area, nearly triple Red Lodge at the time. But in February of 1943, Vein Number 3 of the Smith Mine exploded, killing 74 of the 77 miners on duty that day. It remains the worst coal mining disaster in Montana's history, and signaled the end of the mining heyday in the Bearcreek valley.

MONTANA, WYOMING & SOUTHERN RR DEPOT

The MW&S Railroad was one of many short lines that operated in Montana during the early 1900s. The depot was finished in 1907 at the insistence of railroad speculator F.A. Hall and as a result of his efforts, the town of Belfry sprang up. The MW&S route ran from Bridger to Bearcreek, carrying the valley's high-grade coal to the Northern Pacific Depot in Bridger. Originally, a route to Yellowstone Park was planned, but it never materialized. The rail line closed in the 1950s.

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DRIVING TOUR OF HISTORIC CARBON COUNTY

OLD HILLSBORO/CEDARVALE POST OFFICE AND TOWN SITE

In the early 1900s Dr. Grosvener Barry and his family homesteaded east of the Pryor Mountains, where he planned to run a gold dredging operation. When gold didn't pan out, Barry turned to dude ranching, calling his establishment Cedarvale and having dudes arrive by floating the Bighorn River from a railroad station near Lovell, Wyoming. The Hillsboro post office opened in 1915 and operated until 1945, serving such notable characters as silversmith Eddie Hulbert and bestselling novelist Caroline Lockhart. Today, despite being part of the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Hillsboro is a ghost town, as remote and unpopulated as when Dr. Barry arrived.

GLIDDEN MERCANTILE

The Glidden Mercantile Company was founded in 1903. Just six months after opening his new store, Sam Glidden realized his space was too crowded and started work on this building. 500,000 pressed yellow bricks from Bridger brickmaker William Lavelle were used in the construction, and a Billings stonemason was in charge of cutting the red sandstone from quarries in Bridger Canyon. Completed in 1905, the store carried dry goods, hardware, and agricultural implements at both wholesale and retail prices. In 1915 it was renamed Bridger Mercantile Company reflecting Glidden's absence from the firm. It operated under that name until 1957.

GEBO CEMETERY

In 1895 Samuel Gebo found coal deposits in this area. Over the next two years he secured investors, initiated some minor improvements in his mine and helped lay out the Gebo townsite. He and his investors created the Clarks Fork Coal Company in 1897, persuading the Northern Pacific Railroad to extend a branch line into the Clarks Fork Valley and a spur directly to Gebo in 1899. The mine never lived up to its potential due to a string of legal disputes, and in 1907 it was sold and renamed Coalville. The mine produced from seams deeper than those at Bearcreek until it was closed abruptly in 1912.

MONTAQUA HOT SPRINGS

South of the town of Rockvale in 1904, a local prospector named Major Keown was drilling for oil when he struck 111° F water instead. He quickly built a spa, naming it after a combination of the Latin words for mountain and water. The spa's success and expansion, which included a popular restaurant and cabins, were doomed, however. In 1959, a 7.5 magnitude earthquake hit the Hebgen Lake area north of Yellowstone National Park, shifting the earth at far-away Montaquá. Not only did the earthquake eliminate Montaquá's hot water source, it also released a fissure of natural gas. When the gas was accidentally ignited, it caused an explosion and fire, destroying the spa. The remnants of the restaurant and hotel still stand.

JOLIET BANK

Organized in 1904 by Joliet's Barclay brothers, the Joliet Bank first opened in the Whitney Building on Main Street. Construction for a new building began in December of 1906, but before it could open in April of 1907, the Barclay brothers had sold out to Pagel Simonsen and Company. The Joliet Bank then became Rock Creek State Bank and served the community until December 15, 1923 when it closed its doors. The I.O.O.F then owned the building until it was purchased by the La Cuesta Rebekkah Lodge #56 in 1979.

CARBONADO • CARBONADO & SLACK PILE RD

In 1896, Copper King Marcus Daly purchased this land to construct a vertical shaft coal mine, as well as the associated townsite to be named after the newly formed Carbon County. For three years, up to 700 tons of coal was produced daily from the 980-foot-deep-shaft. But because of water seepage, production was expensive and the coal quality was poor. The mine temporarily closed from August 1899 to February 1900. It closed permanently a year later following the death of Marcus Daly. All that remains of the boomtown is a slackpile and cemetery.

ST. OLAF CHURCH

In 1904, a group of Norwegian immigrants in the Red Lodge Creek and Volney Creek valleys, tired of the long trek by horse and buggy into Absarokee, founded the St. Olaf Lutheran Church. For the next 20 years, services were held in area homes until this building was built, primarily with volunteer labor. The original heating system was a simple cast-iron stove, so it was often said that it wasn't until everyone was leaving that the building finally warmed up. The building is still maintained by the community for weddings, funerals and a few services each year. The church stands as a memorial to the Norwegian settlers whose dedication created this elegant, simple structure.

RED LODGE BREWERY

In 1910, the Red Lodge *Republican Picket* announced, "Red Lodge is going to have a big, modern, thoroughly-equipped brewery." German brewer Fred Lehrkind's family breweries had proved successful in Bozeman as well as just up the road in Silesia, Montana. The Lehrkinds were confident that the growing population of thirsty miners in Red Lodge and the excellent quality of their beer assured its acceptance and promised a boon to the economy of the town. The building was constructed from Fromberg brick at a cost of \$75,000 (\$1.5 million in 2005). The brewery produced 35,000 barrels of beer per year, all of which was aged five months to make a proper German lager. Prohibition closed the brewery down in 1919, and the building was converted to a pea cannery in the 1920s. The cannery operated until the mid-1970s, employing thousands of local farmers and cannery workers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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