



Garnet, Montana (est. 1895)

Garnet is Montana's best preserved ghost town. The Garnet district is managed by The Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This once booming mining town remains a treasure-trove for historical and educational opportunities.

- **1865 - Montana Gold.** The 1865 gold strike on Bear Creek in the Garnet Range spawned Beartown, a rowdy, lawless camp that drew prospectors from far and wide. With choice sites quickly claimed, fortune seekers searched for the “mother lode,” the source of Beartown’s placer gold. The character of the gold washed down from First Chance Gulch indicated the promise of rich quartz veins.

Without a road and dependent on snow melt for placer mining, prospectors eked out a living for the next three decades. Finally, with road construction allowing access to heavy equipment, the transition from placer to hard rock mining took place.

- **1895 – Garnet established.** In 1895 Dr. Armistead Mitchell and Dr. Charles Mussigbrod developed a stamp mill and the camp of Mitchell at First Chance Gulch. When Samuel Ritchey struck a rich vein of gold at his Nancy Hanks mine, just west of the mill in 1896, a new camp called Garnet sprang to life. While men dominated Montana’s earlier mining camps, Garnet miners brought their families. A school served forty-one students. Dances, hay rides, quilting bees, sewing circles, and picnics provided family oriented social activities. Garnet supported numerous saloons, but its family emphasis tempered usual mining camp vices. Cordial relations between independent mine owners and the miners union contrasted with single company towns such as Butte and Philipsburg, prompting the *Garnet Mining News* to proclaim the town a “poor Man’s paradise.”
- Through boom and bust, Frank A. Davey’s steadfast belief in the future of Garnet while owning a general store, the hotel and the stage line, gained him the status of Garnet’s most prominent resident. His death in 1947 and the sale of his holdings in 1948 marked the beginning of Garnet as a ghost town.
- Today, the remaining commercial false-front and log dwellings reflect Garnet’s life span from 1895 to 1948.
- **1972 – BLM.** Since 1972, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has stabilized many of the town’s buildings and vigilantly oversees its historic resources.
- **Garnet Preservation Association.** The Garnet Preservation Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to protect and preserve Garnet Ghost Town. They work in partnership with BLM to enhance the education of Garnet and assist with the stabilization of the town and its remaining buildings.
- **2010 - Garnet Ghost Town** was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Garnet Residents documented as buried in Missoula City Cemetery:



- **Frank Davey.** Frank owned and operated Davey’s General Store and the Garnet Stage line, owned a hotel, a mining claim, and a blacksmith shop. Frank always wore a buffalo robe when he drove the stage and was known to have an ample supply of buffalo robes available to keep the women passengers warm on their ascent into the Garnet range. At the time of Frank’s death in 1947, Frank Davey owned the entire town. By 1948 the majority of his leftover store merchandise, personal belongings, and mining claims were auctioned. His Garnet Lode claim, which consisted of most of the land where the town had been built, was donated to the United States Government by Davey’s heirs.

- **James & Lillian Boles.** James was a miner. He and his wife Lillian lived in Garnet.





- **Gus & Anna Dalberg.** Gus and Anna were both Swedish immigrants. Gus came to Garnet to work the mines for other mine owners. Anna rode the train as far as Minneapolis where she worked in a bakery and learned English. She eventually saved the train money needed to reach Bearmouth only to find the stage had left and she had to walk the twelve steep miles to reach Garnet. She worked in the Wells Hotel serving breakfast to the miners who boarded there until she married Gus. In 1905 Gus partnered with Sam Ritchey and purchased the Garnet Water System. They pumped water from a reservoir to many homes. In 1907 the Dalbergs purchased a large parcel of land and built a four room house with a covered passageway to outdoor buildings. In 1907 the Dalbergs purchased a large ranch in the lower Bear Gulch.

- **Myrtle Dalberg Hamilton.** Myrtle was the daughter of Gus & Anna Dalberg. She was born in Garnet with Mrs. Murphy serving as midwife.

- **Henry & Maude Lehsou.** Henry was the oldest son of John Lehsou. He was born in Beartown, Montana. He grew up in Garnet and graduated from The College of Montana at Deer Lodge, Montana where he won state honors as a tennis champion. Henry served as the Assayer for Garnet and in 1898 he also served in the Legislature as the representative for Granite County. In 1902 he became the “long-time director” of the Western National Bank in Missoula, Montana.

- **John & Dora Lehsou.** John was a German immigrant. He first arrived in the Bitterroot valley when he brought a load of freight from Nebraska. He settled on land near today’s Bearmouth, Montana. John opened a stage line “up the mouth of the Bear.” In 1879 John partnered with Charles Kroger to file the first placer mining claim in the heart of what would later become Garnet. John owned a cabin at the mining site but his main residence was at Beartown, where he was appointed postmaster in 1888. He served in that position for four years. Dora and her sister were on vacation in Montana visiting their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Bein, who ran a store in Deer Lodge where miners bought supplies. John Lehsou and Charles Kroger were invited for dinner to meet two young girls from their hometown. John married Dora and Charles married her sister, Anna. In 1897 he filed the first of many mining claims. In 1892 John and Dora bought a large ranch outside of Missoula, Montana where he established a fruit orchard. John became a principal stockholder in the Western National Bank. Part of John’s land was transferred to Missoula City Cemetery where his family and mining friends were buried. In 1990 the Montana Revenue Department’s Abandoned Property Bureau discovered a small cardboard box in the bank vault. When the Lehsou heirs opened the box they found a cache of 77 gold nuggets and a vial of gold dust along with a note directing them to keep the gold in the family.

- **John Elfers.** John was a miner on Top O’Deep.

- **Donald Angus MacDonald.** Donald owned the Garnet Hotel.

- **Philip Newman.** Philip owned a large steam engine powered sawmill located on Anderson Hill near Garnet. Lumber for Garnet’s buildings, mines, and mills was processed at his sawmill. Philip fell in love with a woman from a red light district. He built a house dubbed by townsfolk as “Gingerbread House.” There was no detail too trivial in design and construction of this labor of love. He even hauled a piano up the extremely sharp grade and purchased a new Majestic range from the Missoula Mercantile so his bride would have every luxury. Unfortunately, prior to the completion of the house, the woman hopped the stage for Helena, Montana never to return to Garnet. Philip stopped construction and lived in the unfinished home by himself. In 1971 arsonists destroyed the building. Philip also had built the Joseph Fitzgerald house up Dublin Gulch. That house was the only one in Garnet with a concrete foundation. The architectural designs and outstanding craftsmanship were a masterpiece.

- **Tom Tonkin.** In 1912 a massive fire broke out in Garnet that almost wiped out the town. The fire started in the Joe F. Fitzgerald’s saloon around 4:00 a.m. and spread rapidly. The business section of town was destroyed except for the Davey Store, the hotel, and Kelly’s saloon. All buildings on both sides of the street below these buildings were destroyed including residential buildings. Tom Tonkin was the only person injured. He suffered severe burns and was brought to Beartown on the stage. Tom died four years later from internal infection from the burns and the antiseptics used to coat them.

- **William Heard.** William was a miner. He, his wife, and their children lived in a cabin near the school.

- **Nels & Lena Seadin.** Nels and Lena Seadin were Swedish immigrants who came to Garnet in 1905. Nels was a miner. The Seadin family would move from Garnet many times throughout the years following work opportunities. In 1930 they returned to Garnet for the last time. Nels was hired as the postmaster until his death in 1939.



- **Tor Seadin.** Tor was the son of Nels and Lena Seadin. He was born in Garnet. Tor graduated from high school in Missoula, Montana. In 1923 he enrolled in the Butte School of Mines which specialized in science and engineering. Tor spent the summer before college at the Elm Orlu mine in Butte where he was killed in a mine explosion.

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- **Margaret Seadin.** was the daughter of Nels and Seadin. She was born in was born with Spina Bifida her entire life in a She was a beautiful girl with blonde curls. The entire died from her disease when

- **Leslie & Jessie Lewis.** Leslie was a miner at Garnet.
- **Robert & Elizabeth Hart.** Robert was a placer miner on Elk Creek, near Garnet.
- **John & Christine Kohr.** John Kohr was a miner who originally settled in the small town of Coloma, adjacent to Garnet. In 1945 he worked as a miner in Garnet. It was during this time that he met Christine. Christine was born and raised just over the hill from Garnet in the farm lands of Potomac, Montana. The Kohr family lived in Garnet until the 1950s. They would return to Garnet to oversee John's mining claims. John and Christine purchased a summer cabin in Garnet, located next to the Dahl house, which their children still visit. The Kohr family is also related to the McDonald family, also Garnet residents.
- **Glen Kohr.** Glen was the son of John & Christine Kohr. He was born in Missoula, Montana. He traveled across the nation but always considered the Garnet cabin home. He died unexpectedly in 2010 and is buried with his mother, Christine Kohr.
- **Margaret Olson Cummings.** When Margaret was widowed, she became a cook at a boarding house in Garnet.
- **George & Murrel McDonald.** George was the son of Margaret Cummings. He and his wife lived in Garnet.
- **Clarence McDonald.** Clarence was the brother-in-law of Margaret Olson Cummings.
- **Robert & Agnes McMahan.** Robert was a miner. He and his wife, Agnes, came to Garnet during the mid 1930 gold rush. Agnes was picked up the town's mail in Drummond, Montana and used a section of Davey's General Store to distribute the mail to Garnet residents. It was on one of her mail runs that she found Frank Davey unconscious alongside one of his claims. She went for help but Frank had lain there unassisted for an unknown number of days. He did not survive.
- **Henry Eppel.** Henry was a miner. He never married.
- **John Donlon.** John was a miner. He never married.
- **John H. Toole.** "Johnny," as he was called, spent his teenage years working his family's mines in the Top O' Deep district and Garnet. His experiences are recorded in his book *The Baron, the Logger, the Miner, and Me*. John graduated from The University of Montana, fought with the army in WW II, opened an insurance company in Missoula, and was Missoula's 47th mayor. He wrote many books about his family and the Missoula area.

Information was provided by the Bureau of Land Management archives, Garnet Preservation documents, and Missoula City Cemetery records. The Seadin family information and photos were provided by Sharon Seadin Baldwin, the granddaughter of Nels & Lena Seadin.