Thomas Cover

Gallatin History Museum
Cover, Thomas Wells, prospector, FRONTIERSMAN (Mar. 31, 1831 Sept. 22, 1884). B. at Westminster, Maryland, his last name is often mistakenly spelled Cover. At the age of 4 his parents took him to Richmond County, Ohio, and later he attended a business academy at Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Around 1850 he went west, reporting he had spent two years in Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas, then frontier areas before returning to Ohio where he remained briefly. About 1854 he set out again, engaged in the lumbering business in Minnesota, arrived in Colorado during the gold rush there, visited Pinos Altos, New Mexico, and by one report went to Chihuahua City, Mexico, before returning to Colorado. In early 1862 he led a party of 25 hopefuls to eastern Idaho; finding they could not take wagons overland to the Idaho gold camps from where they were, the party, or some of it entered southwestern Montana by Lemhi Pass, Cover visiting Gold Creek, Deer Lodge and in the summer of 1862 arrived at the new gold camp of Bannack, a community he helped to lay out. In the spring of 1863 he was one of a party of six others which included Lou Simmons, Bill Fairweather, Henry Edgar and Barney Higgins intending to join the James Stuart exploration group visiting the Yellowstone and tributary streams. The party never quite caught up with the larger, but was captured by Crow Indians and the group was forced to take the back trail back to Indiana country. On the way back on May 26 they struck gold at Alder Gulch; the richest placer ever discovered in the history of the world, although the six did not profit spectacularly from it. Cover reported that he was prominent among the vigilantes who hanged Henry Plummer, Boone Helm and more than a score of others in early 1864. A bit later he and Perry (Bud) McDowell established the first sawmill near Virginia City, Montana, after a few months they sold out and moved up to the Gallatin Valley where they established the first commercial grist mill in Montana at the present site of Bozeman. This was a highly successful business, selling all the grain they could grind at Virginia City, Helena, and to military posts along the Richhona River, Fort C.F. Smith and others. In April 1867 Cover and John M. Bozeman, his friend, headed toward C.F. Smith to see about flour contracts. They crossed the Yellowstone and at the mouth of Cady Coulee, about 14 miles east of the present Livingston, Montana, were attacked by five Blackfoot Indians. In the resulting affray Bozeman was killed and Cover wounded. The next year Cover, by now married, moved to Los Angeles, California where he joined Louis Provost in a silk industry project, but the death of Provost who had the expertise for the operation caused its abandonment. Cover became one of the founders of Riverbank, California, and prominent in development of the fruit and orange empire which commenced there. He became interested in the legend of the Pegleg Smith gold discovery on the desert southeast of Riverbank and financed or took part in five expeditions to relocate it. He interviewed everyone he found with information upon the subject, even traveling to Yuma, Arizona, to interview Dr. Albert E. De Corse who had an especially probable insight into the existence of the lode. Cover had a few narrow escapes on the desert from one exigency or another. On his final trip he left his partner, Wilson Russell, on September 22, 1868, to hike across the Borrego Badlands and meet him on the other side, but he never appeared. A $1,000 reward offered by his widow for information as to what had become of him was never paid, but it served as a bait for countless expeditions in search of his remains by veteran desert travelers and expert trappers. The supposition was strong in some quarters that he had been killed by one or more of the Helen brothers, cousins of the notorious Boone Helm, who were reported to have known Cover in Montana and to be aware of his activities on 'their' desert. In 1890 report that Boone Helm had been shot by a surveying party along with a ring in which his name was engraved was rejected by his family; a report that a deputy sheriff, Charles L. Wright had recovered Charlie's bones of Cover was rejected by a court. Thus there remains no proof whatever as to his fate although the probability is that he met his death within a few miles of where he disappeared, and that foul play was involved, since the body never was found although assiduously searched. Cover had fathered two daughters, one of whom married subsequently. His wife, the former Mary E. Hess, was born November 14, 1835, in Ohio and died January 30, 1913, at Alameda, California.

Dan L. Threefold, Poor Tom Cover, manuscript in preparation.

Covington, Leonard, army officer (Oct. 30, 1768-Nov. 14, 1813). B. at Aquasco, Maryland, he was commissioned a cornet of the Light Dragoons March 14, 1792, a lieutenant October 25, joined the army of Anthony Wayne and became a captain July 11, 1794. Covington "greatly distinguished himself" at the Battle of Fallen Timbers August 20, 1794, leading a cavalry charge in which he personally killed two prominent warriors with his sabre. He resigned from the army September 12, 1795, pursued agricultural interests and served as a Representative in Congress. He was commissioned a lieutenant colonel of Light Dragoons January 9, 1809, and colonel February 15, 1809, commanding Fort Adams in Wilkinson County, Mississippi, in 1810; later Covington took possession of Baton Rouge and a portion of West Florida. He was transferred to the northern frontier in 1813, became a Brigadier General August 11, 1813, and was wounded mortally in the Battle of Chalmette November 11, 1814, and died at French Mills, New York. He was buried at Sackets Harbor, New York, the place of burial now known as Mount Covington.

BDAC: Heitman, J.H. Calhoun, Mississippi as a Province... with Biographical Notice of Eminent Citizens, Jackson, Miss., Power & Berksdale, Publs., 1880.

Cowan, Emma Carpenter, pioneer (c. 1854-Dec. 20, 1938). As a girl of 10 she was brought to Alder Gulch, Montana, from "the East," the family setting for a year at Virginia City. In 1873 she visited the geysers of Yellowstone National Park; in 1875 she married George F. Cowan, moved to Radersburg, Montana, and in 1877 with her husband and others including her sister, Ica, and brother, Frank, took a vacation trip to Yellowstone where they were upon Chief Joseph's Nez Percé on the long trek from Idaho toward Canada. Her husband was shot, mortally as she supposed, and she and her relatives and some others of the party were captured, but not mistreated. She sat at a campfire by Joseph: "The chief sat by the fire; sobs and
COVER LOST LIFE HUNTING FOR GOLD

MINER, DYING, TELLS GALLATIN PIONEER OF SOURCE OF MUCH WEALTH

St. Paul Globe-Times 1/14/90

Cover Watches for Weary Partisan; Remains Identified by a Ring; Fate of John Bozeman Recalled by Gallatin Pioneers.

The tragic death of Thomas Cover, who founded the first flour mill in the Gallatin valley, and the killing of John Bozeman, for whom the city of Bozeman was named, was graphically told a number of years ago by the Pioneer Society of the Gallatin, by Mrs. W. J. Beall, historian of the society, who had lived in Bozeman for over 60 years at the time of her death.

In her address Mrs. Beall mentioned many of the early day pioneers of the Gallatin valley—according to the Indians, "The Valley of Flowers"—among them John M. Bozeman, after whom the city is named; Daniel M. House, William W. Anderson, W. J. Beall, John C. Mendenhall, Frank F. Friddle, W. J. Davies, Squire Fitz and others.

Speaking of John M. Bozeman, she said in part:

"Mr. Bozeman was born in the state of Georgia. He was by nature a pioneer, restless, brave and resourceful, had no conception of fear, was without culture or education, but brave to a fault. It was due to this fact that he lost his life. In the spring of 1866 he and Thomas Cover started for a trip to Fort C. F. Smith, which had been established on the Big Horn in the fall of 1865. Two or three days later they met a small party of Blackfoot Indians who appeared to be friendly, but they treacherously shot and killed Bozeman and wounded Cover, who returned to the city a few days later. Bozeman was killed April 19, 1867. Thus ended the life of a brave pioneer for whom this city is named."

Regarding the tragic end of another of the Gallatin valley's pioneers, Thomas Cover, who started the first flour mill in that section and who later went to California, the speaker said:

"While Cover was in Riverside, Calif., an old miner came into the town one day to die. Cover visited him, and just before he breathed his last he told Cover how he had discovered the wonderful Peg Leg gold mine, which is supposed from tradition to have been the mine from which the Aztecs drew their wealth. The tradition was well known to Cover and to every other miner in California, and he knew that the man who found it would be fabulously rich. So, taking a friend named Russell with him, he started to cross the great desert, known as the Carisco bad lands, and by following the old miner's instructions, to find the wonderful mine. "When they got to the edge of the desert the arrangement was made that Russell would drive around, which would take about six hours, and Cover would walk across. That was the last seen of Cover alive. Russell arrived at the place they were to meet, but Cover was not there. Searching parties tried in vain for months to find him."

"Seventeen years later a surveying party working for the United States government came across the skeleton of a man buried in a few inches of sand. The sight was not unfamiliar to them, but their attention was attracted to a ring on one of his fingers, bearing a Masonic emblem, and when they made a careful examination they found the name, 'Thomas Cover,' in the ring. One member of the party had heard of the strange disappearance of Thomas Cover, and at his instance the bones were carefully collected and taken to Riverside and were given in charge of Mrs. Cover, who arranged for a decent burial. The Peg Leg mine is still 'lost,' despite the fact that Death Valley, in which it is supposed to be located, is now a show place, with railroads, auto roads and even cities within its confines."
First Flour Mill Built in Year 1864

The first flour mill in Gallatin county, and said to be the first in the territory to make flour for commercial purposes, was built by Cover and McAdow, in the fall of 1864 and the spring of 1865, on ground a short distance northeast of the present city limits of Bozeman. It was ready for business in the fall of 1865. P. W. and W. B. McAdow later bought the interest of Thomas Cover, and the McAdow brothers continued the mill until 1879, when P. W. McAdow went down on a ranch, establishing the town of Coulson, now part of Billings. W. B. McAdow kept the mill operating until 1933. When the north line of the Milwaukee railroad was built from Bozeman in 1912, the old mill was torn down, as the right-of-way of this passed through the mill site. The first electric light plant used this old mill for a few years.

Mill Stones Preserved

The mill stones from this historic mill lay on the ground near the former residence of M. and Mrs. W. B. McAdow for several years, but were moved in the spring of 1931, through the efforts of the Board of Public Recreation of Bozeman, to another historic spot, the southwest corner of Beall park, city recreation center, four blocks north of Main street. They were placed on a foundation of logs preserved from the former home of pioneers, M. and Mrs. W. J. Beall. These mill stones, one weighing approximately 1000 pounds, and the other 1365 pounds, were purchased by Cover and McAdow in St. Louis, Mo., and were shipped by steamboat to Fort Benton, Montana, and were brought overland from Fort Benton to Bozeman with mule teams and wagons by Cover and McAdow with the assistance of Frank Rich.

Other Pioneer Mills

The second flour mill in the valley, erected at Springhill about 20 miles north of Bozeman in 1867-68, was known as the Union Mills, started by three Penwell brothers, who conducted the mill for several years. The mill was later owned and operated by J. F. Roll. It had not been operated for several years, and during the winter of 1920, it was destroyed by fire from some unknown cause. Geo. D. Thomas who had settled with his family near what was then the town of Hamilton, not far from the present city of Manhattan in 1864 moved to Gallatin City in 1871, and took charge of the Madison mills, erected the previous year. He installed new machinery, changed the name to Empire Mills, and manufactured famous brands of flour for several years.

Later Flour Mills

Nelson Story, an early Montana pioneer, built a flouring mill in 1882 at mouth of Bridger canyon, a few miles north of Bozeman, and with the help of his sons Nelson Story Jr. and T. Byron Story conducted the business several years, then sold to the Bozeman Milling company which company is continuing the business. The Gallatin Valley Milling company operates at Belgrade, and the Bon Ton Flour mill was built in 1932 in Bozeman.
Mrs. W. J. Beall in an address to the Sons and Daughters of Gallatin Pioneers, February 22, 1923, "Historian was Early Pioneer," printed in the Bozeman Chronicle, February 23, 1923 says of Cover:

"Thomas Cover was one of the discoverers of Alder Gulch, on May 23, 1863. After he made a fortune there, he came to Bozeman and was the senior member of the firm of Cover and McAdow, who built the first flour mill in the valley or in the Territory. The mill and residence were built on the hill east of the city, where the Milwaukee railroad built the north line extension of the Gallatin Valley road, and at this time the mill was torn down....

"In the fall of 1865, Mr. Cover went east, and in the spring of 1866, he returned with a bride, formerly Miss Hess from Columbus, Ohio. She was a cultured lovable woman, who in the years of her residence here won the hearts of all who met her. It was my privilege to know Mr. and Mrs. Cover well. It was in their hospitable home that our beloved Bishop Tuttle was welcomed at his first visitation in our city, in July, 1868, when there were but seven women in the city. Mrs. Cover was a communicant of the Episcopal Church."

(Article in the E. Lina Anderson Houston Scrapbook in MSU Library Special Collections)

From articles in newspaper clippings on which neither date nor title is indicated, in Mrs. W. J. Beall's Scrapbook in MSU Library Special Collections.

"Social Life in Early Days," Mrs. W. J. Beall's address to the Gallatin Pioneers," February 21, 1925 (probably from the Courier)

"On New Years' Day, 1867, a dinner party was given by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Cover to many of their friends. One song, "Listen to the Mocking Bird," very popular in those days, was especially interesting on this occasion, as Mrs. Cotney stood in the hall and imitated a mocking bird as the chorus was sung "Listen to the Mocking Bird." Other musical numbers were enjoyed."

Thomas Cover contributed $100 to the Methodist Church building fund. The gift was dated August 9, 1866. There were only two other gifts of $100. John Bozeman contributed $25.00. (In Mrs. Beall's Scrapbook)

(Merrill G. Burlingame)
TOM COVER'S FATE

Thomas W. Cover was one of the pioneers of Gallatin county of Montana, and was for many years a resident of Bozeman.

He was the sole companion of John Bozeman when in 1867 that brave pioneer was killed by Indians a few miles east of Livingston.

Mr. Cover himself suffered a slight wound at the time, but escaped death and carried the news of Bozeman's death to the people of the town that bears his name. Now it appears that he himself has met a sad fate. Of late years he has been living in southern California with his family. A few weeks ago he went with another man on a prospecting tour on the Colorado desert. The two men separated and agreed to meet on a certain rendezvous. Cover, at last accounts, had never been seen again. His companion returned and organized a party to search for him, and the result is not known. It is thought improbable that he will be found alive as he had neither food or water to sustain him many days in the desert.

A reward of $1000 is offered for the recovery of the body of T. W. Cover, an old time Montanan who was supposed to have been lost on the Colorado desert while prospecting on the 22nd of September last.
DEATH OF MRS. MARY E. COVER
Feb. 1, 1913

Mrs. Mary E. Cover, a former resident of Boreman, widow of Thomas Cover, died during the past winter in Alameda, Cal., the news being brought to this city by Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Ruffner, who gave a clipping from the Oakland Tribune to Mrs. W. J. Beall, an intimate friend of Mrs. and "Mrs. Cover, when they visited in Boreman, during pioneer days. "This clipping in reference to the death of Mrs. Cover, gives an interesting story about the lost Peg Leg mine in the Death valley in California, with the statement that Mrs. Cover probably knew more about the lost mine than any other woman. Six expeditions, five of them personally accompanied by Cover, were financed by him, and in the last one, he lost his life, probably while wandering about in the desert. He was separated from his companions. At that time, Thomas Cover and his family made their home in Riverside, California, where he gained what he thought was reliable information about the lost mine, from an old miner that was dying. The miner told Cover how he had discovered the wonderful Peg Leg mine, which from numerous traditions were supposed to be the mine from which the Apaches drew their wealth of gold. The mine got its name from the fact that an old sailor, who had a wooden leg, claimed to have discovered the mine.

According to the Indian tradition, one man at a time is allowed to

PEG LEG MINE
PROVES DESERT WILL-O'-THE-WISP

A MONTANA PIONEER.

Cover, the Montana pioneer miner, plainsman and Indian fighter before he came to the desert and years ago settled first at Los Angeles and then at Riverside. He brought with him from Montana $72,000, his interest in the iron mine of which he was one of the leaders. He had blood connection with the Helms family, which operated the Helms mine of the same name. He was the son of a miner in the Helms mine.

Cover's mining career with the Peg Leg mine was probably the most thorough of the hundreds of searches made before and since for the alleged fabulous outcropping ledge of gold on a hill where broken quartz rich with gold covered the sand and gravel so commonly found on the Laravel rivers.

DEAD EXPEDITIONS.

Cover's mining activities were almost entirely devoted to the Peg Leg mine. He had made several attempts to reach the mine, but all of his efforts were in vain. He never succeeded in reaching the mine.

The Remains of Thomas Cover Completely Identified by Dr. Maurice Ring on one of the Finger Bones of the Bleached Skeleton, on which was clearly

Thos. Cover.
According to the Indian traditions, only one man at a time is allowed to know the location of this course of fabulous wealth, and he is not allowed to touch any of it for his own use, or if he does, he will die a terrible death. The old miner who told Cover the story, said the location was told him by an old Indian, who was dying of a horrible disease, because he had taken some of the free gold from the mine. The old miner claimed that he had taken some of the gold, a few weeks before he was stricken with this fatal illness, and according to the tradition, he could reveal the secret to one white man, when he believed he was dying.

It is a number of years since Thomas Cover's death, and it was reported at one time that his bones were found in the sands of the desert, and identified by a Masonic ring found on his finger, the name "Thomas Cover" being engraved on the inside. This story, however, seems to have been discredited by the Cover family, and in the story of Mrs. Cover's death, it is stated that no trace of the lost man was ever found, though his wife, at the time he disappeared, offered a reward of $1,000 for the return of his body. The Peg Leg mine is still lost, despite the fact that Death Valley, in which it was supposed to be located, is now a show place, with railroads, automobiles, hotels and even cities in its confines.

Attention has been called to this story, because of the recent death of Mrs. Cover, and because the family at one time resided in Boxeman. Mr. Cover was one of the discoverers of Alder Gulch, and the son-in-law of the famous miner of Cover and McDougall, that built the first great mill in the territory.

ALAMEDA, Feb. 1, 1907—Mary M. Cover, who was buried this morning, the funeral services being held at the home of her daughter, Mrs. W. J. Gould, 2205 Clinton avenue, probably knew more about the lost Peg Leg mine in Death Valley, than any other woman. Her experiences, five of them personally accompanied by her husband, Thomas Cover, were financed by the Cover expedition to search for the mine.

In the last trip Cover lost his life. Whether he perished suddenly from thirst while separated from companions, or was killed by men reputed to be his enemies, is still unsettled. His body was never found. Death from these trials wandering lost in the desert badlands is the most probable solution.

This shifting desert sand was probably blown over the body by the desert wind. For weeks and months friends and hired searchers worked over a vast expanse of the desert. At one time the lost man was found an unsuccessful effort of Deputy Sheriff C. L. Ruggles and Thomas West of Orange to claim the $1000 reward offered by Mrs. Cover for the recovery of her husband, which was discredited by the missing man's family and friends.

Right and West exhibited a beautiful collection of channeled human bones which they claimed to have sifted out of the desert sand in the section of the desert where Cover was last seen. The deputy sheriff

Some years after the time of his death, yet another man made many another, victim of the bitter heat and violence. He became separated from his party on this mining expedition and wandered in a labyrinth for 20 miles on the west of the mountain. He became separated from his party on this mining expedition and wandered in a labyrinth for 20 miles on the west of the mountain. He became separated from his party on this mining expedition and wandered in a labyrinth for 20 miles on the west of the mountain. He became separated from his party on this mining expedition and wandered in a labyrinth for 20 miles on the west of the mountain.
SYNOPSIS

Thomas Wells Cover was an empire builder in California, and before that a figure of uncommon luck and power in Montana's violent beginnings. In both regions his was a life of wild adventure and enormous success, but the triumphs led inexorably to a hideous, if mystery-shrouded finale on the California desert. For over a century his demise has been the subject of legend, supported by precious few facts. In this book a lucidly-argued and carefully-researched solution at last penetrates the riddle.

Cover seemed born to success. He matured in Ohio and as quickly as he was old enough, went West. He became a logger in Minnesota, journeyed to Colorado and north to Montana where rumors of gold abounded.

With five others as hopeful as himself Cover embarked upon an Odyssean prospecting tour. They were captured by Crows and after adventures hairy enough even for souls as hardy as they, were released with their scalps but little else, adrift in the wilderness. So they struck gold! Not just an ordinary pocket, but the richest placer strike in the history of the world! Three billion dollars (at current prices) have been taken out of their 16-mile gulch.

Cover and the others sold out. He commenced the initial sawmill, became a wheat farmer and owned the first commercial grist mill in Montana, sold flour wherever he could, and found the markets immensely rewarding. Seeking fresh outlets he and John Bozeman, who had pioneered the famed Bozeman Trail from the Platte north to the gold camps, were jumped by Blackfeet. Bozeman was killed, Cover wounded. But he escaped again.

He quit Montana and went to southern California. He was a pioneer in a major silk industry promotion. He became a founder of Riverside, and an originator of the navel orange empire which exists to this day. Everything he touched had something of Midas about it. So he would retire into a life of wealth and ease, right?

Not so.

Cover had made one mistake.

In Montana he had been a key figure in the Vigilante movement that rid the gold camps of desperadoes. Tom himself was instrumental in the execution of Boone Helm, the most notorious badman of the day. But Helm's story did not end when the hangman's noose snapped his grimy neck.

He had cousins, like him of Missouri-Kentucky origin, clannish, suspicious, vengeful. They were run out of Montana by Cover and his kind. They never forgot it. Nor did they forget cousinBoone and his awful fate.

When Cover became enamored of the enduring myth of Pegleg Smith's Lost Gold deposit, somewhere on the desert south of his Riverside home, he engaged the problem with all the methodical stubbornness he had shown in everything else.
and he disappeared, a century ago, on that featureless
California desert.

Whatever became of him?

This book provides a thoroughly researched,
logical answer. It determines that fun cover
flourished through vengeance -- the natural which was all
that remained of his arch-antagonist of a time
gone by. But it was through to do him in.
“The great Gallatin valley,” he began, modestly, “is the only valley of any great extent that possesses all the qualities and facilities for agricultural operations within the entire range of the Rocky Mountains. Its length is from forty to forty-five miles and its average width fifteen to thirty. The Gallatin River runs through the centre, the Madison is on the western side, and the Little, or Eastern Gallatin on the eastern” while countless streams, brooks, springs and freshets poured forth their pure cold water for stock, domestic use and irrigation. “The grass is luxuriant; the soil rich and productive, and the climate salubrious..., the winters are as mild as those of the Middle States [and] the land is more productive for all small grains... and the growing season is sufficiently long to mature the earlier kinds of corn. Vegetables such as potatoes, turnips, pumpkins, squashes, melons, onions, beans, peas and other garden produce are equal to those grown in the States.” He concluded:

“In point of fact Gallatin valley is the oasis of the mountains. The scenery cannot be excelled, the surrounding peaks are separated only by... beautiful rivulets, crowned with the ever green foliage... Wild fruits of all kinds are in abundance. Game is plentiful, such as buffalo, elk, bear, deer, antelope and mountain sheep, while the streams abound with beaver, otter, mink, geese, ducks and fish.” A paradise indeed!

On July 7, 1864 the village of “Montana” had been laid out “on a handsome and level piece of land in what is called the upper valley,” where the Bozeman cutoff or route to the eastern states crossed the Little Gallatin. The town would be renamed shortly for the “tall, good natured, good looking Georgian, with easy habits, whose benign countenance may be seen any day of the week, shedding its refulgence upon all who meet him in the streets. Here he is
always to be found, and who was the first man coming across the plains to stop at this point with goods,” and as Bozeman the city is known today. John Bozeman promised town lots to builders, Tom Cover and Bud McAdow and others. He knew Cover well and was acquainted with McAdow. He was aware they were restless in Alder Gulch and urged them to establish a grist mill in “his” valley, for so he considered it by now. Bozeman gave Tom a handful of wheat someone had raised there. Cover examined it carefully, from his Ohio years recognizing excellent grain: good, plump kernels, none shriveled, free of any kind of fungus. About equal in size, hard, red in color and he knew they would leaven well, make superb bread. The yield in the valley, Bozeman assured him was up to sixty bushels an acre, a figure Cover listened to, smiling, discounting a bit for boosterism. But it was good wheat. Any farmer could see that. And in fair seasons yields no doubt would be impressive.

Cover and McAdow were interested in John’s invitation and so Bozeman confidently predicted that by the middle of next year, 1865, there would be a grist mill in the Gallatin Valley. He was not to be disappointed.

Indian troubles were ever a possibility on this remote frontier, with Blackfeet, Sioux and Crows unsubdued, war and raiding parties out all the time and the white population so scant as to be scarcely visible in most places.

Early in September, 1864, the newspaper reported that there was a minor clash along the Gallatin involving some whites from Virginia City who “wantonly killed” two Indians, taking their horses with the object, the paper surmised, of provoking “further hostilities on the part of

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17 *Montana Post*, April 27, 1867.
comfort. Men have not backed in it,” a further blessing12

The Post scoldingly called “the attention of authorities to
the highly improper practice of galloping horses through
the streets of our town. A very small brain fired with tangle
leg, esconced behind a low forehead, and a very big pair of
spurs, are usually the most noticeable articles of the rider’s
outfit.” When the journal turned its fire from hanging
desperadoes to the inconvenience of dodging running
horses it became obvious that things had mightily tamed
down. But Tom Cover never paid attention to such. He
was busy.

Arranging for his mill and farm machinery to follow, he
made his way to the eastern end of the Gallatin Valley,
about seventy miles northeast of Virginia City along the
route traversed by today’s Montana State highways 287
and 84. There, the Post reported on August 5, Cover was
engaged in erecting “a splendid grist mill on the East
Gallatin, about one-half a mile from the town of Bozeman.
The building is framed, sided up, shingled and will soon be
painted. It would be a credit to any country. The
dimensions... are: Length, fifty-four feet; breadth, thirty-
six feet; height, fifty-five feet. It is a three and a half story
structure.”3 In addition he had put in 150 acres of grain,
being “a thoroughly energetic man, and we augur a great
success for him.” The mill machinery had passed through
Virginia City August 1 and probably was at the site already,
while the few farmers settled in the valley also were busily
cultivating large acreages of what had been virgin prairie.
On September 16 the newspaper added that Cover and
Bud McAdow were rapidly completing their mill, the
machinery was installed and they were dressing the burrs,

1Overland Days to Montana in 1865: The Diary of Sarah Raymond... ed. by Raymond
H. and Mary Lund Settle, Glendale, California, Arthur H. Clark Company, 1971,
173-74.

3The mill, located east of modern Bozeman a few blocks north of Main Street, was
torn down when the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad built its north line in
or buhrstones, the huge grinders used in manufacturing flour. The partners had skilled help. Henry H. Mood, a 37-year-old New Jersey-born professional miller was hired to provide his expertise and to manage the operation. Mood had reached Bannack April 18, 1863, and Cover and McAdow, who had long known him, were mighty glad to have him on the payroll. Initial capacity for the plant, which was expected soon to begin operations, was 1,000 sacks of flour a week.

“Next season this will be doubled,” the paper predicted confidently, “and in both cases the stones will be worked to their full power. Starvation is, therefore, ‘played out,’ and beef straight a thing of the past.” It estimated there would be 25,000 bushels of wheat harvested in the valley and an additional 15,000 elsewhere within range of the mill. The Gallatin Valley had about 320,000 arable acres, so produc-

1912. Bud and his brother, William B. McAdow ran the mill after Tom Cover pulled out in 1868. In 1879 Perry sold his interest to William, who operated the enterprise until 1883.
would be a jugular bringing in people from everywhere in the States — and all would funnel, tired and hungry, through Bozeman City past the doors of Tom Cover’s and Bud McAdow’s flour mill. Their location could scarcely be improved upon.

Coach lines however preferred to run from Virginia City to Bannack and thence to Salt Lake City, meeting there the main transcontinental route. Late in November Cover stopped at the Post’s office to meet his editor friend, Thomas Dimsdale and talk over his latest plans, or some of them. Dimsdale wrote that this “enterprising pioneer [has become] one of the first among the public-spirited and... our present thriving city owes much to him. One of our principal streets received its name from him.” He became among the first “to prove the susceptibility of the Gallatin Valley of cultivation.... Such gentlemen as Mr. Cover are the kind to lead in expanding empire.” Now, Dimsdale added, Cover was enroute east to purchase machinery “for a second grist mill,” which the newspaper said he planned to erect on the West Gallatin River.\(^{10}\) Tom seems not to have divulged his primary reason for going east this winter of 1865-66; living alone had played out, for him. He knew someone willing to participate in his adventurous life, or as much of it as a 19th century woman could share. He was pretty well settled, and headed up a thriving business. It was time to get married.

He wasted no time. Cover never did. He reached Ohio about the middle of December and would spend Christmas with his people, no doubt dividing his time with the family of Daniel Hess. On Saturday, December 30 Mary Hess and Tom Cover obtained a marriage license and Sunday,

\(^{10}\)December 2, 1865. The editor was slightly confused on this point, since Cover intended to purchase equipment to modernize his mill, rather than erect a second one, which he never did.
New Year’s Eve, they were united in matrimony at Columbus, Ohio, by Mary’s father, who signed the document, “Elder Daniel Hess,” suggesting that he might have been a minister as well as a jurist. Almost immediately the couple left for a honeymoon in the east. They were in New York in February, Tom calling at the brokerage house of Tufts, Conner & Hagaman at 117 Broadway. No doubt they dropped down to Washington where Cover’s old Bannack partner Sam McLean now was Territorial Delegate to Congress; he served from January 6, 1865 until March 3, 1867 — and probably never returned to Montana, spending the rest of his life in Virginia. Described by one Montana newspaper as “without great mental activity, he was nevertheless a genial, kindly man, with a noble impulse.” He would have been lavish in his praise of the Territory for the benefit of Mrs. Cover, an impressionable bride of only a few weeks.

Late in March the Covers reached St. Louis on the return trip. Tom thought it would be more pleasant, and less of a traumatic shock no doubt, for Mary to approach her new home via a leisurely cruise on a riverboat. In addition, he again had a lot of machinery to transport and it would be cheaper to send it by boat than across the plains. Reapers brought up the Missouri would sell for about $500. A thresher might represent considerable outlay, but at 25 cents a bushel for harvesting wheat it would quickly pay for itself. Thus they had determined to go up the Missouri, 2,317 miles from St. Louis to Fort Benton, and from there overland the 200 miles or so to Bozeman. The journey would require about two and one-half months.

Mary must have been impressed with her first view of

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11 Copy of marriage certificate provided by the Ohio Historical Society.