

ing post near the camp to supply goods and services to the soldiers. The post was named Fort Claggett in honor of William Claggett, one of Montana Territory's most respected politicians and capitalists. After Camp Cooke closed in 1870, Power built a second Fort Claggett east of the Judith River about two miles from this marker. Strategically located near a river ford, the fort obtained supplies from steamboats plying the Missouri and shipped out beaver pelts, buffalo hides and cattle. By 1884, this segment of the Claggett Trail was heavily used by freighters, cowboys, businessmen, Indians and miners seeking their fortunes in the nearby Judith Mountains. In the mid-1880s, Power and Gilman Norris formed the Judith Mercantile and Cattle Company with its headquarters at Fort Claggett. At its peak in the late 1880s, Fort Claggett consisted of a store, hotel, saloon, warehouse, mail station, stables and sheep sheds. Although Fergus County has actively maintained portions of the Claggett Trail, this section exists unaltered and is representative of late 19th century freighting roads.

H The Judith Landing

Hwy. 236 just south of the Missouri River

This area, which surrounds the confluence of the Missouri and Judith Rivers, was designated a National Historic District in 1974 because of its historic importance to Montana's transportation system. Missouri River steamboats en route to Fort Benton tied up at Judith Landing to buy fuel from "woodhaws." The rotted stumps of trees cut for fuel can still be seen in the area. At the Judith's mouth, Camp Cooke was built (1866) to protect river travellers from Indian attacks. In 1872, T. C. Power erected the Fort Claggett Trading Post just below the mouth of the Judith. Renamed Judith Landing, the site became a bustling community including (1885) a large stone warehouse, saloon, hotel, stable, blacksmith shop, and store. The PN (Power-Norris) Ferry provided transportation across the Missouri. The Lohse Family started (1923) a new ferry downstream, and it operated until the Winifred Bridge was built in 1982.

H Fort Chardon

Rte 236

Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark passed through this area (1805) on their expedition to the Pacific Ocean, and the landscape here remains much as they described it. Fur trappers and traders then followed them into the Upper Missouri region. Fort Chardon was erected (1844) on this bank, but local Indian hostilities forced its closure two years later. The north bank also was the site of two important treaty councils. In 1846, Father Pierre Jean De Smet convened the Blackfeet and the Salish here to end their open warfare. In 1855, Governor Isaac I. Stevens organized a meeting of more than 3,000 Blackfeet, Gros Ventres, Nez Percés, and Salish to produce a major treaty between the tribes and the government. This area first was homesteaded in the 1880s. Traces of early homestead irrigation systems can still be seen within the National Historic District.

D Mer. Lewis

August 1, 1806

"a white bear came within 50 paces of our camp before we perceived it; it stood on it's hinder feet and looked at us with much apparent unconcern"

D Sgt. Gass

May 27, 1805

"There are Indian paths along the Missouri and some in other parts of the country. . . There are also roads and paths made by the buffalo and other animals; some of the buffalo roads are at least ten feet wide."

D William Clark

May 28, 1805

POWELL "PIKE" LANDUSKY

Pike Landusky had a reputation as being one of the toughest fighters in the West. At one point, while trapping and trading with the Indians on the Musselshell River, he was captured by a war party of Brules. He began beating one of the warrior braves with a frying pan. The remaining party, awed by the violent spectacle, retreated and left two ponies to calm the wild man down. He later ran a trading post he called Lucky Fort on Flatwillow Creek in what is now Petroleum County. There, after a Piegan brave shot him and shattered his jaw, Landusky tore out the loose fragments of four broken teeth and threw them away.

In 1893 he and his partner, Bob Orman, found gold in the gulches of the Little Rockies and named their mine after the month. Believing they were on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation they initially snuck the gold ore out at night. When they discovered they were a few miles south of the reservation, they relaxed their guard and word leaked out of the discovery. In a matter of months a gold rush was on and hundreds of miners flooded the area. A town was born.

Landusky's luck finally ran out when he had a showdown with "Kid" Curry. The Curry brothers lived five miles to the south and used Landusky as a trading center. "Kid Amby" Cheney, a local cowboy who witnessed the event tells the story:

"The Creek. . . I call Thompsons Creek after a valuable member of our party."

D Sgt. Ordway

May 30, 1805

"we discover in many places old encampments of large bands of Indians, a few weeks past & appear to be making up the River."

T Judith Landing Historic District

40 miles from Big Sandy on Hwy. 236

This is the site of a trading post built by James Wells in 1882 in partnership with T.C. Power and I.G. Baker of Fort Benton, developers of Fort Benton's leading commercial businesses in the 1860s through 1880s. The sandstone and granite building is one Montana's most historic buildings and stands at the landing. The post office, three ranch houses and the town's original log schoolhouse still stand. The buildings are on private property and must be viewed from a distance.

James Wells was a Pony Express rider, stage-coach driver, fur trapper and cattle rancher. He was married to a Gros Ventre Indian woman and became immersed in the customs of her tribe. Wells had great insight into the future of Montana, but could not have predicted the unjust treatment his Indian wife and children would receive after his death. The story of the development of Judith Landing and the Wells family is found in "James Wells of Montana" written by James A. Franks.

T Missouri Breaks Backcountry Byway

Rte. 236, Winifred. 538-7461

This 81 mile loop starts in Winifred. Highlights along the route include the Lewis and Clark and

"Pike was known as a mean devil. He always carried a gold headed, weighted cane and he used it often, sometimes hitting a bystander at the bar whether he was making trouble or not. Pike owned the Landusky Saloon and he had a business rival just across the street named 'Jew Jake,' a one-legged guy who had lost the other one in a shooting scrape in Great Falls. Jew Jake used his rifle as a crutch when he walked and kept it slung around his neck when he sat down. He used to sit out on the porch of his saloon waiting for some trouble with Pike. One day Kid Curry and Pike got into an argument: some say it was over a woman, others that it was over a plow that the Currys had borrowed from Pike and returned badly broken. The Kid was standing at the bar in Pike's saloon when the argument, began. Pike reached for his gun, but Curry was quicker on the draw and killed Landusky with the first shot. Curry escaped and by the time the sheriff had come from Fort Benton (200 miles away) the smoke had cleared away and the officer told the boys in Landusky that if they ever happened to see the Kid to tell him to come on in and give himself up. They wouldn't do much to him because of Pike's quarrelsome reputation. After Landusky's death, John Curry, one of the Kid's brothers, sort of throwed-in with Mrs. Landusky."

When Pike died, it is said that the townspeople buried him six feet deeper than usual and piled rocks on top of his grave so he couldn't get out. The rock is still there along with a carved wood grave marker.

Nez Perce national historic trails, C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and a side trip to the free McClelland Ferry which crosses the Missouri River from April through October.

24. Attraction

Geraldine

This town was named for the wife of Milwaukee Railroad executive William Rockerfeller. Nearby Winchell Springs was a long time stopping off point for travelers and was the water source for Geraldine until artesian wells were drilled in 1959. The stage coach stop at Winchell was called the Dew Drop Inn.

T Square Butte Natural Area

Hwy.. 80, south of Geraldine. 538-7461

A scenic recreational area. This imposing rock butte is home to plentiful deer, elk, mountain goats and hawks. The flat topped butte stands 2,400 feet above the surrounding plains.

25. Historical Marker

Geyser

This town began as an overnight stop on the stage route from Lewistown to Great Falls. It later became a railroad stop when the Great Northern was built from Billings to Great Falls. This area at the turn of the century was primarily a sheep ranching area dominated by the J. B. Long Sheep Company. Homesteaders, mainly Finnish, flooded the area lured here by offers of free land. The town got its name from a nearby bubbling mud springs. The geysers were most active during the dry years of the 1930s, but dried up when the rains returned and never came back.