

Ghost Towns Out West
By Stephen Benz

Many Western towns never lasted a single human lifetime.
– Wallace Stegner

Deadwood: Three times inside a year the place burned to the ground.

Radium Springs: Everyone went batty from a constant pinging sound.

Bullet Hole: The gunshots sang out night and day.

Quarryville: Before long wolves swooped in and had their way.

Mesquite Junction: The constant wind wiped out connecting roads.

Blighton: Fragmentary annals hint at vipers, locusts, toads.

Paradise Valley: They ate of the fruit—and bore God's wrath.

Sweetwater: They found artesian wells but forgot to do the math.

Fort Custer: Neither prayer nor cannon could stop the roving bands.

Arabia: Thus saith the Lord, *Do not build on shifting sands.*

Angel Fire: The good citizens began hearing voices.

Freewill: From start to end, they made bad choices.

Bonanza: A worthless claim—everyone was fleeced.

Rocky Ridge: From day one the tremors never ceased.

Wheatland: A scourge of root rot brought on its death knell.

Furnace Creek: The cartographers warned: Here be hell.