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.