

## HELL'S GATE/MISSOULA Construction Continues in the Spring



Worden Store, Missoula

**Winter snow in the upper Coeur d'Aléne and St. Regis Borgia valleys “fell to the depth of from two and a half to three feet; in the higher portions to from three to five feet, and on the summit of the mountains to from seven to nine feet,” according to Lt. Mullan. In April of 1860, his crew left their winter camp and began work up the Bitterroot Valley toward Hell Gate in the Missoula Valley. The Road’s completion and later improvements opened the Missoula area to vigorous settlement.**

“On the 1st of May I commenced upon the cut around the Big Mountain, and by the 10th had my entire force of citizens and soldiers employed....It was a severe piece of work, and cost us the labor of 150 men for six weeks. Being rocky in most places, we were compelled to blast. By a premature explosion, one of our men, Sheridan, lost one of his eyes, and another, Robert P. Booth, was severely stunned....In the remaining stretch to Hell's Gate, amounting to sixty miles, we continued the road through much open timber...Our work to the Hell's Gate ronde was completed by the 28th of June.”

The Road contributed directly to the settlement of Hell Gate, which later evolved into the city of Missoula. In August 1860, Frank Worden and Christopher Higgins brought a pack train of 76 mules over the Mullan Road from Walla Walla to stock a store they opened at Hell Gate, which became the first commercial building in the state of Montana other than trading posts. One of the town's first residents was Judge Frank H. Woody of Walla Walla. The completion of improvements to the road in 1862 brought additional white settlers into the area. In 1865 Worden and Higgins built a sawmill, flour mill, and new store at the site of present-day Missoula, and all of the residents of Hell Gate promptly moved to the new town.