**LU 017 Script – The East Side**

The first time I ever heard about the East Side of Butte, I was 22 years old, a freshman in a sea of students in the stifling second floor of the Liberal Arts building at the University of Montana in Missoula. One more mediocre student among an anonymous horde of young people, I was likely invisible to the elderly man who strode in to deliver his inaugural lecture for the semester, which gave us an overview of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*.

Professor Fred McGlynn started his lecture by telling us that he grew up in Finntown in East Butte. I had no idea what that meant.

[music]

When we visited with Professor McGlynn on the back patio of his Missoula home in the summer of 2021, I got a chance to tell him what an impact his lectures made on me and hear a lot more about what growing up in Finntown really meant.

[Fred McGlynn 1]

So now we’ll back up a bit and hear about Fred’s early years, and what it was like to arrive into the world of East Butte in 1939, when he was born.

[Fred McGlynn 2]
[Fred McGlynn 3]

Fred’s mother had numerous health problems over the years, including a goiter that nearly consumed her, but she persevered and raised her family amid the hardship of Butte in the years following World War II. We asked Fred McGlynn to tell us more about the old days of the East Side, and what life was like day-to-day back then.

[Fred McGlynn 4]
[music]
[Fred McGlynn 5]
[music]

This is Life Underground, and that was Fred McGlynn, a longtime professor of philosophy at the University of Montana who grew up in Finntown in East Butte. And that’s what we’re looking at today, one of Butte’s bygone ethnic neighborhoods that primarily housed Finnish immigrants and their families. Professor McGlynn was talking about the rough nature of the neighborhood he grew up in, and though he’s a bit younger, Colt Diamond might be an example of the sort of street-smart kids that Fred referred to. I interviewed Colt at the KBMF studios in 2021, and he talked about his Finnish heritage and growing up in Finntown, painting a bit of a different portrait than Professor McGlynn.

[Colt Diamond 1]
[Colt Diamond 2]
[music]

Colt Diamond had a tough time after those early years in Finntown. He spent time in juvenile detention for stealing cars and did time in a federal penitentiary over a gun charge. Today he does a ministry in the streets of Butte and has been homeless for the last 9 years.

[music]

Let’s continue with our look at Finntown in East Butte here on Life Underground. We’ll be switching gears a bit and visiting with Jim Moyle. Aubrey Jaap interviewed him for an oral history at the Butte-Silver Bow Archives.

[Jim Moyle 1]

Jim Moyle wasn’t quite in Finntown, as he said, but he was in East Butte, a part of town that’s largely gone today. It’s all vacant lots except for a couple new developments like the Maroon Activities Center and the CCCS building Jim mentioned earlier. Finntown and East Butte were cleared out long ago to make way for the impending expansion of the Berkely Pit, which never ended up happening. But it wasn’t always that way. At one time, that part of town was bustling with activity from the mines and the busy neighborhoods that sprang up around them.

When he was a little kid, Jim Moyle would walk down Mercury Street to the west to get to his music lessons at Len Waters Music, on upper Main Street. Aubrey asks him about that walk as a little kid.

[Jim Moyle 2]

The process of displacing the neighborhoods on the East Side to make way for mining was done mostly through Anaconda Company settlements, where people would sell their homes or be offered a new home in exchange for vacating Finntown and the East Side neighborhoods. As Fred McGlynn mentioned earlier, the only real remnant of Finntown is the Helsinki Bar, which stands alone on east Broadway Street right along the fence line to the mining property, which today is capped with vegetation and posted with no trespassing signs. When you head east out Broadway Street, the road just ends, with concrete barricades, fencing, and then the Berkeley Pit. I asked Jim Moyle what it was like when the road continued there.

[Jim Moyle 3]
[music]

That was Jim Moyle, remembering the East Side of Butte before it was destroyed to make way for expanded open pit mining. In our final chapter on Finntown and East Butte today, we hear from LuWanna Johnson. Her dad was in World War II and came back to Butte when he returned to the States. Aubrey Jaap conducted her oral history recording.

[LuWanna Johnson 1]
[LuWanna Johnson 2]
[music]

We’re listening to an oral history recording of LuWanna Johnson, who grew up in Finntown in East Butte. Aubrey Jaap asks her to explain a bit more about how the Finnish culture was present in the home growing up.

[LuWanna Johnson 3]

All those nice amenities of Finntown, from the saunas to the tight knit neighborhood community are gone now, and LuWanna here reflects on the changes that began when the Anaconda Company switched from underground mining to open pit mining in the mid-1950s.

[LuWanna Johnson 4]
[music]

That Was LuWanna Johnson, reflecting on her childhood neighborhood of Finntown. And that does it for this episode of Life Underground. I’m Clark Grant, thanks for listening.

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