

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matt Christy (1896- )

Mr. Christy was born in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and although an uncle brought him to Butte as a young boy, he still speaks with a distinct accent. He is a gregarious man and a good storyteller.

He started working at a grocery store in 1908. While working during the day, he attended business school at night. He eventually worked his way up to owning his own store, and then to owning two stores. He was a very successful businessman, and he attributes this success to having always been honest in his dealings with other people. Mr. Christy retired eighteen years ago because he was tired of working long hours with no vacations.

Mr. Christy is very satisfied with his life. In the past few years he has done a lot of traveling, but he feels that he has the best of everything right here in Montana.



she would come take the money out of the register and get drunk. He wanted to sell the store back to Mr. Christy, but he wouldn't buy it. A couple other men bought it, and it wasn't long before they'd gone out of business.

Later, Mr. Christy bought a store on Granite Street. He ran that store for about twenty years. Then he bought another store from his second partner, and ran that store for seventeen years. This second partner had always been a crook, and he had ruined his reputation in Butte. No one wanted to trade with him. When Mr. Christy took over his business, he had to make up a lot of bad debts.

Mr. Christy retired because he was tired of the long hours and no vacations.

The store had a very fine clientele. By this, Mr. Christy means that his customers were hard to please, and they expected quality. Mr. Christy had fancy stuff. His fruits and produce were better than anyone else's. Other stores could have done the same, but they didn't. Mr. Christy stocked the best stuff there was and sold it at lower prices than the competition. He also gave delivery and credit.

When Mr. Christy retired he invested carefully, and has tripled his income. He thinks that anyone can come out all right money-wise if they just save and be honest and don't try to be a hog. Mr. Christy was always careful not to take advantage of other people. Now he can look back and be proud of the way he ran his business.

Mr. Christy shipped a lot of his stock in from far away. Many people in Butte had never seen some of the things he carried. He learned what things were good and what would sell from his work in other stores. There were four different wholesale grocers in Butte then, and he bought his staples from them. There were also three wholesale fruit houses here, and they would get things special if Mr. Christy asked them. But he did ship many other things in anyway. He carried many items that the other Butte stores didn't have. He imported candies and cheese from Switzerland.

Butte used to have at least 180 food stores. There were no chain stores. Most stores were small, and they all had deliveries and charge accounts. Now there are no more wholesale grocers, or meat packers.

There used to be all kinds of bakeries, and lots of cafes uptown. There used to be more people out on West Park Street at midnight than there are now during the daytime when they're having a celebration.

People used to be out all day long. The mines worked three shifts then. There were at least five show houses here. There was always someplace to go.

People started moving down onto the Flat about thirty years ago. They wanted to have yards. Houses on the Hill are built close together because the miners all wanted to live as close as possible to their work, so they squeezed their houses in all together. Everyone used to walk to work.

When the smelters were here, the smoke would sometimes be so bad that you couldn't see a person standing across the street. The smoke smelled very bad.

The streetcars didn't go all the way up to the mines, so the men still had to walk a mile or two. When it was slippery, they had to wear crampons so they could make it up the hill.

Butte had a lot of fires, and Mr. Christy thinks that someone set most of them.

There used to be many mining companies here. As the rich ore petered out, they started selling out to Anaconda. Finally the Company had them all. To make more money, the Company decided to start open pit mining.

Tape #1  
Side B

Great volumes of earth have to be moved to get very little ore. The little companies couldn't exist under these conditions.

The rest of Mr. Christy's family stayed in Yugoslavia. He went back a year ago to visit. He went with his brother because he can speak the language. Mr. Christy has forgotten it. He had not seen his sister since she was two years old.

When he first came here, he missed his family, but not terribly. He thinks it's good that he made it here, because he was able to help his family. They were subsistence farmers. They didn't use any machinery. The land was very hilly, and they farmed on terraces. His family lived on the Adriatic coast.

Mr. Christy didn't have a hard time adjusting to life in Butte. It was a little difficult to learn the language. He didn't live in a Yugoslavian community here. Most people lived wherever they could, because housing was scarce. The Finns were the only ones who really tried to live together. The others seemed to live spread throughout town.

Travelling shows used to come to Butte a lot, and Mr. and Mrs. Christy always went. There were also movies and Pantages shows. People here also skated, hiked, and fished. There was always something to do.

Butte used to be a very well-dressed community. No one would go out unless they were properly dressed.

There were a lot of rich people here when the mines were doing well.

People here were friendly and trustworthy. They took care of each other. When the corporations came in they changed everything. Butte people are good-hearted people. Things are different now. Everyone is living on credit. They expect more. Everybody is out to get all they can.

On Miners' Union Day the whole town was closed. They all paraded. The Fourth of July, Miners' Union Day, and St. Patrick's Day were all big days. There were parades and bands.

There were funeral parlors here, but the bodies were always kept at home. For the funeral, the Slavs would have a big band playing dirges and marching through the streets. People visited the home, and drank and were happy. It was a big day for them. They would hire a horse and buggy and they'd race. Then little by little they started going to the mortuary, and that ended that.

The Irish, English, and Swedes are quite clannish.

The Catholic Church was very strong in Butte. The churches are not so strong any more.

Mr. Christy talks about his religious convictions.

He never celebrated Mesopust.

Tape #2  
Side A

Mesopust was a Catholic celebration.

Mr. Christy thinks of himself of an American.

Some people did take part in the celebrations of other ethnic groups.

There were some ethnic conflicts here. When people mixed together they got along fine. The clannishness caused a lot of trouble. The more people mix the better it is.

Women always used to be safe in Butte. The miners would beat up anyone who was seen bothering a woman. This is no longer true. Mr. Christy thinks this is due to the deterioration of the family.

Mr. Christy thinks that most of Butte's prostitutes were French. He thinks it would be better if the red light district was still here. He once lived in a duplex where prostitutes lived next door. Most of them stayed separate from the rest of the community.

Mr. Christy thinks women have a harder life than men do. He does not believe in equal rights for women.

Mr. Christy describes his travels. He doesn't think that anyplace has all the beauty that Montana has.

Tape #2  
Side B

Mr. Christy tells about some of his investments, and describes his philosophy of business. Mr. Christy made one of his employees buy Liberty Bonds because he saw that he was wasting most of his money.

84 yrs. old

LIFE HISTORY

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Name: Christy (Christovitch) Matt J. Sex: M Race: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last First Middle Maiden  
 Present Address: 609 W. Galena Butte Silver Bow Montana 59701  
 Street Town County State Zip Code  
 Telephone: (406) Birthplace: Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia DOB: 1896

Years of School: 3-4 and business college Church Membership: Catholic - Presbyterian

Grandparents:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
Fa:						
Mo:						
Fa:						
Mo:						

Parents:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
: <u>Jacob Christovitch</u>		<u>Yugoslavia</u>		<u>Farmer</u>		
: <u>Annie Christovitch</u>		<u>Yugoslavia</u>				

Relatives (in order of birth):

Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>Miho</u>			<u>Yugoslavia</u>				
<u>Boza (Bessie)</u>			<u>"</u>				

Occupational History (List jobs in order):

Position	Company	Date of First Employment: Dates

Spouse:

	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>Elizabeth E. Curry Christy</u>	<u>1904</u>	<u>Missoula, Montana</u>	<u>12</u>		<u>1923</u>	

Children (in order of birth):

Name	Sex	DOB	Birthplace	Yrs of School	Occupation(s)	DOM	DOD
<u>George</u>	<u>M</u>		<u>Butte</u>				
<u>Margery</u>	<u>F</u>		<u>Butte</u>				