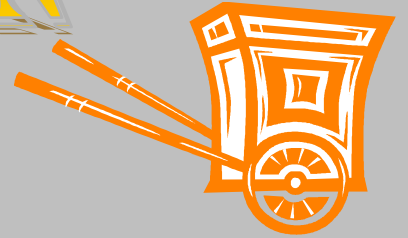


CHINWAGGIN

by J.R. "Barney" Olesen

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There were many little towns started in the old west. Some of these towns never had a post office or a school and most have long been forgotten. This is the story of one of those long forgotten towns.

Back in the early days, a Chinese immigrant family arrived on Beaver Creek. He brought with him his wife, three children, a couple of cousins, and their families. Mr. Chin had been a master rickshaw builder in China and so when they reached their spot on Beaver Creek, Mr. Chin decided to start a wagon factory. He put up a sign on the old stage route that ran from the gold country to Minneapolis.

The sign said: "Chin Waggins." Evidently, Mr. Chin wasn't as good at spelling as he was at rickshaw building since he replaced the "o" with an "i." The second line stated "waggin tongues" were available. Eventually, the stage line recognized, although they never stopped or established a station there, this spot as the little town of "Chinwaggin."

Everything was going fine until a group of dissatisfied, displeased, misplaced, and displaced Cree arrived at Chinwaggin to replace, displace, and dispatch the Chins, presumably from the Chinese version of the happy hunting ground. Their houses were burned and even the brick outhouse was destroyed. The Cree erected their luxurious teepees and resumed hunting on, what they claimed was *their* hunting grounds. When the cavalry caught up with the dissatisfied, misplaced, and displaced Cree, they disorganized and reorganized the dissatisfied, displeased, misplaced, and displaced natives and dispatched them to the place where they had originally been placed where they became dissatisfied, displeased, misplaced, and displaced so that they could continue being displeased. It should be noted that the disorganizing and reorganizing caused a busy day at the happy hunting ground.

Now only the sign remained, as a reminder of the Chins, until a fellow by the name of Henry Holmes homesteaded on the old town site. He bought the old abandoned Ashfield section house from the railroad about two miles away and placed it on the old Chinwaggin town site. Henry was a horse breeder, raiser, trader, and breaker.

Henry wasn't much on horse whispering, however, he was long on horse swearing. Some people believe that the sagebrush leaves were turned bluish-gray-green as they are today by the blue air created from his swearing. When old Henry swore, his horses listened.

My parents owned a team of horses that Henry had broken. Those horses were hard to catch, a good thing because it proved they had spirit until you swore at them, at which point they would see who could get in the corral first. My father, a devout Lutheran, would try to catch them for about three hours and then try his hand at swearing. The final attempt would come when he tried to get Falla (half calf-coyote-dog) out of the backseat of our old thirty-seven Ford to help. Falla just wagged his tail and stayed put. Falla was a member of the cow-dog union and as such he was not allowed to chase horses, cats, chickens, ducks, pigs, or anything else. Dad was not an accomplished *curser*, a couple of "damns" and a few "sons of" would generally do the trick. I could never figure out why he didn't start the swearing right away. Pat and Blue were sold to the can, when I was about fifteen, and replaced with a used Ford tractor - the can indicating a dog food cannery. I believe those two horses are now the patron saints of all misbehaving dogs.

When Henry became old, tractors were replacing horses, so Henry sold the place to my parents. Some years before my parents bought it, the sign was removed and is now forever lost.

With my father passed away, my little sister was in college, my mother moved to town, and I left the ranch the fall of nineteen fifty-nine. After I left, the house was torn down and so now I can say, although I never got a medal or a certificate, that I am the last and the oldest surviving tongue-waggin "chinwagger" to have lived in Chinwaggin, Montana.