

## Charity Dillon – Old Woman’s Grave

The “Old Woman’s Grave” road runs from where it splits from River Road to MT Hwy 285, just east of Radersburg. The road was the original stage line route from Springville (near the Cook Mansion) to Radersburg and was part of the major route from Helena to Radersburg.

Along the road nestled in the Limestone Hills was the home of the woman known as Charity Dillon. Her home was not a stagecoach way station, but a favorite stop by travelers on the road. Whether it was for a meal, a drink of water from the spring (or perhaps a little stronger drink), everyone was welcomed by Charity.

Charity Dillon has become legend in Broadwater County although very little is actually known about her. The most common lore regarding Charity Dillon is that she was born in Missouri as Priscilla Allen and became engaged to a young man who decided to go west to seek his fortune. He promised to return to her after creating a life for them in the west.

He never returned.

Priscilla Allen decided to go west and search for her fiancé. Lore has it that traveling alone by horseback, she arrived in Diamond City in 1866. From Diamond City, Priscilla travelled to Radersburg, where she found her fiancé happily married to another woman and with 2 children. The courageous Priscilla did not want to upset her former fiancé’s life but she still loved him and wanted to be near; so, she built a four-room cabin on the stage line between Radersburg and Springville. Legend has it she became known as “Charity” because of her famed kindness to travelers.

Charity Dillon was found dead by a traveler stopping at her cabin in February 1870. According to a small squib in the Helena Herald on February 25, 1870:

“Found Dead: We have received a letter from a well-known citizen of Springville, Meagher County, stating that a man by the name of John Boyce arrived in town on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and reported that he had found dead in her house a woman by the name of Charity Allen.”

She was buried alongside the road near her cabin. The site became known as the "Old Woman's Grave" despite the fact that she was quite young. Various accounts give her age as 25, 30 or 32 years old. Today there is a marble stone and a cross marking her grave site just off the west side of the "Old Woman's Grave Road".

Charity Dillon remains a mystery! No one seems to know why she was known as Charity Dillon or even how old she was when she died. Some people think she was an alcoholic and drank her self to death; other accounts attribute her death to food poisoning. Despite the account in the Helena Herald the "Old Woman's Grave" headstone says she died in 1872.

Her story has fascinated local people and visitors alike for 150 years!