

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Great Falls Central Business Historic District

other name/site number: Margaret Block/24CA0235; Roberts Building/24CA0231; Post Office/24CA232; Masonic Temple/24CA0670

2. Location

street & number: Second Avenue North- Partial Blocks 250, 302,304,307,308 & 309. All Blocks 310 and 311; not for publication: n/a
First Avenue North- Blocks 312, 313,314,315,316,317,318,319 and 320;
Central Avenue- Blocks 367, 366,365,364,363,362,361,360 and 359; and
First Avenue South- North half of Block 370.

city/town: Great Falls vicinity: n/a
state: Montana code: MT county: Cascade code: 013 zip code: 59401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark F. Gaunler / SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/10/2004
Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register see continuation sheet
- other (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

3/19/04

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private, public

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>99</u>	<u>65</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>99</u>	<u>65</u> TOTAL

Category of Property: District

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 4

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions:**

COMMERCE/business
 COMMERCE/professional
 COMMERCE/financial institutions
 COMMERCE/speciality stores
 COMMERCE/restaurant
 COMMERCE/department stores
 DOMESTIC/Hotel
 DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
 EDUCATION/school
 RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theaters
 GOVERNMENT/Federal Courthouse & Post Office

Current Functions:

COMMERCE/business
 COMMERCE/professional
 COMMERCE/financial institutions
 COMMERCE/speciality stores
 COMMERCE/restaurant
 LANDSCAPE/parking lot
 DOMESTIC/retirement living
 DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
 GOVERNMENT/Federal Courthouse & Post Office
 TRANSPORTATION/road-related

7. Description**Architectural Classification:**

LATE VICTORIAN/Victorian, Italianate, Romanesque
 LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Beaux Arts, Classical Revival (Neoclassical), Late Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival, Mission Revival
 LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Prairie School, Modern Movement/ International, Moderne, Art Deco
 OTHER/Depression Era commercial, World War I Era commercial, World War II Era commercial, Post-World War II commercial, Minimal Traditional, Contemporary commercial, Remodel
 MIXED

Materials:

foundation: CONCRETE, STONE
 walls: BRICK, TERRA COTTA, WOOD, STUCCO, CONCRETE, STONE, STEEL
 roof: ASPHALT, WOOD/shingle, TILE, TIN

Narrative Description

The Original Townsite of the City of Great Falls nestles in, and was shaped by, a broad curve of the Missouri River immediately north of the confluence of the Sun River, where the Missouri makes an extensive eastward turn towards Black Eagle Falls. When viewed from the rolling hills to the southwest, the Original Townsite is seen as a mature, forested area, nourished by a slow-moving, wide body of water and punctuated by numerous towers, steeples, spires and other large architectural interruptions. Only hints of residential areas are visible through the mature landscaping. An area approximately four blocks wide rises from the midpoint of this mass, and extends the ten-block, west-to-east, width of the Original Townsite. It consists of a collection of large, mostly multi-story, masonry buildings that serve to define the historic commercial heart of the city, the Great Falls Central Business Historic District. The buildings which rise from this historic core are, with few exceptions, commercial buildings that are evocative of the long history of commercial construction in the community. Representative examples from nearly every major period of the city's development display the construction methodologies and architectural details characteristic of those periods.

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The townsite, established by entrepreneur Paris Gibson and railroad magnate James J. Hill, was originally surveyed by Herbert P. Rolfe in 1883. He also participated in the creation of the townsite plat, which was filed September 29, 1884, in what was then, Choteau County. The plat was drawn in the Cartesian grid style and consisted of 160 blocks, most of which contained fourteen lots, 50 by 150 feet wide, dissected by an east to west alley. The north-to-south streets and east-to-west avenues were 80 feet wide; a standard measurement that allowed freighters the room to turn their wagons around. Central Avenue, which splits the townsite east-to-west measures a substantial ninety feet wide. Park Avenue, perpendicular to Central Avenue, follows the contour of the Missouri River at the western edge of the townsite, separating the business district from the railroad and public area to the west.

Paris Gibson had great depth of experience in the inner workings of cities, as well as many business contacts, when he planned his city by the Missouri River. He drew from political, manufacturing and business experience he gained in both Maine and Minneapolis and applied it to the design of the fledgling city. His preliminary planning suggested that rail lines would follow the flat land of the river bottom; industries would line the city to the northeast, along the riverbank; a landscaped park, at the riverfront to the west, would provide recreation and solace for residents who would live in neighborhoods flanking the central business district, at the heart of the community. The careful preliminary planning and subsequent development is obvious and continues to shape the built environment of Great Falls.

Mrs. Herbert P. Rolfe described the actual 1884 townsite from the Rolfe preemption claim some two miles southeast of the river, "On the long sweep of land from our shack to the river, grass and sagebrush grew, and nothing indicated that here would rise a city. Piles of rocks were placed at the corners of streets and avenues to show their location."¹

The area, originally ancient, relatively flat, floodplains, proved conducive to construction and an ideal locale for establishing a town. The terrain gradually climbs from the river through a broad, flat plain to gently rolling hills. The river offered water for consumption and industrial development. Huge waterfalls were ultimately harnessed for hydroelectric energy and smelting operations, as well as flour and lumber mills. The designation of Great Falls as a railroad terminus and the subsequent spur lines to the city ensured the success of these developing industries and the downtown business district, which grew to meet the demands of the settlers.

Initial construction in the community, typical of most fledgling frontier towns, consisted of tents, shacks and temporary dwellings built from the materials at hand or those available in the area. Materials generally came from Fort Benton, some 42 miles northeast of Great Falls, at the head of Missouri River navigation. The similarity to other towns ended abruptly, however, due mainly to the vigilance of Paris Gibson. He carefully "advanced the interests of his city" by engaging "powerful outsiders" and area capitalists in community building.² He also carefully controlled the sale of both commercial and residential lots. Within six years, "permanent" buildings dominated the business district, which provided goods for the 1890 population of nearly 4,000. Large commercial buildings displayed Victorian, Romanesque and Classical Revival styles. Many were executed in locally quarried sandstone. The population rose to nearly 15,000 by 1900 and the central business district continued its rapid expansion.

¹ Martha Edgerton (Rolfe)Plassmann, "How Great Falls Began," *True West*, Jan.-Feb. 1969, Pages 10-11,62-64.

² Richard B. Roeder, "A Settlement on the Plains: Paris Gibson and the Building of Great Falls," *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Autumn 1992, Page 4-19.

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The period between 1910 and 1920, in which Great Falls grew to a population of 24,121, effectively demonstrates the optimism held by downtown businesses. The heavy styles of the 1890's gave way to brick, commercial buildings with eclectic, Renaissance and Beaux Arts details, most often executed in elaborate terra cotta. The majority of the contributing buildings within the Central Business Historic District date from this period. Very few major fires were recorded, and it would appear that many of the "permanent" buildings of the past were simply demolished and replaced with stylish new buildings.

Great Falls, unlike many communities that suffered great population losses in the 1920's and 1930's, continued to grow and to improve. Some Art Deco and Moderne buildings were added to the downtown landscape during the 1930-1950 period, but building has never been as confident as it was during the expansion years of 1910-1920. Additional residential areas and the growth of automobile use, contributed to the loss of many downtown buildings for two reasons; upper floor living was discontinued and parking was needed. Construction since 1940, with few exceptions, has been limited to one-story commercial buildings and a number of buildings have given way to parking lots.

The built environment has spread in all directions from the Original Townsite. The earliest residences were mainly located south of the business district. Building lots on the northside were somewhat reserved for the later construction of larger, more elaborate homes. The Northside Residential Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in April of 1991, contains many of the city's largest historic homes, several churches and the Cascade County Courthouse. It contains 257 contributing resources and lies between the northern boundary of the Central Business Historic District and the parks adjacent to the river.

The Railroad Historic District, which was listed in the National Register in February of 1993, encompasses railroad related buildings, west side parks and the monumental Civic Center, which rises dramatically at the west end of the Central Business Historic District, marking the beginning of Central Avenue. The Railroad District, which contains fifty-seven contributing resources, defines the western boundary and wraps around the southwest corner of the Central Business Historic District.

The city has spread over fifty blocks to the east beyond the Original Townsite. The character of the area immediately east of the business district changes quickly from newer commercial to residential development, with a high percentage of Arts and Crafts era housing, effectively dating the neighborhood.

The earliest residential area, located south of the Central Business District, has been altered by encroaching commercial uses and the demolition and alteration of historic housing stock. The city's oldest extant home, a small log cabin built in 1884, was recently discovered in this neighborhood. The lower south side has been targeted by Neighborhood Housing Services and the City of Great Falls for extensive rehabilitation efforts.

Before the turn of the nineteenth century, a shallow buffalo crossing became the location of the first bridges, one a railroad bridge and the other a wagon bridge, connecting the small settlement of Johnstown, on the west side of the river, to Great Falls. As the population grew, and the automobile became popular, transportation improvements followed. With the addition of bridges residential areas spread across the rivers and onto the rolling hills overlooking the original community. The same improvements also facilitated the creation of additional commercial areas, including those of the north and west side of the Missouri River on Smelter Avenue and the Northwest Bypass. The Tenth Avenue South state highway strip became the preferred construction site for businesses after the 1950's, drawing businesses and shoppers away from the historic core of the city, and is now one of Montana's busiest streets.

Through all the changes wrought by 119 years of history, the Central Business Historic District has remained a significant commercial core in Great Falls. Visually and functionally distinguished from the surrounding areas, it continues to provide a traditional "Main Street" experience for residents and visitors. The design, construction methods, materials and uses of the contributing buildings, which constitute a strong, sixty-six percent majority in the district, present an opportunity to glean a sense of time and relate each building to the development of the community. Eighty-two percent of the buildings in the district were

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constructed before 1952; ten percent between 1886 and 1900, thirty percent between 1901 and 1920, twenty-eight percent from 1921 to 1940 and fourteen percent from 1941 to 1952. New construction in the district has not reached those levels in the past fifty years; only five percent were built between 1954 and 1959, three percent from 1960 to 1969, four percent from 1970 to 1979, five percent from 1980 and 1989, two percent from 1991 to 1999, and only one percent date from 2000. The majority of the buildings in the Central Business Historic District were functionally designed for retail/commercial purposes and have been adapted for reuse many times reflecting the whims of progress and the changing needs of the community.

Landscapes and Landscaping

Paris Gibson's original plans for the City of Great Falls included establishment of miles of landscaped boulevards and a substantial park system, that originally had a total area of 407 acres.³ Two thousand shade trees were planted in 1887, as part of a program that continues to benefit the city. In April of 1903, the *Great Falls Tribune* reported that; "With 20,000 elm and ash trees budding into beauty, Great Falls now maintains probably the largest and most successful municipal nursery in the west."

By 1903 the city had completed over eight miles and 2,925 feet of boulevarding, and the trees, which were grown from seed planted in the municipal nursery in 1897, were ready to take their place in the rapidly improving landscape. Great Falls had already "become famous throughout the west as a city of residences where people enjoy nature in all its fullness, though planted on the prairie."⁴

The Park Commission planted trees in the area of the Great Falls Central Business Historic District sparingly and few were planted on Central Avenue. Set backs of commercial buildings did not allow landscaping as the sidewalks met building foundations in most cases, and sidewalk vaults extended out from the basements of most businesses. The few historic plantings included Norway maple, green ash, and lindens on First Avenue South; green ash and honey locusts on First Avenue North; and green ash and American elms on Second Avenue North.

Today, small trees line the streets throughout the Great Falls Central Business Historic District, in a continuing effort to soften the landscape. The hardy and preferred trees currently being planted include green ash, little leaf linden, Norway maple, and honey locust. Plantings are mostly in planned cutouts in the sidewalks. A "streetscape" project, completed in 1992, filled in the many sidewalk vaults, produced new, decorative sidewalks and added reproduction street lights to the central business district. Current city codes require landscaping as part of new construction or rehabilitation projects.

Small, landscaped parks were added in blocks 367 and 313 and "parking lots" occur in almost every block in the central business district, marking locations where buildings have been removed, visually documenting the architectural and commercial losses as well as the growing need to provide for the automobile. Parking facilities or garages are located in Blocks 315, 364 and 365.

Constructed Landscape Description

The perimeter of the Central Business Historic District is anchored by several buildings of primary significance that retain excellent integrity and exhibit wonderfully rich, architectural detail. The two-story, 1936 Daily Apartment building at 209 Park Drive anchors the northwest corner of the district. It displays the straightforward horizontality indicative of the Prairie style, including an unornamented façade with emphasis on bands of windows.

The Washington School and Bucher Block anchor the northeastern corner of the district. The massive three-story, 1909 Washington School at 1015 First Avenue North, designed by Bird and Van Teylingen, is an excellent example of the Classical Revival (Neoclassical) style often seen in schools, public and governmental facilities. The massive, detached building is of light-colored

³ Eilan R. Yuill, *A Centennial Celebration*, privately printed, Great Falls, 1984, page 23.

⁴ "Thousands of trees grown by the City", *Great Falls Tribune*, April 16, 1903, page 8.

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brick with white terra-cotta detailing. The elementary school was closed in 1970 and has been converted for commercial use. It maintains excellent integrity.

The Bucher Block at 113 Tenth Street, a two-story, World War I Era commercial building constructed in dark-colored brick, is an excellent example of commercial property built with little ornamentation to the façade.

The massive, five-story, light colored brick, New Park Hotel at 102 Central Avenue wonderfully represents the Mission Revival style of architecture that utilized fanciful battlements, bays, and scalloped parapet similar to the missions of California. It was built in 1915, on the site of an 1892, wood frame hotel destroyed by fire. The use of terra cotta in ornamentation reflects not only the style, but also the intended grandeur in establishing this building as Great Falls premier hotel. George Shanley, the architect, was known for his detailed use of terra cotta and design of large-scale buildings in the state of Montana. The Park Hotel marks the beginning of the Central Business Historic District at the southwestern edge. Originally built near the railroad depot district to cater to travelers, the hotel has been converted to retirement living. It maintains excellent architectural integrity.

The one-story, 1947 Bus Depot at 326 First Avenue South, anchors the far southern boundary at Block 370. This primary building, designed by McIver and Cohagen, is a charming example of the Moderne style. Its low profile with exaggerated elevation at the entrance and clean, smooth, streamlined exterior with string of round-ended windows are elements typically used in Moderne buildings. Originally built as a bus depot for national bus lines, it was rehabilitated in 2002 for use as the City's Transit Bus depot. The building maintains excellent architectural integrity.

The southeastern boundary of the district is anchored by the Largent School at 915 First Avenue South. Designed by Bird and Van Teylingen, the three-story, brick school was built in 1917 and displays elements of the Classical Revival style, in its massing, ornate terra-cotta detailing and grand entrance. It has functioned as an administration building for the school district and served special, alternative, Indian and adult education classes since the grade school closed in 1973.

Other buildings that are primary resources and already listed in the National Register within the district include the Federal Building/Post Office at 215 1st Avenue North, the Margaret Block at 413-415 Central Avenue, the Masonic Temple at 821 Central Avenue, and the Roberts/Elmore Building at 512-514 Central Avenue.

The three-story, 1910 Federal Building/Post Office (listed 3/13/1986) is an outstanding example of early Twentieth Century federal architecture in the second Renaissance Revival style. The emphasis on grandeur in a public facility is well represented by the use of a long and wide set of steps to the multiple entrances, a main focus of the building; and because of the ornate use of brick, stone, and terra cotta in the window surrounds, entablature, frieze, and cornice.

The three-story, 1914 Margaret Block (listed 8/2/1984), is a compellation of several styles of the 1910s, however, it best exhibits the characteristics of the Main Street Commercial style, mixed details. The architect Henry Black, studied apartment building in California, and applied his expertise in the design of the sleeping rooms and rest rooms in the Margaret's upper floors.

The Masonic Temple (listed 12/28/2000), a three-story building, is another grand scale Bird and Van Teylingen design, combining several architectural elements of exotic styles to promote the message of a secret society with medieval origins. The lofty towers represent the Gothic style, while steep gables and arched doorways reflect the Tudor style. The Moorish (Mediterranean) influence is visible in the unusual and commanding polychromatic design.

The four-story, 1916 Roberts/Elmore Building (listed 9/12/1985), designed by Henry Black and builder/owner, William Roberts best exhibits the characteristics of the Victorian style in iron pilasters and entrance hoods, while the Classical Revival (Neoclassical) style is obvious in the ornate metal cornice with consoles, metopes, and decorative frieze. Roberts also designed and constructed the 1914

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Northern Hotel at 412-414 Central Avenue but believed the Elmore to be his best attempt at hotel design. In this building, Roberts successfully combined retail shops at the first level with hotel accommodations above.

Seven other buildings were identified as primary resources within the District, two of which were built in the 1930's period, but display two very unique styles. The four-story medical facility, the Montana Building, constructed in 1930 at 501-505 First Avenue North, is a fanciful Bird and Van Teylingen design. As in the Masonic Temple, it displays the Moorish (Mediterranean) influence in polychrome, terra cotta, and battlemented parapet. Another 1930s primary building within the historic district is the modest, one-story, 1936 Carl Holm Gas and Oil at 800 First Avenue North. It exemplifies the Moderne style in smooth, curved surfaces, and crown parapet at the entrance which is placed diagonally to the corner of the block.

The three-story Leland Apartments and one-story Leland Triplex, constructed at 726 and 722-724 First Avenue North, also qualify as primary resources within the district. The triplex, devoid of ornamentation exemplifying the trend to move away from the historic precedents, has remained nearly unchanged since the date of its construction. Shanley designed the apartments using elements from three basic styles. The Exotic Revival frieze displays a unique banding of square, raised, brick; and round windows reflect the California Mission Revival style. The most obvious style is the clean, Old English, Colonial Revival; three bays each have entrances that reflect this in pilasters, piers, and a white, flat cornice with brackets over each door.

The very ornate Beaux Arts style is well represented in three buildings considered primary in the district. The three-story, 1910 Liberty Theatre at 301 Central Avenue, also a Shanley design, is a combination of the Beaux Arts and Italianate styles. Rounded Italianate windows with terra cotta surrounds are complimented by the further use of terra cotta in banding, egg-and-dart and leaf motifs, peace bundles, and torches. The fanciful elements of Beaux Arts were commonly employed in the design of theatres nationwide. The three-story, 1922 Leigland Apartments at 11 Ninth Street, combines Tudor Revival with Beaux Arts in an exotic presentation of architecture. The Tudor-arched, stone doorway with molded architrave enhances the entrance while Beaux Arts terra cotta and stone pendants, wheat bundles, fans, and spandrels dress up the exterior. The 1913, four-story, Palace Theatre/Rainbow Building at 601-607 Central Avenue, also displays fanciful, terra cotta design work. The theatre, now a parking garage, still has gargoyles in place that peer down at the parked cars inside.

McIver and Cohagen designed the Beaux Arts, 1928 Graham Building at 608-610 Central Avenue. Of the extant buildings in the district, this three-story building displays the most exaggerated use of terra cotta. The upper stories are nearly totally sheathed in terra cotta banding, battlemented parapet, balustrade, urns, curvilinear designs, piers, and decorative garlands.

The Late Victorian buildings in the district, mostly constructed prior to 1900, set the historic precedent for other styles in the ornate utilization of iron and stone. Cast and galvanized iron columns are commonly found in this style, as are stone accents, pediments, and ornamentation. The Victorian buildings within the district, however, are plainer in ornamentation and elements of the Italianate Style are noted in rounded window moldings and keystones. The three-story, 1890 Realty Block and Grand Hotel at 500-506 1/2 Central Avenue display the Italianate element of patterned, arched, brick moldings at the windows. The two-story, 1890 Beehive Store at 317-319 Central Avenue exhibits the heavy Romanesque style, arched shoulder windows and Norman detail in battlemented parapet. The one-story, Murphy Maclay Hardware Store at 200-206 Central Avenue, the oldest building in the district (constructed in 1886), presents iron columns of the Victorian style with chevron and floral motif at its front elevation.

The styles of the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Movement are modestly represented in the district. This movement indicated a break from the conventional design in building; design became linear, and ornamentation nearly non-existent. The Commercial buildings appear very straightforward in style. They are generally one to two stories tall, square or rectangular, low-massed, and brick or brick veneer with very little exterior detail. Buildings in this style include the two-story, 1915 Russell Block at 427 Central Avenue, and the one-story 1928 Leonard Taylor Chevrolet at 800 Central and the 1910, two-story, Standard Garage at 526 First Avenue North.

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The Modern Movement, a new age of cubic forms, flat surfaces, and clean and sleek design with geometric ornamentation, is represented by Art Deco, International, and Moderne styles of construction in the district. The best example of Moderne, the one-story, 1947 Bus Depot and Garage at 326 First Avenue South, displays the curvilinear walls and sleek lines of the style. The one-story, 1940 Great Falls Building and Loan Association, at 13-15 Fifth Street is another good example of Moderne, punctuated by an "upside down U" extended wall at the entrance. The late Moderne, four-story, 1951 Barber Lydiard Building at 600 Central Avenue, is a smooth, streamlined, modern building that dominates its corner lot position with a curved wall main entrance at the corner of the street.

The Art Deco style is linear in design and often with chevrons and zigzag designs. The 1931, two-story, S.H. Kress building at 411 Central Avenue displays these marvelous motifs in the peach, turquoise, and gold colors popularly used in this style. Art Deco detailing is also very evident in the 1929 Paris Dry Goods at 321 Central Avenue.

Buildings in the district that lack clear, defining architectural characteristics of style, were constructed before and after World War I, the Depression, World War II, and Post-World War II, or have been remodeled, are categorized as "Other". The Post-World War buildings are identified as Minimal Traditional or Contemporary.

The buildings in the category, "Other," are usually low in mass, have plain facades, experienced some remodeling, and are constructed in simple brick or brick veneer. Little attention is given to ornamentation and design is more oriented towards use-specific. These traits are exemplified by the one-story, Post-World War II Era commercial, 1946 Bungalow Bakery at 509 First Avenue North, Depression Era commercial, 1934 Minter Sheet Metal at 507 First Avenue North, and World War I Era commercial, 1917 Ever Ready Vulcanizing Co. at 705-707 Central Avenue. Remodeling, however, has not diminished the buildings' contributions to the district.

The Minimal Traditional style is found at the northwest-end of the district in the one-story, 1949 Dailey Residence, 203 Park Drive. This style, originally based in the Tudor design, which used brick as a preferred construction material and emphasized large chimneys and gabled entrances, became very popular after World War II. The huge chimney at the south elevation, and large, gabled portico in this brick residence, is indicative of the style.

The Contemporary style buildings are those constructed in the 1950s often using plain course brick, shed roofs, and/or pre-fabricated concrete with simple lines of design bent towards the austere. The one-story, 1950 George L. Tracy Co. at 910 First Avenue North, excellently portrays this style because of a low massing, window groupings, and masonry wall extending from the building accentuating the linear characteristic of this style. Several of the Contemporary style buildings were constructed after the historic period.

Property Types and Uses

The vast majority of the buildings within the Central Business Historic District have kept pace with the needs of the shopping public for many years. From hardware stores to speciality shops, furs to tee shirts, dry goods to antiques, the Main Street Commercial buildings have been able to adapt to the changing times with little physical change.

Many of the upper levels, originally dedicated to apartment or hotel living, currently stand empty, such as the 1890 Hotel Grand at 500-506½ Central Avenue. There are a few exceptions, most notably the 1916 Elmore Hotel at 522-528 Central Avenue which has been rehabilitated for apartment use. The major historic hotels in the district, the 1915 "New" Park Hotel at 102 Central Avenue and the 1909 Rainbow Hotel at 20 3rd Street North, have both been converted to senior/retirement living. The 1920 Johnson Hotel, at 419 Central Avenue has been rehabilitated, by the Business Improvement District, for retail, office and one residential space. It is the home of the Downtown Technology Center, Downtown Association, as well as the Business Improvement District offices.

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Several apartment buildings were added to the downtown landscape during the period of significance to serve the needs of a growing population. They include the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival, 1915 Bowman Apartments at 104-106 Second Avenue North, 1916 Leland Apartments at 726 First Avenue North, 1922 Leigland Apartments at 11 Ninth Street South, 1926 Lorraine at 102 Second Avenue North, and 1928 Leland Annex at 718 First Avenue North. The Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Movement building is the 1915 Nilson and Smith Flats at 13-15 Seventh Street North; the 1916 Triplex at 722-724 is classified as a World War I Era commercial; the 1936 Dailey Apartments at 209 Park Drive as Depression Era commercial.

Only four residences are included in the district and they are located at the northwest corner of the district. They are the 1949 Dailey Residence at 203 Park Drive and the three remodeled, 1909 Secombe Residences at 113, 115, 117 Park Drive. The large residences, originally single family dwellings, have been converted to apartments. They are on choice building lots, very near the business district, with Gibson Park just across the street.

Two schools were built at the eastern end of the business district; the 1909 Washington School at 1015 First Avenue North and the 1917 Largent School at 915 First Avenue North. The Washington elementary school closed in 1970 and has become private business offices. Largent, which closed in 1973, has served special and adult education and office functions through 2003.

The impressive, 1912 Great Falls Federal Building and Post Office continues in its original use and stands as the only governmental building in the district. The Great Falls Civic Center, home to city government, and the Cascade County Courthouse are located nearby, in adjacent historic districts.

Financial institutions have been an important part of downtown development since the first bank was organized in 1886, when Great Falls was part of Choteau County and Montana was a territory. Only the 1914 Great Falls National Bank, currently Wells Fargo, at 21 Third Street North retains historic architectural integrity. D.A. Davidson & Company, a nationally known investment company, started business in 1935 in the one-story Steele Building at Third and Central. In 1969 four stories were added to the building, a graphic representation of the growth of the firm. While non-contributing because of the date of alterations, the building remains an economic force in the downtown. The business has expanded to the Liberty Theatre Building across Third street, which has been closed for one-half block for a plaza under the skybridge which connects the buildings.

Freemasonry has a long and significant history in Great Falls. The official charter for Cascade Lodge No. 34 Ancient Free & Accepted Masons was granted in 1887. Lodge meetings were held in shared sites downtown until the 1914 Masonic Lodge at 821 Central Avenue was built. The International Order of Odd Fellows building at 325 1st Avenue North was built in 1912. The three-story Main Street Commercial building provided space for the editorial, advertising and business departments of the Great Falls Leader from 1916 – 1959, in addition to serving the fraternal needs of the popular I.O.O.F Lodge.⁵ In 1949, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) added a lodge to the district at 510 1st Avenue North.

The 1929 Paris Dry Goods Store at 327 Central Avenue provides an excellent example of the history of commerce in downtown Great Falls. Paris Dry Goods Company, originally established in 1894, grew with the town to become one of the largest private department stores in the state. The Paris, purchased by a chain in 1955, added another floor, modernized and purchased an adjacent parking lot. The store continued its tradition of providing "high-grade" dry goods in downtown Great Falls until it closed in 1998, the last major department store in the historic core of the city. The development of this business not only mirrors the growth of commerce in Great Falls, but also the rise and fall of "Main Street America." It has been adapted for reuse as a telephone service center for the National Electronic Warranty Company.

⁵ "Leader Founded by Rolfe as Weekly Paper in 1888" *Great Falls Tribune*, Diamond Jubilee Edition, November 11, 1959, Sec. V, page 11.

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Public transportation has been available in Great Falls since 1887, when a horse-drawn street car whisked travelers up Central Avenue to Seventh Street and back, three times a week. By 1891, five routes were available at half-hour intervals, in street cars powered by electricity from the Black Eagle Dam.⁶ The automobile, however, was an innovation of the 1900's that substantially altered, and continues to alter, the built environment of Great Falls. Business were established to provide the vehicles, parts and other supplies necessary for motoring, ultimately eliminating those catering to a horse-powered society. Historic photos show fairly large numbers of cars on Central Avenue by 1915. Auto industry related buildings in the Central Business District that included auto maintenance, gas and oil, and sales, were concentrated mostly between Sixth and Ninth Streets. These buildings were the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival buildings exemplified by the 1910 Standard Garage at 526 First Avenue North, the 1913/1935 Motor Inn buildings at 109 and 117 Second Avenue North, the 1913 Lee Forest Garage at 117-119 First Avenue North, 1913 Suhr's Buick at 15-17 Fifth Street South, and the 1928 Leonard Taylor Chevrolet at 800 Central Avenue.

The Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Movement buildings associated with the transportation industry are the 1929 Jensen and Johnson Motor Co. at 806-810 First Avenue North and 1948 Bennett Motors at 26 Ninth Street South. The Modern Movement buildings are the 1936 Carl Holm Gas and Oil at 800 Central Avenue, 1940 Joe McNaught Service Station at 926 Central Avenue, and the 1949 Dubbs Block at 815 First Avenue North.

Other buildings related to the auto industry include the World War I Era commercial, 1917 Ever Ready Vulcanizing Co. at 705-707 Central Avenue; the Depression Era commercial, 1929 Ludwig's Garage at 126 Second Avenue North, the Pre-World War II Era commercial, 1940 Goodrich Silverton Store at 714 Central Avenue; the World War II Era commercial, 1945 Seese Chevrolet Garage at 811 Central Avenue; the Post-World War II Era commercial, 1940 Kearns Garage and 1948 Kearns Motor at 617-621 and 625 First Avenue South; and Contemporary remodeled, 1917 Falls Tire Co. at 312 First Avenue North.

As the population of the city grew, and the automobile created ever-increasing mobility, new areas opened up for both residential and commercial development, increasing the demand for improved streets and additional bridges. Large downtown hotels, that originally catered heavily to those arriving on the railroads, gave way to motor inns, that cater to those who travel by car. Three motor inns were added to the Central Business District between 1960 and 1978; Ponderosa Inn at 220 Central Avenue; O'Haire Manor, at 17 Seventh Street South; and the Triple Crown Motor Inn at 625 Central. Large, new shopping malls, with ample parking, pulled business and shoppers from the downtown area. Vacant buildings, within the Central Business Historic District, were often demolished to create more parking opportunities. Two large public parking garages have been added in the district, one at 400 1st Avenue North, in 1980, and the other at 301 First Avenue South, in 2001.

Great Falls has not suffered the "preservation by neglect or poverty" that plagued many Montana communities when populations dropped dramatically as a result of the homestead exodus from the state. The population remained relatively stable in Great Falls and therefore property owners were able to "improve" their buildings or demolish and build new businesses. The Central Business District joined another major national trend after the 1950's, that of "modernizing" historic buildings in order to be competitive with the malls that were pulling business out of the historic downtown. In some cases, whole facades were covered, but many have simply been "improved" at the street level. The sixty-five buildings that do not make a significant contribution to the history of the district, were either heavily remodeled or constructed after the historic period. The 103 buildings that do make a contribution to the historic significance of the district, have retained considerable historic fabric or have experienced changes that are sympathetic with the original design of the building, or are reversible.

The City of Great Falls has created a tax increment zone to encourage investment in the historic commercial area and has invested heavily in improving the public sidewalks, streets and lighting. An active Great Falls Downtown Association, plans activities to entice people downtown, and the Business Improvement District, provides façade improvement grants and other tools for downtown

⁶ Ellan R. Yuill, *A Centennial Celebration*, privately printed, Great Falls, 1984, page 34.

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development. An active Historic Preservation Advisory Commission initiated the Architectural and Historical Survey and National Register nomination for the district, and is dedicated to promote rehabilitation efforts.

In spite of the miles of shopping development removed from Central Avenue, the Great Falls Central Business Historic District provides something that is not available in other areas; a long and colorful history of Great Falls, visible in its public spaces and significant historic buildings. From the first documented Fourth of July parade in 1887, citizens have gathered on Central Avenue to strut their patriotism or "Irish," to promote fairs and carnivals, or parade their pets and dolls. They gather to celebrate the seasons, protest or support events, or simply to shop in the historic heart of the city.

Integrity

Despite infill and remodeling efforts throughout its 120 year history, the Great Falls Central Business Historic District retains a high degree of integrity. The built environment within the historic district boundaries effectively conveys its association with the commercial development of this important Central Montana city. Ranging from the ornate to Spartan, the contributing buildings display integrity of design, workmanship and materials, and stand as fine representations of architectural style. Indeed, when viewed as a whole, the district relates a strong sense of the patterns of commercial enterprise, community development, and late nineteenth century through twentieth century design.

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Building List

Address Historic (parentheses are historic)	Name	Construction	NR Evaluation	Style
1st Avenue North				
100 1 st Ave. North	Golden Triangle	1987	Noncontributing	Modern
101 1 st Ave. North	Hardees	1986	Noncontributing	Modern
117 - 119 1 st Ave. North	Lee Forest Garage, GTF Nash Inc	1913	Contributing	Mission Revival/Prairie
120 1 st Ave. North	Heritage Bank	1991	Noncontributing	Modern
215 1 st Ave. North	Great Falls Post Office	1910	Primary NR listed	Classical Revival
309 1 st Ave. North	Great Falls Automatic Telephone Co	1909	Noncontributing	Remodel
310 1 st Ave N, 21 3rd St. N	GTF National Bank/Ford Bldg	1914	Contributing	Beaux Arts
312 (316 - 318) 1 st Ave. N	Falls Tire Co	1917	Contributing	Contemporary Remodel
314 1 st Ave. North	Eklund Building	1947-1949	Noncontributing	Remodel
319 - 321 1 st Ave. North	Conlin Motor Company	1928	Noncontributing	Pre-Depression Comm
320 1 st Ave. North,	Monarch Loan/Mortgage Co	1949	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
325 1 st Ave. North	IOOF Hall	1912	Contributing	Classical Revival
400 1 st Ave. North	Parking Garage	1980	Noncontributing	Modern
401 - 411 1 st Ave North	Mountain States Telephone Bldg	1953	Noncontributing	Contemporary
413 - 415 1 st Ave. North	Thurston Auto	1927	Noncontributing	Remodel
417 - 425 1 st Ave. North	Montana Bank	1957	Noncontributing	Contemporary
426 1 st Ave. North,	Auto Teller-GTF Fed. Bank	1978	Noncontributing	Modern
501 - 505 1 st Ave. North	Montana Building	1930	Primary	Mediterranean Revival
507 1 st Ave. North	WG Minter Sheet Metal/Roofing Wrks	1934	Contributing	Depression Era Comm
508 1 st Ave. North	Vera Fandericks (Adams)	1949	Noncontributing	Remodel
509 1 st Ave. North	Bungalow Bakery	1946	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
510 1 st Ave. North	Veterans of Foreign Wars	1949	Noncontributing	Contemporary Remodel
511 1 st Ave. North	Great Harvest Bread	1998	Noncontributing	Modern
517 1 st Ave. North	Bowling Alley	1949	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
525 (527) 1 st Ave. North	HH Clack and Co	1928	Noncontributing	Remodel
526 (524) 1 st Ave. North	Standard Garage	1910	Contributing	Sullivan-esque/Classical Rev
706 (704) 1 st Ave. North	Cahalan Bros Wholesale Drug	1951	Contributing	Contemporary
710 (708) 1 st Ave. North	Maher's Rollertorium	1927	Noncontributing	Remodel
718 (716) 1 st Ave. North	Leland Annex	1928	Contributing	Colonial Revival
722 - 724 (720) 1 st Ave. N	Leland Apartment Triplex	1916	Primary	Other WWI Comm
726 1 st Ave. North	Leland Apartments	1916	Primary	Mixed
800 (806) 1 st Ave. North	Carl Holm Gas and Oil	1936	Primary	Moderne'/Art Deco
806 - 810 1 st Ave. North	Jensen/Johnson Motor Co	1929	Contributing	Prairie
811 1 st Ave. North	Wardrobe Co Cleaners	1912	Contributing	Mission Revival
814 1 st Ave. North	Riverside Automotive	1978	Noncontributing	Modern
815 1 st Ave. North	Dubbs Block/Great Falls Motor Co	1949	Contributing	Moderne'
825 (827) 1 st Ave. North	Haggarty Office	1988	Noncontributing	Modern
900 1 st Ave. N (15 9th St. N)	7-11	1979	Noncontributing	Modern
910 1 st Ave. North	George L Tracy Co	1950	Contributing	Contemporary
920-924 (916-922) 1 st Ave N	Montana Power Bldg	1917	Contributing	Tudor Revival
926 1 st Ave. North	Mountain States Telephone/Telegraph	1946	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
1015 (1013) 1 st Ave. North	Washington School	1909	Primary	Classical Revival

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1st Ave. South

215 1 st Ave. South	First Bank Auto Teller	1978	Noncontributing	Modern
300 1 st Ave. South	Victor Arios/Golden Gate Grocery	1896	Contributing	Victorian/Gothic
301 1 st Ave. South	Parking Garage	2001	Noncontributing	Modern
306 1 st Ave. South,	Stanley Block, Thompson Hotel	1910	Contributing	Other Pre WWII Commercial
308 (310) 1 st Ave. S	Victor Arios #2/Belmont Hotel	1913	Contributing	Prairie/Beaux Arts
312 - 318 1 st Ave. S	Auto Craft Shop	1962	Noncontributing	Modern
326 1 st Ave. South	Bus Depot and Garage	1947	Primary	Moderne'
401 1 st Ave. South	Sears Parking Garage	1971	Noncontributing	Modern
513 1 st Ave. South	Montana Garage	1928	Noncontributing	Remodel
617 - 621 1 st Ave. S	Garage	1940	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
625 1 st Ave. South	Kearns Motor	1948	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
915 1 st Ave. South	Largent School	1917	Primary	Classical Revival

2nd Ave. North

102 (104 - 106) 2 nd Ave N	Lorraine Apartments	1926	Contributing	Colonial Revival
104 - 106 2 nd Ave. N	Bowman Apts	1915	Contributing	Colonial Revival
109 2 nd Ave. North	Motor Inn/Great Falls Coach Lines	1935	Contributing	Mission Revival
117 2 nd Ave. North	Motor Inn	1913	Contributing	Mission Revival
126 2 nd Ave. North	Ludwig's Garage	1929	Contributing	Other Depression Era Comm

4th-10th St.s North

18 4 th St. North Commercial	Karmelkorn Confectionary	1936	Contributing	Other Depression Era
20 3 rd St North	Rainbow Hotel	1909	Contributing	Classical Revival/Art Deco
22 4 th St. North	HH Stanley Insurance	1957	Noncontributing	Contemporary
26 4 th St. North	Hank's Hamburger Inn (1st)	1935	Contributing	Other Depression Era Comm
121 (125) 4 th St. North	Tribune Building	1914	Contributing	Mission Revival
13 - 15 (17) 5 th St. North	GTF Building/Loan Assn	1940	Contributing	Moderne'
25 5 th St. North	GTF Federal Svngs Loan Assn	1957	Noncontributing	Contemporary
13 - 15 (19) 7 th St. North	Nilson and Smith Flats	1915	Contributing	Prairie
113 (119) 10 th St. North	Bucher Building	1916	Contributing	Other WWI Comm

2nd-9th Streets South

9 1/2, 21 2 nd St. South	Murphy Maclay	1901	Contributing	Victorian
14 - 18 5 th St. South	Skee's Gas Shop	1928	Contributing	Prairie Commercial
15-17 5 th St. South				
501- 509 1 st Ave North	Suhr's Buick	1913	Contributing	Mission Revival
24 (20) 5 th St. South	Mutual Oil Company	1928	Noncontributing	Remodel
12 (10) 6 th St. South	Lemon Boarding House	1897	Contributing	Victorian
14 (12-12½) 6 th St. South	Boland Realty	1957	Noncontributing	Contemporary
16 6 th St. South	Canton Café	1946	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
17 7 th St. South	O'Haire Manor	1960	Noncontributing	Modern
10 9 th St. South				
(826 Central Ave)	Texaco Service Station	1955	Noncontributing	Contemporary
11 9 th St. South	Leigland Apartments	1922	Primary	Tudor Revival/Beaux Arts
26 9 th St. South	Bennett Motors	1948	Contributing	Prairie/Moderne'

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Central Ave.

102 (100) Central Ave.	The New Park Hotel	1915	Primary	Mission Revival
105 (101-103) Central Ave.	Bach Cory Building (Block)	1890	Noncontributing	Remodel
111 Central Ave.	Albrecht's Furniture	1888	Contributing	Victorian
112 - 116 (118) Central Ave.	Gem Theater/Cobb Block	1888	Contributing	Victorian/Italianate
113 Central Ave.	Williard Storage and Commission	1888	Noncontributing	Victorian
115 Central Ave.	Montana Restaurant	1888	Noncontributing	Victorian
117 Central Ave.	Albrecht's Furniture (Original)	1886	Contributing	Victorian
119 (121 - 123) Central Ave.	Charteris Hardware	1888	Contributing	Victorian
122 (120) Central Ave.	Soft Drink Resort	1888	Contributing	Victorian/Remodel
127 Central Ave.	Hank's Hamburger Inn (2nd)	1938	Contributing	Contemporary Remodel
200 - 206 Central Ave.	Murphy Maclay Hardware Store	1886	Contributing	Victorian/Prairie
208 Central Ave.	R S Ford Block/Simpson Block	1892	Contributing	Victorian /Historic Remodel
220 - 224 Central Ave.	Ponderosa Inn	1969	Noncontributing	Modern
221 Central Ave.	DA Davidson Building	1921	Noncontributing	Remodel
300 Central Ave.	First Bank of Great Falls	1972	Noncontributing	Modern
301 Central Ave.	Liberty Theatre	1920	Primary	Beaux Arts/Italianate
309 - 311 Central Ave.	Kingsbury Block/Beckman's	1888	Contributing	Victorian/Art Deco
312 -318 Central Ave.	Dunn-Brown Building	1916	Contributing	Classical Revival/Beaux Arts
313 - 315 Central Ave.	Metropolitan	1929	Contributing	Greek Revival/Art Deco
317 - 319 Central Ave.	Beehive Store	1890	Contributing	Richardsonian Rom./Norman
320 - 322 Central Ave.	Thisted Building	1913	Contributing	Beaux Arts
324 (326) Central Ave.	Conrad Bank Building	1900	Noncontributing	Remodel
327 (321) Central Ave.	The Paris	1929	Contributing	Art Deco
400 - 408 Central Ave.	Strain Building	1915	Noncontributing	Remodel
401 (403) Central Ave.	Diana Shops	1953	Noncontributing	Remodel
405, 407, 409 Central Ave.	Dahl Jewelry Co	1916	Noncontributing	Remodel
411 (409) Central Ave.	S H Kress and Company	1931	Contributing	Art Deco
412 - 414 Central Ave.	Northern Hotel	1914	Contributing	Italianate and Victorian
413 - 415 Central Ave.	Margaret Block	1914	Primary NR listed	Prairie
416 Central Ave.	Bateman & Switzer Building	1914	Contributing	Victorian and Italianate
417 - 419 Central Ave.	Johnson Hotel	1920	Primary	Classical Revival
418 - 422 Central Ave.	McNair Building	1921	Noncontributing	Remodel
424 - 426 Central Ave.,	Cory Block Cory Hotel	1895/1944	Noncontributing	Remodel
427 (421-429) Central Ave	Russell Bldg (Russell Block)	1915	Contributing	Other Prairie
500-506 1/2 Central Ave	Lt 1 Realty Block, Lt 2 Hotel Grand	1890/1891	Contributing	Victorian/Italianate
501 Central Ave.	J A Berger Department Store	1908	Noncontributing	Contemporary Remodel
508 - 510 Central Ave.	Bishop Block	1909	Contributing	Victorian/Italianate
511 Central Ave.	Golden Rule (J C Penny)	1929	Noncontributing	Remodel
512 - 514 Central Ave.	Roberts Building	1910	Contributing	Egyptian Revival/Prairie
513 (515) Central Ave.	Matteucci Grocery/Western Auto	1927	Noncontributing	Remodel
517 - 527 Central Ave.	Times Square	1981	Noncontributing	Modern
518 - 520 Central Ave.,	JC Anthony Bldg, Davenport Hotel	1914	Contributing	Victorian/Prairie
522-528 (520) Central Ave	Roberts Building/Elmore Hotel	1917	Primary NR listed	Victorian/Classical
600 Central Ave.	Barber-Lydiard Building	1951	Contributing	International
601-607 Central Ave	Palace/Rainbow Bldg/Rocky Mtn Bldg	1913	Contributing	Beaux Arts/Mission Revival
608 - 610 Central Ave.	Graham Building	1928	Primary	Beaux Arts
609-611 Central Ave	Knights Candy Shop/Hastings Apts	1919	Contributing	Beaux Arts
612-614 (616) Central Ave	Mont Beer-614, 616-J Lauer Meats	1925	Contributing	Prairie
613 - 615 Central Ave.	Auto Electric Co	1926	Contributing	Mission Revival
616 Central Ave.	Sanitary Home Bakery	1927	Contributing	Other Pre-Depression Comm

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617 Central Ave.	Victor Ario's Saddlery Co	1916	Noncontributing	Remodel
618 Central Ave.	Oliver Spencer Paints	1927	Contributing	Other Pre-Depression Comm
619 (617) Central Ave	Victor Arios	1916	Noncontributing	Remodel
620 Central Ave.	Sullivan's Inc Women's Clothing	1928	Contributing	Other Pre-Depression Comm
622 Central Ave.	McIntosh Tailors and Men's Shop	1947	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
624 Central Ave.	Sturrock Toys	1950	Contributing	Contemporary
625 Central Ave.	Triple Crown Motor Inn	1978	Noncontributing	Modern
626 - 628 Central Ave 1-10 7 th St. N	Sturrock Block	1927	Contributing	Contemporary
700 Central Ave.	Standard Oil	1950	Noncontributing	Contemporary Remodel
705 - 707 Central Ave.	Ever Ready Vulcanizing Co	1917	Contributing	Other WWI Comm
708 - 710 Central Ave.	O'Connor Funeral Home	1924	Contributing	Other Pre-Depression Comm
709 Central Ave.	City Bar	1938	Noncontributing	Remodel
714 Central Ave.	Goodrich Silvertown Store	1940	Noncontributing	Pre WWII Comm
715 Central Ave.	Hamburger Stand	1937	Noncontributing	Tudor Revival
716 Central Ave.	Carlson Music Shop	1927	Noncontributing	Remodel
718 Central Ave.	Super Creamery	1935	Noncontributing	Other Depression Era Comm
718 1/2 (720) Central Ave.	Volkman's Beauty Salon	1936	Noncontributing	Other Depression Era Comm
720 (722) Central Ave.	Bailor's Ice Cream	1939	Noncontributing	Other Depression Era Comm
721(723) Central Ave.,	Hines Motor , City Food Market	1919	Contributing	Prairie/Mission Revival
725 Central Ave.	Great Falls Gas	1941	Contributing	Other W WWII Commercial
800 Central Ave.	Leonard Taylor Chevrolet	1928	Contributing	Prairie
801 Central Ave.	Hansen Bros Service Station	1938	Noncontributing	Remodel
806-808 Central	Marvin Maytag/Lemmars Taxidermy	1929	Contributing	Contemporary
811 Central Ave.	Seese Chevrolet Garage	1945	Contributing	Other WWII Comm
812 (814) Central Ave.	Valet Dry Cleaning	1928	Contributing	Other Pre-Depression Comm
813 - 815 (817) Central Ave.	Davis Business/Culligan	1944	Contributing	Prairie Commercial
816 (820) Central Ave.	GTFSporting Goods Store	1965	Noncontributing	Modern
819 Central Ave.	Social Security Office	1958	Noncontributing	Contemporary
821 Central Ave.	Masonic Temple	1914	Primary NRlisted	Gothic/Tudor/Moorish
901 Central Ave.	Phillips 66 Service Station	1966	Noncontributing	Remodel
908 - 910 Central Ave.	Town and Ranch	1949	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
917 Central Ave.	Brevig Body Shop	1959/1947	Contributing	Other Post WWII Comm
920 Central Ave.	Remax	1990	Noncontributing	Modern
926 Central Ave.	Joe McNaught Service Station	1940	Contributing	Moderne'
Park Dr.				
113 Park Dr.	Secombe property	1909	Noncontributing	Remodel
115 Park Dr.	Secombe property	1909	Noncontributing	Remodel
117 Park Dr.	Secombe residence	1909	Noncontributing	Remodel
203 (201) Park Dr.	Dailey Residence	1949	Contributing	Minimal Traditional
209 Park Dr.	Dailey Apartments	1936	Contributing	Other Depression Era Comm

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B, C

Areas of Significance: COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT; ARCHITECTURE; COMMERCE

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1886-1953

Significant Person(s): Paris Gibson

Significant Dates: 1887, 1888, 1889

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: George Shanley; George Bird and Johannes Van Teylingen; Angus McIver and Chandler Cohagen; Henry N. Black

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A

The Great Falls Central Business Historic District is significant as an excellent representation of the patterns of development in this Northern Great Plains city during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The district is overwhelmingly commercial in nature and features an eclectic architectural mix that documents each period of the community's history. Some buildings dating from the city's formative years, beginning in the late 1880's, have survived to display the technology and styles of the Victorian era. The vast majority of the community's individually eligible buildings date from the period between 1910 and 1920, when professional designers, builders, technology and improved transportation joined to create a business district for a burgeoning population. Displaying details from a long European and American architectural past, the eclectic Main Street Commercial buildings provide testimony to the rise of the city as the commercial, political, social, and economic center of north central Montana.

Criterion B

The district meets criterion B because of its association with Great Falls' original founder, Paris Gibson. Gibson established the townsite of Great Falls and ensured the future of the city through meticulous community planning and development. Through his guidance and participation, the 1884 townsite reached the status of a small city within a half-dozen years. He applied his vision, farsightedness and practicality to the design of a straightforward street system, boulevards, parks, and landscaping, that enhanced the city's beauty and ease of mobility. Gibson carefully orchestrated the sale of commercial and residential lots and constructed businesses in partnerships that brought people into the community and helped to fulfill his vision for the fledgling city. In association with Great Northern Railroad magnate and friend, James J. Hill, Gibson promoted the rail business and in partnership with others constructed the nearby Park Hotel to accommodate travelers. Paris Gibson remains a lasting presence in Great Falls; his initial planning has served the community well and his vision of creating a beautiful and culturally rich community continues to be the number one goal of the current Great Falls city commission.

Criterion C

The district also qualifies under criterion C because of the excellent degree of architectural integrity in examples that date from nearly every period of the community's history. From the formative years, styles of the late Victorian era have survived to document the 1880's and 1890's. Designers drew from a rich architectural past for the creation of expansion era buildings, which make up the majority of the districts' contributing architecture. Renaissance Revival, Italianate, Beaux Arts and eclectic details adorn Main Street Commercial buildings, constructed during the period between 1908 and 1920. They are most often executed in brick with elaborate terra cotta details or facades. The Modern Movement is also represented in the district with excellent examples of Art Deco and Moderne styles. Great Falls attracted many notable architects, whose design work helped to shape the city, from streets, boulevards, parks and bridges to architecture that elevated the community from frontier town to permanent city. George H. Shanley, Henry N. Black, Angus McIver, George Bird, and Johannes Van Teylingen, among others, left an architectural legacy that serves to characterize the city of Great Falls.

Period of Significance

The Great Falls Central Business Historic district features an eclectic, yet largely historic, architectural mix that is representative of the economic, social, and political development of Great Falls as a major north-central Montana center of industry and commerce during the period of 1886 to 1953. Though the townsite was platted in 1884, the oldest extant building in the district was completed in 1886. Architectural styles and patterns of downtown development reflect national, popular trends, and periods of construction indicate early growth, stabilization, economic decline and prosperity. The formative years of the 1880s to 1890s, the expansion years of 1900s to the 1920s, slowed growth of the Depression Era to World War II and Post World War II Era are well represented by architecture within the historic district.

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Area History and Development

For thousands of years prior to Anglo-Euro settlement, many different tribes or bands of Native Americans inhabited the Great Falls area. Several buffalo jumps, encampments, and sacred sites are testimony of their residency. Many tribes, including the Blackfeet, Salish, and Crow, frequently hunted the game rich area following buffalo that thrived on the grassy plains above the Missouri River and its tributaries. Migration patterns of these and other animals encouraged the establishment of seasonal camps, often utilized for hundreds of years. The plains above the Missouri at Great Falls were a favored, and attractive place to live, and a shallow, buffalo crossing offered easy access to both sides of the river.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European explorers traversed the Rocky Mountain area searching for a westward passage to the Orient. In their reports, they detailed accounts of abundant and valuable fur-bearing animals and precious metal deposits in the region. Consumed with the notion of westward expansion, the United States, under President Thomas Jefferson, purchased the Louisiana Territory in 1803. A year later, Jefferson sent Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark on a fact-finding expedition that shaped the future of Montana and the West. Valuable geographic and scientific information gathered on their journey peaked the interest of entrepreneurs turning their attentions westward.

Fur trappers and traders, attracted to the prolific fur bearers of the wild western waters, were followed by surveying expeditions searching for Pacific transportation routes. Isaac Stevens, leader of an 1853 military reconnaissance, investigated possible passageways to the Coast. His recommendation advised skirting the waterfalls of the Missouri River located north and east of the present day city of Great Falls. Captain John Mullan, builder of the 1857 military Mullan Road, concurred with Stevens, bypassing the future site of Great Falls connecting nearby Fort Benton to Walla Walla, Washington

The five waterfalls of the Missouri served as a major tourist attraction for citizens of Helena and Fort Benton. They offered spectacular viewing to visitors, who often compared their grandeur and beauty to the falls of Niagara. Paris Gibson, an admirer of the area, arrived in Montana in the spring of 1879 fleeing depressed times encountered as a businessman in Minneapolis. At the town of Fort Benton, the head of steamboat navigation on the Missouri, Gibson established a lumber and building supply business and gained some success in real estate ventures. With his sons Theodore and Philip, Gibson purchased acreage near the small Montana town of Belt, becoming a major sheep rancher in the state and influential promoter of the wool producing industry by 1881.

Gibson, whose interest in the Great Falls area was initially peaked by reading the Journals of Lewis and Clark, conducted three trips to the Falls.

Although I had traveled much over Northern Montana and the country between the Missouri River and the Yellowstone during my three years residence in Fort Benton, I had never seen a spot as attractive as this one and that appealed to me as an ideal site for a city...This scenery, composed of valleys and rivers flanked by smoothly rounded tablelands, formed a picture never to be forgotten. I had looked upon this scene for a few moments only when I said to myself, here I will found a city⁷

Gibson's plan for a city became a reality through the financial backing of his friend from Minneapolis, James J. Hill, builder of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad. Gibson expounded on the marvelous resources of the area attracting Hill to the potential waterpower of the falls, minerals, and coal of the region. After a meeting in St. Paul in November 1882, the friends formed a partnership to purchase land and acquire power sites along the Missouri River. However, in pursuing the purchase of the property, the partners encountered rigid parcel acquisition requirements for settling the public domain. According to land legislation, the sale of 160-acre parcels required the residence of property owners on, and improvement of, the land. Utilizing an 1872 revised land law,

⁷ Paris Gibson, *The Founding of Great Falls*, Great Falls: privately printed, no date) no page.

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Hill and Gibson avoided the restriction. The law granted those serving at least ninety days in the military, the right to any federal public lands. Through this law, Hill and Gibson used soldier-homestead scrip in acquiring thousands of acres and water rights.

In 1882 Gibson hired Herbert Percy Rolfe, a Fort Benton surveyor and lawyer, to perform legal work and conduct a survey of the area in the summer of 1883. The Rolfe survey laid out industrial areas and the townsite. In the fall of 1883 Rolfe and Robert Vaughn, a Sun River rancher, platted the Original Townsite. They followed the simple and symmetrical, Cartesian grid system, and Gibson, influenced by Minneapolis, included a river drive and copied the broad streets of Salt Lake City for design of the business district.⁸

A few buildings, previously constructed as a stage stop in an area south of the Sun River, constituted the beginnings of a town that preceded Gibson's planned townsite. Residents on the south and west side of the river anticipated that the 1881 Johnstown plat, named after John Largent, an original settler of the Sun River Valley, would grow and develop rather than Gibson's plat. An easily-accessed ford and, eventually, a river ferry near the mouth of the Sun River quickly dispelled the Johnstown's notions. The plat sold to Gibson in 1882 and Johnstown was slowly consumed by the expanding city of Great Falls. As the rival Johnstown virtually disappeared, Gibson continued with his townsite enterprise. Gibson, in honor of his partner, James J. Hill, initially suggested naming the community Hillton. Hill rejected the idea, and the name "Great Falls" was chosen instead. Great Falls became a reality with the filing of the plat in September of 1884.

Building in the townsite began slowly in the spring of 1884. From a few tents and claim shacks, the town began to take form during that summer. By the end of the building season, the town had perhaps a dozen commercial buildings and a population of about 200 residents. The landscape revealed buildings of a semi permanent nature including a boarding house, saloon, general store, hardware and grocery, meat market, stationary and confectionery store, hide and junk store, blacksmith shop, brickyard, and the A. M. Holter Lumber Company's sawmill and lumberyard operations.

The lumberyard, constructed in 1881 near the mouth of the Sun River and initially serving Fort Benton's building industry, was later relocated to Second Street and Fifth Avenue South. At this location, the lumber business expanded in 1884 to include a planing mill. To meet the demands of a growing city, a competing lumber company opened the same year near the present water pumping plant site by Tenth Avenue South.

Great Falls - 1885-1900

In the spring of 1885, the first major industry was established by Gibson's former business associates from Minneapolis, A. C. Loring and Herbert O. Chowen. Together, they constructed the Cataract Mill, identified as one of the northwest's most modern, equipped mills. This was the first business to harness waterpower in the area and operated successfully on the south bank of the Missouri River until the 1890s, when the associates sold the enterprise because of strong competition from Minnesota mills and high freight rates.

The expansion of Great Falls continued very slowly and in 1886 the population was only about 500. From the beginning, it was apparent to Gibson and other Great Falls businessmen that a reliable transportation system was critical to promote the future development of Great Falls and her industries. In June of 1884, James J. Hill arrived in the city to discuss a plan with the city founders that would transform Great Falls into a major railhead. The plan linked Great Falls with the Red River Valley via the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway. Hill and Gibson, considering the benefits of the nearby waterpower and Sand Coulee coalfields in the success of the railroad and community, sealed the deal. The Manitoba line reached Great Falls in October of 1887.

⁸ Richard B. Roeder, "A Settlement on the Plains: Paris Gibson and the Building of Great Falls," *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Autumn 1992, Page 4-19.

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Hill realized the potential gains of the rail lines and also helped to finance ventures of friends and business associates in linking Butte, Helena, and Great Falls by way of a spur line for the Montana Central Railroad. The construction crew employed over 8,000 men and used 7,000 horses to complete the track to Helena in early 1888. By 1889, the Montana Central linked Great Falls to Butte, and the stage was set for dramatic growth in Great Falls in the 1890's.

The majority of the more permanent commercial buildings existed on Central Avenue in the west-end of the business district. These buildings constructed prior to 1887 are no longer in existence (with the exception of two identified below), and included the Old Park and Milwaukee Hotels, Lapeyre Brothers Drugstore, Nathan's Clothing Store, Strain Brothers store, the First National Bank, Beachly's Confectionery and Stationery Store, and the Minot Block. The Late Victorian, 1886 Murphy Maclay Hardware store at 200-206 Central Avenue, and 1886 Albrecht's Furniture Store at 111 Central Avenue, are the oldest extant buildings in the district. Because of this, these buildings help define the period of significance and are the city's best tangible links to early downtown development.

By 1887, a population of 1,200 people confirmed the continued existence of Great Falls. Gibson, pioneer freighter C.A. Broadwater, and others incorporated the Great Falls Water Power and Townsite Company in May 1887. The Townsite Company forged ahead with a promotional campaign to attract prospective residents and businesses to Great Falls; now a railroad link. Through Gibson's encouragement, the forerunner to the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Trade, sent circular flyers to sheepmen offering reduced rail line shipping and holding rates in Great Falls. Railroad advertisements raved about the golden opportunities of farming the plains surrounding Great Falls; many Minnesotans, bombarded by the campaign, traveled to Montana. Cascade County was created in 1887, from parts of Choteau, Lewis & Clark and Meagher counties, and Great Falls became the county seat. In 1888, the City of Great Falls was incorporated with Paris Gibson as the first mayor, and the First Avenue North Bridge was constructed connecting the west side of the Missouri River to the east.

Several extant Late Victorian buildings were constructed on Central Avenue that same year. The Charteris Hardware at 119 Central Avenue, Albrecht's Furniture (second store) at 117 Central Avenue, Montana Restaurant at 115 Central Avenue, and Willard Storage and Commission, an early grocery store at 113 Central Avenue, were built next to each other on the north side of the street. The Soft Drink Resort at 122 Central Avenue, a jewelry store, saloon, cigar and newsstand, was located across the street. The Kingsbury Block, owned by one of the areas largest sheep rancher, was located down two blocks at 309-311 Central Avenue.

The advertising campaign of the railroad attracted not only businesses as these, but major industrial interests as well. In 1888, the Montana Smelting and Refinery Company, financed by eastern capitalists, constructed a silver smelter on the Missouri River's west side. One year later, the Townsite Company franchised a water system, constructed a dam, and sold water rights to the Boston and Montana Consolidated Copper and Silver Mining Company, which built a smelting operation utilizing waterpower from the dam. An electric trolley, powered by the Black Eagle Falls dam, aided in the expansion of the downtown district by enhancing the transportation system. By 1891, the track was four and a half miles long and included a long stretch down Central Avenue. The trolley is no longer in existence.

By 1890, the population of Great Falls had grown to nearly 4,000 residents and Central Avenue businesses expanded eastward with more Late Victorian construction. Several extant business blocks were constructed including the 1890 Bach Cory Block at 105 Central Avenue, which supplied residents with groceries, hardware, and household goods. The 1890/1891 Realty Block/Hotel Grand at 500-506 Central Avenue, served as offices for the Cascade County Courthouse and first class lodging with steam heat, electric lights, and other modern conveniences. The R.S. Ford Block at 208 Central Avenue also offered lodging for the growing population and boasted the areas first dentist office.

New businesses, agriculture, industries and the railroad offered new jobs to a work force that caused the population figures to soar over 6,000 by 1893. Good wages were provided by the mining companies for hundreds of workers as production expanded. In the agricultural industry, Great Falls earned the reputation as a major shipping and marketing point for livestock, despite the winter of

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1886-87's devastating toll on livestock, especially cattle. The mutton and sheep markets remained strong; Great Falls served the shipping for the entire Judith Basin and Sun River country, a region well known for quality sheep production.

The national monetary crisis known as the Panic of 1893 temporarily palled the bright future of the city and stalled economic growth. A flooded silver market from increased worldwide production and repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, crushed western silver mining and smelting. The Silver Act initially benefited the western states economy by doubling the governmental purchase of silver annually. The repeal of the Act and change to the gold-based economic system caused the failure of most silver towns, especially those in Montana, and banks nationwide. In Great Falls, the silver operation Boston and Montana Silver Smelter closed its doors forever, and Hill's Manitoba railway workers went on strike against pay cuts that lessened wages to under \$40.00 per month.

The Panic appeared to jeopardize the prosperity of the early years of the community. However, the city recovered much more quickly than other Montana cities often dependent mostly on silver mining. Its diversified economy as an agricultural marketing center, county seat, a railhead, a center for lumber and flour milling, brewery location, and support service businesses kept the city growing. Railroad workers previously idled by the 1894 strikes, returned to work after negotiations later that year.

The depressed 1890s did not hinder the city's expansion; the downtown business area and residential areas continued to grow. Buildings continued to be constructed and included the 1895 Cory Block at 424-426 Central Avenue which housed a hotel and nationally known chain store, the Golden Rule, the saddle and harness shop of the 1896 Victor Arios at 300 First Avenue South, and the 1897 Lemon Boarding House at 12 Sixth Street South. Residential areas continued to grow around the business district and mushroomed near the smelting operations north of the district, and near the 1892 Montana Brewing Company's plant located in the old Johnstown plat.

1900-1920

By 1900, the city's population increased to nearly 15,000 residents, a substantial increase from the 1890 census of slightly less than 4,000 inhabitants. Great Falls lost population, for the first time in its history between 1900 and 1910, due to the national depression, but rebounded because of changes to the Homestead laws and promotions by railroads and town builders. The result was an influx of immigrants attracted to available, inexpensive land in the area. The 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act committed the Federal government's completion of irrigation dams and water diversion projects in western states. This reclamation program enticed many farmers and ranchers to settle surrounding valleys previously unclaimed, including the Sun River Valley. Since the majority of the land in Montana was not under irrigation, the focus turned towards the benefits of dry land farming.

The increase in population was mirrored by the growth of the wealthy water and power companies in Great Falls. In 1903, John D. Ryan, manager of the Marcus Daly Bank and Trust Company and John Morony, the auditor of Daly's estate, convinced Daly's widow to supply the needed capital to purchase the Great Falls Electric and Power Company and the Boston Electric Company. The two men, utilizing water purchased from the Great Falls Water Power and Townsite Company, supplied electrical power to Great Falls. In 1908, the Anaconda Copper Mining (ACM) Company purchased power from this company for their copper facilities in Butte and Anaconda. Four years later, the power company was incorporated as the Montana Power Company, and controlled all electric plants in Montana. The power supplied by Montana Power electrified the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, the main competitor of James J. Hill's Great Northern Railroad.

Hill, pressured by the construction through central Montana of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, and its attractive land campaign based on H.W. Campbell's revolutionizing, deep till, arid farming, responded with his own advertising campaign. Hill hired the Minnesota Agricultural College dry farming expert, Professor Thomas Shaw, to conduct several agricultural experiments in Montana. Lectures on the subject were conducted and promotional articles and posters distributed throughout the eastern United States and Europe by Hill's Great Northern Railroad (formerly the Manitoba). Promotional efforts

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heightened with the interest of speculators, government officials and bankers, causing an ensuing homestead rush to the area. By 1910, land applications averaged 29 filings per day.

An increasing number of businesses provided goods and services specifically targeting the agricultural customer. Agricultural related industries mushroomed on the fringes of the historic district including the International Harvester Company that constructed buildings for sales and service. Purchasers of the Cataract Mill in 1895, Richard Graham and John Ross, enlarged their granary services to include feed, seed and poultry sales and supplies as a sideline, and also sold coal, greatly increasing their operations. By 1916, the Sapphire Flour Mill and the Royal Mill strongly competed with the Cataract and others for the increased grain production of the region. The Great Falls Meat Company incorporated in 1897 and modernized into a complete slaughterhouse and packing plant, serving Montana and neighboring states.

Several men involved in the booming agricultural economy, especially those with sheep interests, invested in the construction of the downtown. In 1900, William Conrad, a businessman with interests in lucrative mercantile freighting, mining, cattle, sheep, and real estate businesses had the Conrad Bank Building constructed at 324 Central Avenue. He was also the president and founder of the Northwest National Bank. When that bank failed in 1897 because of the Depression, Conrad volunteered to personally pay all accounts in full.

The city's largest automotive business, The 1910 Standard Garage at 526 Central Avenue, offering sales and services, was constructed for L.H. Hamilton; one of the areas most successful sheep ranchers with holdings between Augusta and Great Falls. This building and the 1901 Murphy Maclay Garage at 21 Second Street South are the downtown's first automotive support businesses extant in the district.

Those associated with the rail business also sought to capitalize on the economic upswing and promote accommodations for train traffic and others. In 1909, Paris Gibson and James J. Hill, constructed one of Montana's most lavish hotels, the Rainbow. Located at 20 Third Street North and designed by Shanley and Kent, the hotel elegantly displayed a lobby finished in white marble, ivory, and bronze. The fireplace was faced in Moravian tile with a hammered, copper, hood; Japanese chandeliers were graced with cut glass globes and tropical, oil paintings adorned the walls. Shanley also designed the 1920 Johnson Hotel at 417-419 Central Avenue for Pete Johnson, a local rancher and county commissioner. The sumptuous lobby heralded a mezzanine decorated with furnishings from the Albrecht Furniture Store. The many first floor, retail businesses included a beauty shop and shoe store.

That same year, attorney for the Hill's Great Northern Railroad, E.L. Bishop built the extant Bishop Block/Hotel Fair. Hotel guests enjoyed steam heat, sanitary beds and springs, and four inside baths; two for each sex. One year later, William Roberts, local contractor and real estate investor, constructed the Roberts Building next to the Bishop at 512-514 Central Avenue. Designed with the help of architect, Henry N. Black, who had considerable experience designing hotels, the upper floors were called the Hotel Oxford. Street levels of both buildings provided retail space, support services and shops for the hotels.

The communication industry, reflecting the nationwide popularity of telephones, set down new architectural roots in the city with the construction of the 1909 Great Falls Automatic Telephone Company at 309 First Avenue North. Designed by George Shanley, this was the first brick-faced, reinforced concrete, building in Great Falls. Shanley also designed one of the city's first department store, the 1908 J.A. Berger at 501 Central Avenue; an investment of local rancher and banker, R.S. Ford. Both are located within the boundaries of the Great Falls Central Business Historic District.

Construction of many substantial buildings including banks, government buildings, industrial structures, and schools occurred between 1900 and 1910. These included the original First National Bank (demolished), Cascade County Courthouse located north of the district, the smelter smokestack north of the Missouri River, and the Rainbow Dam. Others, within the district, include the 1910 Great Falls Post Office at 215 First Avenue North, and Washington School at 1015 First Avenue North. At the time, the school stood

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well away from the business district to accommodate children from the sprawling residential areas, including those associated with the copper smelter.

As the housing pressures increased, investors recognized the profit in lodging above businesses, hotel, and apartment spaces. The retail businesses allowed the lodgers to conduct their shopping on the spot for notions, hardware, sweets, tobacco products, household supplies, dry goods, clothing, food, medication, etc., and receive services such as repairs and beauty care.

Several buildings with retail on the first floor and lodging on the upper stories were constructed between Park Drive and Fifth Street. Known as two-part commercial blocks, these include the 1913 Thisted Building at 320-322 Central Avenue, 1913 Victor Arios/Belmont Hotel at 308 First Avenue South, 1914 Northern Hotel at 412-414 Central Avenue located next to the 1914 Bateman and Switzer Building at 416 Central Avenue, and the Margaret Block, located across the street. The 1914 Margaret Block at 413-415 Central Avenue was constructed for owner A.W. Kingsbury, and named after his wife. Kingsbury's sheep ranch encompassed a vast area of Central Avenue Montana, and eventually he expanded his enterprises to include banking and real estate ventures such as this building.

The 1914 J.C. Anthony Building/Davenport Hotel at 518-520 Central Avenue, is located next to the sumptuous, 1916 Roberts Building/Elmore Hotel at 522-528 Central Avenue. The Elmore Hotel, designed by Henry N. Black and William Roberts provided guests with gas, electricity, steam heat, porter and maid service, and private telephones in its 99 rooms. The construction of the New Park Hotel at 102 Central Avenue, however, by Paris Gibson and Townsite Company members in 1915, rivaled all hotels. Designed by Shanley as a reinforced concrete structure, and constructed by Leigland and Klepp for \$170,000, the New Park captured much of the rail traffic because of its proximity to the depots and beauty in Mission style ornamentation.

The growing need for modest income lodging increased the continued construction of above business apartments. These types of businesses include the 1916 Dunn Brown Building at 312-318 Central Avenue, another Shanley design. H.P. Brown, founder of Great Falls Meat, and rancher, Mathew Dunn collaborated in the construction of this building. The 1915 Russell building at 427 Central Avenue, another Black design, had apartment living upstairs and several retail shops at the first floor. The 1916 Bucher Building at 113 Tenth Street, designed by the local firm of McIver and Cohagen, and served as a grocery on the first floor and apartments on the second floor.

Apartment construction increased during this period of population growth in Great Falls. In 1915, the Beaulauriers constructed the Bowman Apartments at 104-106 Second Avenue North; Leo later became a famous western artist. That same year, the Nilson and Smith Flats, designed by Shanley and constructed at 13-15 Seventh Street North, had eleven apartments each with a sleeping porch, rear and front entrances. A year later, Shanley designed the 22-unit, Leland Apartments and probably Triplex at 726 and 722-724 First Avenue North, both in close proximity to the Flats.

Other support and service businesses, and specific social and banking construction took place between 1912 and 1919. The 1912 Wardrobe Cleaners at 811 First Avenue North and 1915 National Laundry (burned 2003) designed by Shanley at 1000 First Avenue North, served the communities laundry needs. The 1916 Victor Arios and the Golden Gate Grocery at 617 and 619 First Avenue South offered the finest leather goods, harnesses and groceries; both much needed commodities. The 1912 I.O.O.F. at 325 First Avenue North and Masonic Temple, designed by Bird and Van Teylingen at 821 Central Avenue, served those organizations functions. The 1915 Strain Building at 400-408 Central Avenue, a venture of the real estate brokerage, the Strain Bros., contained several small stores on the first floor and offices at its upper stories. This is one of Great Falls' tallest office buildings.

The expanding Montana Power Company constructed offices and substation at 920-924 First Avenue North in 1917 to accommodate the distribution of electricity to the city and the electrified trolley. That same year, the newly constructed Largent School, designed by Bird and Teylingen, functioned as a much needed junior high school.

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The automotive industry in Great Falls featured several new buildings constructed to accommodate sales and services. Sales were on the increase as the population grew; nearly every farm family had a farm vehicle or car. Transportation corridors that connected outlying farms in the region included improved roadbeds, bridges, and a new bridge across the Missouri. In 1913, the repair and sales facility, the Motor Inn, was built at 117 Second Avenue North. That same year, the elaborate design by Shanley of the Lee Forest Garage, was constructed at 117-119 First Avenue North. The buildings' upper floors were designed to hold several cars. Also in 1913, Suhr's Buick went in at 15-17 Fifth Street South. In 1917, the Ever Ready Vulcanizing Co. was constructed at 705-707 Central Avenue; that same year, Falls Tires operated at 312 First Avenue North. Two years later, the Hines Motor Supply was constructed close to Ever Ready at 721 Central Avenue.

The world of entertainment was graced and exemplified by the lavish designs of George Shanley for the Palace and Liberty theatres. The 1913 Palace/Rainbow Building was constructed as an elaborate theatre at 601-607 Central Avenue with retail shops and lodging upstairs. The 1920 Liberty Theatre at 301 Central Avenue had numerous, first floor shops, upper level apartments, and Waller's Bowling Alley in the basement.

Another local architectural firm, Henry Hall Johnson, designed two prominent extant buildings in the district. The 1914 Great Falls National Bank, was established by the R.S. Ford family, and constructed at 21 Third Street North. That same year, Johnson designed the Tribune Building at 121 Fourth Street North. It housed the offices of Great Falls' oldest, and continuously running newspaper, the *Tribune*, as well as the *Montana Farmer Stockman*.

The 1910s to 1920 marked a period of increased production for the Great Falls smelting operation. The operation of the Boston and Montana Copper Company, previously purchased by the powerful Anaconda Copper Mining Company in a battle for supremacy of the Montana copper industry, increased operations by adding zinc and copper wire manufacturing plants and a 500-foot high smelting stack. Despite the significant additions to the Great Falls operations, employment figures remained about the same.

The growth of Great Falls is best characterized by increased construction within the downtown area from the 1910s to 1920s, which accommodated an expanding population influenced by the influx of homesteaders, veterans, and investments of entrepreneurs. The period of the 1920s to the 1930s, however, marks a turning point from the previously experienced successes.

1920s-1930s

Most of the founding Great Falls planners and developers, including Paris Gibson, had died by the 1920s, and the city experienced the negative impact of unemployment and a worsened, drought ridden, agricultural economy. The unemployment figures in the city rose to over 2,000 in 1921; and by the same year, 75,000 Montanans had left the state. Between 1919 and 1925, 11,000 farms were abandoned dropping approximately 2,000,000 acres in the state from agricultural production. During that same time period, over one half of Montana's banks failed.

The high cost of production and poor conditions coupled with depressed copper prices on the world market, produced a rapid decline of the economy of Great Falls, however, 4,500 new citizens moved into the city, many fleeing failed homesteads.

Construction was slow in the downtown area between 1921 and 1925 because of the economy. The 1921 D.A. Davidson Building at 221 Central Avenue, now a five-story building that originally was one, modestly housed several businesses and offices including a beauty shop, cigar store, specialty shop, jewelry store, and the Eddy Thorn Orchestra. That same year, the McNair Building at 418-422 Central Avenue was constructed. B.P. McNair established Great Falls' earliest insurance and real estate firm in 1893. In 1922, contractor Henning S. Leigland, designed and constructed the Leigland Apartments at 11 Ninth Street South. Two years later, the O'Connors constructed a funeral parlor that also served as a residence to the rear at 708-710 Central Avenue. In 1925, the Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store at 612-614 Central Avenue sold the finest cuts of meat. After Prohibition, the building became the Montana Beer Parlor, offering soothing libation to soften the woes of Great Falls citizens.

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Great Falls received an economic boost after the greatest oil strike in Montana's history occurred in the Kevin Sunburst Field, north of Great Falls in 1922. Six years later, the company of Lincoln Oil and later, Philips Petroleum, established large refineries in the city. The Mutual (Continental) Oil Company had interests in the area as well, constructing a 1928 office at 24 Fifth Street South. It was located next to the 1928 Skee's Gas Shop, a building constructed for the specific purpose of selling gas appliances, popularized by gas production that became an offshoot of the oil industry. That same year, Great Falls obtained a license for mail service and became part of the only north-south airmail line north of the transcontinental route.

Construction picked up in the later 1920s with the sudden brightening economy, and pushed the business district east. Apartment building continued in association with the downtown. These buildings included the contributing 1926 Lorraine Apartments at 102 Second Avenue North and 1928 Leland Annex at 718 First Avenue North. Maher's Rollertorium, constructed in 1927 next to the Leland at 710 First Avenue North, allowed its customer the delightful benefits of roller-skating on hardwood floors. The Rollertorium, however, was remodeled as offices in later years.

The design of the 1928 Graham Building at 608-610 Central Avenue, executed by Angus McIver, was a drastic departure from his other work in the community. McIver, best known for his Modern Movement buildings, such as the 1929 Art Deco Paris Dry Goods or the 1947 Moderne Bus Terminal, at age 36, produced one of the most elaborate brick and terra cotta buildings in the district, which presents an eclectic façade rich with Renaissance and Beaux Arts details. It and five other buildings, several being only one-story, located on the south side of Block 362, were constructed between 1925 and 1928. These extant buildings include the aforementioned 1925 Piggly Wiggly, 1927 Sanitary Home Bakery at 616 Central Avenue, 1927 Oliver Spencer Paints at 618 Central Avenue, and 1928 Sullivan's Inc. at 620 Central Avenue, and Sturrock Block at 626-628 Central Avenue.

Block 360, between Eighth and Ninth Streets, is also infilled with contributing, extant buildings from 1928 to 1929. The Valet Dry Cleaning was constructed at 812 Central Avenue, Marvin Maytag and Lemmar's Taxidermy, a McIver and Cohagen design, occupied 806-808 Central Avenue, and Leonard Chevrolet, a Shanley design, at 800 Central Avenue.

Automotive associated businesses continued in popularity as existing roads were graded, concrete-surfaced, and constructed to outlying communities such as Browning, Valier, and Raynesford. Between 1927 and 1929, garages and showrooms were built on the secondary streets of First and Second Avenues North and South. The non-contributing 1927 Thurston Auto was constructed at 413-415 First Avenue North, the non-contributing 1928 Conlin Motor Company at 319-321 First Avenue North, contributing Ludwig's Garage at 126 Second Avenue North, contributing Jensen and Johnson Motor Company at 806-810 First Avenue North, and the 1928 non-contributing Montana Garage at 513 First Avenue South. The exception is the 1928 construction of the contributing Auto Electric Company at 613-615 Central Avenue.

The late 1920s also witnessed the addition of two significant extant business buildings, the Paris Dry Goods, designed by McIver and Cohagen, was built at 327 Central Avenue at a cost of \$23,9837 and the Metropolitan at 313-315 Central Avenue, which was one of Great Falls first steel truss buildings.

The Wall Street Crash in 1929 caused a severe period of stagnation in the construction industry and further economic difficulty. In January 1930, the Great Falls Family Welfare Association collected household goods and 27,000 pieces of clothing for 400 destitute families. The Cascade County relief rolls of December 1932 indicated 6,213 people received aid. That same year, the ACM Company closed its zinc operation and for the next eight years, struggled with closing and reopening the zinc units and the copper refinery.

Building permits issued in 1930 amounted to \$1.1 million as compared to \$3.5 million in 1929. Revenues generated by housing permits dropped from \$384,870 in 1930 to less than \$15,000 in 1934. From 1930 to 1938, only a handful of buildings went up in the downtown. The largest venture was the primary 1930 Montana Building; a professional building that filled the need for a centrally

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located medical facility. Located at 501-505 First Avenue North, the Bird and Van Teylingen designed structure held the offices of doctors, dentists, a laboratory, and a pharmacy.

Many of the 1930s buildings served the economic needs and culinary requirements of the residents of Great Falls. The contributing S.H. Kress Company at 411 Central Avenue constructed in 1931, was one of several chain stores that enabled customers to purchase inexpensive items. The contributing 1936 Karmelkorn Confectionary at 18 Fourth Street North indulged the sweet tooth; the next-door down, the contributing 1936 Hank's Hamburger Inn at 26 Fourth Street North satisfied the palate.

The onset of the Depression brought the infusion of dollars from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Federal Works Projects, alphabet agencies, the CWA, PWA, WPA, NYA, FERA and CCC. The most frequently utilized programs in Great Falls, the PWA and WPA, constructed the 1939-1940 Mitchell Pool, the 1938 Whittier School, Civic Center, Airport terminal, state fair buildings, River Drive road improvements, improvements to parks, including Paris Gibson Park Lake, and improvements to the airport, water and sewer systems, boulevards and street works. Clearly the New Deal program contributions helped Great Falls through the Depression.

1940-1953

With the entrance of the United States in World War II, the Seventh Ferrying Group of the Army Air Corps moved its wing of the Army's Air Transport Command to Great Falls. Beginning in 1941, this unit, through daily flights from Great Falls to Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska, moved massive amounts of supplies to bases in Russia. That same year, the Gillis Hangar, additional runways, and a control tower were constructed to accommodate the command at the base of this operation, the municipal airport. In 1942, the Army Air Services Command installed a sub depot at the WPA Administration Building.

The economy of Great Falls was somewhat supported by the wartime construction of East Base (currently Malmstrom Air Force Base) in 1942. Constructed initially as a training center for service staff and bomber crews, East Base was eventually transformed into the Army Air Corps Service Command Headquarters. By the end of World War II, the military had infused over 2,400 personnel into the base making it one of Great Falls largest employers.

The influx of military to the area did not affect the rate of construction in the core business district. In fact, the downtown had very few buildings constructed from 1940 to after the war. These buildings generally were constructed in the undeveloped and residential areas between Fifth and Tenth Streets. The Great Falls Building and Loan Association built a 1940 building at 13-15 Fifth Street North to aid in financing residential construction, etc. The same year, the Goodrich Silverton Store sold tires at their new building located at 714 Central Avenue. Across the street, the Great Falls Gas Company constructed offices in 1941 at 725 Central Avenue to accommodate growing natural gas customers. Down the block in 1940, Joe McNaught constructed a modern looking gas station at 926 Central Avenue; a garage was constructed at 617-621 First Avenue South in 1940. In 1944, the Davis Business Machines constructed at 813-815 Central Avenue; a year later, Seese Chevrolet constructed a garage and showroom next door at 811 Central Avenue.

Construction slowed Post-World War II, with just a handful of buildings constructed in the downtown. The Bungalow Bakery at 509 First Avenue South, Canton Café at 16 Sixth Street South, and Mountain States Telephone Building at 926 First Avenue North were the three downtown buildings constructed in that first year after the war. In 1947, McIntosh Tailors and Men's Store was built at 622 Central Avenue and the Eklund Building at 314 First Avenue North; the 1947 Brevigs Body Shop at 917 Central Avenue. That same year, the much needed Greyhound Bus Depot and Garage was constructed at 326 First Avenue South. The depot set the precedent for mass transit and centralized other, smaller bus companies as well, offering reasonably priced tickets to travelers.

Additional 1948 to 1949 downtown construction included buildings often infilling lots emptied mostly by demolition. Kearnes Motors was constructed in 1948 at 625 First Avenue South and Bennett Motors at 26 Ninth Street South. The Dailey Residence, the

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only Post-World War II single-family residence in the district, was built in 1949 at 203 Park Drive. The 1949 buildings included the Dubbs Block at 815 First Avenue North, the Bowling Alley at 517 First Avenue North, the Monarch Loan and Mortgage at 320 First Avenue North, Vera Fandericks Bar at 508 First Avenue North, and the Veterans of Foreign War next door at 510 First Avenue North.

Remodeling, demolition, and minimal construction in the district area marked the Post-World War II era. Money was readily available and blighted downtown buildings made way for parking lots and newer construction. Only four buildings were constructed in the Contemporary commercial style downtown within the historic period of 1950 to 1953. They include the 1950 Standard Oil Station at 700 Central Avenue; one of several that were built in Montana. Constructed that same year, the George L. Tracy Building at 910 First Avenue North served as one of the cities longest running wholesale food brokerages. Another wholesale operation, the Calahan Bros. Wholesale Drugs, constructed its building at 706 First Avenue North.

The most impressive building constructed during this time is the Barber Lydiard Building, designed by Shanley in 1951 at 600 Central Avenue. The building was built for the Barber Inc. on a lot cleared by demolition. The massive, four-story structure housed offices including those of George Shanley, and the goods of Barber Inc., which included furniture, appliances, and musical instruments.

In the 1960s, a federal assistance program known as the Seven Point Workable Program changed once more the constructed landscape downtown. The program required the identification of blighted conditions, non-code compliance, citizen involvement, and development of a community plan and analysis. It also offered some financing. It was during this time that many businesses moved from the downtown. The 1959 Holiday Village Mall and 1965 Westgate Mall construction sapped many businesses from this area. In 1966, J.C. Penny's and Montgomery Ward joined the exodus to Tenth Avenue South.

In an effort to keep business downtown, business owners expended time in remodels and construction. The year 1969 signaled record construction in Great Falls. That was the same year of the Davidson Building reconstruction, construction of the Great Falls bank parking lot and drive up, demolition of the Minot Block, original Maverick Bar, and Great Falls Hotel, and construction of the Ponderosa Motel. The First National Bank remodel was the largest permit issued at that point in time, amounting to a whopping \$2,621,663 dollars.

The 1950s and 1960s marked a period of change in the downtown that often entailed demolition, remodeling, and newer construction. These changes reflected national patterns of urban renewal intended to aid dying downtowns, however, non-historic and non-contributing buildings are in the minority in the district. The majority of the buildings within the district boundaries exhibit excellent architectural integrity. Many are primary examples of the broad patterns of architectural evolution that characterized communities throughout Montana and the west.

Commerce

The Great Falls Central Business Historic District has served the commercial needs of area residents since Paris Gibson contracted with the Fort Benton firm of Murphy Maclay and Company, to open a branch in his new city. John T. Murphy and Edgar G. Maclay opened the first store in Great Falls in 1884. Worden P. Wren was the company agent, stocking the store with 100,000 pounds of merchandise including patent medicine, groceries, and hardware. It was located at the site of the Charteris Hardware store at 119 Central Avenue.

When Kate Beachley arrived in Great Falls with her husband William, in July of 1884, she was only the third woman in town. The Beachleys built a store that stocked stationery, candy, tobacco and magazines and, in addition to being a favorite gathering place for

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the men of the community, it served as the post office. William Beachley was then appointed postmaster, taking over for Paris Gibson, who was the first postmaster in the new city.⁹

Gibson advertised and made personal contacts to fill the commercial needs of Great Falls and slowly businessmen responded. Since most goods had to be freighted, generally a three-day trip from Fort Benton, it was not until the railroad arrived in 1887 that the business district mushroomed. The railroad advertising campaign attracted both homesteaders and businesses and by 1890, Great Falls sported a bustling "permanent" business district that offered a full range of goods and services.

Except for a brief period between 1900 and 1910, Great Falls continued to grow throughout the period of significance, gaining almost 10,000 people between 1940 and 1950, bringing the population to 39,214. The central business district was packed with mostly multi-story buildings and the surrounding residential areas constrained lateral growth. Room for expansion to meet new needs was limited. Additionally, housing trends changed after World War II and Americans wanted homes of their own. Upper floor apartments were abandoned in favor of houses and automobiles made it possible to live in the suburbs. Business remained brisk downtown, throughout the 1950's, with large department stores and specialty stores to serve commercial needs.

In 1949, ground was broken for a structure that was to have a future negative impact on commercial development in the historic core of Great Falls, as work began on the Warden Bridge. Completed in 1951, the bridge opened the way for commercial strip development along Tenth Avenue South, ten blocks south of Central Avenue. Commercial strips were also developing west of the business district across the river.

Businesses in the core of Great Falls, responded to the commercial needs of residents throughout the period of significance, from 1886 – 1953 and the Main Street Commercial buildings were able, for the most part, to adapt to those changing needs. The advent of the automobile, however, created broad changes in the business district. Businesses that provided horse furnishings, harness, saddles, tents and wagons gave way to those that catered to a motoring public. Buildings were demolished, not only to provide ever increasing parking spaces, but also to serve a new set of needs; car dealerships, garages, motels and service stations and drive-in banks. These functions represented an architectural design change from the Main Street Commercial buildings that lined the streets. They were mostly one-story, detached buildings with large set-backs, to allow automobile access and parking.

Some downtown businesses responded to competition by the "malls," that were developing along strips removed from the central business district, by modernizing older buildings – either new storefronts or, in a few cases, covering entire buildings. Two major national department stores, J. C. Penney and Montgomery Ward, abandoned the central business district to locate in new shopping centers, in 1966. The Bon, which was the last department store downtown, closed in 1998.

Commerce in downtown Great Falls has changed radically over the years. Theaters now provide professional office functions, hotels have become retirement homes, department stores are now telephone marketing facilities, and retail functions continue, as they have in the past, to respond to the desires of consumers. Throughout the history of downtown, the significant buildings in the Great Falls Central Business Historic District, have served the public well and retained the architectural integrity to tell the story of commercial development in Great Falls.

Paris Gibson: Community Planning and Development

The Great Falls Central Business Historic District is surrounded by parks and residential districts, according to a plan conceived by Paris Gibson in 1883. Gibson applied his vision of establishing a city at the confluence of the Missouri and Sun Rivers by crafting a plan, acquiring land, forming a townsite company, becoming a civic leader and promoting the city as a railhead, commercial,

⁹ Ellan R. Yuill, *A Centennial Celebration*, privately printed, Great Falls, 1984, page 19.

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industrial, cultural and political center. The Original Townsite and the commercial core that rises within it best represent Gibsons productive life and his influence in shaping the city.

Paris Gibson was born in Brownfield, Maine, in 1830, on the family farm. He graduated at the age of 21 from Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine in 1851 and three years later was serving in the Maine legislature. It wasn't until his father's death that Gibson returned to run the farm for a short time. In 1858, Paris Gibson moved to St. Anthony Falls (now Minneapolis, Minnesota) where, in association with W. G. Eastman, he built the Minnesota Cataract Mill. During the same time, Gibson aided the formation of the Minnesota North Star Woolen Mill. He had substantial holdings in both companies. He spent 21 years in Minneapolis where he was involved in city planning, public works and the State University.

The Gibson family came to Montana from Minnesota in 1879 after the Panic of 1873 caused them to relinquish their family wool and flour holdings in Minneapolis. Settling in nearby Fort Benton, the Gibsons established a lumber company that failed shortly after opening. After the failure, the Gibsons moved to Otter Creek where they purchased a large sheep ranch eventually earning the reputation as the first ranchers to introduce Delaine Merino sheep into Northern Montana.

While in the sheep business, Paris recognized the potential of developing the Great Falls area natural resources that included vast coal deposits and waterpower. Convinced of the opportunities available, Paris earned the backing of railroad magnate, James J. Hill, using soldier script to obtain the land. In 1884, Gibson and Hill, supported by the efforts of his son, Theodore Gibson, and a handful of men, platted the original townsite in a small canvas and frame office at Second Street and Central Avenue. By the fall of that year, more than 200 people lived in the fledgling city.

Gibson, interested in the establishment of Great Falls as a merchandising center, played a crucial role in the city's early growth. He was elected the first mayor in 1890 and was instrumental in forming the Board of Trade, forerunner to the Chamber of Commerce, serving as president from 1890 to 1892. He also was active in the development of the banking industry by being one of the first members of the Board of Directors for the First National Bank and the Great Falls Building and Loan Association. Other boards he served on included the Great Falls Iron Works, Rocky Mountain Fire Insurance, the first school board, Old Timers' Association, and Highland Cemetery. Additionally, he helped organize the first parks and boulevard systems, the Cataract Mill that was the city's first flourmill, the original electric light plant, the real estate branch of the Great Falls Townsite Company, and was part owner of the Park and Rainbow Hotels.

Paris Gibson's significance in the formation of Great Falls and aid in the development of civic and public organizations was also complimented by his participation in the 1889 Constitutional Convention. As a delegate to the convention, Gibson supported the location of the state capital in Helena, the contender nearest Great Falls. Later in the convention, however, Gibson identified Great Falls as the preferred site emphasizing the availability of natural resources in the Belt Mountain region of north-central Montana.

Gibson continued his interest in the future of Montana by pursuing positions in the State Senate. He gained the elected position of State Senator in 1890 and later United States Senator in 1901, continually supporting Great Falls as an industrial center capable of utilizing waterpower, nearby coalfields, and abundant agricultural opportunities. Gibson remained active in promoting the benefits of Great Falls well into his 80s. He died in 1920 at the age of 90 in the home he shared with his son, Theodore, located in the Northside Residential Historic District.

Unlike many "town founders" in the west, whose sole aim was private profit, Gibson was very concerned with the aesthetics of Great Falls. He hired George Bird, an architect, born and educated in Philadelphia, to lay out the streets, parks and boulevards of the embryo city. Gibsons plan, beginning in 1884, called for the planting of the first trees in Great Falls--native cottonwoods and box elders--along Park Drive from Third to Eighth Avenue North and along Whittier and Margaret Parks. Despite criticism, Gibson contended that:

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Looking out in any direction ... we see a country absolutely treeless save the fringe of cottonwood and willow trees scattered along the ... rivers.... This barren condition of the surrounding country gives immeasurable value to the cultivation of trees and shrubs within the limits of our city¹⁰.

Gibson pursued his beautification plan giving the city beautifully shaded parks and streets. In 1891, the city council passed ordinances protecting trees from foraging animals and use as hitching posts. Four years later, the city passed \$40,000 in bonds to purchase future park sites. Hay cut on those park sites, including the western boundary of the historic district, Paris Gibson Park, added to the city treasury.

By 1902, a city nursery maintained by the Board of Park commissioners in Cascade Park, sold and transplanted trees within the Great Falls corporate limits. Elms, ash, and maples replaced the original cottonwoods and box elders as the result of experimentation conducted by the agricultural station at Bozeman. The nursery was the pride of Paris Gibson, who "visits it almost daily, directing its general welfare and to him is largely due the fact that it exists."¹¹ By 1913, 67,000 shade trees were planted along 22 miles of boulevards throughout the city. That same year, a *Great Falls Tribune* article identified the city-operated nursery as responsible for making the city one of the most beautiful in the west.

Paris Gibson ensured Great Falls' future by his deeply committed involvement in the planning and economic promotion of the city. Gibson's vision became a reality with the platting of the town and formation of businesses, city government and civic organizations. He utilized an impressive array of business, industrial and political connections to bring his plan to fruition and applied a high level of professionalism to development in Great Falls by engaging those with appropriate expertise for the task at hand. Paris Gibson remains a presence in Great Falls; his name graces a school, dam, park, art center and Civic Center meeting room. His portrait hangs in the City Commission chamber and his statue guards Gibson Park, but clearly his most lasting legacy is the visionary and well-crafted foundation he laid for the City of Great Falls.

Architectural Styles

Unlike many Montana settlements and mining camps that grew haphazardly around a spontaneous development, or were laid out with the identifiable precision of a railroad company, Great Falls grew according to a well-crafted plan. With only that plan for the flat plain, and promises of a railroad and water power, the "Future Great Falls" began a period of slow growth in 1884.

The first settlers brought their own ideas for building styles, whether residential or commercial, but were limited by the lack of building materials and craftsmen, so initial construction was relatively crude, utilizing the materials at hand or those freighted from Fort Benton. A lumber yard and portable sawmill were among the first businesses to locate in the area of Great Falls, and a brick yard and sandstone quarry were quick to follow. Photos of the new city, taken as early as 1887, show Central Avenue already lined with a fair number of "permanent" masonry buildings.

Great Falls was born on the heels of the Victorian era and its period of rapid growth occurred during a period of eclecticism in American architecture, which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century and lasted until around 1940. Stylistically, many of the buildings in the Central Business Historic District, built during the period of significance, could simply be classified as "Western Commercial," a style typical of many emerging towns across the United States. Main Street Commercial buildings are generally two to four stories in height, masonry in character, with relatively plain symmetrical facades. The simple, rectangular plans take full advantage of the lot width and are usually attached. Stamped sheet metal cornices that recreate the carved stone styles of their European predecessors, are common. Others might simply use the wall material, stepping or corbelling out brick or stone, to create

¹⁰ Candi Zion, "The Chamber of Commerce and the Building of Great Falls, Montana, 1888-1945," Thesis, (Arizona State University, Masters Program, 1992) Page. 32.

¹¹ "Thousands of Trees Grown by The City" *Great Falls Tribune*, April 16, 1903. Page 8

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decorative elements. The legacy of the industrial revolution provided the means to create large expanses of glass, and the mastery of cast iron as a structural material made it possible to create storefronts that exhibited goods in the windows to entice customers into businesses. Manufactured or prefabricated building pieces such as stamped metal cornices, decorative terra-cotta, and other embellishments that could not be manufactured locally flooded into Great Falls with the advent of the railroad.

The contributing buildings within the district display a variety of styles that architecturally reflect the design thinking that was popular at the time they were built. Architects were influenced by national trends as well as advances in technology, and during the period of significance in Great Falls, they drew from the full spectrum of architectural tradition, with styles drawn from the European and Colonial American past, and from the opposing wave of architectural modernism.

Buildings within the boundaries of the Great Falls Central Historic Business District display the characteristic styles and combination of styles of the Late Victorian period, Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival, American Movement, and Modern Movement. The oldest style of architecture, categorized as Late Victorian, is represented in nine percent of the buildings. It is often combined with the Late Victorian styles of Italianate, Gothic, and Romanesque. At least sixteen percent of the district is comprised of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival and mixed style buildings. The category is exemplified by two percent Classical Revival (Neoclassical), one percent Colonial Revival, two percent Beaux Arts, one percent Tudor, and four percent Mission Revival. The Modern Movement is represented by two percent Moderne, one percent International, and one percent Art Deco.

During this period of eclecticism it is not unusual to see combined characteristics of several different architectural styles. Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revivals and mixed styles comprise at least eighteen percent of the district. Elements of the Tudor, Mission, Classical, and Colonial Revival styles, Beaux Arts, Exotic, Moorish, Victorian and Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century and Modern Movements are randomly combined in many buildings.

Commercial buildings that do not display strong stylistic characteristics are classified as "Other" and are subcategorized by era, year associations, and use. These are one percent Pre-World War I Era commercial (1900-1914), two percent World War I Era commercial (1915-1917), two percent Pre-Depression Era commercial (1918-1927), five percent Depression Era commercial (1928-1936), two percent Pre-World War II commercial (1937-1940), three percent World War II commercial (1941-1945), and one percent Post-World War II commercial (1946-1952). The Minimal Traditional style of the 1940s is represented by one percent and the early 1950s Contemporary commercial style, by eight percent. Noncontributing buildings include seventeen percent remodels, twelve percent post 1952 or Modern, and two percent Contemporary.

The Late Victorian style was the most popular building style in America prior to 1900 setting a historic precedent in architecture. Other stylistic influences during the formative years for the Great Falls central business district included the Italianate and Gothic Revival styles, which looked back to the romantic past for inspiration. Towering spires, pointed arches, and elaborate detail punctuate the Gothic style while exaggerated window surrounds and articulated cornices represent the Italianate, along with overhanging eaves supported by ornate brackets. Renaissance and 2nd Renaissance revival styles are also evident in the district as exhibited by the Post Office with its layered fenestration and balustraded roof line.

Rapid industrialization and railroad growth permitted the mass production and distribution of building elements all over the United States. Ornate stone accents, pediments, and mass-produced cast and galvanized iron were readily accessible and they were used in the popular period styles of architecture being designed by America's architects. The incorporation of reinforced concrete and structural steel shapes into building technology in the late 1800's allowed designers of the time to apply period revival forms to their buildings in new and unprecedented ways.

Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Revival buildings in the district are often combinations of Mission Revival, Classical Revival (Neoclassical), Colonial Revival, Exotic Revivals, Tudor Revival, and Beaux Arts styles. The revivals actually are

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resurrections of many historic world orders that utilized the traditions of decorative arts. The expanding industrial economy at the turn of the century caused dramatic changes in life-styles and spending opportunities. With the new life-style came a nostalgic return to handicrafts and the traditions of world order architecture. Architects designing buildings in the historic district reflected the course taken by architects nationwide.

The buildings within the Great Falls Central Historic Business District exemplify the significant periods of architecture from the Victorian age to the Contemporary age. The styles of these periods are well represented by significant features and architectural characteristics, which retain excellent degrees of integrity. National and international design trends are reflected in the constructed landscape of the district.

Architects

Research indicates that several prominent, Montana architects were associated with the design of the majority of the significant buildings within the Great Falls Central Historic Business District. They applied their professionalism to designing streets, boulevards, parks, and bridges, as well as buildings in the community leaving a planned, built environment that serves to characterize the City of Great Falls.

George Shanley

The most prolific of the Great Falls architects was George Shanley, whose work in the community spans from 1908 to the 1950s. The Vermont educated architect worked his way west after spending time employed in Minnesota and North Dakota. In 1896, he established the firm of Gibson and Shanley, designing buildings in Butte and Kalispell. Shanley opened offices in Great Falls in 1908, on the eve of the major expansion years in the city. He partnered with John Kent, one of the state capitol designers, who retired shortly thereafter. They designed only one building in the district together, the elegant Rainbow Hotel; one of the most lavish in the city. The 1908 J.A. Berger Department Store at 501 Central Avenue, although non-contributing, was the earliest Shanley design and the first department store in Great Falls. In 1955, he designed remodels of the building, completed by Sletten Construction to accommodate Buttrey's Grocery Store. He was also known for designing the 1909 Great Falls Automatic Telephone Building at 309 1st Avenue North, the first reinforced concrete, brick faced building in the city.

Other buildings he solely designed, within the district, include the 1909 First National Bank (demolished), 1913 upper parking of the Lee Forest Garage, 1915 National Laundry, 1915 Strain Building, 1915 New Park Hotel, 1915 Nilson and Smith Flats, 1916 Leland Apartments, 1916 Dahl Jewelry, 1916 Dunn Brown Building, 1919 Knight's Candy Shop/Hastings Apartments, 1920 Johnson Hotel, and 1951 Barber Lydiard Buildings.

Shanley was most prolific during the expansion years of the community. He executed numerous Main Street Commercial buildings that display eclectic details, usually in terra cotta. The 1913 Lee Forest Garage at 117-119 First Avenue North is unique because of upper floor parking and work area designed by Shanley. Vehicles were transported to the upper floors by freight elevator. A machine shop conducted the needed service and provided vehicular parts. A pair of winged tires, uniquely executed in terra cotta, decorate the building. The best example of the Mission style in his work is the 1915 New Park Hotel at 102 Central Avenue. The large reinforced concrete mass building displays elaborate terra cotta shields, scalloped parapets, and battlemented cornice and bays. Shanley designed the 1920 Johnson Hotel at 417-419 Central Avenue for Pete Johnson, a local rancher and county commissioner. This commercial building exhibits Classical Revival details. The ornately decorated, marbled, lobby heralded a mezzanine furnished by the Albrecht Furniture Store. The buildings' numerous first floor, retail businesses included a beauty shop and shoe store.

Shanley partnered with several architects over the years including Priteca, Ryan, Baker, Wilson and Hugenin. Shanley and B.M. Priteca, also a noted artist, designed the 1913, Palace Theatre/Rainbow Building at 601-607 Central Avenue. Shanley and architect, A. Ryan designed the Liberty Theatre at 301 Central Avenue in 1920. Both theatres display fanciful Beaux Arts details. Buildings

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attributed to Shanley and Baker include the 1924 O'Conner Funeral Home at 708-710 Central Avenue and the 1928 Leonard Taylor Chevrolet at 800 Central Avenue. Another garage, the 1929 Ludwig's Garage at 126 Second Avenue North, was designed by Shanley in cooperation with Wilson and Hugenin and is very straightforward in design.

The four-story, 1951 Barber Lydiard Building at 600 Central Avenue was a Shanley design and also the location of his later day offices. The streamlined, brick commercial building with rounded corner seems a late version of the Moderne style, similar to the Eagles Club in Lewistown, Montana, which Shanley also designed the same year. It would seem that, at age 76, Shanley was embracing the Modern Movement.

Shanley and his partner's talents were also directed towards the construction of apartments located within the Northside Residential Historic District. The Blackstone is at 314 Third Street North, Jensen at 803-807 Fourth Avenue North, Lexington at 802 Second Avenue North, Doheny at 202-206 Eighth Street North, Curry at 112 Sixth Street North, Gies at 310 Fifth Street North, and the Toy at 517 Third Avenue North. Additional Shanley designs include his home at 916 Third Avenue North, Sacred Heart Convent at 920 Fourth Avenue North, St. Mary's Institute, Falls Hotel, St. Thomas Home, Columbus Hospital, First Avenue North and Tenth Street bridges, and the Cascade County Jail.

Shanley was very active civically and through his profession. He was the recipient of the prestigious Distinguished Service Award as a member of the Architectural Registration Board, first chair of the Montana Board of Architectural Examiners, and vice president of the Montana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He served as a state legislator, city councilman, and city planning board chair, and remained active until his death in Great Falls, in 1960. Shanley was incredibly influential as an architect throughout his long career. He left an architectural mark in numerous communities throughout the state, with work that spanned nearly half of a century.

George Bird and Johannes Van Teylingen

Bird and Van Teylingen were active in the Great Falls community between 1909 and 1930. Born and educated in Philadelphia, George Bird "arrived at the confluence of the Sun and Missouri Rivers by stage coach in 1882."¹² The twenty-one year old came to Montana the suggestion of Jim Hill and was hired by Great Falls' first mayor, Paris Gibson, to design the street boulevards, streets, and parks as the city engineer. George Bird witnessed the city's transformation from embryo tent village to permanent masonry city. He died in Great Falls at the age of one hundred in 1961.

Johannes Van Teylingen, born in the Netherlands and educated at the Royal Academy in Harlem, Netherlands, migrated to the United States and partnered with Bird before 1909 until his death in 1956. He served as a major in the US Army Corp of Engineers in 1942, and later as a post war rehabilitation engineer. In Great Falls, Van Teylingen actively participated in many civic activities and held several states, national, and international chess titles. He served his profession as president of the Montana Chapter of the AIA as well.

Together, Bird and Van Teylingen (and associates) designed several schools and churches in the city and are known for their use of fanciful Exotic Revival styles, and lofty, Classical Revival (Neoclassical) style to send a message in design. The Great Falls Civic Center, First Baptist Church, Whittier, Lowell, Great Falls High, and Roosevelt Schools are some of their buildings located outside of the district. Outside of the city, they designed the Butte High School, State Hospital in Warm Springs, and Havre Methodist Church.

Their buildings within the district include the 1909 Washington School, 1914 Masonic Temple, 1917 Largent School, and 1930 Montana Building. The massive three-story, 1909 Washington at 1015 First Avenue North, is a fantastic example of the Classical Revival (Neoclassical) style popularly used in schools, public and governmental facilities. The Masonic Temple, a three-story

¹² Great Falls Society of Architects, "Architects Past and Present: Great Falls Montana." Unpublished, 1961

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building at 821 Central Avenue, is another grand scale, Bird and Teylingen design, which combines elements of exotic styles that represent a secret society with medieval origins. The 1917 Largent School at 915 First Avenue South displays elements of the Classical Revival (Neoclassical) style in its three stories similarly to the Washington School. Both schools boast the ornate terra cotta, massing, and glorified entrances typical of the style. The four-story Montana Building, constructed in 1930 at 501-505 First Avenue North, is a charming Bird and Teylingen design that, as in the Masonic Temple, displays the Moorish (Mediterranean) influence in polychrome, terra cotta, and battlemented parapet.

George Bird is significant as one of Great Falls' earliest architects to arrive during the city's fledgling years. He holds prominence as the first city engineer whose responsibilities included planning street designs, boulevards, and parks in Great Falls. Through this title, Bird essentially established the platform for the constructed landscape.

Bird and Van Teylingen, together are best known in the state for their design of large-scale schools, churches, and public facilities. The historic district well represents their statewide reputation in the elaborate architecture found there. The two schools and two Exotic Revival style buildings located within the boundary of the district exemplify their design of large scale, ornate construction.

Angus McIver and Chandler Cohagen

Angus McIver was born in Great Falls in 1892. He graduated from Great Falls schools and went on to graduate from the University of Michigan in 1915. He partnered with Chandler C. Cohagen and W.V. Marshall, in a firm which dissolved in 1917 when the three men entered the armed services. After a tour in Europe, McIver and Cohagen formed a new partnership and opened an office in Billings. A branch office with McIver at the helm opened in Great Falls until dissolution of the partnership in 1937. The firm became McIver, Hess, and Haugsjaa until 1959.

McIver was a member of the State Board of Architectural Examiners and only one of two people to achieve "fellow" status by the AIA. He served as president of the Montana chapter of AIA and on the state board of Architectural Examiners and held long-standing memberships in local organizations.

In Great Falls, McIver is best known for the design of Art Deco and Moderne structures including the 1929 Paris Dry Goods and 1947 Greyhound Bus Depot, both within the district. The 1928 Graham Building at 608-610 Central Avenue, is a radical departure from his Modern Movement styles. The three-story Main Street Commercial building displays an exaggerated use of terra cotta in details drawn from Renaissance Revival and Beaux Arts styles. On the other end of the spectrum is the plain 1916 Bucher Building at 113 Tenth Street North. The building contained a grocery below and apartments on the upper level.

In Helena, the firm designed the First Presbyterian Church, the state capitol landscape plans, and Veterans and Pioneers Memorial Building (Montana Historical Society). Courthouses in Conrad, Shelby, and Cut bank were also produced by the firm.

McIver is the only architect of these listed who was born in Great Falls. He was well respected and active in local civic organizations, including the Rotary club, Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, Elks, Meadowlark Country Club and the Masonic Lodge. It is significant that McIver achieved "fellow" status for his work and participation as an architect in the AIA.

Henry N. Black

Henry N. Black graduated from Boston Latin and Boston School of Technology (MIT) in 1872 at age eighteen. He conducted postgraduate work at Harvard University and worked as a foreman for the architectural department of Bryant and Rogers of Boston for five years after. In the following years, he formed partnerships mostly in the east coast states, but moved to Montana in 1895 as a competitor for the state capitol (proposed in Anaconda) design. Black designed several business blocks, residences, churches, and schools in Anaconda prior to moving to Great Falls around 1902. Black passed away sometime in 1922 at the age of sixty-eight.

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Black designed buildings mostly during the 1900's and 1910's in Great Falls. His largest project, completed with architect Frank Longstaff, was the Cascade County Courthouse. Located within the Northside Residential Historic District, this massive, rusticated stone building with copper roofing is characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style.

His most ardent endeavor, however, was in designing apartments. He studied California apartment building and applied what he learned of lighting, arrangement of space, and design to structures in Great Falls. The 1910 Roberts Building at 512-514 Central Avenue, combined the basic Commercial style with eclectic design elements for a most interesting effect. He also applied an interesting mix of design elements to the three-story, 1914 Margaret Block at 413-415 Central Avenue and the 1914 Bateman and Switzer building at 416 Central Avenue.

The 1915 Russell Building, at 427 Central Avenue is a low, two-story mass with apartments on the second floor. The building, designed around a court, included two storefronts at the alley. At the opposite end of the scale is the four-story, 1916 Roberts/Elmore Building at 522-528 Central Avenue. Friend, builder and real estate investor, William Roberts, who shared Black's enthusiasm in lodging construction, aided in the design of the Robert/Elmore as a sumptuous, shop fronted hotel.

Black's prestigious educational background and multi-faceted experience in design, on the east coast, California, and Anaconda, culminates in the design of buildings located within the historic district. These buildings, especially the apartments and hotel, are significant, creative compellations of several different styles.

The creative efforts of these architects, as well as lesser-known firms, resulted in a vibrant, eclectic commercial area. Attention to detail, keeping pace with trends in style, access to modern materials and extraordinary talent combined in the Great Falls Central Business Historic District to create an effective visual history of the commercial development of the community. The district is clearly eligible for listing in the National Register for its expansive representation of architectural styles dating from the late 1800s through the early 1950s. It gains additional significance for its association with several of the most prominent architects in the area.

Conclusion

Indeed the Great Falls Central Business Historic District embodies the history of commerce and community development in this important city. Displaying details from a long European and American architectural past, the eclectic Main Street Commercial buildings provide testimony to the rise of the city as the commercial, political, social, and economic center of north central Montana. City founder Paris Gibson's vision for the city, with its wide streets, centralized commercial area, green spaces, and bustling energy remains evident within the district. The architecture not only defines periods of economic growth and stagnation, but also the changes in popular style through the period of significance. For these reasons, the district is eligible for listing under Criteria A, B, and C.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government: Great Falls Historic Preservation Office
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 84 acres

UTM References: Zone:	12	Easting	Northing:
	A	476951	5261453
	B	478255	5261314
	C	478126	5261008
	D	476944	5261017

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s): Township 20 North, Range 3 East, all quarters of Section 12

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Great Falls Central Business Historic District is shown as a solid line on the accompanying map entitled, "Central Business Historic District."

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for this district were drawn to include the highest concentration of historic buildings within the historic central business district; linked by history and purpose. Buildings of primary significance anchor the boundaries of the district at the west, south, north, and east-sides. The Great Falls Northside Residential Historic District lies directly to the north and the Great Falls Railroad Historic District follows the west boundary and wraps the south-west corner of the district, both representing a clear change of character and purpose. Development to the east includes some commercial buildings, but reflects a change in character due age of construction, and then quickly becomes residential in character. South side development also represents a change in character; it is mixed, residential and commercial, and marks a change that breaks the continuity of the Central Business Historic District.

11. Form Prepared By

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city or town: Great Falls

state: MT

date: July 2003
telephone:
zip code: 59404

edited by:

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Photographs

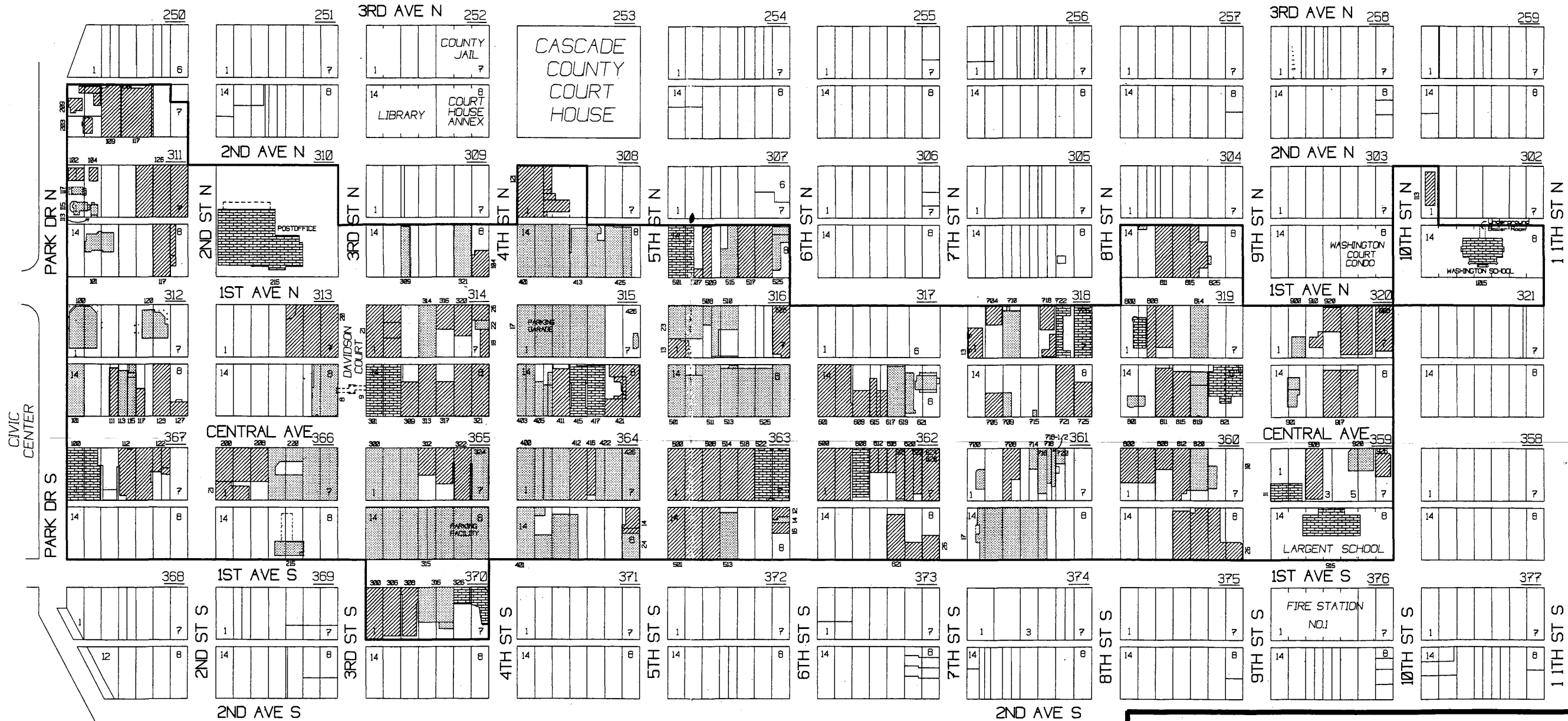
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The photographs accompanying this nomination were taken by Candi Zion in September 2002. The negatives are housed at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office in Helena, Montana.

Photograph #	Name of Property	Description of View
1	Leighland Apartments, Block 359	East
2	Largent School, Block 359	Northeast
3	Bennett Motors, Block 360	Northeast
4	Block 362	Northeast
5	Block 362	North
6	Block 363	North
7	Block 364	East
8	Block 365	West
9	Block 370	Southwest
10	Bus Depot, Block 370	South
11	Block 370	East
12	Park Hotel, Block 367	North
13	Block 250 from Gibson Park	Northeast
14	Block 311 from Gibson Park	East
15	Blocks 319-320	Northeast
16	Block 317	Northwest
17	Block 363 – Roberts Building	Southeast
18	Block 363	Southeast
19	Block 315	Northeast
20	Block 314 – Liberty Theatre	East
21	Block 367	Southwest
22	Blocks 313 & 314 - skywalk	Southwest
23	Block 320	East
24	Block 316	West
25	Block 307	Northeast
26	Block 308	Northwest
27	Block 309	Northwest
28	Block 311	Northwest
29	Block 310 – Post Office	Northeast
30	Block 313 - Rainbow Hotel	East
31	Block 308 – Tribune Building	East
32	Block 302 – Washington School	Northeast
33	Block 319 – Masonic Lodge	North




GREAT FALLS, MONTANA CENTRAL BUSINESS HISTORIC DISTRICT



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1/15/2004
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-  PRIMARY
-  CONTRIBUTING
-  NON-CONTRIBUTING

