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National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Commercial Historic District

HISTORIC NAME: Hamilton Commercial Historic District

LOCATION: 100-400 block of Main Street
100 block North 2nd
100 block South 2nd
100 block South 3rd
West 1/2 of 100 block of State Street (N. side)
200-300 block of State Street (N. side)

CLASSIFICATION: Historic District
Private ownership
Public acquisition: n/a
Occupied
Restricted access
Commercial use

OWNERSHIP: Multiple

LOCATION of LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Ravalli County Courthouse
23 Bedford, Hamilton, MT 59840

REPRESENTATION of SURVEY: Hamilton Historic Resource Survey,
sponsored by The Bitter Root Valley Historical Society.

DEPOSITORY of SURVEY RECORDS:
Montana State Historic Preservation Office
102 South Broadway
Helena, MT

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: Hamilton Commercial Historic District

CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS: 48

NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS: 17

The Hamilton Commercial Historic District, the most cosmopolitan environment in the Bitterroot Valley, is composed of three and one-half blocks of uninterrupted commercial development. It begins at the intersection of Main and 1st and proceeds west to the middle of the 400 block of West Main. The strength of the historic fabric begins midway into the first block with key buildings being the O'Brien and Daly Blocks on the south side and the F.L. Burns Block to the north. The 100 block of South 2nd is rich with a solid line of significant historic buildings, including the Drinkenberg Blocks and Bitter Root Stock Farm building. The south side of the 200 block of Main St. is firmly anchored with the Bower and McGrath Blocks, while the 300 block features the two-story Smyth Block. The Commercial Historic District boundary is terminated at the west end by the famous Ravalli County Creamery on the north side and the town's only intact, wood frame, false-front building on the south. State Street ties into the historic district on the north side of Main St. with the Hamilton City Hall (National Register: 4/21/80) and the Carnegie Library. The Hamilton Commercial Historic District remains a commercially active district and gains strength through the preservation of a high concentration of significant historic buildings, most of

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which were architect-designed and retain a high degree of integrity.

The major periods of development are well represented by the buildings found within the Hamilton Commercial Historic District. The first generation of construction in Hamilton is recalled by the two remaining wood frame buildings dating to 1890-1894. There are 19 second generation, brick bearing wall buildings built between 1895-1907. The third generation of commercial buildings, dating from 1908-1917, are characterized by the use of high-fired brick bearing wall construction with metal mullion storefronts and leaded glass transoms.

A distinct fourth generation of commercial masonry buildings, represented by 12 buildings, are found in the historic district. These buildings date from 1933-1947, and, although some of the buildings of this type are less than fifty years of age, they remain integral components of the district, carrying on a design format developed during the 1930's. Typical characteristics of fourth generation buildings are the use of striated polychromatic brick set in modern block forms with clean lines on smooth facades, generally bereft of protruding decorative details. Solider courses outline window and door openings and the buildings are abruptly terminated with simple coping or a few solider courses to mark the cornice. Half of the buildings of this type were erected between 1933-1937, and half between 1938-1947. This was the last coherent commercial building style developed in Hamilton and its fifteen year reign indicates its solid popularity. Only one building of this group has lost integrity to the degree that it no longer makes a positive contribution to the historic district. The Fullerton Building retains its historic massing and fenestration pattern, but the construction of a gable roof over the original flat roof disrupts the horizontal emphasis of the style.

Of the 65 buildings inventoried, 48 buildings make a positive contribution to the historic character of the district, while 17 are judged to be noncontributing. Of the 48 contributing, 12 are of high historical and architectural significance, most of which are documented to be architect-designed and retain excellent integrity. Thirty-six contributing buildings are integral historic buildings that may lack individual distinction but serve to create a strong impression of historic development patterns within the district. This assessment yields an overall percentage of approximately 74% contributing and 26% noncontributing buildings. Of the noncontributing buildings, 7 are newer replacement construction or historic buildings that have received completely new facade alterations. The remaining 10 are easily recognizable as historic structures but have experienced substantial loss of integrity. However, these later buildings still exhibit original massing, and, in some cases, even good second story integrity, e.g. the old Ben Franklin building, 210 West Main, now incorporated into Anthony's. Another noncontributing building, the General Surplus clothing store at 307 West Main, clearly incorporated three, one-story, historic buildings to achieve their current, three-bay store, indicated by the three false-front parapets still in place above the continuous awning. Although the

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noncontributing buildings that date to the historic period have been given new facades, they continue to provide a clear indication of the scale, massing and building density of early Hamilton.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Hamilton Commercial Historic District

Period of significance: 1890-1947
Areas of significance: architecture, commerce
Criteria: A and C
Criteria Considerations: G

The Hamilton Commercial Historic District is significant as a reflection of the relative prosperity of four discrete periods of local architectural development and economic growth: the initial townsite phase, 1890-1894; the Marcus Daly/ACM Mill period, 1895-1905; the Big Ditch/Apple Boom period, 1907-1917; and the post-Depression period, 1927-1947. The city of Hamilton was founded by Marcus Daly, a wealthy mining magnate who headed one of the most powerful corporations in Montana history (the Anaconda Copper Mining company). Of crucial importance to the development of Hamilton's commercial district is the fact that Daly adopted an attitude of benevolent paternalism toward his new town. He actively encouraged local commercial competition rather than enforcing company control of local commerce, which would have been well within his means. Although the Bitter Root Development Company store, later called the Valley Mercantile, was an important part of Hamilton's commercial fabric, a diverse and lively commercial environment was established early, flourished, and continues today to serve as the center of trade for the Bitterroot Valley. The architectural qualities of the district warrant recognition and preservation because the existing buildings clearly embody the distinctive stylistic characteristics, technology and craftsmanship of their eras.

Hamilton's Main Street of the early 1890's was primarily composed of wood frame construction with a variety of false fronts. Only two examples of wood frame, false-fronted construction remain in the district. The two-story building at 411 W. Main St is an excellent example of false-front construction that retains a high degree of historic integrity and accurately recalls the period of initial townsite settlement. By the later 1890's, the early frame buildings already made way for substantial new masonry buildings, many of which remain today. The oldest of this group of vernacular brick buildings tend to be of masonry bearing wall construction, using a soft, locally-produced brick, and built with single-lot frontage.

Marcus Daly's direct impact upon local commercial development is seen in the town's first bank, the Ravalli County Bank at 225 W. Main, built in 1895. Now called the "Banque Club," this building is an excellent example of two-story, Romanesque Revival commercial construction. Also in 1895, two other major new

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buildings were constructed: the Ravalli Hotel, built by Marcus Daly and the Lucas Opera House, built by Sam Lucas, the man in charge of Daly's thoroughbred operation. Unfortunately neither of these brick edifices remain. The Ravalli Hotel burned in 1919 and the Opera House in 1986. Daly erected a two-story brick building for his newspaper in 1900, the Ravalli County Democrat at 301 W. Main, which remains in good condition today.

By the early 20th century, a number of men who would have a significant influence on the commercial development of the town had established themselves in business. Frank Burns, a jeweler and one of the first businessmen in Hamilton, erected the Burns Block at 128-132 W. Main in 1900 and expanded the building in 1906. The Burns Block exhibits the typical characteristics of the western commercial vernacular style, a style that remained popular in Hamilton until as late as 1918, when it was used in the construction of the I.O.O.F. building at 110 N. 2nd. The western commercial vernacular style takes its primary design cues from the Italianate style, with a tripartite scheme consisting of an open commercial storefront, tall, narrow windows on the second story, and a pressed metal, bracketed cornice crowning the building.

The Big Ditch Boom from 1905-1917 spurred considerable new construction in the commercial district. W.P. O'Brien built the two-story O'Brien Block at 113-117 W. Main in 1910. Also in 1910, Dr. George McGrath and the Bitter Root Stock Farm retained Missoula architect A.J. Gibson for the design of two very similar, double-lot commercial buildings, the McGrath Block at 215-219 W. Main and the Stock Farm Building for the Chamber of Commerce at 166-170 S. 2nd Street. The McGrath Block was richly ornamented with Neo-classical motifs at the central entry to the second floor and on the cornice band. While the Stock Farm building followed an identical format and brick patterning, it lacked any classical ornament. Margaret Daly, widow of Marcus Daly, also commissioned Gibson to design a double-lot width commercial block for Main Street, called the Daly Block and completed at 127 W. Main in 1909. At this same time F.H. Drinkenberg teamed up with various partners to construct three major commercial blocks on the west side of S. 2nd Street: the Wells Creamery at 162-164 S. 2nd in 1909; the Drinkenberg/Bell Block at 175 S. 2nd in 1910; and the Drinkenberg/Coulter Building at 179 S. 2nd, also in 1910.

These masonry bearing wall commercial buildings of the 1905-1917 era utilized steel lintels supported by a pipe columns to create a slightly recessed, open storefronts, which were glazed with large plate glass and very thin metal mullions, and typically had leaded glass transoms above. The fact that Missoula architect A.J. Gibson was very active in Hamilton between 1905-1912 reflected the prosperity and confidence in the new "time of opportunity" created by the Big Ditch construction and rapid agrarian settlement of the Valley. A higher level of design sophistication can be seen in the multi-lot buildings erected during this period. Gibson was in step with the times and used the latest technology of metal mullion and leaded glass transom storefront design as early as 1909. By

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1914, most of Hamilton's commercial district had been rebuilt using permanent, masonry construction. For the most part, the few buildings erected after this period of intensive construction were built to replace historic buildings that had been destroyed by fire.

The final period of architectural development within the Commercial Historic District began during the mid-1930's and continued through 1947. Characterized by the use of multi-colored, striated brick in a simple block form, these later buildings often exhibited modified Moderne or Spanish form and massing. The "fourth generation" commercial buildings enrich Hamilton's business district with a number of pleasing architectural variations. The Roxy Theater, built in 1935 at 120 N. 2nd, utilized basic Art Deco massing with polychromatic brick detailing. The Montana Telephone Exchange building at 339-345 West Main, built in 1935, is unique with its Romanesque arch doorway accented again with polychromatic brick set in soldier courses. The Bower Block, built in 1936, was designed by Missoula architect H.E. Kirkemo for W.A. Bower and is a one-story masonry building in the Moderne style, located at 209 W. Main. The Gieman Building at 186 S. 3rd, built in 1936 and added on to in 1939, is detailed with a polychromatic lintel motif, clay tile parapet cap, and glass block windows. Several buildings of equal significance but of the later period include the Ford's Clothing at 136 West Main, a two-story example with a stucco accent panel in the upper story front facade and a rich fenestration pattern on the 2nd St. elevation. Built in 1947, Ford's replaced a corner Standard Oil gas station and completed the block with full, two-story commercial construction.

Although less than fifty years of age, the Ford's Clothing building (1947), the O.B. Collins Building (c.1945), the Apline Chiropractic Clinic (c.1946), the Sears store (c.1946) and the addition to the Gieman Building (c.1939) are all examples of this building type that must be considered integral components of the historic districts in Hamilton because they faithfully carry on architectural motifs initiated during the mid-1930's. From an architectural view point, the buildings follow the tripartite scheme of storefront, body, and cornice, although the composition is clearly influenced by the Moderne styles. These buildings enhance the district by following traditional scale and commercial storefront patterns and are compatible with earlier period buildings when juxtaposed on the street with zero lot lines. However, when constructed as detached buildings, fourth generation buildings often broke from tradition by use of set backs for landscaping and fenestration patterns that follow function, as in the use of the large glass block openings of the Ravalli Creamery (1933-1946) and residential style windows on the Montana Telephone Exchange (1933-1936). The U.S. Post Office building at 306 W. Main was built by the U.S. Government in 1940. Although the design for this building originated in Washington, D.C., the Post Office conforms with all of the basic design tenets used for other "fourth generation" buildings.

A final building of this locally significant building style and that best

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illustrates the length of the style's popular use is the Ravalli Creamery. The original portion of the Creamery was built in 1933 at 404 West Main. Predating the Roxy Theater and the Montana Telephone Exchange by two years, it is the earliest example of the style. Using polychrome and abstracted classical motifs above the windows, builder, John Peterson, set an example that would be popular for nearly two decades. When the Creamery was expanded in 1946, the form and detailing of the original portion was precisely mimicked in the addition, which doubled the size of the building.

The overall historic architectural integrity of the Hamilton Commercial Historic District remains high, although a number of the first floor storefronts have been modernized or substantially remodeled during the past two decades. A few excellent individual examples of historic styling remain to represent each period of construction. A sense of architectural cohesion within the district is bolstered by the high level of integrity of the second floor facades. Hamilton's commercial district remains very active today with a very low vacancy rate and a considerable number of occupied second floor spaces.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Hamilton's commercial historic district extends west on Main Street from the intersection of 1st and Main for three full blocks to 4th Street and one-half block beyond to include the Ravalli Creamery both the original 1933 portion and the 1946 addition to the north and the Fullerton Plumbing and Hamilton's only intact, two-story, wood frame, false-fronted building at 411 W. Main. In a north-south direction, the district includes the 100 block of both North and South 2nd and 3rd, and the east side of the 100 block of South 4th, which is occupied by the Carnegie Library.

A technical description of all property to be included inside the district boundary begins at the intersection of Main and 1st; then, proceed north to the alley of block 28; then, west to the intersection of the north-south alley in the center of block 28; then, north to Pinckney. At Pinckney, proceed west past N. 2nd to the north-south alley between 2nd and 3rd in block 27; then, south to the main east-west alley of block 27; then, west to the point of intersection of the north-south alley of block 25; then, south along the western edge of lot 12 of block 25 to Main St. Continuing across Main in a southeasterly direction, proceed south along the western edge of lot 9 of block 32 to the east-west alley of block 32; then, east on the alley to S. 4th St.; then, south on S. 4th to State; then, east on State to the north-south alley of block 29; then, north on the alley to the east-west alley in block 29; then, east to 1st Street; then, north to the point of origin.

ACREAGE: approximately 18 acres

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UTM REFERENCES: A(1) 11/719340/5125310
B(1) 11/719180/5125100
F(1) 11/718950/5125130
G(1) 11/718940/5125280
H(1) 11/719160/5125340

U.S.G.S. QUAD: Hamilton South, Montana

HAMILTON COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Even Numbers - N. Main

| <u>Address</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Building</u> | <u>Status</u> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 100 W. Main St. | c. 1950 | Citizen's Bank | noncontributing |
| 116-120 W. Main St. | 1911 | Peterson Block | contributing |
| 124 W. Main St. | 1910 | Blindauer Building | contributing |
| 128-132 W. Main St. | 1900-1905 | Burns Block/Hall | contributing |
| 134 W. Main St. | c. 1920 | Montana Cafe | contributing |
| 136 W. Main St. | 1947 | Ford's Clothing | contributing |
| 200 W. Main St. | 1891 (remodeled) | Bitterroot Develop. Co. | noncontributing |
| 206-210 W. Main St. | c. 1892 (remodeled) | Johnston block | noncontributing |
| 212 W. Main St. | c. 1893, 1940 (facade) | O'Hara Office | contributing |
| 220 W. Main St. | c. 1896, 1970's (facade) | Muechel's Shoe Shop | noncontributing |
| 230 W. Main St. | c. 1900 | Notions/Hamilton Bookstore | contributing |
| 232 W. Main St. | 1894 | W.H. Roberts Building | contributing |
| 236 W. Main St. | 1901 | Hamilton Bargain Store/ Crutchfield Building | contributing |
| 240 W. Main St. | 1911 | City Meat Market | contributing |
| 246 W. Main St. | c. 1916 | N.W. Blindauer Building | contributing |
| 300 W. Main St. | c. 1909 | Symth Block | contributing |
| 306 W. Main St. | c. 1940 | United States Post Office | contributing |
| 404 W. Main St. | c. 1933 and 1946 | Ravalli County Creamery | primary |

Odd Numbers - W. Main

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 109 W. Main St. | c. 1908 | Bruce's Tap | noncontributing |
| 111 W. Main St. | 1901 | Scandia Saloon | contributing |
| 113-117 W. Main St. | 1910 | O'Brien Block | primary |
| 127 W. Main St. | 1908-1909 | Daly Block | contributing |
| 131 W. Main St. | c. 1892 (remodeled) | Yellow Front | noncontributing |
| 135 W. Main St. | 1987 | Dowling Drug Store | noncontributing |
| 201-209 W. Main St. | 1936 | Bower Building | primary |
| 211 W. Main St. | 1910 | Corner Drug | contributing |
| 213 W. Main St. | 1909 | Lyric Theater | contributing |

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| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 215-219 W. Main St. | 1910 | McGrath Block | primary |
| 221 W. Main St. | 1910 | Barron's Jewellery | primary |
| 225 W. Main St. | 1895 | Ravalli County Bank | contributing |
| 301 W. Main St. | 1900 | Ravalli County Democrat | contributing |
| 307 W. Main St. | c. 1980 (facade) | Central Meat/Nichol's Grocery | noncontributing |
| 319-321 W. Main St. | c. 1945 | O.B. Collins | contributing |
| 323-325 W. Main St. | c. 1910 | Music Box | contributing |
| 327-329 W. Main St. | 1909 | Reimel Building | contributing |
| 333 W. Main St. | c. 1980 | Job Service | noncontributing |
| 335 W. Main St. | c. 1946 | Alpine Chiropractic | contributing |
| 337 W. Main St. | c. 1946 | Sears | contributing |
| 339-345 W. Main St. | 1935 | Telephone Exchange | contributing |
| 401 W. Main St. | c. 1937 | W.J. Fullerton | noncontributing |
| 411 W. Main St. | c. 1894 | Art City | primary |
| <u>Even - N. 2nd St.</u> | | | |
| 110 N. 2nd St. | 1918 | Odd Fellows Hall | contributing |
| 120-140 N. 2nd St. | 1935 | Roxy Theater & Office | contributing |
| 140 N. 2nd St. | c. 1935 | Rocky Mtn. House Store | contributing |
| 142 N. 2nd St. | c. 1946 | J.C. Penney | noncontributing |
| <u>Odd - N. 2nd St.</u> | | | |
| 111 N. 2nd St. | c. 1897-1898 | Mtn. Outfitters Annex | contributing |
| 113 N. 2nd St. | c. 1893 | City Market | contributing |
| 115 N. 2nd St. | 1908 | Smith & Brown Building | contributing |
| <u>Even - S. 2nd St.</u> | | | |
| 162-164 S. 2nd St. | 1909 | Wells Creamery/ Drinkenberg Rooms | contributing |
| 166-168-170 S. 2nd St. | 1909 | Stock Farm Office | primary |
| 174 S. 2nd St. | c. 1901 | Hageman's | noncontributing |
| 176 1/2 2nd St. | c. 1944 | Travel International | noncontributing |
| 176 S. 2nd St. | c. 1960 | Western News Building | noncontributing |
| <u>Odd - S. 2nd St.</u> | | | |
| 163-167 S. 2nd St. | 1910 | First National Bank | primary |
| 169 S. 2nd St. | c. 1895 | Doran Block | contributing |
| 175 S. 2nd St. | 1910 | Drinkenberg/Bell Block | contributing |
| 179 S. 2nd St. | 1910 | Drinkenberg/ C.C. Coulter Building | contributing |

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Even - S. 3rd St.

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 164 S. 3rd St. | c. 1937 | Peterson Paint | noncontributing |
| 178 S. 3rd St. | c. 1975 | Peterson/Rollin & Peck | noncontributing |
| 186 S. 3rd St. | c. 1936 & 1939 | Geiman Building | contributing |

Odd - S. 3rd St.

| | | | |
|----------------|---------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 113 S. 3rd St. | c. 1957 | Bitterroot Steam Laundry | noncontributing |
| 115 S. 3rd St. | 1915 | Masonic Lodge | primary |
| 119 S. 3rd St. | 1906 | City Hall | primary |

State Street

| | | | |
|---------------|------|------------------|---------|
| 312 State St. | 1916 | Carnegie Library | primary |
|---------------|------|------------------|---------|

HAMILTON COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

(Hamilton Multiple Resource Area)

