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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gilliam and Bisbee Building  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner of Main and May Streets N/A not for publication  
city, town Heppner N/A vicinity  
state Oregon code OR county Morrow code 049 zip code 97836

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: April 20, 1990  
State or Federal agency and bureau: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

5. 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.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

Entered in the  
National Register

[Signature]

6/1/90

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty Store

Commerce/Trade: Business

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century

American Movements: Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

stucco

roof asphalt

other concrete

wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

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I. SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The two story GILLIAM AND BISBEE building was constructed in 1919 by contractor T.G. Denissee for the GILLIAM AND BISBEE Hardware Co. The main retail trade occurred in the first floor store area with a stockroom behind. Accessible by a large freight elevator, the second floor and basement housed the agricultural implements and larger hardware items.

The basic organization of the building's exterior reflects the 20th Century American Movements styles, as seen in the strong emphasis on the horizontal and vertical elements of the two public facades and in window proportions. Secondly, the decorative brick corbel courses on the 'front' facade and the pilasters extended above the cornice line with faux chimney caps on both of the public facades are Victorian vernacular motifs reminiscent of the earlier Italianate style popular in frontier towns.

The building has not been moved or substantially altered, though minor modifications have occurred since GILLIAM AND BISBEE sold out in 1955. The two story building has had minor exterior changes to door and window openings plus some 'cover-up' of historic features, most of which are reversible.

The warehouse and retail outlet built for the firm in 1919 is structurally sound, except minor cracking can be found in a few locations in both the exterior stucco and interior plaster of the building.

The original, first floor store area is now occupied by a Coast-to-Coast store, the remainder serves as stockroom and office for the store, with a separate leased office at the extreme south end of the building. The basement is used for storage and mechanical equipment. The second floor is divided into individual leased office spaces, but is currently vacant.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2**II. SITE**

The GILLIAM AND BISBEE building is located on the south east corner of the intersections of Main and May streets in Heppner. Though the historic center of Heppner, this intersection now lies at the extreme south end of town. A sharp rise in the terrain, beginning just south of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building, limited the towns expansion in that direction so the only room for growth was to the north. Main Street in Heppner is also the main highway connecting the town with Lexington, Ione, and the Columbia River to the north along Willow Creek and with Hardman, Fossil, Spray and Condon to the south as the road branches out along various creek valleys in the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

The historic Morrow County Courthouse (1902) is elevated on a hillside two blocks to the east of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building on the axis of May Street. May Street was also the main access route to Willow Creek Road, until construction of the Willow Creek Dam in 1980 forced re-routing, and remains still today as the main route to Highway 74 toward Pilot Rock. Perhaps it is for these reasons that the building's main brick veneer facade and storefront is atypically oriented north toward May Street rather than west toward Main Street as are the other historic buildings in Heppner. Most of historic downtown Heppner is located along Main Street in the three blocks immediately north of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building, and so the building participates in this historic section most appropriately with its large storefront looking north. Also, for visitors proceeding south on Main Street, the prominent north facade of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building becomes a focal point and anchor for the downtown business district.

**III. BASIC SHAPE & DIMENSIONS, NUMBER OF STORIES**

The two story building is rectangular, measuring 50 feet wide, along May Street, by 143 feet along Main Street. The ground floor level steps up about 18 inches at the rear of the retail store, allowing at grade access for both the storefront and the stockroom as the sidewalk elevation rises gradually to the south. The second floor is approx. 14 1/2 feet above the retail floor and the roof deck is about 12 feet above the second floor. The height of the full basement varies with the change in the first floor level, from nearly seven feet floor-to-floor, under the retail store to over 8 feet under the stockroom.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3**IV. BASIC STRUCTURAL DETAILS**

The perimeter wall foundations of the building are cast-in-place concrete as is the basement floor. The interior foundation system consists of three rows of concrete pier blocks, resting on the basement floor, with wood posts up to the floor structure above. The piers and posts are spaced about 18 feet apart down the length of the building. A center row coincides with first story columns, while two additional rows occur midway between the center and the long perimeter walls, supporting only the first floor structure.

Cast iron posts in the retail space and 9 inch square wood posts in the remainder of the first story support the steel wide flange beams down the center of the building. Two of these, exposed in the retail stockroom, have the words "Gilliam & Bisbee, Heppner Or" written on them with yellow paint. Floor joists, approximately 2 inches wide by 14 inches deep span the 25 foot distance from the steel beam to the supporting perimeter walls. Floor decking of diagonal boards is visible in the basement and from the retail stockroom.

The walls of the building are constructed of cast-in-place concrete. Exposed walls reveal that form boards about 9 inches wide were used throughout. Somewhat irregular pour lines are visible on the wall surface, but very few voids. Some minor cracking has occurred, as is natural with concrete construction, but no structural damage is evident. The amount of reinforcing used is not known, as no original plans for the building have been found. The interior surface of the walls is plastered in all 'public' rooms, and the exterior on the Main Street facade is stucco. The front facade, facing May Street, is covered with brick veneer in two colors.

The roof of the building is wood joist and wood decking with built-up type, asphalt roofing.

**V. SALIENT FEATURES OF EXTERIOR**

The front facade of the building is faced primarily with tan colored brick, a darker brown brick being used for decorative corbel courses at the cornice, above the storefront and over each second story window pair. Full height corner pilasters and wall pilasters beginning above the storefront transom, divide this facade into three bays at the second story, the center bay being smaller than the outer two. The first story shows evidence of the bays only in the small cast iron columns located on the interior at either side of the entrance. These align with the wall pilasters above and can be seen through the storefront glazing. In contrast to the bay divisions at the second story, the continuous transom with unbroken corbel course above and the all glass storefront give the building a very horizontal appearance on the first story.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 4

Above the second story windows, wood sign panels in each bay, reading "GILLIAM", "AND", "BISBEE" respectively, took the place of brick veneer. Early photos show these sign panels had dark painted backgrounds with gold painted, or possibly gilded, letters. Currently, the "GILLIAM" sign has fallen off and been discarded and the other two are in need of repair. Panels below the storefront windows have been covered over with plywood siding in recent years. Early photos show that these panels are solid wood on the west half and glazed on the east half of the storefront, perhaps to admit light into the basement.

The west, or Main Street, facade of the building is a carefully balanced composition of verticals and horizontals. A series of prominent pilasters, extending above the cornice with faux chimney caps, strongly divide the facade into eight bays. This vertical emphasis is softened by a series of horizontal elements repeated in each of the bays. The windows themselves form the strongest horizontal band, nearly filling the wall panels between the pilasters. Further horizontal articulation is provided by slightly projecting brick window sills, horizontal 'panels' below each window pair and the coved projections at the top of the parapet wall, above the windows and at the first floor ceiling line. The second story paired, one-over-one, double hung windows have lights of unequal size, the upper light having horizontal proportions and the lower being just slightly taller than it is wide. One pair of windows, in line with the original elevator, was omitted and a recessed stucco panel was substituted in the opening.

A variety of openings occur at the first story, which continue the rhythm established above but which also address the uses of the interior spaces. One significant difference is that the ground floor openings are not paired, and thus do not entirely fill the wall surface between pilasters as do the upper windows. The first bay, from the front of the building, originally contained storefront glazing which has since been removed. The second through fifth bays have recessed panels at the ceiling level, two of which were originally glazed. The fifth bay also has two tall panels, glazed originally to light the office platform located inside. The sixth bay originally had a freight entrance which nearly filled it, and now is infilled with plywood siding, and two man doors. The seventh bay has two tall panels, originally glazed, but without the transom type panels above. Apparently the floor level was raised again in this section of the building to coincide with the sidewalk level. A window and door opening in the eighth, and final, bay suggests that these last two bays may have been leased out as a separate office or store. The openings in the last bay have been filled and altered in recent years, the door and window trading places, and the floor level has been returned to the lower level of the stockroom, requiring a ramp inside the office for access.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 5

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Though several openings have been altered on the buildings west facade, nearly all of the changes have been made with remarkable sensitivity. Except for the most recent changes in the eighth bay, all of the windows removed were filled in with recessed stucco panels over the original brick sills, such that their original locations and proportions are not only evident but still contribute to the organization of openings on the this facade. Changes to the north facade were also, almost miraculously, accomplished without destroying the original building construction. The storefront transom was simply covered and still remains protected beneath plywood siding, as do the wood and glazed panels below the storefront, presumably. Also, many of the doors and windows removed from the building over the years are stored in the basement of the building, including the original glazed, stile and rail front doors. An inventory of these materials has not yet been made to identify the original locations of these materials and their possible re-use.

The south and east sides of the building are exposed concrete with form imprints clearly visible, as is the case with an adjacent 'plumbing shop', a complementary part of the firm's operation from 1922 onward, but now a feature under separate ownership. The adjoining building is no longer interconnected. The east wall of the two story building, visible above the 'plumbing shop', has never been painted. This wall is devoid of any decoration, with a square shaped, cast-in-place, chimney at about its mid-point which is no longer used. Four single windows, identical to those on the major facades, are punched in the concrete wall in the rear half of the building. A fifth double hung window, of squattier proportions, was added to this wall at a later date to light and ventilate a toilet room. Two more second story windows of this size were added to the south wall of the building to light offices along that wall. When the openings into the ground floor corner office were changed, three small, sliding, aluminum sash windows were added to light the interior.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 6

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## VI . ORIGINAL INTERNAL SPATIAL ORGANIZATION AND SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS

The first floor of the building originally had the existing 50 x 90 foot retail space with unfinished stock room behind. The business office for the firm was located at the rear of the retail space on a raised platform with two windows looking out to Main Street. A freight elevator was located in the stockroom, just inside the freight entrance, in the first bay south of the retail space. Two door openings once connected the stockroom and the 'plumbing shop', one at the extreme south end of the shared wall and the other at the north end of the plumbing shop, near the rear of the retail space. The last two bays of the building contained a door and three window openings, indicating that there was probably a leased office in the corner of the building, with the stock room to the east and north of it. The rising sidewalk and higher door and window openings also suggest that floor level may have been raised in this corner.

The original rough board stair to the basement runs from the rear wall of the retail space south toward the rear of the building. On the east side of this stair, two risers can be seen which were the original access to the stockroom from the retail space. These two risers have been walled off and now the stock room is accessed by a ramp on the west side of the basement stair. The original stair to the second floor apparently extended south from the current ramp location. The original stair opening is visible in the stock room ceiling, running south from the first post inside the stockroom. It has been filled in with smaller, more closely spaced joists, the decking perpendicular to the joists. The existing stair to the second floor from the Main Street entrance was built when the second floor was remodeled for offices, in the framed opening occupied by the original elevator. Also at this time a second exit stair was built with a door directly out to May street, within the original storefront.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7

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The second floor was originally an open display room for agricultural implements, apparently with toilet facilities along the east wall near the elevator since plumbing exists in that location on both floors. The elevator served both floors and the basement. The existing basement pit measures about 12 feet by 7 feet indicating a rather large elevator as necessary for carrying agricultural implements. Partitions installed on the second floor in the 1960's divide it into several leasable office spaces accessed from a central corridor running down the length of the building.

VII . ORIGINAL INTERIOR FINISH AND SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS

The interior of the building's concrete walls were originally plastered, as they remain today, with the exception of the stockroom and shop. An historic interior photo of the retail area indicates that the ceiling was also plastered, although it has since been lowered somewhat and is now covered with acoustical tiles. The frame wall at the rear of the retail area is lath and plaster, a portion of which is visible from the basement at the change in floor levels. The wood frame partitions added at the second floor are covered with three different types of wood paneling, probably representing subsequent remodels. The building is currently heated by a boiler-type unit situated in the basement from which pipes supply hot water to baseboard heat registers throughout the building. Through-window air-conditioners at the second floor have provided the only means of cooling.

The two door and four window penetrations in the east wall of the ground story that earlier provided connection with the 'plumbing shop' all have been infilled with concrete masonry units, flush with the interior wall.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1919-1933

1919

Significant Dates

1919

1919

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Denissee, T. G., Contractor

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**INTRODUCTION**

The large, two-story warehouse and retail outlet built in 1919 for the leading Morrow County hardware firm of Gilliam and Bisbee is located on Main Street at the south end of the business district of Heppner, Oregon, the Morrow County seat. T. G. Denissee was the contractor. The store replaced the firm's earlier outlet which had been destroyed by fire in 1918. Most of Heppner's earliest building stock was lost to flood (1903) or fire.

The nominated building is constructed of poured-in-place concrete and has a sturdy framing system of cast iron columns and steel beams to carry the loads of heavy machinery and farming equipment for ranches of the surrounding district. The building presents its major frontage of 143 feet along Main Street, and its principal facade, 50 feet in width, faces north onto May Street, which is the major road to the courthouse and canyon routes to the east. The building is related to work influenced by the Chicago School in that exterior elevations express wide, regularly spaced structural bays. The principal facade is faced with pale tan brick accented with a corbeled parapet string course and corbeled window hoods of contrasting brown-red brick. The facade is symmetrically organized into three bays marked by strip pilasters rising continuously to terminate above the straight parapet in the manner of false chimneys. A simple rectangular crest bears the building date, and the title of the historic firm is carried in spandrels across the facade. Window openings trimmed with flat arches of vertical stretcher brick and brick sills are fitted with paired divided lights in the outer bays. The central bay originally had a true, three-part Chicago School window assembly. While the transom of the ground story storefront was covered in the course of minor remodeling carried out after 1955, the year the firm closed its business, the lights are intact beneath the plywood covering. A double-leaf front door replacement is virtually the only other storefront alteration.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 0.16 acres Heppner, Oregon 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	0
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3	0	0	0	9	0
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5	0	2	5	1	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is located in SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> NW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 35, Township 2S, Range 6E, Willamette Meridian, in Heppner, Morrow County, Oregon. It is legally described as the westerly 50 feet of Lots 9 and 10, Block 5, Original Town of Heppner, and is otherwise identified as Tax Lot 10800 at said location.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary is equal to the footprint of the historic building and is the lot purchased by Gilliam and Bisbee in 1918 for the purpose of constructing the building. Not included in the nominated area is a later, single-story shop building adjacent to the east wall which complemented the firm's operations from 1922 onward. The adjoining building is no longer interconnected and is under separate ownership.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Gail A. Sargent, architect  
organization N/A date December 13, 1989  
street & number Route 2, Box 2138 telephone (503) 567-0589  
city or town Hermiston state Oregon zip code 97838

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1B

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A comparative analysis of the Gilliam and Bisbee Building with four or five comparable buildings in Heppner shows that the nominated property is not a conventional Commercial style building. Its window to wall ratio is greater than that of the contemporary retail, banking and hotel blocks, as was consistent with its warehouse function. It was the town's first concrete and steel building and the first to be equipped with a freight elevator. The buildings identified in the comparative analysis are the Murray Drug Block (1901), Gardner's Men's Wear (c. 1915), First National Bank (c. 1917); and the Elks Lodge and St. Patrick's Hotel (Heppner Hotel) both by John Bennes and constructed of structural clay tile.

The building meets National Register Criterion C as Heppner's best preserved and earliest example of modern warehouse construction. It is eligible also under Criterion A as the headquarters of the leading hardware distributor in Morrow County and one of the largest in eastern Oregon. The firm was founded by Frank Gilliam in 1887. Such businesses were vital to farmers and ranchers, and a leading concern such as Gilliam's was the means by which new technology was introduced to remote agricultural communities in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

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One of the best preserved commercial buildings in Heppner, in terms of its physical condition and retention of its original character, the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building possesses integrity in all of the essential qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The property meets National Register criterion A as the most important and only remaining built representation of the business achievements of pioneer hardware retailers Frank Gilliam and Louis E. Bisbee.

The property meets criterion C in both its architectural style and construction materials, being the first example of modern, Commercial style warehouse architecture in Morrow County and also the most important concrete and steel building constructed in Heppner, the county seat.

Its commercial importance arises from the innovation and prominent community stature of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE hardware business. Except for ranches, the GILLIAM AND BISBEE company was the longest operating business in county history, under the same name with continuous family ownership. History records many firsts for GILLIAM AND BISBEE, such as bringing the combine type harvester to Morrow County, and pumping gasoline in Heppner.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3

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**I . HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The very first settlers arrived in southern Morrow county as farmers and cattlemen beginning in the 1860's. Among the earliest of these settlers were the Gilliam and Bisbee families, founders of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE Hardware Co. from which the building derives its name and long history.

Albert Wright, head of one of the earliest ranching families in the area, moved to Morrow county from Oregon City in 1864 and homesteaded on Rhea Creek in 1872, near the site currently known as Ruggs, about 10 miles southwest of Heppner. His eldest daughter, Julia, and son-in-law TIMOTHY HERALD BISBEE (12/6/1838 - 9/2/1902), soon followed, homesteading near the Wrights in 1875. Bisbee had traveled through the northern part of Morrow county in 1862, with a party heading for Spokane. The actual date that Bisbee first came to live in Morrow county is unknown, his first child was born in Oregon City in 1874, however Julia (9/25/1850 - 11/9/1908) was only 14 when her parents came to Morrow county and most likely would have accompanied them. Prior to his business interests in Heppner, Bisbee was in partnership with Wright raising sheep, and also worked regularly at Parker's Mill, a sawmill in the mountains 25 miles south of Heppner.

William Gilliam and his 16 year old nephew FRANK GILLIAM (11/29/1854-4/2/1933), also homesteaded on Rhea Creek in 1870, about 2 miles southeast of Wright's later claim. Frank's great uncle, Colonel Cornelius Gilliam, for whom Gilliam County is named, passed through Morrow county in 1848 with a band of volunteers sent to punish the Cayuse indians responsible for the Whitman Massacre. Frank's parents, Jasper and Rosa Ann Gilliam, immigrated to Damascas, Oregon from North Carolina in 1852. Frank was born in Clackamas county and educated in both Clackamas and Multnomah counties. He also worked in the Portland area briefly before settling in Morrow county with his uncle. Stock raising is the reported occupation of Frank Gilliam prior to his business and political ventures in the town of Heppner, apparently working for his uncle, since he is not recorded as homesteading in the area himself. In 1882, Frank married another of Albert Wright's daughters, Effie J. Wright, and thus Frank Gilliam and Timothy Bisbee became brother-in-law.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 4

Meanwhile, the town of Heppner was taking shape on a land claim staked originally by a squatter named David Estes, and then assumed by George Stansbury in 1870. The 1870 census indicates about two dozen ranching families had settled in all of Morrow county. These early ranchers had to haul all their supplies and farming equipment from Umatilla Landing about sixty miles to the north. By 1872 the settlers had persuaded Jackson L. Morrow, for whom the county is named, and Henry Heppner, for whom the city is named, to relocate in the area from La Grande, and open a store, on the N.E. corner of what is now Main and May Streets. And this area quickly became the center of the growing town.

George Stansbury was appointed post master of Vinson, about 25 miles east of Heppner, in 1872. When reappointed in 1873, he gave the location of the post office as Stansbury Flat, later renamed Heppner. During the 1870's, Stansbury sold enough of his claim to the locals, to pay off his claim in 1878. Other businesses followed quickly and by 1880 Heppner claimed a population of 318. When Morrow County was formed out of Umatilla County in 1885, Frank Gilliam had already achieved enough local recognition to be among the first county officials, appointed by Governor Zenas Moody. Gilliam served in the position of county commissioner until elections could be held in 1886, and was later elected to serve two terms as county treasurer. Frank's first recorded business venture was the establishment of "Gilliam and Coffee Hardware" in 1887, during Heppner's period of greatest growth. Brother-in-law, Tim Bisbee, bought out Gilliam's partner John A.W. Coffee in 1889 and the business name became GILLIAM AND BISBEE Hardware Company. Coffee went on to edit a local newspaper, the "Morrow County Record", published in Lexington, about ten miles north of Heppner.

In 1887 the city of Heppner became incorporated, and in 1888 the railroad was extended to Heppner from the main line along the Columbia River, providing a way to market wool and grain in quantities never possible before. The town of Heppner grew tremendously in the following decade, supplying farmers and ranchers over a vast region, and by 1900 had a population of 1146. Frank Gilliam was elected mayor in 1899, a position which he held at the time of the great Heppner flood in June of 1903 which wiped out nearly a fourth of the towns population. Gilliam directed the rescue work and clean up of the town which took many weeks.

Frank Gilliam became the town's official weather recorder in 1910, a position he dutifully carried out until his final illness in 1933. Leonard Gilliam took over after his father and continued until his death in 1967, succeeded later by his own son Don Gilliam, for a total of more than sixty years of community service by the Gilliam family. Lou Bisbee's civic activities included serving as a city commissioner under three mayors to help make Heppner "a good place to live".

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 5

Bisbee's son Louis E. (9/24/1881 - 12/8/1967) and Gilliam's sons Leonard (1886 - 1966), Clinton (1888 - ??) and Earle (4/3/1890 - 12/7/76), all began working in the store as they reached their late teens, beginning with Lou Bisbee in 1900. When Timothy Bisbee died in 1902, Lou took over his father's ownership interest in the business, and was later know as the partner who ran the store. Thus when land was purchased for the present building, Frank Gilliam and Louis Bisbee are recorded as the owners of GILLIAM AND BISBEE. Two of Gilliam's sons became partners after Frank's death in 1933, Leonard acting primarily as bookkeeper and Earle taking charge of the plumbing shop. Clinton had moved from the area about 1918 and never became a partner in the business.

The original GILLIAM AND BISBEE store was located on the west side of Main Street in the first wood framed building past the First National Bank on the northwest corner of the Main and May street intersection. Sanborn maps indicate that the business grew from a single storefront, tin shop and implement shed totaling about 3300 square feet in 1893 to a complex of adjoining storefronts, storage buildings and tin shop totaling over 9300 square feet plus an 8000 square foot warehouse for implements at the corner of May and Chase streets a block to the east by 1910. The original store survived the 1903 flood, being protected from the full force of the water by buildings on the east side of Main Street, but the machine shed at May and Chase had to be rebuilt. In 1929, Frank Gilliam recalled loosing about \$15,000 in warehoused stock in the flood, sewing machines and threshing machines being buried in the mud for miles downstream.

A devastating fire swept many blocks of downtown Heppner on July 4, 1918, the GILLIAM AND BISBEE warehouse among its many casualties. In September of that same year GILLIAM AND BISBEE purchased a lot at the S.E. corner of Main & May, where the Vic Groschens tavern had just burned. In August of 1919, the Gazette-Times reported that GILLIAM AND BISBEE's new \$50,000 building was rising rapidly and that "The entire building will be given over to a general line of hardware, every inch of floor space being occupied by the owners, and it will be one of the largest stores of its kind in Eastern Oregon." The 23,000 square foot building, including basement and plumbing shop, allowed GILLIAM AND BISBEE to incorporate their entire store and warehouse under one roof.

A tribute to Gilliam, a few days after his death in 1933, calls the business, which was begun by Gilliam in 1887 and continued in operation until about 1960, "one of the leading hardware firms in Eastern Oregon", and says of this building, "... (it) will long stand as a testimony to the enterprise and civic pride of the senior member (Gilliam) of the firm."



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 6

The business economy of Heppner fluctuated with the nation's economy over the years, but most specifically with prices of wheat and wool, and the weather during the crop year. Though crop prices were high in the 1920's, the farmer's were rapidly switching from horse powered to gasoline powered farming equipment, requiring most to buy on credit. A GILLIAM AND BISBEE advertisement in the mid-twenties made a somewhat desperate plea for people to pay off their store loans, "In 1921 our business died. Now she's dead again. We don't know where she's gone to, only trust for the best. But trusting won't do; that is what caused her death. Bring some money instead of flowers to the funeral." Themselves indebted for their new store building, GILLIAM AND BISBEE were forced to let the building go back to the lenders, the Hellums family of Pendleton, when their payments were almost completed in order to save their business. When Lou Bisbee, and Len and Earle Gilliam retired in 1955, they sold only the business to Claude Bushke, who later bought the building from Hellums' in 1959.

**II . COMPARATIVE ARCHITECTURE**

The innovative GILLIAM AND BISBEE building is more 'modern' than its contemporary neighbors in both its construction and design. It is the earliest building to have an elevator, the first to be constructed of concrete and steel in the city, and, although the decorative corbel courses on the building's north facade were inspired by the Italianate style, its window proportions and spacings are decidedly 'Twentieth Century', as is the horizontal expanse of storefront glazing. The perimeter walls of the building are load bearing at the first floor with the more modern post and beam structural grid system only at the second floor above, as spandrels of some sort were essential to support the weight of the roof above the wide window panels. The grid type structural system is expressed on the facade at both floors even though it correctly reflects only the second story wall construction. This building does not copy any particular high style examples of the Sullivanesque or Chicago styles but its vertical and horizontal structural expression clearly belongs to that period in architectural history.

Due to floods and fires only a handful of historic commercial buildings remain in Heppner, and none of these date from the earliest periods of the town's development. One of the remaining historic commercial buildings in Heppner significantly pre-dates the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building and the others were built nearly concurrently. The economic climate in the twenties and thirties virtually stopped commercial development, and the built environment in Heppner today is little changed from its appearance in the twenties.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7

The 1901 Murray Drug block consists of two adjoining, rough-hewn stone buildings which are nicely integrated. One building is entirely of a brownish colored basalt, the other of very dark grey basalt with the brownish stone used for arches over openings and quoins. Despite remodeled storefronts, this block wonderfully displays its original character, though the style is not elaborate. Heppner's earliest link to its commercial past, this building represents a period of exchanging early wood structures for more permanent materials.

Constructed in the mid to late 1910's of dark red brick, the Gardner's Mens Wear store building, represents what might be called the Vernacular Victorian Italianate style. A heavily corbeled cornice tops the building and minor corbeling on the wall surfaces highlights second story window openings. However the window proportions indicate a rather modern building and the elaborate bracketing and arched window treatments, typical of the earlier Italianate style buildings in the community, are entirely missing. The exterior of the building remains in fairly original condition and represents the very common vernacular Victorian style prevalent in small western towns between 1900 and 1920.

The First National Bank building was constructed about 1917, to replace an earlier elaborate Italianate bank building. The new bank is constructed of tan colored brick similar to that on the north facade of the GILLIAM AND BISBEE building. It features a flat wall plane punctuated by four-over-one double hung windows and a projecting cornice. It is one of three buildings in town representative of the 19th and 20th Century Revival of the Mission Style. The ground story windows have all been replaced and the arrangements of the openings altered.

The Elks Lodge building and the St. Patrick's Hotel were both designed by Architect John V. Bennes of Portland, in a style similar to the bank described above. Both buildings are constructed of structural clay tile with stucco facing on the public faces, and feature projecting, tile roofed, cornices in the Mission Style. The ground floor storefronts of the two story Elks building have been modified considerably over the years until they retain no historic character today. The double-hung, second story windows are arranged in an interesting pattern of single, triple, single, triple and single. The cornice features interesting pressed metal rosettes every few feet on its underside instead of brackets. The three story Hotel building, placed on the National Register in recent years, was renovated in 1988 for elderly housing and a Senior Center. Second and third story windows are single, one-over-one, double hung sashes set in a flat wall surface. At the first story, six light picture windows fill both public facades.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   1  

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East Oregonian, Pendleton, Oregon, article by Fred Lockley, 7/17/29.

Morrow County Deed Records

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTOS Page 1

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COMMON INFORMATION

- 1) GILLIAM AND BISBEE Building
- 2) Heppner, Morrow County, Oregon
- 3) Photographer: Gail Sargent, except 1 of 25, 2 of 25, and 3 of 25
- 4) Date of Photo: November 1989, except 1 of 25, 2 of 25, and 3 of 25
- 5) Negatives: Richard Sargent, Box 98, Heppner OR 97836

PHOTO LIST

- 3) Photographer: Unknown
- 4) Date: 1919
- 6) Looking south along Main Street at building exterior, front view of north or May St. facade, forshortened view of west or Main St. facade
- 7) 1 of 25
  
- 3) Photographer: Unknown
- 4) Date: 1920's
- 6) Looking north down center of Main St., west side of GILLIAM AND BISBEE building is in the far right side of photo.
- 7) 2 of 25
  
- 3) Photographer: Unknown
- 4) Date: c. 1920
- 6) Looking south at west side of store interior, left to right, Frank Gilliam, Leonard Gilliam, and Louis Bisbee.
- 7) 3 of 25
  
- 6) North facade.
- 7) 4 of 25
  
- 6) West facade.
- 7) 5 of 25
  
- 6) Looking east along south wall of building.
- 7) 6 of 25
  
- 6) East wall of two story building with single story 'plumbing shop' in foreground.
- 7) 7 of 25

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTOS Page 2

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- 6) Detail of north facade, two west bays with original signage.
- 7) 8 of 25
  
- 6) Detail of west facade, fifth bay.
- 7) 9 of 25
  
- 6) Detail of west facade, sixth bay with original stucco panel in window location.
- 7) 10 of 25
  
- 6) Detail of west facade, seventh bay.
- 7) 11 of 25
  
- 6) Detail of west facade, eighth bay.
- 7) 12 of 25
  
- 6) Detail of north facade, main entry doors (installed about 1970).
- 7) 13 of 25
  
- 6) Interior of retail space looking north toward front entry. Original cast iron posts down center of space. Angled ceiling below exit stair (added about 1960) visible in northeast corner of room.
- 7) 14 of 25
  
- 6) Original door openings at rear wall of retail space, left hand door to basement stair, right hand opening to stockroom ramp.
- 7) 15 of 25
  
- 6) Steel beam above stockroom bearing the words, "Gilliam & Bisbee Heppner Or", floor joists and diagonal decking visible above.
- 7) 16 of 25
  
- 6) Interior of stockroom, plywood panels on the far wall are the infilled window openings of the seventh bay, seen from the exterior in photo no. 11 of 25.
- 7) 17 of 25

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTOS Page 3

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- 6) Interior of stockroom, looking at east exterior wall of building. Light colored portion wall is concrete masonry unit infill of one of the window openings between the stockroom and the 'plumbing shop'.  
7) 18 of 25
- 6) Looking down at Main Street entry door serving second floor office space.  
7) 19 of 25
- 6) Typical second floor office space, pilaster between windows does not align with exterior pilasters, but rather is in the center of one of the exterior bays.  
7) 20 of 25
- 6) Interior of small storage room in northeast corner of second floor, which retains its original appearance, unpainted stucco walls and wood strip flooring. Interior window trim is missing in this room.  
7) 21 of 25
- 6) Interior of emergency exit stair well, with door opening to May street through storefront. Vertical panels over door transom covered with plywood on the exterior are a portion of the original transom over the storefront.  
7) 22 of 25
- 6) Basement stair, sloping wall section at top of stair is part of original two riser stair to stockroom. Structure of existing ramp to stock room can be seen on the opposite side of the stair.  
7) 23 of 25
- 6) Basement, dark area on floor is the original elevator pit, now lined with black plastic and used as a catch basin for the heating system condensate. Infill framing spans north-south rather than east-west as typical for the floor structure. Change in first floor elevation occurs above far side of pit.  
7) 24 of 25
- 6) Original retail space entry doors, stored in basement along with many other doors and windows.  
7) 25 of 25

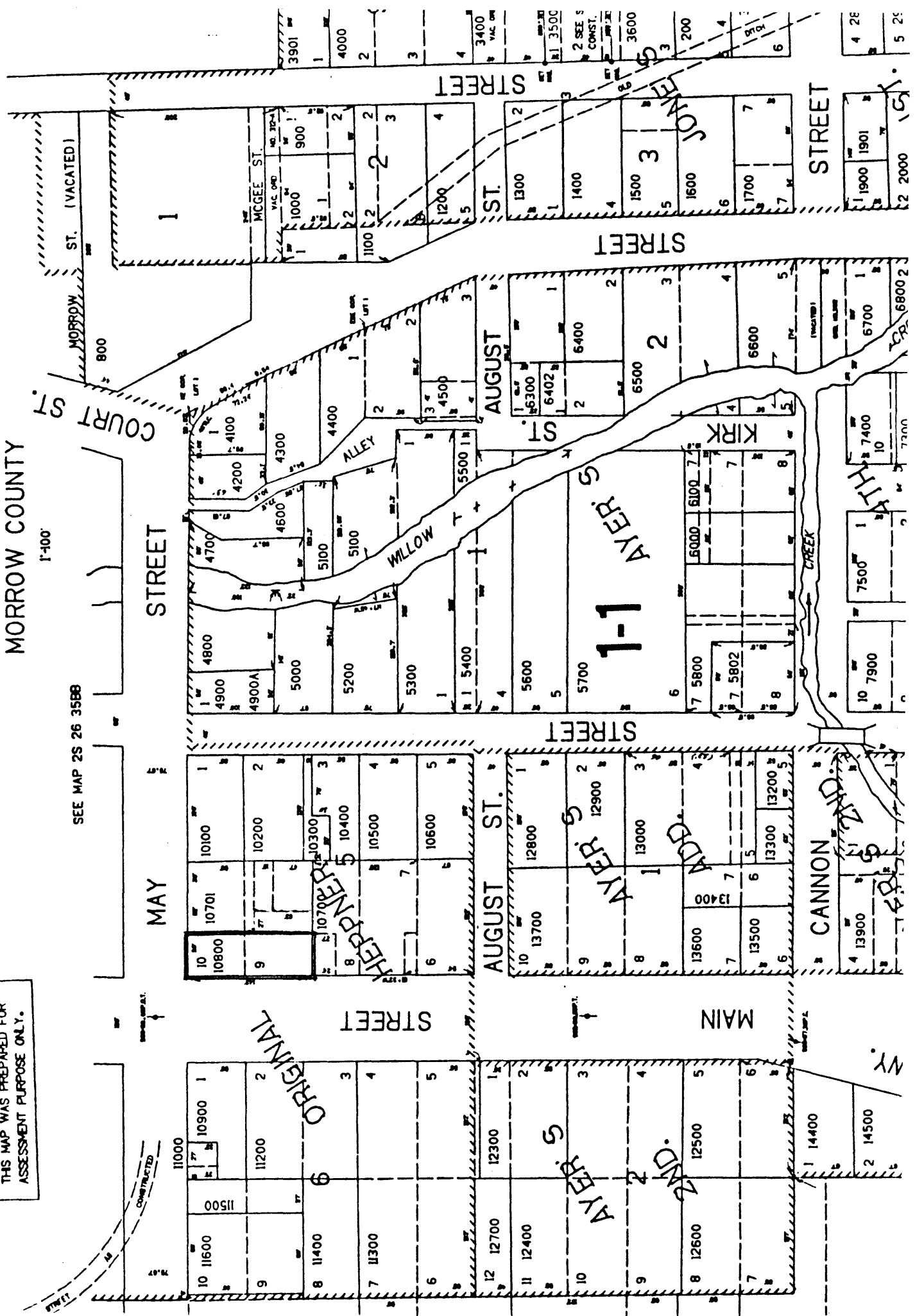
14170

SW1/4 NW1/4 SEC. 35 T.2S. R.26E. W.M.  
MORROW COUNTY

THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR  
ASSESSMENT PURPOSE ONLY.

SEE MAP 2S 26 35BB

1"=100'



ORIGINAL

1-1