

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 26 1986
date entered MAR 27 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cooke City Store

and or common Cooke City Store

2. Location

street & number Box 1097, Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Cooke City

N/A vicinity of

state Montana

code 030

county Park

code 067

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ralph and Sue Glidden

street & number Box 1097, Main Street

city, town Cooke City

N/A vicinity of

state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Park County Courthouse

street & number 414 East Callender

city, town Livingston

state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cooke City Store is a two story, rectangular-shaped wood frame building constructed on a stone foundation and sheathed with unembossed and ashlar-patterned metal. As originally constructed in 1886 the Cooke City Store was approximately 50 feet long and covered with rough board siding. In 1907 the store was enlarged to about twice its original length, a basement was excavated under the rear portion of the building, and a variety of patterned metals were applied to both the interior and exterior of the building. The front of the store, which runs perpendicular to Main Street, consists of a central recessed entrance on the first floor flanked by six-light fixed windows on each side with painted transoms. Directly above the transoms is a small wooden cornice, while below the windows on each side are wooden panels that extend to the sidewalk. Vertical boards, which were installed at an undetermined date, cover the recessed entrance to the top of the first floor and serve as a vestibule. The second story of the primary facade is covered with unpatterned metal and there is a plastic and metal sign hanging between the two floors.

The west elevation is covered from the front of the building approximately halfway on both stories with ashlar-patterned metal. The rear half is sheathed with wide, horizontal panels of metal. There are no windows on the first floor, while the second story is punctuated by five 2/2 double hung windows, two of which are paired. A wooden sign "Cooke City Store" is attached at the top of the facade near the front of the building. The east elevation is covered with plain metal siding. The first floor storefront windows at the northeast corner of the building wrap around the corner for the full width of one window. Two 2/2 double hung paired windows are centered on the first floor of the facade, and there are two entrances with transoms at the rear, one of which is flanked by 2/2 double hung windows and provides access to the basement. The second story is pierced by three 2/2 double hung windows located in the front half of the facade, and there are two three-light fixed windows toward the rear. The south (rear) elevation of the building is covered with rolled tar paper and has two single light fixed windows under the slightly-overhanging bracketed roof.

The interior of the store is remarkably intact and conveys the feeling of a small town turn-of-the-century general merchandise store. Five 8" x 8" posts along the centerline of store act as a divider between two aisles. Metal siding in a variety of patterns covers the walls, cornice and ceiling. Oak shelving from the M. Winter Lumber Company of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, with floor-to-ceiling rolling ladders are attached to the east and west walls. Other early 20th century merchandising equipment such as curved glass-topped showcases, ornate tea and spice tins, wooden hopper bins, scales and a hand crank register adorn the inside of the building. At the rear of the store a hallway leads to a storage room and a walk-in cooler. A staircase along the west wall provides access to a utility room and entry to the original second story living quarters at the front of the building. The walls of this room are covered with a variety of decorative metal. The rear of the second story was originally unfinished and has recently been remodeled with sheetrock and wood paneling for use as an apartment.

A false ceiling and fluorescent lighting which covers the original patterned

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tin ceiling on the first floor was installed in 1963. The original gas light fixtures also were removed at this time. Under the rear half of the building is a cement-floored basement, added in 1907, which has a coal room partitioned in the southwest corner.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1886, 1907 **Builder/Architect** Savage and Elder, builders

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Architect unknown

The Cooke City Store is significant both as a rare and extremely well-preserved example of late 19th century vernacular mercantile architecture, and for its association with the settlement and economic development of Cooke City, Montana. The history of the changing use and fluctuating prosperity of the Cooke City Store over the past 100 years accurately reflect the unstable economic circumstances of this remote Montana mining town. Cooke City is presently a community of about 50 people located at an elevation of 7,651 feet in a valley of the rugged Beartooth Mountain Range four miles northeast of the Yellowstone National Park along the Montana-Wyoming border.

Built in 1886 and enlarged in 1907, the Cooke City Store is a nearly-intact two story, wood frame general store fronting on Main Street in Cooke City, Montana. Except for an enclosed front entrance and painted transoms, the store remains virtually unchanged since its 1907 addition. The building is very typical of a late 19th century small town western commercial building with its recessed entranced flanked by large plate glass windows, tall second story double hung windows and small, wooden bracketed cornice. The Cooke City Store is somewhat unusual because of its extreme length, although its size historically reflects the community's desire and need for a large, all purpose mercantile store.

In the spring of 1864 a group of men explored the upper Yellowstone River area surrounding present-day Cooke City in search of mineral resources. By the summer of 1870 a number of prospectors made a strike at what was later to become the New World Mining District and within a year, Cooke City had become a small mining camp with a variety of crude log buildings and temporary shacks. In March, 1872, President Grant signed a bill creating Yellowstone National Park, an event that would eventually have a profound impact to the development of Cooke City. During the 1870s, the mining town prospered with an ore grinding mill, furnace smelter and other mining-related structures being constructed. With the addition of several other new buildings including the Allen Hotel, which was constructed in 1883 and capable of serving 150 guests per day, Cooke City evolved into a more permanent, albeit rough, community: "The houses are dirt-covered log shacks, that indicate the lack of building material instead of poverty of purse and mild architectural ambitions rather than indifference to comfort."¹

The ground on which the Cooke City Store was built was originally part of the "Cache of Ore Millsite", owned by George A. Huston, the earliest known prospector in the region. In November, 1883, Sigmund Deutsch surveyed the area, and by the late summer of 1884 Probate Judge John P. Martin had purchased the entire townsite for \$60.20. Lots were resold for \$10 each, and on September 15, 1884 David Budlong, a Livingston judge purchased the property where the Store is located. One month later Budlong sold the lot for \$550 to John A. Savage, who

¹ Livingston Enterprise 17 October 1883

9. Major Bibliographical References

Glidden, R. The Cooke City Store and General Merchandising Since 1886: A Photographic History. Billings: Publication Designs, 1979.
 Glidden, R. Exploring the Yellowstone High Country, A History of the Cooke City Area. Billings: Publication Designs, 1982.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Cooke City

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is located on Lot 1, Block 15, Main Street, Cooke City, Montana and measures approximately 25' x 100' in size.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph Glidden, partner Cooke City Store

organization

date November 5, 1985

street & number Box 1097, Main Street

telephone (406) 838-2234

city or town Cooke City

state Montana 59020

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Marcella Shiff

title

SHPO

date

2-14-86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Joyce M. McPherson
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
 National Register

date

3/27/86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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came from Livingston, Montana (110 miles north of Cooke City) in 1884. Savage held this lot for one year and on 20 October 1885 sold one-half of his interest to John Elder for one dollar. In the late spring of the following year Savage and Elder hauled milled lumber from the lower elevations around Cooke City to begin construction of their store. By the late 1880s Savage and Elder's general merchandise was providing supplies for the community and area miners, but also had competition from Bause and French's mercantile store. Two livery stables, a butcher shop, two hotels, and numerous saloons comprised the business district in Cooke City at this time.

During the late 1880s the population in Cooke City varied from as many as 1,000 to as few as twenty people. By the summer of 1889, Savage and Elder had sold their store to William Nichols and Hiram Chittenden for \$800. Nichols and Chittenden paid an additional \$250 to Joe Keeney to prevent the estate and heirs of George Huston from claiming any ownership of the old millsite. After apparently overextending themselves to their wholesalers, Nichols and Chittenden relinquished the Store in 1893 to George L. Carey for creditors in trust. A few days later the property was transferred to the Livingston National Bank by court order, which stipulated that William Bause be the receiver of "all property of the firm of Nichols & Chittenden, including the stock of general merchandise contained in Nichols and Chittenden's store building, as well as about 30 cords of wood standing on the adjoining west lot."

Cooke City experienced slow growth in the early 1890s, and in the summer of 1893 when the national mining economy experienced a major depression the Store began to be used exclusively for storage. On November 14, 1895 the court authorized the sale of the store to Sophia Wetzstein for \$600. She and her husband owned other property in Cooke City and were involved in the wholesale liquor business in Livingston. A boost in mining operations in 1905 occasioned by the introduction of more efficient means of ore processing improved the local economy, and several mining companies reopened their properties. One of these firms, the Cooke City Smelter, which began operating under the direction of George Allison, leased the Wetzstein's Cooke City Store in 1906 for \$300 a year for use as a general store. Allison began an extensive remodeling of the building, and in the spring and summer of 1907, the renamed "Cooke City Smelter" store was enlarged and sided with decorative pressed metal. Allison operated the store for two years but his ambition proved too great for the company's resources, and by the summer of 1908 the Cooke City Smelter was in serious financial difficulty. The store began selling goods at cost and for cash only, and when Allison's lease expired in July of 1908, Nels and Elizabeth Soderholm bought the store for \$3,000 with \$500 as a down payment, and \$500 per year for five years at six percent interest. After selling the property, Allison began constructing a new store, financed from the sheriff's sale of the Cooke City Smelter, directly across the street from the Cooke City Store. By the fall of 1908 the Allison Mercantile Company had opened with furnishings and fixtures from the Cooke City Store which Allison had removed for his new building.

In January, 1909 Nels became postmaster for Cooke City, which had a post office

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since 1882. In the winter, mail was brought by another postal employee from Nye (40 miles north) on skis to a cabin near Lake Abundance where Soderholm had skied from Daisy Pass to deliver and retrieve the mail. The money earned by the Soderholm's from the postal work enabled them to remodel the front room of the second story in their store into an apartment. While the Cooke City Store added new lines to its expanding inventory and continued to prosper, early in 1911 the Allison Mercantile Company went bankrupt. Many of the fixtures that had originally been put into the Cooke City Store when Allison owned it were then sold to Soderholm at a sheriff's sale and placed back in the Store. In anticipation of the auto tourist industry, Nels Soderholm purchased a bulk fuel tank and hauled gasoline to a Conoco station which he operated adjacent to the Store. The interior of the building was modernized by the replacement of the original gas lighting system with two Kohler diesel light plants, and by the addition of a water storage locker and septic tank.

After Yellowstone National Park was opened to automobile travel in 1915, Cooke City slowly began to prosper from the tourist industry. The Store quickly became the final location for purchasing goods and supplies by tourists entering the Park from the northeast. Prior to 1936, when the Beartooth Scenic Highway was opened through the Beartooth Mountains, there was no major road providing access to the Park from the northeast. Today the Beartooth Highway provides a vital link with nearby recreational areas, rising to 10,697 feet and crossing a mountain wilderness abounding with dude ranches, hunting, fishing and skiing. Yet because of heavy snow, Highway 212 is open for only about four months during the entire year, so that the only approach to Cooke City except in the summer is from the west through Yellowstone National Park.

Since its construction 100 years ago when it provided miners and settlers with a wide range of merchandise, the Cooke City Store has continuously served area residents and tourists as the only major source of supplies and goods in the upper Yellowstone River area. Throughout the community's history, the presence, appearance and use of the Cooke City Store has clearly illustrated local economic and business trends. The building retains excellent historic architectural integrity, and is highly unusual as an intact, historically appearing and functioning small town mercantile store. Modern construction and a number of fires along Main Street in Cooke City have destroyed nearly all historic structures from the town's early development. Today, the Cooke City Store is one of the only remaining buildings that date to Cooke City's boom period, and its role as a primary supply center and source of social interaction in the region has not changed significantly over time.