

85

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 02 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 "NA" 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: BLUE FRONT ROOMING HOUSE
other names/site number: SWANLAND HOTEL

2. Location

street & number: 1187 Main Street not for publication
city, town: Forsyth vicinity
state: Montana code: MT county: Rosebud code: 087 zip code: 59327

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	1	objects
			Total
Name of related multiple property listing: HISTORIC RESOURCES OF FORSYTH, MONTANA		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0	

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 Maurella Shep Date 12-21-89

State or federal agency and bureau MT SHPO

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:)

Patrick Andrews

2/12/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete
 walls: brick
 concrete
 roof: asphalt
 other: wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

The Blue Front Rooming House is located in the 1100 block of Main Street in the community of Forsyth, Montana. Forsyth has an estimated 1989 population of 2,100; its economy is based largely on agriculture, railroad, and energy-related employment. The building site is at the far eastern edge of the community's Main Street commercial district. Ten of the 12 building lots facing Main Street in this block are occupied by a total of six commercial buildings. The Blue Front Rooming House dates from 1912; the remaining five buildings were erected between ca. 1905 and 1967. The buildings face Main Street (south), an asphalt-surfaced east-west street with concrete sidewalks.

The Blue Front Rooming House is a two-story commercial building measuring 25 feet wide by 40 feet deep. The street facade is faced with commercial, light-colored brick, while the remaining walls are red brick (likely locally produced). Side walls have stepped parapets. The building's west wall sports a recent coat of stucco; the east wall abuts an adjoining commercial building (the Carolan-Murray Motors building, constructed 1947). Fenestration areas on the facade have concrete sills, and lintel areas have flat brick soldier coursing. A decorative

See continuation sheet

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

bracketed wooden cornice and centered pediment mark the facade; the pediment prominently features the date "1912." The building has a shed roof sloping to the rear; it is covered with built-up roofing. There is a central chimney of red brick. The foundation is concrete.

Fenestration is wood-framed and historic. Windows on the south facade are one-over-one double-hung; aluminum-framed screens exist on the first floor windows. The main entry door (historic) is centered on the south facade; it is of paneled wood (five horizontal panels) and is beneath a wood-framed transom. The east and west walls are devoid of fenestration; the north wall contains only a wood-framed doorway, now blocked off. Exterior wood members are currently painted dark brown.

The building's interior retains a substantial amount of historic fabric. Both the first and second levels feature a central, double-loaded corridor. Paneled wood doors with transoms lead to small wallpapered lodging rooms. The rooms do not include closets. The first floor includes a small common living area (at the southeast corner of the building) and the remains of a common kitchen area at the rear. A wooden two-run stairwell leads from the living room to the second floor. All walls are plaster over lath. A leaking roof has caused some fallen plaster and water damage on the upper level. No historic interior furnishings remain.

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) Period of Significance Significant Dates

Architecture
Social History

1912-1935

1912

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

n/a

unknown

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

The Blue Front Rooming House meets criteria "a" and "c" for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is significant as an excellent surviving example of an early twentieth-century residential lodging facility. A number of such businesses operated in Forsyth during the early the late 1800's and early 1900's. Two of these buildings survive today, structurally intact: the Ivey Hotel (189 North 8th Avenue -- erected ca. 1904) and the Blue Front Rooming House. The Ivey hotel displays a clapboard, hip-roof "residential" design and is located in a transitional commercial/residential streetscape. The Blue Front, somewhat less typically, exhibits the outward qualities of a standard business block and is located in a largely commercial neighborhood. Both facilities, as well as their contemporaries, filled the important role of providing relatively inexpensive, variable-term housing for unmarried local workers.

Historical Significance

From Forsyth's beginnings in 1882, the community served as an operations base for Northern Pacific Railroad operating and maintenance crews. Many of the positions thus created were filled by unmarried male workers, often from other areas and with little "tie" to the Forsyth community. These men required inexpensive, basic housing facilities, often with common dining and "parlor" areas. In Forsyth, this need was initially filled by the railroad owned Occidental Hotel (erected ca. 1882); this 2 1/2 story wooden building, known locally as the "section house," operated until destroyed by fire on July 8, 1901. It was not replaced by the railroad, and its function was assumed by privately-operated rooming houses. These local rooming houses drew additional tenants from the ranks of construction

See continuation sheet

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

workers, store clerks and other occupations common to any small community. Nearly all were males. Unmarried women in similar circumstances either boarded with a local family or shared a rented house with other single women; some males followed these practices, as well.

The lot occupied by the Blue Front apparently remained vacant until after the arrival of the twentieth century, although the 1910 Sanborn fire insurance map reveals a small, single-story wooden building offering "lodgings" on the site. Work on the present building began in July, 1912 when Gustaf "Gus" Swanland began erecting his two-story rooming house here. Swanland lived in his new building and operated the rooming house for a number of years; it became generally known as the "Blue Front" because of the bright paint color used on the facade's wood trim. Contemporary newspaper advertisements, though, describe the business as the "Swanland Hotel." By the time the 1920 Sanborn map was prepared a utilitarian single-story wood building had been added to the rear of the rooming house to provide additional lodging facilities. It was removed at an unknown date.

Swanland continued to own the building until his death. In 1935, his estate sold the building to John Kullman of Miles City for \$900. It has apparently seen only limited use since that time; in recent years it has seen occasional use as a storage area for the Clark Hardware Co. store next door (in the old Carolan-Murray Motors building). The building's facade was recently cleaned and repainted.

Architectural Significance

The Blue Front Rooming House exhibits a design reflective of Forsyth's early twentieth-century commercial architecture. The building's primary facade is largely utilitarian; its primary visual detail is provided by a bracketed wooden cornice and pediment. This is highly indicative of the town's early brick business blocks, and gives the building a vernacular Italianate appearance. Other, limited visual detail is provided by the concrete sills and brick soldier coursing. The brick construction was mandated by a 1905 Forsyth ordinance defining a downtown "Fire Limit." The Blue Front, along with most of Forsyth's 1910's business blocks, "enhanced" the basic red brick construction by adding a commercial brick veneer to the primary facade.

The Blue Front's interior configuration is typical of early rooming houses. The central, double-loaded corridors accessing small private rooms provided a simple, efficient plan. The small sleeping rooms were supplemented by common living and dining areas, adding a social aspect to the largely spartan living arrangements.

The facility is locally unusual, however, in that it superimposed a commercial building form on a typical rooming house interior plan. Most longer-term lodging facilities attempted to emulate a residential exterior form and setting. The Blue Front's exterior form was dictated both by the narrow 25-foot width of Swanland's

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

commercial building lot and the building codes applicable to the lot's business district location. These circumstances resulted in a facility somewhat more cramped than other Forsyth rooming houses -- more cramped than even the town's transient hotels. This may have been a factor in the business' relatively early (c. 1935) demise; its historic competition, the Ivey Hotel, remains in operation in 1989 (as the "Hoboken Apartments").

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

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A	<u>113</u>	<u>37108810</u>	<u>5112481910</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All of Lot 8, Block 57, Original Townsite of Forsyth, Rosebud County, Montana.

See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes only the city lot upon which the Blue Front Rooming House building is situated.

See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark A. Hufstetler

organization _____ date November 1, 1989

street & number 610 Dell Place, #10 telephone (406) 587-9518

city or town Bozeman state Montana zip code 59715

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

Major Bibliographical References:

Forsyth Times-Journal, July 25, 1912.

Interview with Max Blakesley, Forsyth, Montana, October 12, 1988.

Records of the Rosebud County Clerk and Recorder, Forsyth, Montana.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1903, 1910, 1920.