

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED SEP 18 1979
DATE ENTERED 000 31 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC 9
~~The~~ Wilma Theatre
AND/OR COMMON
Smead Simons Building

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
104 S. Higgins Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Missoula
STATE
Montana 59801
VICINITY OF
1
COUNTY
Missoula
CODE
030
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1
CODE
063

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<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:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Hanson-Simons Company, Ed Sharp, President
STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 7277
CITY, TOWN
Missoula,
STATE
Montana 59801

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Missoula County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Missoula,
STATE
Montana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Not Applicable
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Constructed in 1921 as the HANSON SIMONS BUILDING is of fireproof construction throughout. Built in the spirit of the Alder and Sullivan auditorium in Chicago the building is eight stories tall with a mezzanine and full basement below. The original design included the theatre, and enclosed swimming pool and gymnasium, restaurant, barber shop, two stores, fifty offices and twelve apartments.

The building is 67 feet wide and 189 feet long of brown brick construction with the first 65 feet of the side elevation designed as a unit with the principle facade. The building is chiefly Chicago style, the front, or south elevation is broken into three parts with the central portion consisting of four windows divided by raised pilasters flanked by paired windows at each end. The west elevation is divided into four parts with the central paired windows divided with pilasters as in the front. The eighth floor is set off with a banded cornice and the dividing pilasters are accented with terra-cotta panels depicting a grecian urn motif. The building is topped by a double cornice with brackets decorated with floral pendants and fleur-de-lis the top cornice is accented by a row of incandescant lights. The rear portion of the theatre is also of brick with pilasters that conform to the structure, with coffered panels along the roof line of the building, terminate with a penthouse over the stage area. A cantilevered concrete walkway runs the length of the west elevation, serves as an exit to Higgins Avenue as well as a divide to the lower facade. This originally served as a retaining wall for the Clark Fork of the Missoula River until a diversion project in 1958 raised the ground level. Now the area is paved and serves as tenant parking. A quiet title auction is currently underway to acquire this abandoned city property.

The theatre interior is done in rich Louis XVI style with gilded cast plaster mouldings and panels throughout. The proscenium arch over the stage is adorned with egg and dart and rinceau scroll moulding with a complementing scroll moulding springing from the rear base of the organ chambers following the proscenium line, with the ceiling in-filled with a central floral medallion flanked by symmetrical foliated patterns. The organ chambers are contained within a gilded arch subdivided into three parts by scrolled columns with modified ionic capitals supporting three intermediate arches, in-filled with wooden eggshell grillwork. Below the organ chamber are lighted niches flanked by paired columns wrapped by bay leaf garland and divided from the chamber arch by a panel with re-entrant corners depicting an urn with swags.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The sides of the theatre are upholstered panels divided by flush pilasters topped by the entablature with plaster panels, depicting a lyre with festoons anchored by torches alternating with a foliated cherub motif; this is terminated by a cyma/recta moulding with indirect lighting to a cove ceiling, consisting of foliated panels divided by raised bands that align with the pilasters below. This same moulding is paired to frame a coffered ceiling. This ceiling is accented by a large circular ventilator dominated by an early-style art-deco chandelier encased in frosted glass with chrome joints and anthemion pendants, suspended by bound chrome tubes. From this point the ceiling radiates in rich hand-painted foliated panels to four smaller chandeliers located at the corners, with a fan pattern at each terminus.

The Wilma Theatre has a full balcony with a plush loge section with semi-circular extensions at both ends. This section is separated from the rest of the balcony central aisle that serves the entry ramp from the mezzanine and runs to the fire exits at either end.

The theatre underwent extensive renovation in 1951. This renovation included: installation of the present marquee, acquisition of a three-rank Robert Morgan organ from the Orpheus Theatre in Seattle to replace a similiar original model, as well as a concert Baldwin piano from the San Francisco Opera House, installation of modern projection, lighting and sound equipment, replacing the main curtain, upholstered panels and tapestries with replicas derived from the Milan Opera House, re-terracing of the seating arrangement to increase legroom resulting in a loss of seating of from approx. 1400 to a present 1063, as well as a cleaning and retouching of all trim and hand painted decorated panels.

The swimming pool and gymnasium area were closed in the early 1930's due to excessive moisture problems. The restaurant closed soon thereafter. These areas are now occupied by office space. The present configuration consist of the theatre, two shops, eighteen offices and thirty-five apartments. Despite these functional changes, the structure remains remarkably intact, preserving the architectural character and flawless acoustics. The Wilma remains the tallest building in Western Montana and is still deserving the title of "The Showplace of Montana."

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICALS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES **May 11, 1921** BUILDER/ARCHITECT **H.E. Kirkemo/Ole & Bakke**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE **Criteria B and C**

Proclaimed to be the finest and most beautiful theatre between the twin cities and the west coast, the Wilma Theatre opened May 11, 1921 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and has continued this excellence by playing to numerous New York stage and Metropolitan Opera shows and such notables as Will Rogers, John Phillip Sousa, Ethel Barrymore, Marian Anderson, Carlos Montoya, Mahalia Jackson, Jan Peerce, Ferrante and teicher and countless others.

The Wilma was built be William A. "Billy" Simons, an early western entrepreneur who once produced a wild west show, featuring hundreds of cowboys, indians, etc, built several theatres during the Alaskan gold rush days as well as theatres in Oregon and Idaho. He has employed such notables as A.G. Barnes, an early circus promoter and Alexander Pantages, founder of the famous Pantages vaudeville circuit. In Missoula, Simons built the first electric light plant, the original Missoula Drug Company, and with Major Smead, the town's most ambitious business block, the Smead-Simons building which contains the Wilma Theatre.

The theatre was built as a living memorial and is named for Edna Wilma, Simon's wife, who was a renowned light opera star and performed with her sister, Edith, for the Pantages vaudeville circuit. After Simon's death in 1937, she continued to own and operate a chain of theatres throughout the northwest and personally presided over the 1951 renovation. For many years she sponsored and underwrote cultural events for the people of Missoula such as community Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. Since Edna Wilma's death in 1954 these traditions have been maintained by her second husband and Edward Sharp, who operates the building as a movie theatre-performing arts center which features many University of Montana events, because the patron accommodations and acoustics far surpass any University facility.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with the architect: H.E. Kirkemo; 951 Ronald Ave., Missoula MT
 Interview with the present building owner; Edward Sharp, Box 7277,
 Missoula, Montana 59801
 The Daily Missoulian: February 14, 1951
 August 10, 1978
 The Wilma Theatre program files

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SECTION 22 T.13N. R.19W.

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4.164 /*.5967

UTM REFERENCES Southeast Missoula Montana Quad. Scale 1:24000

A	<u>1,2</u>	<u>2,7,1,7,2,0</u>	<u>5,1,9,4,7,4,0</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Extending along Higgins Ave. to a point approx. 137' from Front St. to 67' of building frontage, extending 187' to the rear, with an additional 30' strip along the west elevation fronting the Clark Fork of the Missoula River. ***NOTE:** There is currently a quiet title action to acquire an additional 42' abandoned by the city as a result of the Missoula River diversion project.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Not Applicable			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Roger D. Muzia/Designer

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Friends of Old Houses/ Building Friends & Associates August 17, 1979

STREET & NUMBER
4005 A Valley View Road

TELEPHONE
(512) 447-6699

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Austin, Texas 78704

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

Ednie Vinson, Jr. Ken Korte

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

9-10-79

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Cecil D. Shiel

DATE

12-31-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Kristin O'Connell

DATE

12/27/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The Wilma Theatre is significant not only for its architectural scope and purity, but as a lasting monument to the spirit of people such as W.A. "Billy" Simons and Edna Wilma who pioneered efforts to bring culture and live entertainment to a developing Northwest. The theatre is remarkably intact and continues to serve the cultural, clerical, and residential needs of the people of Missoula and Western Montana in a style and comfort unmatched by contemporary construction.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Wilma Theatre, Missoula, Mt.

All that portion of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, in Block 4 of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana, and of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, Township 13 North, Range 19 West, Principal Meridian, Montana, which is particularly described as follows, to-wit:

1. Commencing on the West side line of Higgins Avenue, at a point where a line drawn Easterly and Westerly, and parallel with the South end wall of the Hammond Block, and distant at right angles from said wall 45 feet, intersects the West side line of said Higgins Avenue, where an iron stake is driven in the ground; thence Westerly on the aforesaid line 170 feet; thence Southerly and at right angles to the line aforesaid 50 feet; thence Easterly and parallel to the line first above mentioned, 170 feet, more or less, to the West side line of said Higgins Avenue; and thence Northerly along the West side line of said Higgins Avenue a distance of 55 feet, more or less, to the place of beginning.
2. All that part of Lot 6 in Block 4 of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana, known as the McNamara Lot, (if any) South of the North line of what is known as the Forbis Lot, (which said Forbis Lot is the Lot herein first particularly described) if said North line of said Forbis Lot was projected Westerly across said Lot 6 to the West line of said Lot 6, described as aforesaid.
3. A strip of land 18 inches in width, more or less, and 20 feet in length, being a strip of the above dimensions lying immediately North of and adjoining the Lot herein secondly particularly described.
4. A strip of land being 30 feet wide lying in and adjacent to the river bed of the Missoula River, and joining on the South that certain lot or tract known as the Forbis Lot (which said Forbis Lot is the Lot herein first particularly described); said tract hereby described is 30 feet in width with a frontage on Higgins Avenue and extending
(Continued on next Sheet hereof.)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary TEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

Wilma Theatre, Missoula, Mt.
CAPTION SHEET (Continued.)

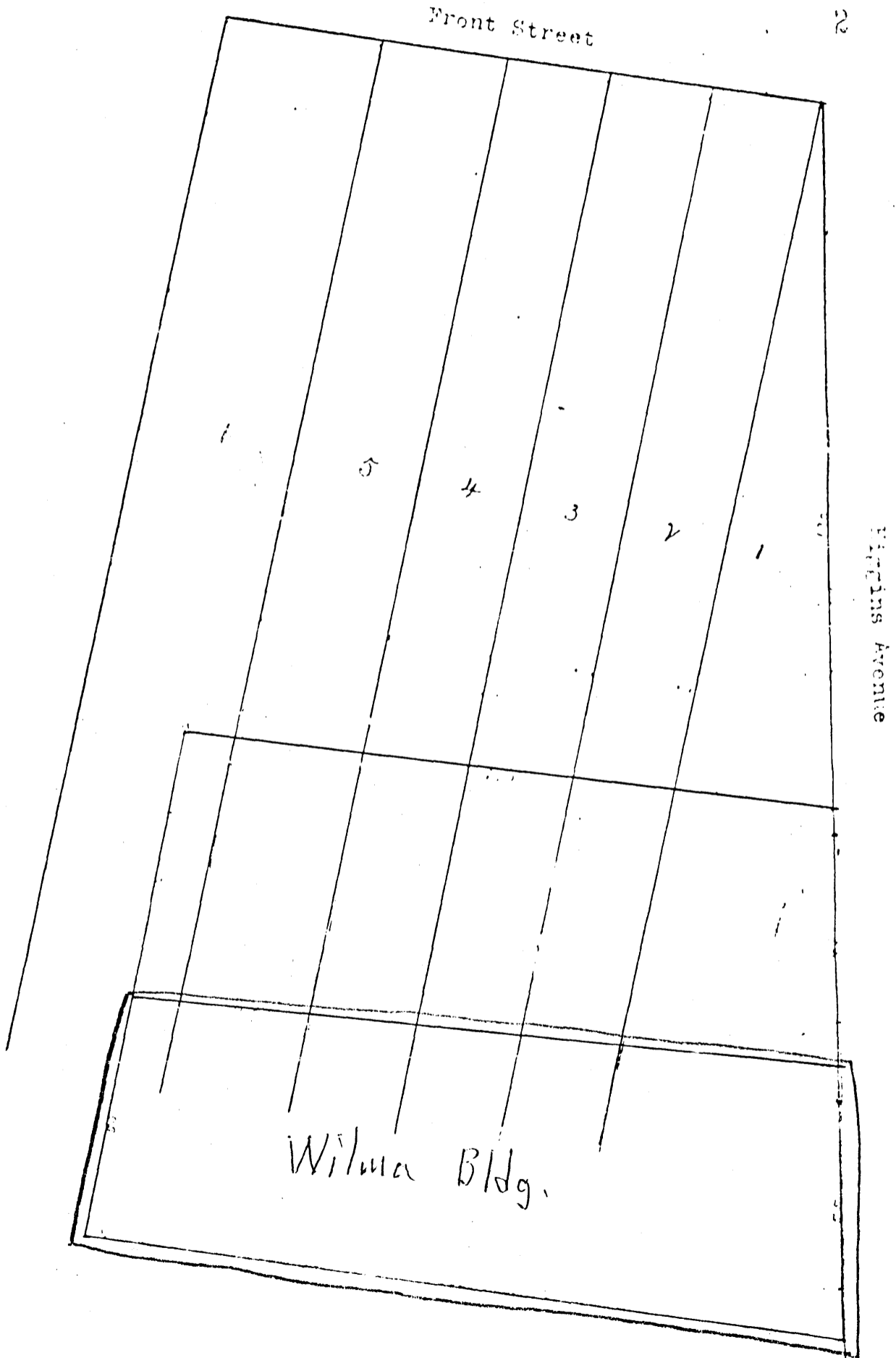
Westerly to a point where the South and North lines of said tract intersect with the Southerly extended or projected West line of Lot 6 in Block 4 of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana, the West 20 feet of which is commonly known as the McNamara Lot, being a part of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana, and is also described as follows, to-wit: Beginning at a point 95 feet South of, and at right angles to the Southeast Corner of the Hammond Block (herein designated as the Southeast Corner of Lot 1 in Block 4 of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana); thence West along the South line of the Forbis Lot above mentioned, to a point where said line would intersect the West line extended Southerly of Lot 6 in Block 4 of the Original Townsite of the City of Missoula, Montana, the West 20 feet of which is commonly known as the McNamara Lot; thence South at right angles a distance of 30 feet; thence East parallel to the South line of the Forbis Lot above referred to, to the intersection of the West line of Higgins Avenue; thence North along the West line of Higgins Avenue to a point where the South line of the Forbis Lot intersects with Higgins Avenue; thence West along the South line of the Forbis Lot to the place of beginning.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 3

Wilma Theatre, Missoula, Mt.
Site plan



14

UAG

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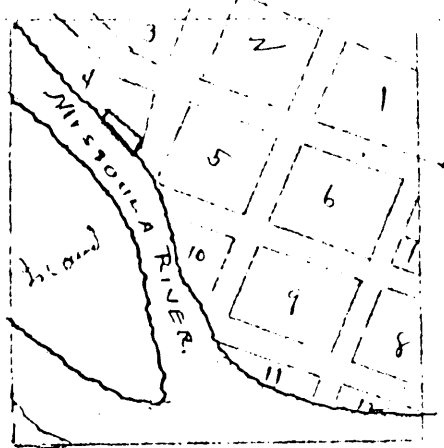
RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

31 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 4

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 22 T.13N. R.19W.



Handwritten note:
None other than
the page 120
which is empty.

Block 4 of the original townsite of Missoula

