

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Symes Hotel
other name/site number: Symes Medical Springs, Symes Medicine Springs

2. Location

street & number: 209 North Wall Street not for publication: na
city/town: Hot Springs vicinity: na
state: Montana code: MT county: Sanders code: 089 zip code: 59845

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.
Signature of certifying official/Title: *[Signature]* Date: Sep 30 - 1998
Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official: *[Signature]* Date: _____
State or Federal agency and bureau: _____

4. 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
 see continuation sheet
 removed from the National Register
 see continuation sheet
 other (explain): _____
Signature of the Keeper: *Wilson R. Beall* Date of Action: 11.12.98

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing Noncontributing

Category of Property: Building

10 ___ building(s)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: na

___ sites

1 ___ structures

___ objects

Name of related multiple property listing: na

11 ___ TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Current Functions:

HEALTH CARE/Resort Facility

DOMESTIC/Hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mission

foundation: Concrete
walls: Stucco
roof: Asphalt
other:

Narrative Description

The Symes Hotel is located in the town of Hot Springs, Montana. It is one block northwest of the central business district. Fred Symes purchased the three-acre parcel in 1929. At the time, a free flowing spring of hot mineral water, known as Lemeroux Springs, existed on the northwest side of the property. Upon purchase of the property, Symes announced plans to build a new resort hotel and bath house. Even after completion of the Mission Style hotel in the spring of 1930, Symes continued an ambitious building program that completed changed the appearance of the building while maintaining its Mission Style motif. He also added other guest facilities, including six tourist cabins and a multi-car garage. Other buildings on the property are the original boiler/laundry building, a coal shed, and a garage/workshop.

An unknown architect designed the 1930 one-story hotel in the Mission Style. The building had a symmetrical facade with center and end cross-wings. The central wing was slightly higher than the end wings. Spanish mission-influenced curvilinear parapets hid the gable ends. Quatrefoil designed glazing set in round openings provided a focal point below the parapets. Besides the parapets and windows, references to the Mission Style were also made in the stuccoed walls, multi-paned window sash, and multi-colored hexagonal roof tiles. A double-bay porte-cochere with massive square columns and decorative brackets further added to the Spanish flavor by providing reference to an arcade.

Historic photographs of the Symes Hotel document steady expansion of the hotel through the 1930s and into the first half of the 1940s. Within about one year of the building's completion, Symes installed a large sign over the porte-cochere reading "Medical Springs." A two-story, rectangular wing is visible at the rear of the building's central cross-wing. The addition had a multi-stepped parapet culminating in a low gable; this modification of the original curvilinear parapets was used on most future additions. The new wing housed hotel rooms on the second floor and individual apartments on the first floor for long-term guests. The eastern cross-wing also received an addition of an apartment with a full-length screened porch.

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By 1940, a second story was added over the central and west wings. The "Medical Springs" sign was moved to the roof of the addition. A solarium with multi-paned double-hung windows was built on top of the porte cochere. Striped canvas awnings appeared on many windows. A row of tourist cabins to the west of the hotel showed Symes was now catering to the motoring public. Another two story addition to the north of the central wing's c.1931 addition almost double its size. The second floor contained hotel rooms and the ground floor five additional apartments.

The Symes Hotel reached its present appearance by 1945. A concrete T-beam carport was added to the front of the porte-cochere with sunbathing facilities on its roof. The lobby expanded into one bay of the porte-cochere with new picture windows facing east and west. The front facade of the east wing was moved out to the plane of the original cross gables. The awnings and the large sign on top of the building were removed, and the stucco walls painted. On the east side of the two-story central wing, a neon sign in large letters identified the "Symes Hotel." Smaller neon signs on the porte-cochere advertised "apartments" and "cabins" and unlit signs, "medicinal baths" and "AAA" approved.

Windows in the building are a variety of configurations although they are primarily double hung, one-over-one sash. On the front, some of them appear in pairs, but they are generally single units, often separated by much smaller units denoting the location of bathrooms. Multi-pane double-hung sash are found in some first floor locations and in the solarium. Porches supported by built-up wood posts run almost the length of the north and south side of the two additions to the central wing.

The interior of the Symes Hotel is modest and unornamented. The walls and ceilings are plastered and simple Mission Style woodwork. Interior doors are two panels excepting the north wing of the central wing which are one panel. A tiled fireplace is placed opposite the entry door in the lobby and arched openings from the lobby open into a small back lobby which contains the stairway. The original men's bath wing is located to the west of the lobby. It still contains the individual beaded board private stalls, each with a six-foot-long claw foot tub. A massage room, bathroom, and steam bath room are at the end of the men's bath wing. The east wing off the lobby contained similar facilities for women (although the claw foot tubs were only five-foot-long). The stalls and fixtures have been removed, and the room converted to a dining room.

Boiler/Laundry Building (1929, contributing building)

The boiler/laundry building is located just to the west of the back wing of the hotel. The central and northern portions of the building housed a coal boiler and laundry facilities; the southern portion provided lodging for the boiler man and other hotel help. A tall metal stack that originally served the boiler was removed (probably in 1974 when an oil fired boiler was installed). The wood frame building has a double-pitched gabled roof covered with rolled roofing. The exterior walls are stuccoed. Openings on the facade include a pair of one-over-one, double-hung windows; a person door; and a paneled wood rolling door on the first floor, four bungalow type sash (large sheets of glazing with two small panes at the top) at the second level, and two more bungalow type sash at the third level. The sides of the building have six light casement windows; the south side also has three one-half light, three paneled wood doors. The rear of the building, which is a story above the front, has a five-paneled wood door, a fixed light window, and a sliding window.

Coal Shed (c.1929, contributing structure)

The Coal shed is located at the rear of the north side of the boiler house. It is a rectangular, wood frame building sided with drop siding. The gabled roof is covered with rolled roofing. A nine-light window is located on the west side. A large, garage door size opening on the north side does not contain a door.

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Garage/Workshop (c.1935, contributing building)

The Garage/Workshop is located just to the north of the Boiler House. It is rectangular in plan and has a gable roof. The wood frame building is covered with galvanized metal. Two, wood paneled, rolling garage doors face south. The east and west sides each have two, two-over-two double-hung windows. Additionally, the east side has a one-half light three-paneled wood person door.

Garage (c. 1935, contributing building)

Attached to the rear of the garage and extending to the east is a six-bay garage for apartment guests. Constructed of 6 by 6 posts, the front of the building is open. The roof and walls are sheathed with corrugated metal.

Six Tourist Cabins (c. 1940, contributing buildings)

In a row to the west of the hotel are six, almost identical tourist cabins. They appear in two historic photographs dating from about 1940. The cabins are small rectangular buildings with gable roofs. The buildings are stuccoed and roofed with asphalt shingles and rolled roofing. The rafter tails are exposed. Gable-roofed porch roofs on brackets protect the concrete stoops. Exterior walls are stuccoed. On the front elevation are a pair of one-over-one double hung sash and a one-half-light, 3-paneled wood door. Two one-over-one double hung sash windows are located on each side (some of these have been replaced). A small single-light window and a one-half-light, three paneled wood door are located on the rear. Some modifications have been made to the rear of three of the cabins at unknown dates.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and
Development; Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Period(s) of Significance: 1929-1948

Significant Person(s): N/A

Significant Dates: 1929

Cultural Affiliation: European-American

Architect/Builder: unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Symes Hotel is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The town of Hot Springs largely owes its existence to the natural hot springs that attracted tourists to the area. These springs became the primary influence in the social and economic lives of the community, and insulated the town from the ravaged Montana economy during the 1920s and 1930s. Hot Springs residents supplemented their income by building accommodations for the visitors. The Symes Hotel was the largest of these facilities, and with the nearby Camas Hot Springs, became the driving force behind the widespread belief in the healing powers of the waters.

The Symes Hotel is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The Mission Style design of the original building is representative of the Spanish-influenced designs found at most of Montana's hot springs resorts. The Symes was the last of the large hot springs hotels to be built, and later historic period additions are more Art Moderne in appearance with subtle links to the building's origins. These later additions are significant representations of changing architectural tastes in the interwar period.

History of Hot Springs

The Symes Hotel is located in the town of Hot Springs, Montana. Hot Springs, originally platted as Pineville, is on the western edge of the Little Bitterroot River Valley within the borders of The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Grasslands of the semi-arid rolling plain extend eastward from the town, platted astride Warm Springs Creek. Low-lying, forested mountains and open benches protect the town to the west, north, and south.

The Flathead, Kalispell, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai Indians occupied the Little Bitterroot River Valley long before European-American trappers and traders moved in to exploit its natural wealth of fur-bearing animals. Jesuit missionary Father de Smet chronicled the natural hot springs, long enjoyed by the Indians, in 1842. de Smet wrote about stopping at the springs and speaking with the indigenous peoples about the waters. His journal recounted that "after the fatigues of a long journey, they find that bathing in this water greatly refreshes them."

Isaac H. Stevens, governor of the newly created Washington Territory, met with the Flathead, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille nations at Council Grove, near present Missoula, on July 16, 1855 to decide upon the boundaries of a common reservation for the tribes. Steven's proposal, which they eventually accepted, located the reservation in the Flathead Valley. When the U.S. Congress established the reservation, it set aside an 80-acre government reserve around the hot springs.

The first years of the new century witnessed a growing white demand to open the reservation lands to homestead settlement. Joseph M. Dixon, a Montana congressman, introduced a bill in 1903 to release much of the Flathead Reservation land to settlement. The bill became law on April 23, 1904, but was much amended before the reservation was opened for homesteading in 1910. Between 1905 and September 25, 1909, tribal members received 80- and 160-acre land allotments, and 2,525 acres were reserved for tribal use. The remainder of the unallotted lands were available to eager homesteaders. On April 1, 1910, the federal government offered, through a lottery, 1,126,587 acres within the Flathead Reservation. Soon after, President Taft authorized Indians to sell their allotments. The platting of the town of Hot Springs resulted from this latter order.

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Under the Taft order that allowed the sale of tribal allotments, portions of the DeMers and Maillet families' allotments, and the land of an early settler, Ed Lamereaux, became the townsite of Pineville. Almost beside Pineville, and next to the government hot springs reserve, the U.S. Congress also set aside a 120-acre townsite called Camas. The two towns grew alongside each other for a few years, but by 1915 Pineville, which became Hot Springs in 1913, prevailed over Camas as the business center of the Little Bitterroot River Valley.

From the outset, European-Americans used the hot springs on the government reserve, and set about improving the natural baths. The baths were free of charge in the early days and consisted of five bathing places and two mud baths. As word of the springs' curative powers spread, demand for better and larger accommodations prompted fund-raising dances, socials, and donation drives. A bathhouse of seven rooms with baths opened in 1911, still free of charge. Two hotels in Camas catered to the traveling public.

In 1913, Al Hurst acquired a use permit for the springs from the Flathead Tribe and constructed a second, larger bathhouse near the first building. By 1922, improvements at Camas Hot Springs included a bathhouse equipped with bathtubs, showers, sweat rooms, and dressing rooms. Three separate mud baths with mineral water contained small plunges and sweat rooms. A "standard" sized concrete swimming pool was filled with spring water. Hurst operated the facility until 1930, when he removed the older structure and constructed a new stucco bathhouse. Eventually, however, the Tribal government resumed control and hired caretakers to run the property. In 1949, the Flathead Tribe built a new building at a cost of \$400,000. The facility was dedicated on July 20, 1949 with athlete Jim Thorpe presiding. Presently, the bathes are abandoned.

From the beginning, the springs attracted local, regional, and international visitors, and as a result, became a primary force in the social and economic lives of the community. Before analysis by the United States Geological Survey, which verified the high mineral content of the water, many praised the hot springs for their medicinal powers. As a result of the many testimonials, Hot Springs became host to travelers seeking the healthful effects of the hot water. Between 1910 and into the 1920's when the rest of Montana was suffering a severe agricultural depression, economic optimism prevailed in the Hot Springs' area. In the usual capacity of a homestead area town, Hot Springs supplied local residents with necessary services and goods, but more important, although the town itself sat far from a major railroad and a major highway, visitors to the natural hot springs guaranteed the town a unique and dependable economic base.

In the first decade of Hot Springs' development, in-town hotels accommodated visitors to the springs. The first major guest resort hotel was the two-story, wood frame Towanda Hotel, built in 1917. The Towanda featured a large lawn, porch sitting areas, and meals with vegetables grown on the premises. Medical, osteopathic, and chiropractic doctors opened offices catering to visitors seeking mineral water cures for rheumatism, stomach trouble, chronic indigestion, kidney, bladder and liver ailments, eczema and skin diseases. Many Hot Springs residents supplemented their income by building accommodations for the visitors. Compact, privately owned and operated motels, cabins, and apartments sprang up throughout the town. These new tourist-related buildings and the rebuilding of retail businesses on Main Street after devastating fires in 1918 and 1931 left the town with an architectural heritage unusual in Montana. Mission, Moderne, and Art Deco designs and features appear on many buildings constructed at this time.

The Symes Hotel

By the late-1920s, Hot Springs' popularity strained the town's existing tourist facilities. Fred Symes, the Little Bitterroot Valley's leading businessman, recognized the economic potential for a modern resort hotel. In July 1929, he purchased 200 lots in the largely vacant Lemeroux addition to the town. The purchase included the largely undeveloped Lemeroux Hot Springs. Symes retained an unidentified architect to prepare plans for a \$50,000 hotel. Construction continued through the winter of 1929-30, and the buildings' completion was announced in February. The *Sanders County Independent-Ledger*, whose publisher paid little attention to spelling or grammar, carried the following description of the building:

... The building is of Spanish architecture done in yellow cream color on a concrete foundation, Fire proof roofing. Walls are plastered and concrete floors thruout [sic].

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The approach to the building is a large double portico with a capacity of ten to fifteen cars, from here you enter the main lobby of the building which is furnished with overstuffed furniture with tile fireplace. Two wings leading from the lobby are the Doctors' offices, Bath tubs, Mud Baths and a special[sic] sit bath for those who are unable to lie down. The tubs are something new in non-resisting [sic] acid.

Twenty baths have been installed. From these baths one enters the sweat room which is a treat for anyone to see. The sanitary equipment is exquisite. The cots are metal cream enamel with a canvass [sic] covering which is laced with metal rings easy to slip on and off when coiled, They also [sic] have an adjustable head rest.

Another wing leading from the sweat room are the dressing rooms with shower bath and toilets.

These Doctors' offices, rest room, bath room and dressing rooms are all ivory enamel with doors and window of glass, with large windows of glass, with large ventilators and radiators [sic] in the ceilings. Then we come to the beautiful [sic] Sun Parlor facing the south with its Vita Ray glass which draws the sun, heals the sick, and is so beneficial to the health of old and young. The Sun Parlors are also furnished in overstuffed furniture.

Metal flower boxes surround the buildings and will be filled with flowers in the spring. Gravel walks extend from bath house to street. A heating plant 25 x 55 furnishes steam heat for the whole system with private quarters for the fireman.

...

This development which is going on in the center of Hot Springs on a plat of ground 300 x 610 feet with a creek running thru [sic] it, will be used to irrigate lawns etc. The Symes expect to build a large hotel in this ideal spot.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when many other Montana towns were suffering the consequences of agricultural drought, low ore prices, and the Great Depression, Hot Springs flourished. Aggressive advertising by Fred Symes publicized the springs throughout Montana and beyond. Missoula and Kalispell residents could motor to Hot Springs in three hours. While local visitors usually stayed for a relatively short period, longer term visitors taking the month long cure were also common. Ranchers from across Montana and loggers from northwest Montana and North Idaho regularly spent their winters at the springs.

What must have been almost constant construction at the Symes Hotel through the Great Depression shows the "medicinal springs" as a depression proof business. At one time, Symes employed thirteen people at the Hotel: two bath attendants, three maids, two laundry personnel, two maintenance personnel, two yard attendants, a chiropractor, and a masseuse. The Symes provided an array of lodging alternatives catering to the varied demands of its clientele. More wealthy guests, used to the luxuries of private rooms and baths with maid service and a nicely furnished lobby stayed in the hotel. For the rapidly increasing motoring public who felt more comfortable in tourist courts, six free standing cabins provided rooms in a more casual atmosphere. Finally, long-term guests could rent an apartment with front and back porches, a living room, bedroom, and kitchen.

During the 1950s, the popularity of hot springs in Montana declined. Some say it was the advent of penicillin that dissuaded many from seeking the cure of healing waters. Most of Hot Springs' tourist cabins, small hotels and retail businesses closed. A major blow to the area's economy came in 1973, when the tribally-owned Camas Hot Springs shut its doors. Records from the bathhouse show visitors from thirty-five states and eight foreign countries. At one time Hot Springs' population was listed at 5,000. The 1990 census counted a population of 411.

The Symes Hotel complex continued to do business, staying in the Symes family, until August of 1994. Keva Symes (Fred's second wife) and her business partner, William Zanetti, sold the Symes to Thomas J. and Kathryn Maillet. In October of 1996, the Maillet's sold the property to Leslee Balsey-Smith and her husband, Daniel J. Smith. The Smith's are the current owners of the property. Of the three

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original acres purchased by Fred Symes, only 2.5 acres constitute the Symes Hotel complex. In 1931, part of the property was sold and became a lounge which was in operation until 1953. It presently houses the Lutheran Church of Hot Springs. A portion was also set aside beside the creek and is the private residence of Keva Symes.

In April 1997, the Hot Springs Artists Society, Inc. was founded. A partnership with the Symes was developed and it has become the performance venue for numerous events sponsored by the Society. As a result, the Symes Hotel is again playing a major role in the economic revival of the town.

Architectural Significance

The Symes Hotel is a representative example of Montana's hot springs health resort architecture. Beginning in the final decade of the 19th century and culminating with construction of the Symes in 1930, these grand hotels used Spanish-influenced architecture as a common theme. Charles Broadwater's natatorium at the Helena hot springs bearing his name was the first and most exotic example. Architects John C. Paulsen and Noah J. McConnell covered the plunge with a Moorish style building with motifs borrowed from Islamic mosques. Other hot springs owners followed Broadwater's lead, although the designs appeared in the less-elaborate Spanish Mission Style, reflecting the owners' more restricted financial resources after the Panic of 1893. In 1909, the 454-foot-long Dakota Hotel opened at Hunter's Hot Springs. The stuccoed building had Mission Style curvilinear parapets, quatrefoil windows, and a second floor arcade connecting it to the round-roofed plunge. One year later, the new owner of the rambling Queen Anne Style hotel at Boulder Hot Springs stripped off its Victorian detailing and transformed into a Mission Style building with curvilinear parapets and an open bell tower with a bell-shaped roof. Mission Style buildings also appeared at Corwin, Gregson, and Alhambra hot springs.

The Mission Style design of the original Symes Hotel carried the Spanish-motifs characteristic of the style in Montana. The stucco walls, curvilinear parapets, and quatrefoil windows distinctly linked it with its predecessors. As Symes continued to increase the size of the building, the building lost much of its original Mission styling. The then popular Art Moderne Style seems to have influenced the later work although he continued a conscious link to the buildings' original design with the use of stucco and modified parapets. These later additions to the building reflect changes in architectural tastes in the interwar period.

Symes Hotel
Name of Property

Sanders County, Montana
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

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: 2.744 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	11	675040	5275410

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4, Township 21 North, Range 24 West, P.M.M.

Verbal Boundary Description

Two parcels of land in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 4, Township 21 North, Range 24 West, P.M.M. identified on Certificate of Survey No. 1619-MS, Sanders County: Parcel "A" containing 2.503 acres and Parcel "B" containing 0.241 acres.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Symes Hotel, including its extensive lawns. Two smaller parcels, each containing a building originally part of the complex, are not included because they are now under separate ownership.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Susan Faye Roberts and SHPO staff
organization: Hot Springs Artist Society, Inc.
street & number: P.O. Box 711
city or town: Hot Springs state: MT

date: March 1998
telephone: 406-741-2433
zip code: 59845

Property Owner

name/title: Leslee and Daniel Smith
street & number: P.O. Box 651
city or town: Hot Springs state: MT

telephone: 406-741-2361
zip code: 59845

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Photographs

Photographer: Lon Johnson
Date: June 1998

Negatives: Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Photograph No. 1	Symes Hotel. View to northwest.
Photograph No. 2	Symes Hotel. View to northwest.
Photograph No. 3	Symes Hotel. View to northeast.
Photograph No. 4	Symes Hotel. View to southwest.
Photograph No. 5	Symes Hotel. View to southwest.
Photograph No. 6	Symes Hotel. Interior view of Men's Bath Wing.
Photograph No. 7	Symes Hotel. Boiler/Laundry Building. View to northwest.
Photograph No. 8	Symes Hotel. Boiler/Laundry Building and Coal Shed. View to northeast.
Photograph No. 9	Symes Hotel. Garage/Workshop. View to northwest.
Photograph No. 10	Symes Hotel. Garage. View to northeast.
Photograph No. 11	Symes Hotel. Tourist Cabins. View to northwest.



1930



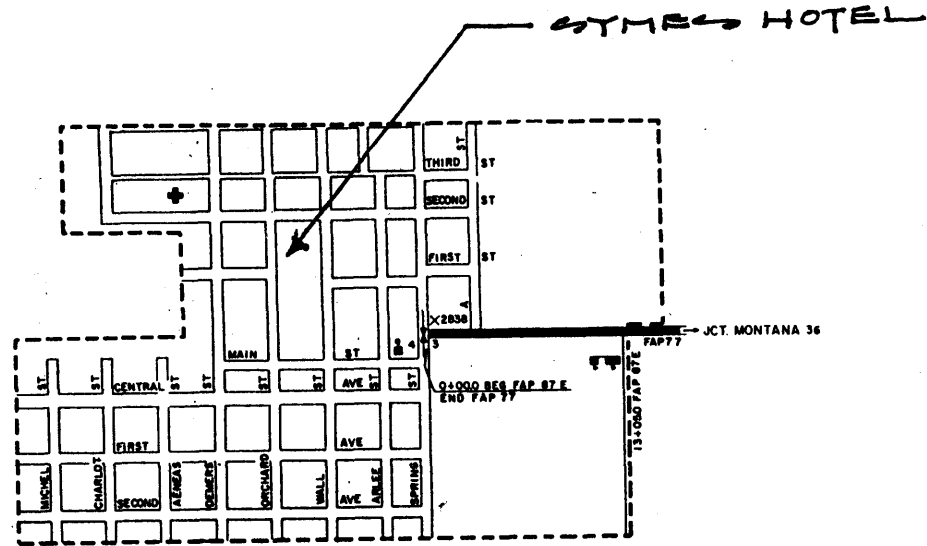
c1931



©1940



c1945



	PROPOSED ROAD
	GRADED AND DRAINED ROAD
	GRAVEL OR STONE ROAD
	LOW TYPE BITUMINOUS ROAD
	PAVED ROAD
	DIVIDED ROAD - TRAFFIC FLOW
F A I	FEDERAL AID INTERSTATE SYSTEM
F A P	FEDERAL AID PRIMARY SYSTEM

LEGEND

F A S	FEDERAL AID SECONDARY SYSTEM
	INTERSTATE ROUTE MARKER
	U.S. NUMBERED ROUTE MARKER
	STATE ROUTE MARKER
	OTHER ROUTE MARKER
	CORPORATE BOUNDARY LINE
	NON-EXISTENT DEDICATED STREET
	CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

	URBAN EXTENSION BOUNDARY
	RAILROAD AND STATION
	POST OFFICE
	COURT HOUSE
	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
	HIGH SCHOOL
	HOSPITAL
	ELEVATION



CITY PLAT
HOT SPRINGS
 SANDERS COUNTY
 MONTANA

1970 CENSUS 664
 SCALE IN FEET
 600 0 600 1200