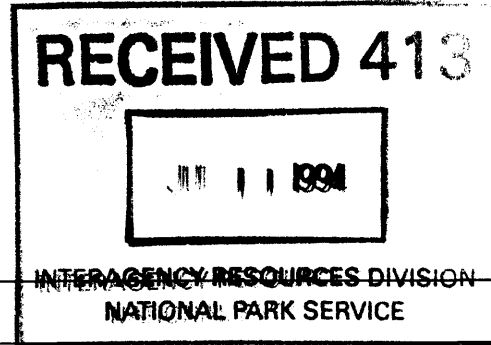


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Kerr House

other name/site number: 24FH

2. Location

street & number: 136 Fifth Avenue West

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Kalispell

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 029 zip code: 59901

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. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Maule Shay MT SHPO 6-28-94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official 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): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 8-24-94

~~Entered in the~~ Entered in the  
~~History~~ National Register

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### 5. Classification

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Ownership of Property:  private  public-local  public-State  public-Federal

Category of Property:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u> building(s)
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> objects
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

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### 6. Function or Use

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**Historic Functions:**  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**Current Functions:**  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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### 7. Description

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**Architectural Classification:**  
Colonial Revival

**Materials:**  
foundation: stone  
roof: wood shingle  
walls: brick; wood shingle  
other: n/a

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Kerr House, built in 1900, is a well-preserved example of a transitional Colonial Revival brick residence in Kalispell. The cross-gabled house has an integrated full-width front porch with Tuscan columns resting on brick piers that extend to the ground. The windows are single, paired and triple wooden one-over-one-light double-hung units. The gable ends have decorative shingle work, and there is a decorative row of angled bricks along the top of the relieving arches of the first-floor windows. An engaged rear porch is original. The house sits on a random native rock foundation, and the wide-eaved roof is covered with wood shingles. A side-gabled one-car garage with a composition shingle-covered roof and shiplap siding, located at the rear of the lot, is a contributing building.

Crab apple trees and lilacs to the south of the house may have been part of the historic landscaping.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: C	Areas of Significance: Architecture
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a	Period(s) of Significance: 1900
Significant Person(s): n/a	Significant Dates: 1900
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder(s): Kerr, Lee (builder)

### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kerr House, built ca. 1900, is a well-preserved example of a transitional Colonial Revival brick residence in Kalispell. It is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, Architecture. Significant architectural features include the cross-gabled plan and the integrated full-width front porch with Tuscan columns resting on brick piers that extend to the ground. The house was built between 1899 and 1901, probably by contractor Lee Kerr, its owner for 40 years. (It is probably the brick residence listed in the *Kalispell Bee* as being built by Kerr for \$2,200 in 1900.) Its design was probably taken from a pattern book.

Lee Kerr was born in Freeport, Ohio, in 1863. He came to Helena in 1895 and to the Flathead Valley soon after. Kerr had rooms in 318 Main Street and at the Kalispell Volunteer Department (he was elected chief twice) until moving into this house in 1911. After homesteading about 12 miles northwest of Kalispell, he worked in Columbia Falls and Kalispell as a carpenter. Throughout his life, Kerr was involved in oil ventures. In 1901 he was one of the organizers of the Kintla Lake Oil Company, formed to buy, sell, and develop placer and quartz claims and to sink oil and water wells in the North Fork of the Flathead. Kerr owned claims in the North Fork country, but they never yielded any resources of value. In 1908 he married Mrs. Elizabeth (Reid) Gardner, who had been born in 1870 in Warsaw, Illinois, and had come to the Flathead in 1889. They lived part of the time on his homestead on the upper Stillwater River, while Kerr worked in Kalispell during the week for architect Joseph Gibson. Mrs. Kerr was a member of the Eastern Star, the Royal Neighbors, and the Methodist Church, and she "associated herself with the social and spiritual upbuilding of the Flathead valley." The Kerrs moved to Seattle in 1918 but returned after a few months, telling a local newspaper they did not like the long commutes. In the 1920s, Kerr became one of the organizers and the heaviest stockholder in the Kalispell-Kevin Oil Company; his early investment in the company returned him handsome profit.

In 1932, Kerr and another oil investor, Charles Emmons, traveled to Seward, Alaska, to look over some gold mining property. In the 1930s, Kerr's occupation is listed in the 1938-39 Kalispell City Directory as vice president of the Kalispell-Kevin Oil Company. He died in 1939 at the age of 76. The first known occupant of the Kerr House was Chris Best, secretary of the Kalispell Brewing & Malting Company. Chris Best was a major stockholder and then president of the Kalispell Malting & Brewing Company from 1898 to 1913, and he moved to this house, located one block from the brewery, in 1901. Born in Germany in 1872, he was a member of the Pabst family of Milwaukee (the "B" in the center of the maple leaf on the Pabst Blue Ribbon label is in memory of the Best family). Chris Best was involved in civic affairs. For example, he was a member of the Kalispell Water Commission that in 1912 convinced the City to build its own water plant. He also served as vice president of the Kalispell Building and Loan Association. In 1912 the Best family spent the winter in San Diego, and that winter he sold his interest in the brewery to John Hogl of San Diego. The Bests returned to Kalispell, and in November of 1913 the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce sent Best to Germany to investigate the potato flake industry there (he had a brother involved in the industry) and its potential for the Flathead Valley. By Prohibition, Chris and Richard Best and their families had left the Flathead; the Chris Best family moved to San Diego and Richard Best to San Francisco.

From approximately 1905 until 1909, William L. Carter rented the Kerr House. He was the president, treasurer, and manager of the Carter Mercantile. In 1913, the Carter Mercantile did \$200,000 business, and Carter was a director of the Kalispell National Bank and of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce. Born in 1876 in Kingston, Missouri, Carter received a liberal arts degree in 1896 and came to Montana in 1902 and established the Carter Mercantile. Carter was a Democrat

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8

Kerr House

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and a member of the Woodmen of the World, the Modern Woodmen of America, the Knights of Pythias, the Kalispell Club (a social club), and the Elks. In 1903 he married Edith Butterfield, and they had two children. After living here, the Carters moved to 542 1st Avenue East. They had left Kalispell by 1917. Richard Best, the brother of Chris Best who was also a brewmaster, unsuccessfully negotiated with Lee Kerr to buy his house. Soon after, in 1911, Lee and Elizabeth Kerr themselves moved into the house. They each lived there, with a brief interlude in Seattle, until their deaths.

After Lee Kerr's death in 1939, his house was offered for sale with the following advertisement:

Six rooms with bath, basement, fine garage with studio room. To be sold to highest bidder for cash in order to close estate. The best construction and heat insulation.

The mention of a studio in the garage is interesting; Kerr's occupation is listed in the 1936-37 Kalispell City Directory as "artist." Kerr did oil paintings; some are still in the homes of Kalispell residents.

### 9. Major Bibliographic References

*Daily Inter Lake*, "Body of Mrs. Elizabeth Kerr Laid at Rest," October 19, 1925, p. 1; "Lee Kerr," June 23, 1939, p. 4; Elwood, Henry, *The Train Didn't Stay Long* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, Inc., 1982), p. 48.  
*Flathead Monitor*: April 26, 1901; September 22, 1932, p. 8; September 26, 1940, p. 8.  
*Great Falls Tribune*: "Kalispell Fire Department Planning 45th Annual Ball," November 29, 1936, p. 5.  
Happ, Norma (former mayor of Kalispell), interview with Kathy McKay, June 1992.  
*Kalispell Bee*: December 20, 1900, p. 11. "On the Way to Kintla," September 7, 1901, p. 3; "Kintla Lake Oil Company," October 26, 1901, p. 1; February 14, 1905, p. 5; June 27, 1905, p. 7; "Kalispell Building & Loan Association," June 23, 1908, p. 7; December 8, 1908, p. 8; May 25, 1909, p. 8; February 18, 1910, p. 3; November 26, 1912, p. 4; March 11, 1913, p. 1; November 7, 1913, p. 8; March 6, 1919, p. 8;  
Kalispell City Directories, 1901-41.  
Kalispell, City of, "Report of Water Commission" (1912).  
*Kalispell Journal*: January 20, 1910; October 16, 1913; March 19, 1914.  
*Kalispell Times*: "Dick Best Visiting," July 11, 1946, p. 1.  
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Kalispell, Montana, 1903, 1910, 1937, 1956.  
Sanders, Helen Fitzgerald, *History of Montana* (Chicago, IL: Lewis Publishing Co., 1913), vol. 3, p. 1680.

#### 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 (City of Kalispell)  
 University  
 Other -- Specify Repository: Flathead County Library, Kalispell

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	11	699170	5341200

#### Verbal Boundary Description

Lot, 5, block 160, Kalispell Original Townsite. Section 18, Township 28 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian.

#### Boundary Justification

The legally recorded boundary of this property encompasses the significant resources.

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kathy McKay, Historian	date: May 1993
street & number: 491 Eckelberry Dr.	telephone: (406) 892-1538
city or town: Columbia Falls	state: Montana zip code: 59912

### Property Owner

name/title: Gretchen Larson Otto	telephone:
street & number: 136 5th Avenue West	zip code: 59901
city or town: Kalispell	state: MT