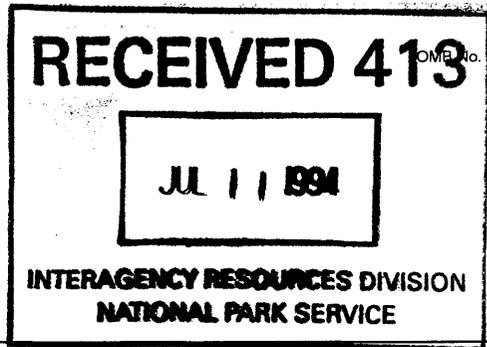


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Gibson/Lebert House

other name/site number: 24FH

2. Location

street & number: 461 E. California

not for publication: n/a  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.)

Maudie Shep 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson K. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
8.24.94

Entered in the  
National Register.

5. Classification

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>  1  </u>	<u>  1  </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>  1  </u>	<u>  1  </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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:  
Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions:  
Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification:  
Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials:  
foundation: stone  
roof: asphalt  
walls: wood/weatherboard  
other: n/a

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

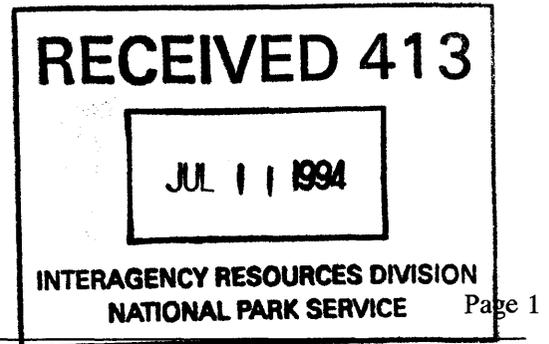
The Gibson/Lebert House features such Craftsman-style architectural details as wide eaves, exposed rafter tails, decorative knee braces under the eaves, wide dormers, a flared chimney, a full-width porch, and multi-over single-pane windows. The one-story frame dwelling has a gabled roof covered with composition shingles. The exterior wall sheathing is narrow-reveal clapboard with wood shingles above the first-floor windows. The foundation is argillite, a native rock, presumably from the Greig quarry southwest of town near Lone Pine. The fully-finished basement extends up to the front wall of the full-width front porch. All walls are lath and plaster. The windows are twelve-over-one-light units and are arranged in groups of one to four windows. Groups of three windows project in small square bays on the east and west elevations and are covered with shed roofs. On the west elevation, the double-hung projecting windows create a window seat in the downstairs bedroom. On the east elevation, the fixed-pane projecting windows create space for the built-in china cabinet in the dining room. The two large picture windows on the front elevation have multiple small panes in the upper transoms and are flanked by double-hung 12-over-1 windows. The south elevation (front) of the house has a large gable-roofed dormer with a band of four 12-over-1 windows and a low shingled balcony in front of it. The rear dormer has a shed roof. The brick chimney is partially exposed on the west elevation and flares at the bottom. The front porch is supported by large square columns, and the native rock foundation extends out on either side of the wide front steps. The front door has a nine-pane beveled glass window, and the original cast-iron door knocker is still in use.

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National Park Service

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Gibson/Lebert House



The physical integrity of the exterior of this house is excellent. The roofing was changed from wood shingle to composition shingle in 1975. The exterior siding was painted in 1976 and the foundation was pointed up and resealed in the 1960s. The front porch swing has been in the same location on the west end of the porch since at least the 1920s. The curving concrete sidewalk also dates from at least the 1920s. Even some of the landscaping from the 1920s and 1930s remains; peonies grow in two clumps inside the curve of the front walk, and Virginia creepers climb the columns on the west end of the porch. The rear porch is screened and has the original wood decking. The outside stairs to the basement go underneath the downstairs bathroom and a projecting closet on the rear of the house.

The interior of the house also retains much integrity. Of primary significance are the built-in china cabinet on the east wall of the dining room and the built-in book shelves and cupboard with beveled-glass doors flanking the fireplace in the living room. All window and door frames and the exposed wood ceiling beams in the living room and dining room are stained to match these built-in furnishings and add to the elegance of the house. A large pocket door, also of the original wood, can be pulled out to close off the living room from the stairway and rear bedroom on the first floor. This door has a tiny gold key (stored in a scooped-out hollow in the door itself) that locks the door from either side. On the first floor, the flooring is 2 1/2" tongue-and-groove maple, except for the bathroom and kitchen. The first-floor ceilings are 9' 7" high. The original fruit room in the basement still has the original shelves on each side of the room and has never been paved (the dirt floor is covered with heavy planks).

The kitchen and first-floor bathroom were remodeled in 1963. At that time, the kitchen walls were panelled with cherry wood and the original windows on the east and north sides of the kitchen were replaced with three stationary windows. The bathroom also received a new fixed-pane window at that time. A new closet was built off the kitchen that extends onto the rear porch, and a closet in the downstairs bedroom is possibly not original. An accordion door was added to the doorway between the dining room and kitchen. Originally the hardwood floors were exposed throughout the house; wall-to-wall carpets were installed in the living room and dining room in 1966, others at an earlier date. A gas furnace was installed in 1991.

There are three large bedrooms upstairs, plus a sewing room/sun room. All three bedrooms have large closets under the eaves (one has an interior cedar closet). The stairway, stair rails, and hallway woodwork are the original dark-stained hardwood trim. There is a built-in set of drawers in the upstairs hallway. All bedroom trim has been painted white. The upstairs bathroom has been remodeled and is paneled with birch. The carpeting in the sewing room and south bedroom and bath was replaced in 1972. The upstairs east and west bedrooms each have two double-hung windows. The south bedroom has four double-hung 12-over-1 windows. In the sun room, all the windows are stationary multi-paned. The upstairs bathroom has a double-hung window with pins, so it opens to pre-determined heights. All the windows on the second floor are original.

The house for many years had a large (1½ story) barn in the rear. From a 1924 photograph, the barn appears to have had two sliding doors on the front and a window above the doors that had a hinged wooden covering and presumably opened into the hay mow. The barn had running water, as the Gibson estate had to pay a plumber's bill for "running water to barn." This barn was torn down between 1966 and 1968.

The garage matches the house in siding and style although it was built in 1948 or 1949 by the Luptons, then the owners. This garage sits to the northeast of the house. It is quite long, with a shingled gable roof and narrow clapboard and shingle siding. There is a modern window and a metal fold-up door on the south (front) end. This garage was insulated and a heating system was installed in 1984. Despite the compatible design and use of matching exterior sheathing materials, the garage is considered a noncontributing element to the property due to its relatively recent age. Despite the

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Gibson/Lebert House

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compatible design and use of matching exterior sheathing materials, the garage is considered a non-contributing element of the property due to its relative recent age.

When Effie Gibson advertised the house for sale after the death of her husband in 1918, she mentioned that it had a "nice barn and hen house." There is no longer any evidence of a hen house on the property, which reportedly was to the north of the barn. The driveway, originally dirt and gravel, originally curved around the back of the house from the east side and then went straight back to the barn. Today, it goes straight along the east side to the more recent garage. The driveway was paved between 1960 and 1966.

When the house was built, there were no other residences on the north side of California Street in this area. Today, there are houses on both sides, including several on an extension of 4th Ave. E. N. that sit behind and to the west of the Gibson house. The prominent feature of this part of town, the Stillwater Slough just behind the Gibson/ Lebert House, is still present, although the water level is much lower than it was during the time Lebert used the slough as an ice pond and a mill pond.

The site of this residence is unusual, as it sits on a slight rise at the head of 4th Ave. E. N. and is thus visible for quite a distance to anyone looking up the avenue. Gibson may have chosen the site because of its prominence, as an advertisement of his architectural skills. The *Kalispell Times* commented soon after its construction, "Mr. Gibson's selection of a building site indicated a keen sense of artistic effect. He built a very handsome residence." The site itself is unusual, too, because just behind the house is a slough of the Stillwater River. It is a dramatic setting in several ways.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C	Areas of Significance: Architecture Commerce
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a	Period(s) of Significance: 1910-1936
Significant Person(s): n/a	Significant Dates: 1910, 1918
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder(s): Gibson, Joseph B.

### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gibson/Lebert House is a classic example of the Craftsman style of architecture. The well-preserved residence is significant under Criterion C as one of the finest residential designs of Joseph B. Gibson, Kalispell's first architect, who lived here from the construction of the house in 1910 until his death in 1918. Significant architectural features include the wide eaves, decorative knee braces, the front dormer with a band of multi-paned windows, the full front porch with heavy square columns, the projecting windows on the east and west, and the built-in china cabinet and bookshelves on the interior. The property is also significant under Criterion A (under commerce) for its association with the ice business of John J. Lebert. From 1905 until 1936 Lebert operated a large ice business, and at times a cordwood business, using the Stillwater slough directly behind the house as an ice pond and as a millpond. Lebert lived in the eight-room house from 1918 until his death in 1947.

Construction of the house, under the supervision of its designer Joseph Gibson, began in September of 1910, and Gibson and his wife Effie moved in just before the new year. As the *Kalispell Bee* commented just after the house was completed, "It is a very comfortable and commodious dwelling and adds greatly to the attractiveness of that part of the city." The house does not sit on a typical Kalispell city lot; Gibson bought 3.66 acres along the Stillwater Slough, on the north end of 4th Ave. E. Today, after many divisions of the tract, the house is on a 0.7-acre piece of property. The living space of the house totals 3,603 square feet, including the basement.

Joseph B. Gibson was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, on January 7, 1864. One or both of his parents were Scottish immigrants. After public schools of Vermont, he attended the Boston Polytechnic Institute (now Massachusetts Institute of Technology) where he studied architecture and engineering. He came west at the age of 17, as a member of the government survey that completed the coast survey of Hudson Bay. Next he worked for the locating engineering department of the Northern Pacific Railroad as it made its way across Montana, until 1883. From that year until 1891 he worked in civil engineering and architecture in both Minnesota and North Dakota.

On March 1, 1891, Gibson came to Kalispell, which at the time of his arrival consisted of two log cabins. He and his partner Billy Hawes platted the townsite for the Kalispell Townsite Company. Since then, he was county engineer for 6 years, and also county assessor and county surveyor. He was a member of the original Kalispell Fire Department, and later an active member of the good roads campaign. (When he was elected assessor in 1894, he was the only non-Populist to win in the county.) He worked as a civil and structural engineer, laying out roads and bridges, and also as an architect.

In the late 1890s Gibson formed a partnership with George Shanley (an architect who moved to Butte and then Great Falls). Their firm took on both architectural design and civil engineering projects. For example, Gibson surveyed Whitefish township in 1903 when the Great Northern Railroad division point was moved from Kalispell to that area. They also produced several large maps of Flathead County for sale. Gibson also worked with architect Robert Forrey, and he hired many draftsmen over the years. In 1911 the *Kalispell Times* commented that Gibson "has designed or supervised nearly every building of importance in the valley." Unfortunately, many of the buildings he is known to have designed have been destroyed by fire or have been intentionally demolished. Besides his own residence, the buildings in Kalispell that Gibson is known to have designed are the Masonic Temple, the Hollensteiner House (116 5th Avenue East), the Eckelberry House (146 3rd Avenue West), and the Thibodeau Business Block (313 2nd Avenue West), and the Kalispell Monument Works (7 1st Avenue East).

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Gibson married Effie Grace Johnston, a native of Maine, in Portland, Oregon, on June 12, 1907. They had no children. Joseph Gibson died in 1918 at the age of 54. The service was Christian Science, and he was a member of the Odd Fellows. The funeral was held from his house and had one of the largest crowds ever to attend a funeral in Kalispell; the funeral procession was "probably a mile in length." According to the *Inter Lake*, he was "one of Kalispell's best loved pioneers." A few years later, one of Gibson's friends recorded the following incident, which may help explain why Gibson was so well regarded. In the 1890s, Gibson's partner and roommate Billy Hawes suddenly became insane one day on a job, and was sent to the institution at Warm Springs where he died a few months later. According to Gibson's friend Bill Mulaney, "Gib sent money to [Hawes'] mother for a long time, as Billy was the only support she had. Good old Gib. Many was the kindly act he did; many was the fellow who was down and out that Gib helped."

After her husband died, Effie Gibson sold their house, possibly to pay debts. Joseph Gibson's five surviving relatives, all siblings living in Vermont, relinquished any claims on the estate. They never had achieved title to the house, as John Lebert purchased it from the Kalispell Townsite Co. Effie sold some of her husband's office furnishings, drafting instruments and drafting board (full list in the estate appraisal) and paid off his many creditors, some of whom had maintained accounts for Gibson since 1916. Joseph and Effie had owned 160 acres of cut-over stumpland, which she maintained title to when the estate was closed. Effie Gibson died in Arizona in 1954 and was buried beside her husband in Conrad Memorial Cemetery in Kalispell.

John J. Lebert was born in Sleepyeye, Minnesota, in 1869 or 1871, the seventh of 11 children of French immigrants Joseph and Anna LeBert. His daughter Lonelva Cyr believes he came to the Flathead around 1891, after working his way west on foot, taking odd jobs such as driving horses for the crew laying the final telegraph line to Helena or Havre. Lonelva described him as "a wiry little Frenchman about 5'6" who always gave a full days work never back [sic] away from a job (or a fight) and was always true to his word." John followed his older brother Frank to the Flathead, who had arrived in the valley in 1887.

Frank Lebert was a significant person in the early development of the lumber industry in the Flathead Valley, and his much-younger brother John helped him in his various enterprises until forming his own business in 1905. In 1891, Frank Lebert brought planing and finishing machinery for a sawmill to Demersville. From 1892-1898, Lebert and McMannamy operated a mill together. This partnership was dissolved in 1898, with McMannamy continuing the planing mill business in the southwest part of Kalispell and Lebert searching for a new location and partner. In 1898, Frank Lebert and Al J. Burns purchased 26 acres of David R. Macginnis' land, west and east of Kalispell, including all river privileges for logging, for \$1,000. Frank and John together built a dam and established a mill on the Stillwater River just northeast of Kalispell (a short distance east of the Gibson house). This mill, known as the Northwest Lumber Company mill, initially had a capacity of 20,000 board feet/day; by 1905, the capacity was 70,000 board feet. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1911. The dam provided power for the Kalispell Industrial Company flour mill. The dam for this planing and saw mill created a millpond in a slough of the Stillwater River just behind the Gibson/Lebert House. This pond was later used as an ice pond by John Lebert. According to a local newspaper, the Northwestern Lumber Company mill "made a fortune" for Frank Lebert in just a few years."

The Lebert & Burns operation was succeeded by the Northwestern Lumber Company. In the first Kalispell City Directory (1901-1902), Frank is listed as the president of Northwestern Lumber, John as a foreman. The incorporators and directors of Northwestern included some of the major capitalists of the day: J. J. Lebert, F. J. Lebert, Alfred H. Burns, Edmund Gale and Charles I. O'Neil. The two Lebert brothers, Frank J. and John J., each sold their interest in the Northwestern Lumber Company in December of 1902. Frank moved to San Diego in 1908 and remained a California resident the rest of his life.

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John J. Lebert married Mayme Morrill at her mother's house in Kalispell in 1910. Mayme Morrill Lebert was born in Salt Lake City to a Mormon family. In 1883 her family moved to Butte, Montana, and then to a ranch near Holt in the Flathead Valley in 1889. She moved to Kalispell in 1894, worked for Wilson's Dry Goods in Kalispell. The Leberts' first child, Lonelva, was born in 1912, and their son Jack in 1918.

In the fall of 1903, the *Kalispell Bee* mentions that Jack Lebert, formerly a Kalispell resident, was engaged in the hardware business in Havre. By 1905, however, he had returned to Kalispell and had entered the ice business that he would operate until he retired in 1936. He purchased the ice business of Gregg Brothers in March of 1905. This included 3,000 tons of ice, ice houses and machinery, 3 ice plows, 3 ice racks, a Fish Brothers ice delivery wagon with bed and canvas cover, implements and tools, and the ice houses located where John continued the business. In October of that same year he purchased the teams, stock and business of the Flathead Ice Company and consolidated that business with his own. In 1907, he bought land north of East California St. from Tyson D. and Sarah Duncan, original homesteaders of the northeast section of Kalispell. The Lebert ice business property along the Stillwater Slough surrounded the Gibson house on three sides. Lebert harvested "natural fresh ice," in his daughter's words, from the Stillwater Slough. He had an extensive series of conveyors, ice racks and ice houses located on the bank of the slough to the east of the Gibson house. When the dam was operational, the slough came up to the foot of the bank behind the house; the water was 60' deep at times. The ice pond was popular with neighborhood children for ice skating and hockey.

The 1907 City Directory lists the Lebert ice business address as being at the north end of 5th Ave. E.N. He lived in a number of different dwellings until 1918. In that year, Joseph Gibson died and his wife placed the house at 461 E. California on the market soon after. John Lebert bought the house in the fall of 1918. According to his daughter, Lonelva, John Lebert had been making annual offers to the Gibsons for their house, none of which were accepted. For several years, the family had lived at 476 4th Ave. E.N., just to the south of the Gibson house.

John J. Lebert sold the ice business and the family left the Flathead Valley for a short time in the 1910s. In June of 1914 they moved to San Diego, where John was in charge of the agricultural operations of his brother Frank's "extensive holdings in the Imperial valley" (according to a Kalispell newspaper) or where he was a truck farmer with Woody and Lillian Collett, his wife's sister and brother-in-law). In October of 1915, however, the purchaser of the ice plant defaulted on his payments and John and family returned to Kalispell to take the business back.

The Leberts also ran a cordwood operation out of the pond behind their house. In 1922, the *Kalispell Times* mentioned that they had about 4,000 cords of wood that they planned to float down the Stillwater River from the Tom Gardner place. The wood was then drawn from the river to a landing at the head of 3rd Ave. E. N. by "an elevator driven by electricity" and then stacked in long rows on the Lebert property just to the west of the house. Frank Lebert's adopted son Frank came from San Diego to help with the operation. Lebert continued his ice business through these years. In fact, in 1929 he bought out the ice business of Richard and Mary Greig, which included the right to harvest, sell and deliver ice from a pond a few miles to the east of his existing business.

The Lebert ice business was quite a large operation, and many Kalispell residents still remember deliveries by the Lebert wagon. In 1911, for example, he harvested 1,200 tons of ice to serve Kalispell customers the following summer. In 1912, he had a crew of 30-40 men cutting ice on the Stillwater River at one time.

Frank Lebert moved to San Diego, but he evidently had an interest in John's ice business, as the City Directory lists the business during the 1920s as "Lebert Brothers." The Leberts apparently rented out the house by 1928, as the City Directory for that year lists the Leberts' home address as 475 4th Ave. E. N. Mayme H. Lebert passed away in 1932 at the age of 52, and John J. subsequently married Zelpha E. Bundy in 1937. She was a nurse and had moved to Kalispell in

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1925. From 1938-41, John and Zelpha are again listed as residing at 461 E. California. Mayme's mother Mrs. Morrill lived for a time with the Leberts, until the day her daughter died. John and Zelpha rented out an upstairs bedroom to a couple some time after they were married.

In 1936, John J. Lebert sold his ice business (including land he owned to the east of the house) to Charles W. Brooks for \$7,025.87. Brooks had been an employee of Lebert's for the past 8 years and agreed to operate the ice plant "in a first-class manner, such as it has been heretofore conducted and operated by the seller." He also agreed to hire one man during the hot months and whenever work became too heavy for him alone. Brooks did run the ice business for many years, eventually manufacturing ice in the ice house that is still standing at the head of 5th Ave. E.N. instead of harvesting it from the Stillwater Slough.

After selling his ice business, Lebert purchased a hotel in Joplin, MT, and moved there. Just a few months later, however, a fire destroyed the hotel. At the time, he told the *Flathead Monitor* he would either rebuild or look for another building in Havre to use for a hotel, but by 1938 he is again listed in the City Directory as living in Kalispell in the house at 461 E. California. He continued to help relatives; in 1940 he built a house for his son Jack and Jack's wife Bonnie at 307 E. California, close to his own house. John J. Lebert passed away in the house in 1947 at the age of 76. His widow Zelpha Lebert owned the property until 1955.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:            Zone    Easting    Northing  
                          A        11        699910    5342515

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### Verbal Boundary Description

Tract 7M, Section 7, Township 28 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian.

### Boundary Justification

This boundary represents the legally recorded boundary lines of the property as it is defined today. The original property owned by Joseph Gibson and then by John Lebert was much larger, but it has been subsequently subdivided and developed. The portion that was associated with the Lebert ice business may prove to be eligible for the National Register. This would require an archaeological investigation and a separate nomination form. That portion (including the ice house and the remnants of a chute that went down into the pond) has therefore been excluded from consideration in this nomination.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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

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### Property Owner

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name/title: Patricia A. Murphy  
street & number: 461 E. California St.  
city or town: Kalispell            state: Montana    zip code: 59901

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*Kalispell Graphic*: "Progressive Kalispell," December 28, 1892, pp. 1-2.  
*Kalispell Journal*: May 7, 1908; "The Fire Fiend," October 5, 1911, p. 1; "Old Timers Celebrate Twentieth Anniversary,"  
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\_\_\_\_\_. 11th Annual Report (1924), p. 27.