

HISTORIC NAME: Litening Gas
 ADDRESS: 424 E. Main
 LEGAL BOUNDARY: Rouse's Blk A
 Lots 5-9
 OWNER'S NAME: Wanda Grauman
 OWNER ADDRESS: 3362 Windmill Circle
 Billings, MT 59102
 SPECIFIC DATE: 1939
 ARCHITECT: Unknown
 BUILDER: Unknown
 ORIGINAL OWNER: Delmar White
 ORIGINAL USE: Gas Station
 PRESENT USE: Muffler Company
 UTM REFERENCE: 12/497620/5058175
 ACREAGE: less than one
 U.S.G.S. QUAD: Bozeman, 1953



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Applicable Criteria: C

Number of Contributing Properties: 1

One of the outstanding examples of Streamline Moderne gas station architecture, the "Litening Gas" station was built in 1939, which is quite early for the style, and qualified for listing in the National Register due to its exceptional architectural significance as a "one of a kind" design. The building has an unusual wedge-shaped plan such that, when seen from the street, the curved, porcelainized metal panel facade appears to have no supporting structure in back. The interior is trimmed with pressed metal, egg-and-dart pattern crown moldings - a holdover from the 19th and early 20th century. With the exception of the removal of a dark stripe that spanned the parapet, formed of three rounded projecting moldings, the building is very well preserved. On the street in front of the station originally stood Main Street's tallest sign, which read "Litening Gas," in the form of a large "L" fifty feet high.

Prior to the construction of the Litening Gas station in 1939, this site had been occupied by a boarding house, owned by Charles Lundwall. The station was built for Delmar S. White, who leased the business. It was one of the stations served by the Yale Oil Co. distributor of Billings. White operated the station until 1947. By the 1970's, Exxon had purchased it. The Silent Knight Muffler Co. presently occupies the building.

The Litening Gas Station is the best of only three examples of the Streamline Modern style in Bozeman, the other two being Main Street commercial blocks. It is the only significant remaining example in the city of the use of porcelainized metal panel sheathing. The station, which is located just east of the Main Street commercial district, is among the first examples of roadside architecture built in the city, and is the oldest surviving example. The unusual form, large sign, and advantageous location of the building were all intended to draw motorists traveling between Bozeman and points east, through Bozeman Pass. Perhaps most important, the building is an excellent example of early Streamline Moderne style gas station architecture in a national context, and clearly meets the National Register criteria exception for less than fifty-year-old buildings.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This one-story commercial structure in the "Moderne" style has a squared-back, oval-shaped plan with a symmetrical facade. There is a central entrance and metal, multi-paned, curved windows span the central bulge. This central bay is flanked by two, multi-light, overhanging door service bays. Restrooms originally were set in the corner curves of each side of the front facade. The rear of the building tapers back from the front to create the illusion of a free standing facade. A large wooden overhanging garage door is set in the center of the rear elevation. The construction is finished in metal porcelain panels and stucco over brick in the rear. The foundation is of concrete and the roof is flat, lying parallel to the street.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bozeman Daily Chronicle: December 8, 1978, p. A-8
City Directory: 1942, p. 154
Application for Sewer Connection: Charles Lundwall, Nov. 11, 1907

FORM PREPARED BY: James R. McDonald, P.C. (1983-84); Matthew Cohen (1985-86 revision); Patricia Bick (1987 revision), State Historic Preservation Office, 225 No. Roberts, Helena, Montana 59620 (406) 444-7715