

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED JUL 24 1979	
DATE ENTERED	JUL 1 1979

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  ~~HIGGINS~~ BLOCK  
("C. P. Higgins' Western Bank")

AND/OR COMMON  
First Federal Building

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

202 North Higgins/Corner Higgins & Main

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Missoula

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Montana: Western 01

STATE

Montana

VICINITY OF

CODE

30

COUNTY

Missoula

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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Western Montana Partners, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 7252

CITY, TOWN

Missoula

VICINITY OF

STATE

Montana 59807

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Assessor's Office, Missoula County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

200 West Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Missoula

STATE

Montana 59801

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Montana Historic Preservation Plan: With Historic Sites Compendium

DATE

July, 1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Montana State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Helena

STATE

Montana

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

The magnificence of the structure makes it a very significant landmark in the Missoula downtown area. It is a good example of the Queen Anne style of architecture because of the varied textured finish. The different colors, forms, and textures created by the use of different materials, i.e. stone, brick, terra cotta, and metal, give it a varied composition. The Missoula Gazette Holiday Edition of 1 January 1899 on page 14 described the physical appearance as follows:

"The building is situated on the corner of Higgins Avenue and Main Street. Its dimensions over all is 100 x 90 feet, or a floor surface of 9,000 square feet at each story, making it the largest three-story structure in Montana. Its style is modern, greater attention being paid to light and convenience than to the following of any particular tenets of the architectural schools. Still the exterior and interior details of construction are so nicely harmonized that the structure as a whole presents an appearance that is hard to excel in any country.

The materials used in the construction of the exterior are native granite, pressed brick, terra cotta and iron. The structure embraces three stories and a basement. The walls of the bank for a distance of thirty feet along each street on either side of the bank entrance are built entirely of granite, ashlar laid in colored mortar, the sameness being broken at regular intervals by belt courses of finely cut granite and brown sandstone. These courses extend the full length of the two street fronts, and form the sills and lintels to the openings, at the same time they aid materially to the strength and beauty of the edifice. Terra cotta dadoes, finely carved in leaf and scroll pattern are confined between the belt courses at the floor lines of each story. The walls are surmounted with a neat iron cornice, sanded in imitation of stone. A massive round tower supported on two polished granite pillars, and standing two-thirds of the circle of its plan in relief from the building walls form the distinguishing feature of the exterior. The soffit over the columns form a covering to the entrance to the bank rooms. Seven circular steps gain ascent to the level of the bank floor, which is raised three feet above the store floors, thereby giving direct light and ventilation to the rooms in the basement under the bank, and more prominence to this section of the building. This tower is ingeniously supported on an arrangement of steel beams which bear on the columns and building walls. The steel work is enclosed by a continuous belt of copper, which at the same time forms the frieze to the cornice over the entrance, its surface being embellished with the raised letters,

"C. P. HIGGINS' WESTERN BANK."

The platform of vestibule or portico is one large flag stone of granite, probably the largest stone of its kind yet quarried in the state, its dimensions being 8 x 12 feet. Finely carved stone pilasters form the jambs to the entrance doors. The entire finish of the woodwork

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of exterior and interior of the bank is quarter sawed oak, finished in hard oil, antique style. The bank counters, screens, and architraves over the openings, for attractiveness of design and beauty of finish, are hard to excell in any country, and we doubt very much if the convenient arrangement of the interior is equalled in the northwest. We would like very much to describe it in detail, but want of space compels us to but treat it on the most prominent features. The roofs of the towers are sheathed in copper, and terminate in finials and turned ornaments of rich design."

At present the building retains these same characteristics with some exceptions. In 1911 the building was added to on the east side. The addition was very sympathetic using the same materials as in the original building with the exception of the brick which is a lighter color.

During the 1955 remodeling the exterior was changed. The storefronts on the east and north ends of the first floor were changed to aluminum facia and the upper part of the floor was covered up for signs. The two granite pilasters were removed on this floor. The corner entrance and the two other entrances on Higgins have also been changed to aluminum. The granite center pier for the two arches just north of the corner entrance was removed and a large window was put in. The window wells along Higgins letting light into the basement were filled in. All of the other wood windows, copper cornice and copper roof towers were painted silver. The silver has since been removed from the corner dome. The building shares a common wall with the building to the North. The interiors of the first floor bank and stores have been completely remodeled. Most of the woodwork in the upper floor offices have been painted and the oak and maple floors covered with vinyl tiles.

The character of the building has still been maintained and with some work could be brought back so that all parts of the building could be sympathetic to the structure as a whole.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1899	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Paulsen & McConnell
	1911-remodeling & addition		Haire & Link

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Situated at the corner of Higgins and Main, the Higgins Block represents Missoula, Montana's closest physical tie with the memory of Christopher Power Higgins, Missoula co-founder, regional explorer, and western entrepreneur.

Criteria B (Individual of Local Significance)  
 Higgins was born in Ireland on March 16, 1830 and, by age 25, was exploring the western United States as a member of Isaac Ingalls Stevens survey crew for a northern route railroad to connect the Pacific Ocean with the Mississippi River. Stevens, one of the most outstanding figures in the Northwest's early development, once credited Higgins with saving his life when a raft carrying the two men went out of control in a strong current on the St. Regis River during a trek to formulate a treaty with the Flathead Indians near present-day Missoula.

Upon the completion of the railroad surveys, Higgins stayed with the quartermaster corps at Walla Walla. There he later joined with merchant Frank L. Worden. The two loaded 75 pack animals and set out for Hellgate (near Missoula) where they established in 1860 the first store in western Montana. In 1864 Higgins constructed a flour mill on what was to become the original Missoula townsite and inaugurated a move from the old Hell Gate Village. The Mullan Road (Ft. Benton-Idaho) ran past the back door of the mill, and only a couple blocks away, Higgins built his home. In 1865, Higgins and partner Worden moved their store from Hell Gate to Missoula where they constructed a brick structure near the flour mill.

In his years of public service, Higgins served as one of three original commissioners for Missoula County when it was created as part of Washington Territory in 1860. In 1864 he became a member of the first Montana Territory Legislative Assembly and an incorporator of the Montana Historical Society. In 1870 he first engaged in the banking business, becoming president of the First National Bank in 1873.

Early newspaper accounts called construction of the Higgins Block the "heaviest fruit" of a frugal life. In 1888 Christopher P. Higgins incorporated the C. P. Higgins Western Bank and commissioned local builder-architects Paulsen and McConnell to design a structure to house the bank. Construction on the Higgins Block, as it was to be called, commenced in 1888 after Higgin's house was moved from the construction site to the eastern end of the block. C. P. Higgins spent much time on the construction site, but died in his neighboring house just as the building was completed.

Construction of the Higgins Block was part of a plan to construct a central business district surrounding Higgins Avenue. The district has remained largely true to that plan with the corner of Higgins and Main often referred to by local business people

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Koelbel, Lenora, Missoula The Way It Was, Gateway Printing & Litho, Missoula, 1972 (PP. 69-70.)
- Missoula Gazette, Holiday Edition, January 1, 1890, pp. 7, 9, 14.
- The Gazette: Missoula and Coeur d'Alene Edition, January 1, 1892, pp. 6, 7, 13.
- Wright & Woodward, Missoula City Directory, Missoula, 1890.
- Missoulian - Sentinel, Centennial Edition, July 27, 1960.
- Johnson, Dale, "The D. J. Hennessey Mercantile Co. & Department Store Politics", Montana Business Quarterly, Spring, 1979, pp. 46-47.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .31 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Southeast Missoula

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 12 27 1880 51951000

B               

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

C. P. Higgins Addition N82½' Lots 7 to 10 Block B, Lots 1 to 5 Block B, E15' Lot 6 Block B, Alley 20' x 165'

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James R. McDonald Architect (History by Gary Williams, Historical Research Associates)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

James R. McDonald Architect Edited by Kingston Heath

19 June 1979

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

210 North Higgins, P.O. Box 8163

(406)543-3787

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Missoula,

Montana

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

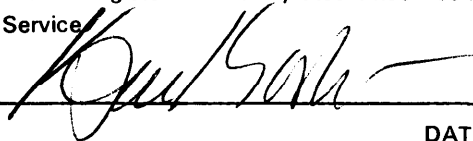
NATIONAL     

STATE X

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



TITLE

DATE 07-16-79

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

for Gary Cecil Skull  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10-1-79

ATTEST: W. Ray Luce  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 9/27/79

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as the "Golden Block", or highly-trafficed commercial area. Only recently, with the opening of a large shopping mall away from the downtown area, has this changed. The Higgins Block currently is at the center of an anticipated historic district for the City of Missoula. Hence, not only has this structure remained the pivotal hub of downtown Missoula, but continues to symbolize the commercial growth attained by one of its principal native sons, C.P. Higgins, as well as reflect Missoula's commercial maturation in general.

When the Higgins Block opened for business in 1889, it housed the C.P. Higgins Western Bank (a private institution and one of three Missoula banks), the D.J. Hennessy Mercantile Company, and a multitude of offices. Included in those offices were attorneys, insurance and real estate men, surveyors, architects, engineers, plumbers, and at least one physician. In 1895 the D.J. Hennessy Co. closed its business in the Higgins Block and smaller businesses, including a restaurant, occupied the space.

Around 1900 the Conrad Kohrs Company (note association with Conrad Kohrs National Historic Site) purchased the building, continuing with its former use pattern. By 1907 the Higgins Bank had disappeared. It was replaced by the Missoula Trust and Security Bank. By 1911 that bank became the Missoula Trust and Savings Bank. An addition to the original structure was added to the back, with a front on Main Street, by the Conrad Kohrs Company in 1911. Currently that addition is occupied by a title company. In 1955 the bank area was completely remodeled for the Missoula Building & Loan Association which moved in on October 4 of that year. The Association purchased the Higgins Block from the Conrad Kohrs interests in July of 1959 and owned the structure until 1978 when Western Montana Partners, Inc. bought the building. The Bank area currently is occupied by the First Federal Savings & Loan of Missoula. Other current occupants of the Higgins Block include insurance people, attorneys, a beauty parlor, an architect, and miscellaneous small businesses - all consistent with the original use.

**Criteria C (Architectural Significance)**

The Higgins block remains today a fine example of a Queen Anne commercial structure rendered in masonry. The elevation plays off the sweeping horizontals of the string courses and cornice line with the strong vertical statements made by the features of the oriel bay, "hooded" bay, and rock face corner treatment. Opposition continues, as a true Queen Anne design technique, in the contrast of texture between smooth brick and rough granite, between the shining copper dome and dull masonry finish and between strident brick red against the cream colored ashlar window lintels. Even in modeling, the hollow void of the corner entrance is answered above by the outward pull of the oriel whose weighty column, in turn, is juxtaposed against slender, seemingly

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insubstantial columns.

(see description part 1)

In addition to the inherent stylistic significance, the structure was designed by the important architectural firm of Paulson and McConnell of Helena. An outstanding practitioner of Richardsonian Romanesque as well as the Queen Anne style, J.C. Paulsen came to Helena in 1887 after studying architecture in Germany. His credits include the Romanesque Montana Hall (1893) at Montana State University (Bozeman), the Moorish inspired Broadwater Natatorium, (Helena), and the Richardsonian Silver Bow Block, 1890 (Butte). Paulsen became associated with N.J. McConnell in 1887 and as an architectural partnership, they designed some of the most prominent buildings in Helena as well as around the state during the late 1880's and 1890's.