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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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NATIONAL  
REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Wellman Block

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 206 East Main Street

not for publication: n/a  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

city/town: White Sulphur Springs

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Meagher code: 059

zip code:

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 Day MTSHPO 1-10-94  
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 3/7/94  
Entered in the National Register

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### 5. Classification

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<b>Ownership of Property:</b> private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b> Building	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> 0	<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> building(s)
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> TOTAL

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### 6. Function or Use

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<b>Historic Functions:</b> COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store, business, restaurant DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling GOVERNMENT: post office	<b>Current Functions:</b> COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling
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### 7. Description

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<b>Architectural Classification:</b> Other: Western Commercial	<b>Materials:</b> foundation: stone walls: brick roof: asphalt other: n/a
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### Narrative Description

The Wellman Block is a two part commercial building constructed of common bonded red brick. The original design of the building reflects popular Western commercial design, common to settlement era communities throughout Montana. Typical of the style, the building features a false front which masks the simple gable-roofed rectangular form. Located in the heart of the White Sulphur Springs commercial area, the block's long rectangular massing is set perpendicular to the street facing north.

The original design of the building typified early commercial building of the territorial era. On the north elevation, tall arched openings across the ground level are segmentally arched and hooded. The display windows included fixed, multipaned units skirted with low brick kickpanels. The door was placed centrally, housing a door with multipaned glass and a two-pane transom above. On the second story, two double hung windows were set toward the outside, giving the facade a wide-eyed look. The front terminated in a corbelled and corniced brick parapet, with a flat expanse for painted signage below the cornice.

In 1911, the building was remodelled following a major downtown fire, which may well have damaged this building. This new updated front featured a larger storefront for improved display, an added front entrance to the upper story, more windows to illuminate the upstairs, and an ornate metal cornice crowning the building. This design remains to the present day, in a high state of preservation. On the ground level the storefront's central entrance is recessed and enframed by large, single panel glass windows. High transoms with textured multiblock amethyst glass finish the openings. The doorway is framed with wood, windows are now framed with metal. Outer bearing walls gain a pilastered appearance from decorative raised brick courses.

On the second story, window openings include segmental brick arches and stone lintels. Double hung windows are arranged 1-over-1, with the outer windows being narrower than the inner units. Above this, an ornate metal cornice with a semi-elliptical central pediment and distinctive cornerblocks with ball-like finials crowns the facade. The cornice includes a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Wellman Block

Page 1

frieze ornamented with rosettes and swags, and egg and dart molding. The name "WELLMAN BLOCK/ 1911" is arranged in the pediment.

On the west elevation, the building has been stuccoed and painted white. A couple original windows do remain, and are framed with wood and double hung, 2-over-2. On the east elevation, the Wellman Block abuts a building next door; very little shows beneath the roofline. The back of the building faces south. On this elevation the historic brickwork is visible, reflecting early design of the building and some later alterations. Segmental openings across the first story mark locations of two large windows and a central doorway with a transom. The windows and transom are now boarded over and a narrower door occupies the space beneath the central brick archway. Lower courses of brick have been cemented across the facade. On the upper story, openings are spanned by flat arches, however, evidence of an earlier round brick archway is visible. Openings on this level include a single window, double hung, 1-over-1, and a doorway which opens onto a new wooden stairway. An engaged chimney rises along the wall and is trimmed with a corbelled cap. Other interior chimneys visible in historic photographs are no longer extant.

The Wellman Block rests on a stone foundation which is not visible on the exterior. The gable roof is covered with modern ribbed metal roofing which replaced similar corrugated metal which formerly roofed the building. Owners of the Wellman Block have recently completed rehabilitating the building under the Tax Incentive Program, completing much-needed repairs.

On the interior, the building was gutted during rehab efforts, although an effort was made to retain elements of the historic design. On the first floor, the main doorway opens off the street into a single shop space, a portion of which is now walled off at the back. A high ceiling covered with ornate, pressed tin and supported with flaring pilasters along the walls remains, however a dropped ceiling installed to comply with fire codes now masks the higher historic ceiling. On the second floor, little remained of the historic interior, although the floorplan was marked by wall studs and vintage linoleum flooring. These were removed and the area was converted into apartments. A bit of historic detailing did remain; original windows and moldings were repaired, and the wooden stairway remains.

The Wellman Block retains an excellent degree of historic integrity, brought out in recent months by the rehabilitation project. One of the best preserved historic commercial buildings in White Sulphur Springs, this block accurately reflects, in detail, the historic design and function of the building dating to 1911 and the remodel of the primary facade. The building commands a strong presence in the downtown streetscape, contributing to the vitality of the commercial district, and helping to anchor the historic character of this small town.

Appropriately, the building has been restored to its original use, for the current owners operate a saddlery and boot making business on the first floor. The owners have done a commendable job in their work on the building, and may set an example for others to follow here, for the town retains many other good historic buildings which would benefit from rehabilitation.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Commerce  
Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1880 - 1944

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: ca. 1880, 1911

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

The Wellman Block is one of the earliest commercial buildings in White Sulphur Springs. An integral part of the historic downtown and a well preserved local example of popular Western Commercial architecture, the building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C.

### Historical Significance

In 1864, gold strikes at Confederate Gulch in the Big Belt Mountains brought white prospectors and settlers to the region. In 1866, a pioneer named James Scott Brewer encountered the hot springs which were known to the native peoples of the region and regarded for their medicinal qualities. Four years later filed a pre-emption claim on a quarter section of land encompassing the springs. "Brewer's Springs" became a business enterprise in 1871, when Major R.C. Walker purchased a half interest and a patent was issued to the two men. The first buildings were erected shortly thereafter at the springs, including dwellings, bathhouses and stables.<sup>1</sup> In 1874, the Helena Carroll Road opened, and Brewer's Springs became a regular stopping place on the route.

It was reported in 1877 that "White Sulphur Springs, on the north fork of Smith's river, Meagher county, is now the sole property of Dr. William Parberry, he having recently [in 1876] purchased the one-half interest of H.B. Brainard. Mr. and Mrs. Brainard, the popular host and hostess of the Springs for the last three years will vacate the property next month... Dr. Parberry and wife will locate at the springs and invalids seeking this health giving resort can rely upon the best medical advice and treatment."<sup>2</sup>

The first post office was established that year in the Springs Hotel; the following year, Parberry acquired the remaining holdings from Brewer.

The Wellman Block stands on property originally platted by Dr. Parberry and Robert N. Sutherlin. Parberry sold the lots for the building to William H. and Robert N. Sutherlin<sup>3</sup>, early White Sulphur businessmen, founders and operators of the Rocky Mountain Husbandman newspaper which moved its offices from a waning Diamond City mining camp to the emerging town of White Sulphur Springs in 1880.<sup>4</sup> That year, White Sulphur Springs replaced Diamond City as the county seat.<sup>5</sup> From that time on, while the nearby mining districts played out, farming and ranching took over the surrounding rural area. White Sulphur Springs became a commercial and financial hub for the surrounding agricultural ventures and remains so to the present day.

See continuation sheets

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<sup>1</sup>Great Falls Tribune, February 16, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>A.J. Fiske, Helena Herald, 1877, as quoted in the Great Falls Tribune, February 17, 1935.

<sup>3</sup>Abstract of title

<sup>4</sup>Grant, Frank R. "Embattled Voice of the Montana Farmer"

<sup>5</sup>Meagher County News, November 25, 1976.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Wellman Block

Page 1

The Sutherlin brothers appear to have built the building ca. 1880; by 1884, Sanborn maps depict the two-story brick building which became known as the Wellman Block on this site. The earliest known use of the building was as a harness and saddle makers shop, James MacDonald proprietor. MacDonald came to White Sulphur Springs via Fort Benton in 1882 to "engage in the leather business." He purchased this building two years later for "the sum of eight hundred dollars, lawful money of the United States of America."<sup>6</sup>

MacDonald operated his shop on the ground floor, and through the 1880s the second story offered lodgings. By 1891, the second story was converted to offices.<sup>7</sup> The shop remained with MacDonald until 1907, when William Wellman purchased the building.<sup>8</sup>

William Wellman was a native of Illinois, who trained through apprenticeship in saddle and harness making. He worked in Iowa and Nebraska, then Denver and Albuquerque before he moved to territorial Montana in 1883. Stopping first in Bozeman, Helena and Miles City, he located permanently in White Sulphur Springs about two years later. In 1888, he again entered into the harness and saddle making business. He worked in that trade in White Sulphur Springs until his retirement in 1917. Wellman married Jessie Weaver during the 1890s, a native of Missouri.<sup>9</sup> It is not clear when Wellman moved into the saddlery in this building, it may have been prior to purchasing it in 1907. The last listing in the city directories for James MacDonald was entered in 1886-87, the first listing for Wellman isn't until 1904. However, Sanborn maps indicate harness and saddle making continuing here throughout the period. So, at some point, the saddlery changed hands and in 1907 Wellman purchased the building from the MacDonald family after James MacDonald's death.

In June of 1905, fire broke out in the Red Barn across the street from the Wellman Block. Windows were reported to have broken out across from the blaze and this building may possibly have been damaged. It was reported that the Chinese owners of a laundry next door worked to save their building by throwing water on it.<sup>10</sup>

Fire damage, or perhaps simply the desire to update the business, led William Wellman to remodel the facade of the building in 1911. The original brick facade was replaced with a more open storefront and a more ornate appearance due in large measure to the pressed metal cornice added to the front and bearing the name of the owner. The Wellman Block as it was known from that time on took on a more established presence in the fabric of downtown White Sulphur Springs.

While continuing to operate the saddlery, the Wellmans purchased and subdivided 17 acres adjacent to town which became known as the Wellman Addition. The Wellman residence was built in the addition, along with other town residences. Wellman retired from business in 1917; he died in 1929 at age 85. Use of the building after that time is a bit unclear, however, it was converted to a restaurant by 1929, and in 1936 the building was willed to Robert J. Gordon upon the death of Jessie Wellman.

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<sup>6</sup>Record of Deed, page 562, Book J, White Sulphur Springs.

<sup>7</sup>Sanborn Map and Publishing Co., Ltd. Maps for White Sulphur Springs Montana, 1884, 1886, 1889, 1891.

<sup>8</sup>Record of deed, 1 May 1907, p. 307, Book 21, White Sulphur Springs.

<sup>9</sup>Sanders, Helen F. A History of Montana, p. 1266; Stout, Thomas Montana, It's Story & Biography, p. 622.

<sup>10</sup>Gordon, Taylor "The Man Who Built the Castle", p.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Wellman Block

Page 2

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The Gordons were a well-known African-American family in White Sulphur Springs who joined the White Sulphur Springs community when Robert's parents came upriver to Montana on the steamboat Katie in 1881. They had five children. Immanuel "Taylor" Gordon was a well-traveled singer and writer who wrote Born to Be, a Montana classic which received wide critical acclaim. Rose, Robert's sister, was a physio-therapist and ran a local restaurant. The Rose B. Gordon Cafe was likely located here in the Wellman Block. Later, Taylor ran an antique store here and apartments on the second floor, and from 1938 until 1950, the White Sulphur Springs Post Office was located in the Wellman Block. The building remained in the Gordon family until 1974, when it passed from the estate of Robert Gordon to Howard Lowry.

### **Architectural Significance**

The Wellman Block is a highly preserved example of popular Western Commercial design, which was common in Montana through the territorial and early statehood years. Embodying several elements of this style, the Wellman Block presents the characteristic brick front to the street while masking a simpler gable roofed mass behind. The symmetrical storefront with recessed entrance, regularly placed double hung windows across the second story and decorative parapet are all common to this treatment. The Wellman Block retains its original design, and provides an excellent example of Western Commercial styling in this small community. Presently, the Wellman Block has been refurbished to much of its original stylishness, and fittingly, a saddlery is once again located in the building.

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: less than 1 acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	12	507580	5154690

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):

The Wellman Block property is located in the NE¼, NW¼, NW¼ of Section 18, T9N, R7E.

Verbal Boundary Description

The Wellman Block is located in the E 28 and 1/3 feet of W 60 feet of Lots 1 and 2, all in block 19, White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries encompass the property associated with the Wellman Block since the time of its construction in 1880.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Chere Jiusto	date: October 1993
organization: SHPO	telephone: 406-444-7715
street & number: 1410 8th Ave	state: MT zip code: 59620
city or town: Helena	

Property Owner

name/title: Bill & Marlene Feldspausch	
street & number: Box 648	telephone: 406-547-2167
city or town: White Sulphur Springs	state: MT zip code: 59645

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Wellman Block

Page 1

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Burlingame, Merrill and K. Ross Toole, *A History of Montana*, Lewis Publishing Company, Volume II, 1957, pp. 208-209, 350.

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Meagher County Historical Society, compiler, *An Early-Day Pictorial History, 1867-1967*, Meagher County News, 1967.

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Montana, the Magazine of Western History, Spring 1974, pp. 35-43; Winter 1975, p. 10.

Polk Business Directory, 1884-1885, 1886-1887, 1904

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Saunders, Helen Fitzgerald, *A History of Montana, Volume II*, Lewis Publishing Company, 1913, pp. 1266-1267.

Stout, Tom, ed., *Montana: Its Story and Biography, Volume II*. American Historical Society, NY, 1921., pp. 622-623.