

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received DEC 26 1985

date entered FEB 6 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Adair, W.L., General Mercantile Historic District

and/or common Polebridge Store; Polebridge Mercantile

2. Location

street & number Polebridge Loop Road, 1/4 mile east of North Fork Road N/A not for publication

city, town Polebridge N/A vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Flathead code 029

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Polebridge Mercantile (a corporation)

street & number P.O. Box 34

city, town Polebridge N/A vicinity of state Montana 59928

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Flathead County Courthouse

street & number South Main Street

city, town Kalispell state Montana 59901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

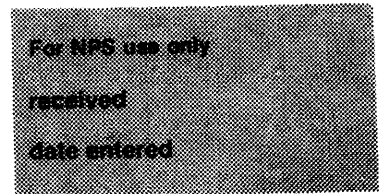
date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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that are joined with a square corner notch. The primary facade has a centrally-located door flanked by a 6/6 double hung window on each side. A shed roofed porch spanning the front of the building is supported by four round posts. The south gable end has logs up to the ridge and one 6/6 double hung window centered in the gable. The north gable end has a single 1/1 double hung window and a door in the shed addition. The rear of the main cabin has three four-light sliding windows and one fixed four-light window. A single brick and stovepipe chimney pierces the gable roof which is covered with rolled asphalt. The structure rests on a log and concrete drum foundation. Attached to the southeast corner of the cabin is a 16' square shed roofed addition of an undetermined date of construction. A five panel wooden door opens onto the south side of the addition. The lower section of the addition is constructed with wide clapboard siding extending to the top of the door, and half logs nailed together up to the roof. A six-light sliding window is located on the west side of the addition. While the exterior of the cabin remains largely unaltered, the interior has been modified to provide cooking and eating space. The building is a contributing structure of the historic district.

#3 ICE HOUSE, CA. 1914

Located about 100' southeast of Adair's cabin, the 14'x 22' ice house is built of rounded logs with pole chinking and saddle corner notches. A low, wide door is located in the north gable end, and one stained glass window centered in the upper part of each gable end has been added at an undetermined date. The sheet metal gable roof is cantilevered several feet over the north gable end, and supported by wooden angle braces. The structure is built on a log sill. The interior has been altered for living space but continues to have only one room and no modern amenities. It is a contributing structure of the historic district.

#4 MACHINE SHED/SHOP, CA. 1925

Directly behind and perpendicular to the ice house is a 24'x 35' wood frame machine shed/shop sheathed with ten inch lapped siding. The west facade has two sets of large, hinged center-opening doors with a small entrance to the left side. A pair of hinged doors are centered in the upper part of the gable end. Three fixed six-light windows are located on the north side of the structure. The gable roof is covered with cedar shingles and there is a cinder block foundation. The building is a contributing structure of the historic district.

#5 LOG BARN, 1917

The barn is located approximately 200' southeast of the machine shed. It consists of a 22'x 43' rectangular-shaped, unchinked, saddle notched log section with a cantilevered gambrel roof, and a 20'x 43' log shed addition attached to the north side. The roof is covered with cedar shingles. The structure rests on a log foundation. It is a contributing structure of the historic district.

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#6 WOOD FRAME CABINS, 1945

Four wood frame cabins built by the second owner of the property, Ben Rover, are located on the property. Three of the cabins stand in a line along the south boundary set off from the Mercantile approximately 250 feet, and the fourth is located along the northern edge of the district. The cabins in the group of three are presently rented to summer tourists and identically built, have rolled asphalt gable roofs and all are sheathed with clapboard. The fourth cabin also has a similar roof but is covered with vertical board and batten siding. All of the cabins are built with compatible materials and are not intrusive elements within the district. Because the cabins were not associated with the original owner of the property and were not built within the historic period of significance, they are considered to be non-contributing structures of the historic district.

#7 GENERATOR BUILDING, 1969

Located about 150 feet southeast of the Mercantile is a small wood frame generator building that has a rolled asphalt shed roof. The building is a non-contributing structure of the historic district.

#8 GREENHOUSE, 1968

Adjacent to the generator building is a small rectangular-shaped wood frame greenhouse with a large fixed window on each long facade and two six-light fixed windows in each gable end. It has a shed roof covered with rolled asphalt. The building is a non-contributing structure of the historic district.

#9 PROPANE SHELTER, 1982

This structure is simply a shed roof supported by six poles covering a propane tank. It is a non-contributing structure of the historic district.

#10 OUTHOUSES,

Two small, wood frame one-person privies are located near the ice house, while two more of similar construction are built directly behind and to the south of the four modern cabins. They are non-contributing structures of the historic district.

The boundaries for the historic district are as follows: beginning at a point on the Polebridge Loop Road roughly 175 feet north of the northwest corner of the Mercantile, proceed east along the edge of the woods for about 500 feet to where another stand of trees begins. Turning south proceed approximately 485 feet. Turning west proceed roughly 420 feet to the edge of the road to the Arnett Homestead. Then turn north and proceed along the gravel road until reaching the woods to the east.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1914 **Builder/Architect** Bill Adair, Builder and Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Adair's General Mercantile Store Historic District is significant as an outstanding collection of early 20th century buildings that for over seventy years have served as the center of social and commercial activity for much of the Montana population in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley. The district is also significant because of its association with William Adair, the builder and original owner of the property, who was the first person in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley to open and maintain a mercantile supply business in the area. Despite undeveloped roads which have severely limited access to the area for over 70 years, Adair's Polebridge Mercantile Store has consistently provided goods and services to the settlers in the approximately 900-square-mile area of the North Fork valley. The complex of buildings demonstrates very well the lifestyles and patterns of commerce common to isolated general stores in Montana.

The entire Montana North Fork of the Flathead River drainage was included in the Blackfoot National Forest (now Flathead) after 1896. While coal, oil and mineral exploration resulted in some interest in the North Fork shortly before the turn of the century, a wagon road built along the valley on the east side of the river had a more profound impact in the area. When Bill Adair arrived in Montana in 1895 he quickly became involved in several saloon and grocery enterprises in the Flathead Valley with Tom Lacher. In 1904 he built a log mercantile store on the east side of the North Fork of the Flathead River located in an area contained within what is now Glacier National Park. When Glacier Park was created in 1910, all land in the valley east of the North Fork was included in the Park, thereby eliminating new homesteading on that side of the River. With the passage of the Forest Homestead Act in 1906, the west side of the valley was opened to settlement, and by 1907 several hundred claims had been filed. When construction began in 1913 on a new road paralleling the west side of the River, the area soon became popular for settlers within the region. By 1922 more than 150 homesteads, with over 300 persons, were located in a 50-mile stretch of the valley bottom, from Big Creek north to the Canadian border.

The designation of Glacier National Park and a new west side road together prompted Adair to move his business across the River and further north about one mile south of the first permanent bridge in the area, which was built in 1912. Adair filed his homestead claim in July, 1912 for the East 1/2 of the East 1/2 of Section 27, T35N R21W (part of which was coal reservation land), and by November, 1917 had made \$4,000 worth of improvements including his log house, the Mercantile store, a 14' x 20' horse barn, a 12' x 15' cow barn, and two miles of "pole and wire" fence. In 1913 Adair had four and one-half acres of land under cultivation and by 1917 had increased his holdings to 22 acres with hay, potatoes, timothy grass, and a one acre garden covering the property. Adair also owned four "head heavy work horses," 100 chickens and a single milk cow.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Walter, Dave. "Answers From the Bon Ami Box", Montana Magazine, 72 (July-August 1985), 11-15.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 4

Quadrangle name Polebridge

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	1	6	9	9	6	2	0	5	4	0	4	3	4	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B

Zone	Easting			Northing										

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification The North Half of the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$) and the North Half of the South Half of the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$), all in Section 27, Township 35 North, Range 21 West, EXCEPTING THEREFROM, a tract of land particularly described as follows:(see continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen Feather, owner; Jerry DeSanto, Polebridge Sub-district Ranger, NPS

organization N/A date May 17, 1985

street & number telephone (406)888-5669

city or town Polebridge state Montana 59928

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 Marcella Skiff MPS
PAK

title SHPO date 12-2-85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for William B. Bushong date 2/6/86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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In direct response to the need for a general store in the North Fork region, Adair built a new mercantile which provided goods and services for the area settlers. From 1913 to 1920, Adair operated the only general store in the Valley, which became the focus of the North Fork community. Originally, the Polebridge Store served as a communications and social center, and as the only local supplier of goods for the North Fork region. When another mercantile store opened just one mile away in 1920 and obtained the Polebridge post office commission, Adair simply worked harder to accomodate his customers and retain their business. Area residents could order most anything through the Polebridge Mercantile, and if an item was not stocked, Adair could find it in Kalispell, about 50 miles to the south.

While homesteaders had access to the Great Northern Railroad, local transportation was provided by foot, horse or wagon during the drier months, and by snowshoes, skis, horse, wagon or sleigh during the winter. Some of the residents had automobiles, but their use was limited by weather and road conditions. Each week a horse-drawn wagon, truck or sleigh (depending on the weather), went from Adair's Polebridge Mercantile to Belton (located on the Great Northern line about 35 miles southeast of Polebridge) leaving on Monday and returning on Wednesday. Initial postal service for the area was inextricably linked to this system, as the carrier brought mail up from Belton on the Wednesday stage trip. When the mail arrived, Adair and his wife then boxed up the orders on Wednesday nights for customers so they could be delivered on Thursday by the mailman, or picked up by the settlers themselves. Although the valley had a series of post office contracts and locations, Polebridge regained a contract in 1934 and has held it since. While social gatherings were frequently held at two area schoolhouses, the Polebridge Mercantile also provided a suitable location for these activities. Immediately after the Mercantile was opened, a local couple held their wedding reception on the second floor, with more than 50 guests in attendance.

In 1921 the Polebridge Ranger Station/Park Entrance was built north of the Mercantile Store on the western edge of Glacier Park. This location today serves as one of only two western accesses to the Park. The Polebridge Mercantile still depends heavily on the summer tourist season, but limited access and a lack of development in the North Fork valley has minimized the amount of tourism in the area. Of the more than 2 million visitors to Glacier Park in 1984, only 28,000 came through the Polebridge entrance.

With the nearest electric power lines located 25 miles away, the Polebridge Mercantile today continues to be the critical link in providing goods and services for North Fork residents. Over 70 years after it was built, the Mercantile is still the center of communication and commercial activity in Polebridge. Using his keen business sense and great dedication, Bill Adair saw the opportunity and need for the first permanent general store in the area, and because of his efforts, the Mercantile remains the only supply center and source of local information in the region.

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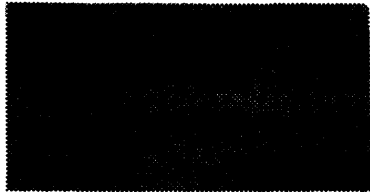
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$N\frac{1}{2}NE\frac{1}{4}NE\frac{1}{4}SE\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 27, Township 35 North, Range 21 West.

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