

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered SEP 12 1985

1. Name

historic ROBERTS BUILDING

and/or common ELMORE HOTEL

2. Location

street & number 520-526 Central Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Great Falls N/A vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Cascade code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name PINGREE/DAHLE, INC.

street & number 1981 East 4800 South #110

city, town Salt Lake City N/A vicinity of state Utah

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cascade County Courthouse

street & number 415 Second Avenue North

city, town Great Falls state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Great Falls Historical and Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The four story Roberts Building, also known as the Elmore Hotel, occupies a prominent corner location within the early 20th century commercial district along Central Avenue in Great Falls. Elements of the Neo-Classical architectural style are evident in the simple, yet broad expanses of plain wall surface and linteled windows and doorways. Typical of many buildings constructed in Great Falls during the 1910-1920 period of tremendous growth resulting from increased homesteading in central Montana, the first floor of the building was used for retail commercial space while the upper three floors served as a residential hotel.

Built of strecher bond brick with cut stone detailing, the fenestrated walls have a random combination of 3/1, 2/1, 3/2, and 1/2 double hung windows with stone sills. Original building plans show one-over-one configurations on the primary facade and two-over-two on the secondary facades. An elaborate cornice area has a brick battlemented parapet with stone coping and recessed panels. The projecting stone cornice wraps fully along the east and north walls of the structure. It is supported by paired, carved consoles with carved metopes and decorative frieze along the stone belt course at the base of these consoles. There is a diagonal belt course of header bricks placed beneath this frieze. Centered in both the north and east parapet of the roof is a raised sign that reads "19 ROBERTS 17."

Constructed over a full basement, the building occupies two city lots with 100 feet of frontage on Central Avenue and 150 feet on Sixth Street. The structure was erected at a cost of \$175,000-\$200,000 on stone walls ten feet high standing on concrete footings 16-inches thick and five feet square. The first story was divided into six retail stores which were separated from each other by 12-inch brick walls. The three upper floors originally contained 33 double apartments, 30 single apartments, and 26 individual sleeping rooms. Each of the 63 apartments was equipped with a private bath and kitchenette, with porter and maid service and private telephone hookups also available. The double apartments were divided into two rooms -- an 11' x 20' living area and a 6' x 7' kitchenette -- plus a bathroom and two closets. The single apartments had one main room, a kitchenette, bathroom and one large closet. Included in fifty of the apartments were built-in sideboards with space underneath for a Holmes disappearing bed, while the other thirteen apartments were provided with Murphy closet beds. All of the original woodworking, fixtures, and built-in furnishings remain in place.

According to a 1918 newspaper description of the construction, "no general contract was let but most of the work was done under separate contracts the carrying out of which was supervised by Mr. Roberts who has devoted most of the past year to the work. Various features of the work were handled under contracts as follows: John Restelli, excavation and stonework; Mourer & Young, brick work; Mr. Roberts supervising the carpenter work under day labor; C.F. Clark company, roofing, cornice and general metal work; Boyd Bros., plumbing and heating; National Electric company, electrical wiring; J.S. Jackman, plastering; J.A. Dennison, painting, and the Pope-Atchison Hardware company, hardware."1

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Numerous exterior alterations have occurred since the original construction of the Roberts Building. Storefronts facing north to Central Avenue were extensively remodeled in the 1960's. Original multipane leaded-transom glass across the facade has been covered with corrugated metal and plastic signs, while the lower portions were divided into large display windows. The original entrance on Sixth Street to the Elmore Hotel portion of the building, featured a glass and metal marquee covering two sets of double doors leading into a 12' x 43' vestibule floored with Italian marble. This entrance was moved several feet to the south and considerably modified. The present entrance consists of a flat metal and plastic sign suspended over a set of modern, glass double doors. As a result of the entrance being relocated, the interior hallway and staircase to the second floor lobby have been altered. Three former retail stores which were located immediately south of the entrance have been infilled with modern materials. The original light court at the rear of the building, which was accessible from the alley by an iron staircase, has been enclosed at the first floor level with a flat roof with one skylight and presently serves as a rear hotel entrance.

1. Great Falls Tribune, 17 March 1918, Sec. 11, p. 1.

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 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 1917 **Builder/Architect** William Roberts/H.N. Black

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Roberts Building, built in 1917, is significant due to its association with William Roberts, a man who played a prominent role in the development of downtown Great Falls from 1886-1926. Roberts is associated with the construction of a number of important commercial buildings in the city. The Roberts Building, also known as the Elmore Hotel (named after Roberts' eldest son), is the one building that best represents Roberts' career in Great Falls due to its architectural prominence and the documented personal involvement of Roberts in the building's design and construction. The Roberts Building is also significant as it clearly represents the economic growth in Great Falls between 1910 and 1920. During the 1910's Great Falls emerged as a major industrial city as well as a trade and service center for the agriculturally-oriented central Montana plains area. When the region's population boomed as a result of tens of thousands of incoming homestead settlers during the 1910's, extensive commercial construction ensued in downtown Great Falls. Many of the city's most substantial, existing buildings were constructed during this period, typically of brick and stone, often replacing earlier wooden structures. The Roberts Building, in its material, mass, detailing, and function, retains a direct association with this historic period of intense commercial development experienced in Great Falls.

Roberts arrived in Great Falls in 1886, only five years after the city was founded. A carpenter and contractor by trade, Roberts previously worked in Butte since 1881 and in California prior that time. In Great Falls, Roberts quickly became established as one of the city's leading contractors, overseeing construction of the Great Falls Opera House*, and several other downtown commercial buildings, including the Dunn Block* (205-207 Central Avenue), Bach-Cory Building* (101 Central Avenue), Kingsbury Block* (311 Central), Phelps Block, Tod Block, and the Cory Block. According to a 1918 newspaper article, Roberts traveled to California where he made an extensive study of apartment buildings. Roberts also was responsible for the construction of two other retail/residential buildings in Great Falls prior to the construction of the Roberts/Elmore Hotel: the Oxford Hotel* (512 Central Ave.) in 1910 and the Northern Hotel* (412 Central Ave.) in 1913. The same newspaper account describes Roberts as having "...been identified with the industrial life of Great Falls since its early days and...is one of the heaviest owners of business property in the city."¹ In addition to Roberts' extensive business endeavors, his civic involvement is demonstrated by his election to the city council (representing the Fourth Ward) in 1893 and re-election in 1897.

At the time of its construction, the Roberts Building represented one of the city's most modern and elegant commercial and residential facilities, prompting a local newspaper to suggest that it "ranks as one of the largest and most modern of Montana's apartment and mercantile structures."² It provided its guests with gas and electricity, steam heating, porter and maid service, and private telephone hookups. Most of the

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interior features in the hotel remain intact, including the original floor plan, room arrangement, plumbing and some lighting fixtures.

The Roberts Building exhibits design elements common to the Neo-Classical Commercial style. The symmetrically arranged facade, which according to the architectural plans originally featured 1/1 double hung sash windows, is restrained with the exception of the elaborate cornice area. Although the first floor storefronts and the sash pattern of the upper story windows have been changed, the Roberts Building possesses sufficient integrity of design, materials and detailing to successfully evoke the historic period of the building's construction.

* extant

1. Great Falls Tribune, 17 March 1918, Sec. 11, p. 1.

2. Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Great Falls Tribune, March 17, 1918, Sec. II, p. 1.
Great Falls Tribune, December 30, 1917, Sec. I, p. 14.
Historical and Architectural Survey of a Selected Area within the Great Falls
Revitalization District, Historical Research Associates, September 21, 1984.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Northwest Great Falls

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	2	4	7	7	6	4	5	5	2	6	1	1	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 6 and 7, Block 363 of Original Townsite, Great Falls, Montana

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 Janes R. McDonald

organization James R. McDonald Architects, P.C.

date 4 March 1985

street & number P.O. Box 8163

telephone (406) 721-5643

city or town Missoula

state Montana

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

Marcelle Sheffy

title SHPO

date 7-2-85

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

**Entered in the
National Register**

date

9/12/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration