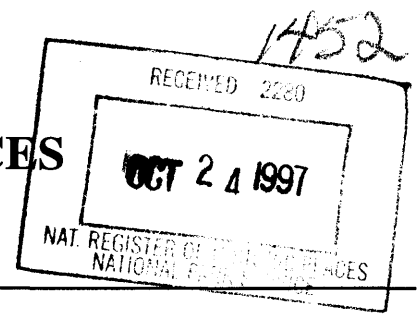


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Saco Mercantile

other name/site number: Saco Co-operative Store, C.P. Martin Store

2. Location

street & number: 201 Taylor Street

not for publication: n/a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

city/town: Saco

state: Montana code: MT county: Phillips code: 071 zip code: 59261

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.

Date: 10-14-97

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

12/3/97

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Building

Category of Property: Private

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	___ building(s)
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
<u>1</u>	___ TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Commerce/Trade: Department Store

Current Functions:

Commerce/Trade: Department Store

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other: Western Commercial

Materials:

foundation: stone
walls: brick
roof: asphalt
other: n/a

Narrative Description

The Saco Mercantile is a two story brick building designed in the Western Commercial style. The building is a substantial anchor to Saco's tiny business district. In its heyday, the town only had about a dozen commercial buildings. They were set in a line facing south, towards the Great Northern Railway's tracks and depot. The buildings were primarily false-front wooden buildings, with a handful of two-story brick buildings interspersed. Today, the Saco Mercantile and a few others remain, while many of the wooden false-front buildings are no longer extant.

The Saco Mercantile's design embodies the typical characteristics of the Western Commercial style. The primary facade (south) is organized in a symmetrical, bipartite arrangement. This facade included a first floor storefront typical of the period, having a central entrance flanked by display windows, a lower window panel, and a transom across the top. A canvas storefront awning is pictured in historic photos of the building.

Engaged pilasters enframe the storefront, and extend up to visually support the cornice. A third pilaster divides the upper story into two equal parts, each part houses two double-hung windows. These openings are finished with flat brick arches and a continuous stone sill stretching between the pilasters. An ornate metal and brick cornice crowns the front. It begins with a corbeled brick stretcher course above which are two recessed brick panels. Above the panels is a projecting metal cornice with garlands across the frieze. Above this, a short brick parapet rises to a secondary brick cornice which echoes the lines of the lower metalwork. Brick coping and three pilaster caps finish the roofline.

The east and west walls are similar, but not identical in design. These walls lack the decorative detail applied to the front facade. The openings have flat brick arches and lug sills. The windows are one-over-one double-hung sash. A second floor doorway, minus its stairway, is located at about the midpoint of the west wall. Towards the rear of this wall are a door and a pair of double-

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hung windows. Also, on this wall is a historic painted sign advertising "Lee/Union-Alls-Overalls/WHIZITS". The east wall historically abutted a single-story building. The parapet walls step down toward the rear of the building on both sides

The rear of the building (north) fronts onto an alley. This elevation includes two doorways at ground level. One of the doorways at the northeast corner is double width; it accessed an elevator. A single-width doorway at the center has a tall transom. A window is offset to the east of the center door and a pair of windows is located to the west. All openings at this level have flattened brick arches. On the second story, three double-hung one-over-one windows are set in the wall. Each has a flat brick arch. The window at the center is dropped below the level of the flanking windows; it provide light to the office stairs.

The interior of the building was originally arranged with one open commercial space on the first floor. At the rear, a mezzanine provided office space in the northwest corner; an elevator and a stairway accessed other levels. On the second story, a central hallway separated three long rectangular spaces -- one to either side, and one along the front. Historically, the western space was divided into offices and the other two were used as apartments.

The front of the building has sustained alterations to the storefront. Although windows remain in the same location, the original glazing has been incompatibly replaced by smaller, aluminum framed units. The historically recessed entry has been replaced by doors at the storefront plane. A modern brick bulkhead is located below the window. The transom remains intact, but is covered with corrugated fiberglass sheets. The second floor windows on the primary facade, and some window and door openings on the other elevations, are currently boarded over.

On the interior, two smaller spaces have been created in the front of the original store space on the first floor; a bathroom and laundromat are now located at the rear. On the second story, the space across the front of the building has been opened into one large meeting room.

Integrity

At first glance, the primary facade of the Saco Mercantile appears to have been impacted by a fair amount of alteration. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that the design and most of the historic fabric design are intact, but covered. Changes to the storefront are the main alterations. The transom and upper level windows, although covered, are still in place. Other alterations are limited to the interior, where space has been modified for newer uses.

On the whole, these changes are readily reversible. Although the character of the primary facade suffers, a high degree of the original design is in place, and the building clearly reflects and conveys its historic appearance and associations. The building continues to be a major component of the commercial streetscape in this small community, and it houses a vital part of the commerce and community activity which still binds this small town together.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and B

Areas of Significance: Commerce

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1907 - 1947

Significant Person(s): William and Emma Taylor

Significant Dates: 1907, 1913

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

Constructed in September 1907, the Saco Mercantile has been a center of commerce in this tiny town for 90 years. The building was constructed by William Henry and Emma Taylor, leading promoters of Saco during the settlement period and one of the area's most important rancher families. Local farmers and ranchers later formed the Saco Co-operative Association in an attempt to take control of the economic enterprises that directly affected them. They purchased shares in the mercantile and paid the profits out in dividends. For these important associations, the building qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and B.

Introduction

Saco is a small town on Montana's Hi-Line, the northern travel corridor running east-west across the state. Both the Great Northern Railway and Highway 2 brought travelers and commerce through Saco, which served as a hub of transportation, business and community for those who lived in the surrounding rural areas. Largely dependent on agriculture, the town has had sporadic booms of economic prosperity. In 1928 a spur railroad was built between Saco and Hogeland. Construction of Fort Peck Dam during the 1930s brought prosperity to the local economy, when gravel pits at nearby Cole went into production to supply the gigantic structure. During the 1940s gas wells were drilled around Saco, again stimulating local business. In recent years, the economy of Saco has slowed, and the population of the community has declined. Businesses have become fewer; agriculture and Montana Dakota Utilities provide most local jobs.

Historical Significance and Background

William Henry Taylor traveled to Montana from Byron, Minnesota in the summer of 1890 trailing a herd of cattle to sell here. Impressed by the tall grass, open space and abundant water, he returned to Minnesota, gathered his family and some cattle, and moved to Montana. Taylor and his family first settled north of the Milk River, two miles east of Hinsdale. After a year, they sold the cattle and bought sheep.

In 1893, the Taylors moved their ranch headquarters to the Saco Flats. They were the first to raise sheep in the area, and it became the predominant industry in the area. Taylor filed on a desert claim about five miles south of Saco at the mouth of First Creek. Taylor's wife, Emma, also held a claim in her name. Together, they developed one of the largest sheep operations in the region, controlling public lands around their claims by holding the surrounding water rights. Sheep ranchers in the area prospered during the period from 1890 to 1916, and the Taylors were no exception. They ran as many as 20,000 sheep at one time.

In 1909, the Enlarged Homestead Act was passed and open range land became broken up by homestead claims. In old Valley County (later part of Phillips and Valley Counties) some 3.5 million acres were opened to settlement. Lands farther from the railroad remained unclaimed, and the Taylors found it necessary to graze their sheep north near the Canadian border and south on the Missouri River breaks. Finally, in 1916 the Taylors sold their sheep and moved to Saco; in 1919, they retired from ranching and sold the home ranch at First Creek.

When the Taylors arrived in the Saco area in 1893, the section house for the Great Northern Railway was the only building in town. A school and several businesses were constructed that year. The Taylors established wide business interests in Saco and they are credited with helping to develop the town. The Taylors constructed the Saco Mercantile in 1907. William was also one of the

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original stockholders in the First Bank of Saco, and was on the board of directors for many years. He was also a stockholder in the First National Bank of Glasgow, Montana, and owned the local livery barn in Saco.

By 1911, businesses in Saco numbered at least 17, including the Saco Mercantile, the bank, a hotel, three saloons, a meat market, a livery barn, an auto salesroom, and a real estate company. The town of Saco incorporated in 1918, and through that time, the Saco Mercantile was a "general merchandise store that sold everything necessary for life or health, from baby cribs on through caskets."

The Saco Mercantile was leased to the Saco Co-operative Association in 1913. The co-operative was formed by selling shares to over 100 farmers and ranchers, most of whom lived east of Saco. The association hired C.P. Martin as the manager. Cooperative mercantiles and grain elevators opened throughout the state during the teens as farmers and ranchers sought control of economic enterprises that directly affected their survival. The Saco Co-operative Store was described as "the first truly co-operative store in Montana." The association paid a dividend on the capital reserve and returned the remainder of the profits to the store's patrons. For the first four months of business ending in January 1914, stockholders received back eight percent of their purchases and non-stockholders four percent. The Saco Co-operative Association opened a second store in nearby Beaverton in 1914, and had at least one other store in Genevieve. When the co-op became a little shaky in 1929, Martin bought the stockholders out, changing the name to C.P. Martin and Company. The store continued the general merchandise tradition, stocking supplies, clothing, groceries, and more.

C.P. Martin and his wife Jessie moved to Saco from Michigan in 1913. Trained in management, he served as the manager of the Saco Co-operative Store for 15 years. He also served as mayor of Saco, as well as on the school board. He operated the C.P. Martin store until 1963, at which time he sold the property to the Masonic Temple Association of Saco, of which he was an officer.

The Masons installed hot water and new electricity in the building. They used the upper floor for Masonic meetings, and opened the space to the public for community functions, including town breakfasts and high school graduation luncheons.

The Saco Mercantile building remains in use, serving public and business interests in much the same ways that it has since its early history. Current owners Will and Betty Copple run an antique store in the front and mid portion, the local branch of the Phillips County Library rents a portion of the front, a laundromat occupies the rear, and local hunter safety classes are held throughout the winter in the basement which now includes a target shooting facility. The building is a popular stop for travelers who pass through the area. The Copples are active community members: Will has lived in Saco all of his 62 years and Betty serves on the local selective service board and the Saco Chamber of Commerce.

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Amendment to Section 8 Additional Criterion B information

The Saco Mercantile is significant under Criterion B for its association with William H. Taylor. Taylor, a prosperous local rancher, played a leading role in what turned out to be the failed promotion of the town of Saco. The town's main business street is named after him, and his documented commitment to the community and its physical growth are best represented by the Saco Mercantile.

Taylor was a pioneer of the Saco area. His arrival in 1893 coincided with that of the Great Northern Railway and the founding of Saco. Taylor brought the first sheep into the area, and through the 1890s and on into the first decade of the twentieth century, he prospered as one of the area's leading ranchers. By 1907, he was a director of the First National Bank of Glasgow (in the county seat) and served on the Republican Central Committee. Saco's growth stagnated after arrival of the railroad. A c. 1900 photograph shows just a half dozen log buildings lining Saco's one-sided main street. As late as 1910, Saco's business district consisted of only eighteen log and frame buildings and the brick Saco Mercantile.

Taylor's willingness, beginning in 1907, to invest substantial amounts of his ranching wealth in the embryonic community is open to speculation. He may have astutely recognized the changing economic climate in the area. As the fervor of homesteading swept Montana, Taylor saw his "customary range" (the public lands on which he freely grazed his large bands of sheep) rapidly claimed by new settlers. Providing services to the homesteaders may have been a means of shoring up his dwindling ranch income. On the other hand, Taylor may have sincerely believed in the future of the area and its potential for sustained growth. As a leading pioneer stockman, he perhaps saw it as his civic duty to help convince potential settlers of the area's prosperity.

Whatever his motives, William H. Taylor played a leading role in promoting the development of Saco during the area's homestead boom. A biography of Taylor states, ". . . he has contributed in a substantial manner to [Saco's] growth and development, erecting a residence, livery stable and business house, and investing in other business property." He constructed the town's first brick building, the two-story Saco Mercantile, and placed his son, Cecil, in charge of the business. The second floor of the building originally functioned as Taylor Hall where community events were held. It was later partitioned for professional offices. The mercantile also operated a lumber yard and sold farm implements. Taylor, his son, and the Saco Mercantile were the largest property owners within the townsite in 1910. The same year the mercantile opened, Taylor purchased the Montana Livery Barn, which provided driving and working teams and drayage. Taylor later helped organize the First National Bank of Saco and sat on its board of directors. When the bank constructed a new building, Saco's second brick building, it went up just two lots away from the mercantile. The vacant lot between the two buildings was then dedicated as a public street, creating "corner" locations for both the bank and mercantile.

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Taylor's investments in Saco spurred little other support with one notable exception. Local ranchers and businessmen formed a stock company in 1914, and constructed an impressive two story hotel, Saco's third and final brick building. The building, however, burned to the ground c. 1917. By 1920, Saco's main street was already showing the effects of Montana's years of drought and post-World War I depression. The 18 businesses of 1910 had been reduced to 12. The decline has been continuous since then with only short periods of economic growth.

The Saco Mercantile is the surviving intact building which best represents William H. Taylor's significance in the Saco area. His ranch house and in-town house are now gone or extensively remodeled. The First National Bank of Saco still stands across the street from the mercantile and retains architectural integrity. Taylor's involvement with the bank, however, was as one of its several founders and directors. The Saco Mercantile, because of Taylor's ownership and its date of construction, best represents the part Taylor played in promoting the development of the town of Saco.

Amendment to Section 10 Verbal Boundary Description

The Saco Mercantile is located on Lot 40, Block 19 in the Townsite of Saco, excepting that portion of said lot lying Southeast of a line running from a point on the Northeast line of said lot two and five-tenths feet from the Northeast corner of said lot to a point on the Southwest line of said lot four and two-tenths feet from the Southeast corner of said lot.

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

Acreeage of Property: less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	13	326860	5369420

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): Section 8, T31N, R34E

Verbal Boundary Description

The Saco Mercantile is located on part of lot 40, block 19, in the original townsite of Saco.

Boundary Justification

These are the town lots associated with the mercantile since its construction in 1907.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Will & Betty Copple
organization: date: June 1997
street & number: PO Box 485 telephone: 406-527-3218
city or town: Saco state: MT zip code: 59261

Property Owner

name/title: same as above
street & number: telephone:
city or town: state: MT zip code:

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Bibliographic References

Footprints in the Valley: A History of Valley County, Montana. Vol. 2. Shelby, MT: Promoter Publishing, 1991.

Hutchins, Jack Randolph. Genealogy of Thomas Hutchins of Salem, Massachusetts. Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 1984.

Phillips County Clerk and Recorder's Office. Deed Books.

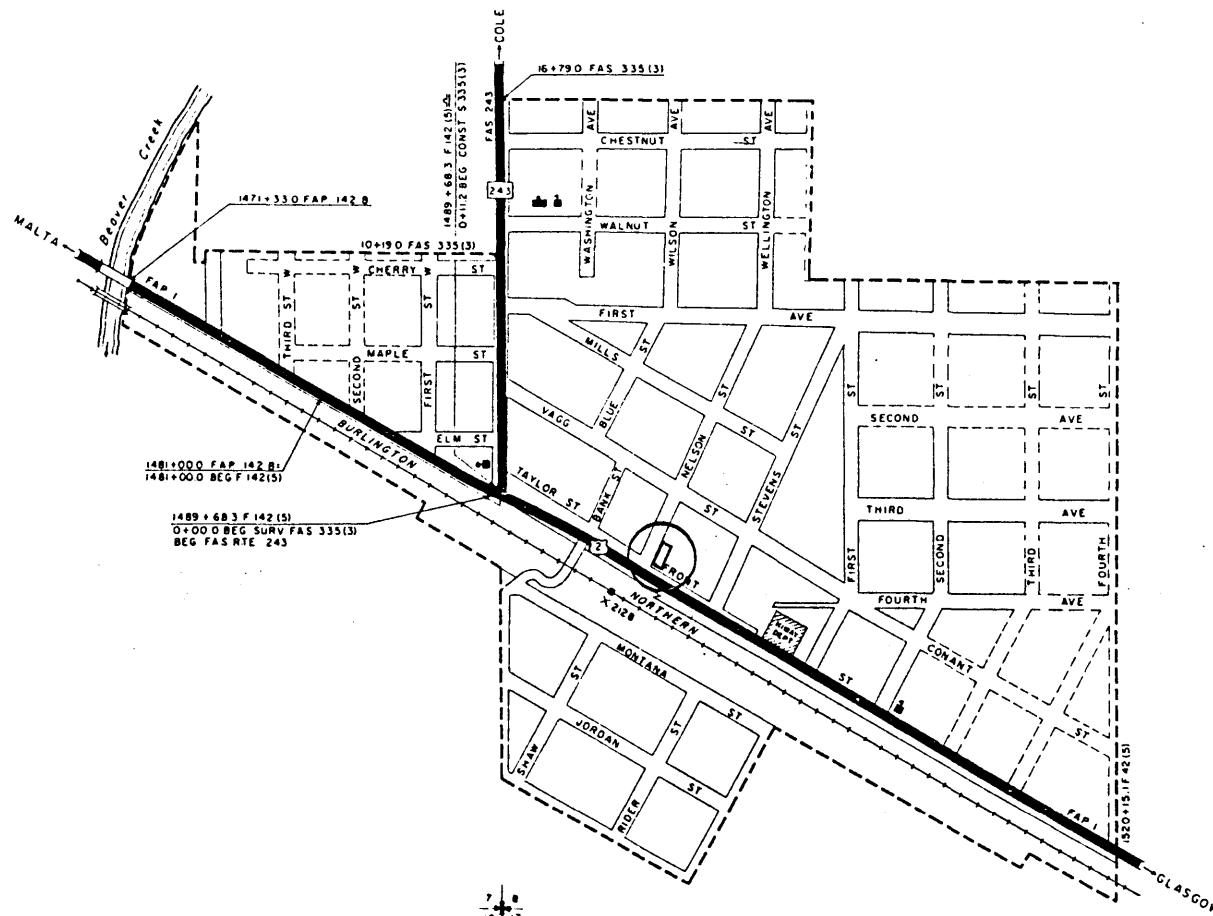
Saco Independent. 1914. 23 January; 31 July; 7 August; 2 October.

Photographic Log

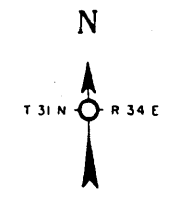
Saco Mercantile
201 Taylor Street
Saco, Montana

Photographer and negatives: Will and Betty Copple
P.O. Box 485
Saco, Montana 59261
June 1997

1. Saco Mercantile, south elevation, looking north.
2. Saco Mercantile, west elevation, looking northeast.
3. Saco Mercantile, east elevation, looking southwest.
4. Saco Mercantile, north elevation, looking southwest.



- LEGEND**
- PROPOSED ROAD
 - GRADED AND DRAINED ROAD
 - GRAVEL OR STONE ROAD
 - LOW TYPE BITUMINOUS ROAD
 - PAVED ROAD
 - DIVIDED ROAD - TRAFFIC FLOW
 - F A I FEDERAL AID INTERSTATE SYSTEM
 - F A P FEDERAL AID PRIMARY SYSTEM
 - F A S FEDERAL AID SECONDARY SYSTEM
 - INTERSTATE ROUTE MARKER
 - U S NUMBERED ROUTE MARKER
 - STATE ROUTE MARKER
 - OTHER ROUTE MARKER
 - CORPORATE BOUNDARY LINE
 - NON-EXISTENT DEDICATED STREET
 - CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
 - URBAN EXTENSION BOUNDARY
 - RAILROAD AND STATION
 - POST OFFICE
 - COURT HOUSE
 - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 - HIGH SCHOOL
 - HOSPITAL
 - ELEVATION



CITY PLAT
SACO
 PHILLIPS COUNTY
 MONTANA

1970 CENSUS 356
 SCALE IN FEET
 400 0 400 800

*SACO MERCANTILE
 201 TAYLOR
 TAYLOR @ NELSON*

Copies of this map are available for a nominal cost at the Montana Department of Highways—Helena, Montana 59601

REVISED DEC 31, 1976

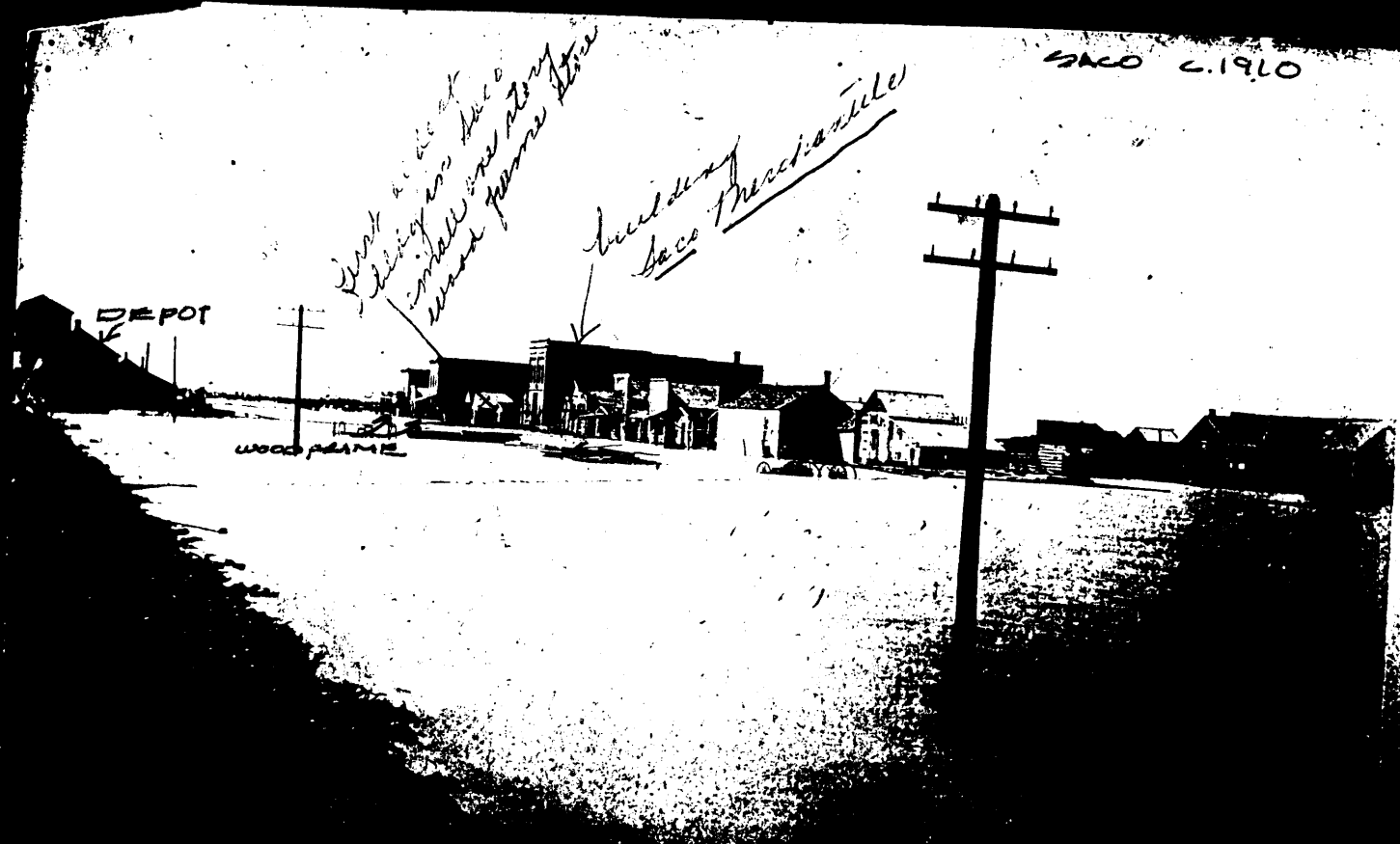
SACO 2.19.10

South side of
Building for Saco
infall and story
wood frame stone

Building
Saco Merchandise

DEPOT

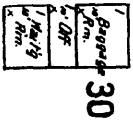
WOOD FRAME



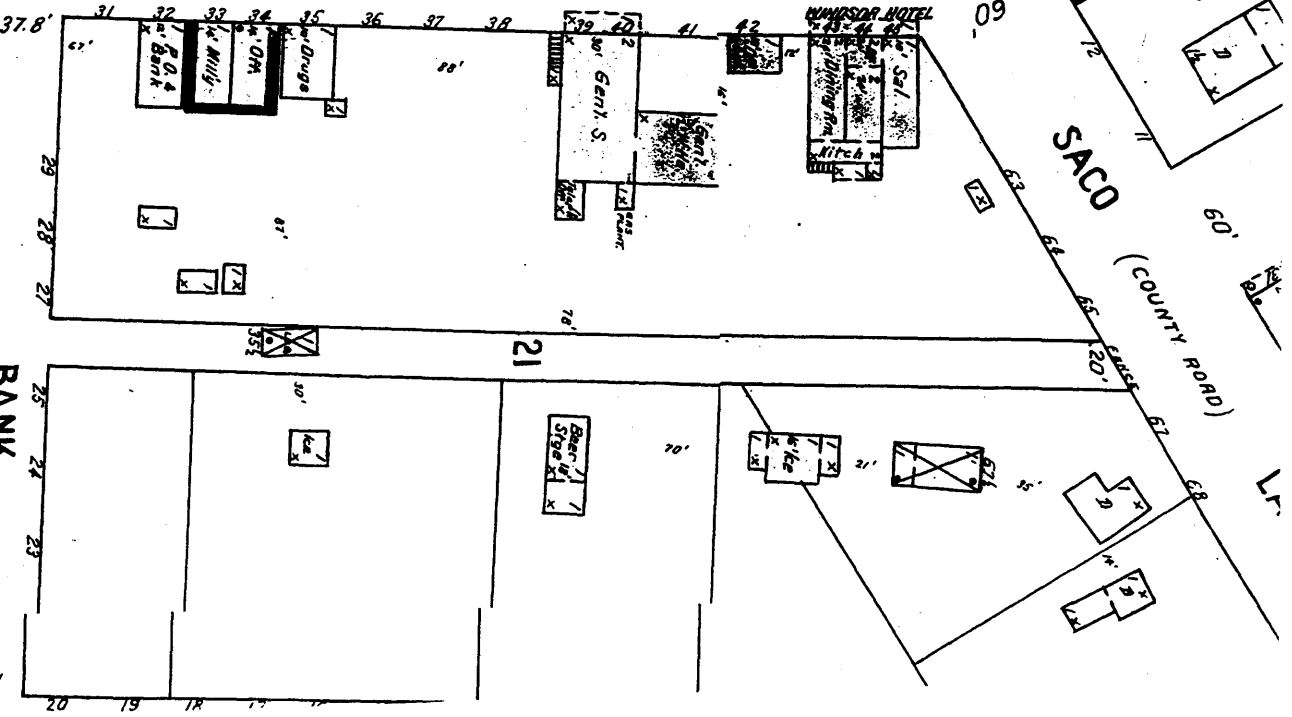
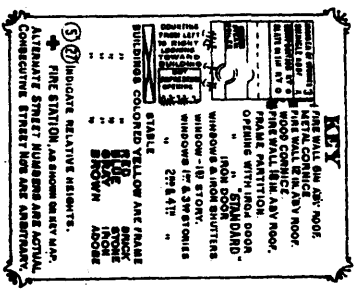
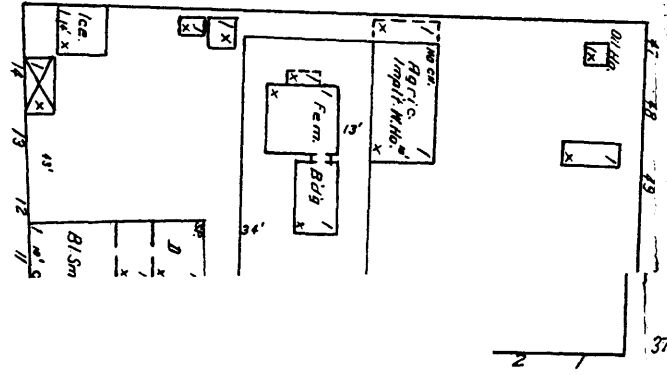
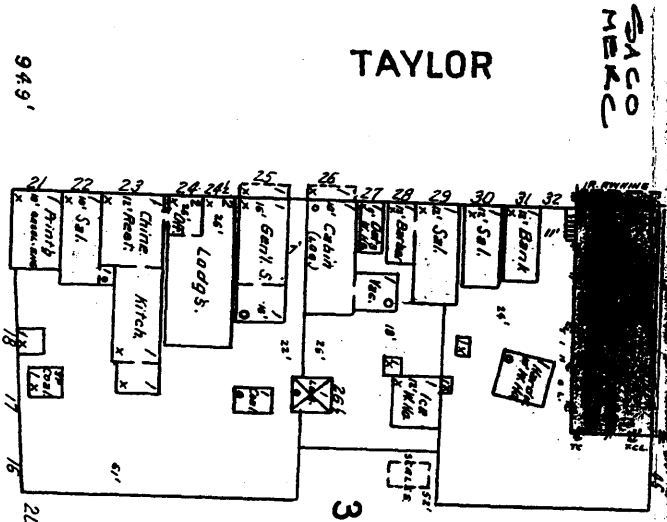
1910 SANBORN

NO
1

NORTH LINE OF G. N. R. R. RIGHT OF WAY



1/8" = 20' SCALE



20

TAYLOR

SACO MERC

SACO

(COUNTY ROAD)

BANK

21

LT.