

# MONTANA HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

Site # 5



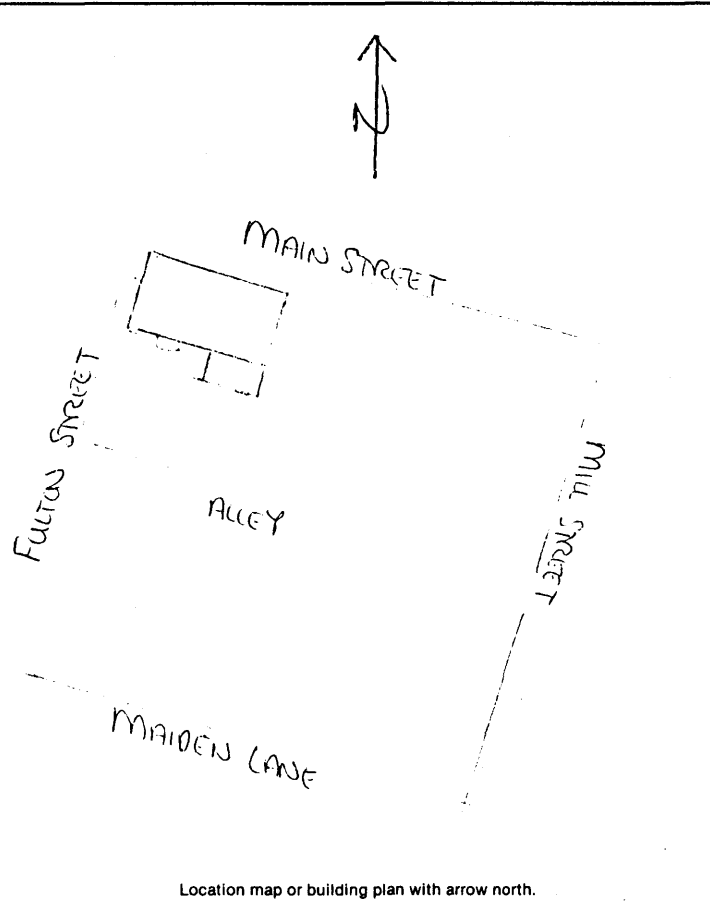
Legal Description: Block 2, lots 8 (W 20 5 ft.) 9 10

Address: 919 Main Street

Ownership: Name: Lincoln Todd c/o J. G. And B. W. Scott

private address: Box 876 Thompson Falls, MT 59873  
 public

Roll # 1 Frame # 115-125



Location map or building plan with arrow north.

Historic Name: Ward Hotel

Common Name: Townhouse Hotel

Date of Construction: 1907-08  estimated  documented

Architect: N/A

Builder: James Lyons

Original Owner: Edward Donlan

Original Use: hotel/restaurant

Present Use: hotel/restaurant/rentals

**RESEARCH SOURCES:** Note all records consulted to determine dates of construction, original owners, builders, uses, etc.

Abstract of Title: Deedbook 6, p. 91.

Plat Records: Thompson Falls Original Townsite

Tax Records: 1908 Assessment Book

Building Permits: \_\_\_\_\_

Sewer/Water Permits: \_\_\_\_\_

City Directories: Polk, Missoula County: 1909, p. 710.

Sanborn Maps: 1910, 1914, 1922, 1927.

Newspapers: Sanders County Ledger: 9/27/09; 4/24/08.

Other: photographs of early Thompson Falls

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** Describe present appearance of structure/site, then contrast and compare that with it's original appearance, noting additions, alterations, and changes in materials. Discuss significant architectural features.

The two story Ward Hotel is a frame structure with a brick veneer laid in common bond resting on a stone and mortar and wood pier foundation. The main (north) facade has eight 1/1 double hung sash windows with wood sills and stone relieving arches. A pair of modern hinged glass doors centered along the facade are covered by a gabled, bracketed hood. Along the left side of the facade two large picture windows flank a recessed entry which is covered by a metal awning. Eight 1/1 double hung windows with wood sills and stone relieving arches are located on the second floor of the primary facade. An air cooler is placed within a former door frame which led to a second story balcony. This opening has a brick and stone semicircular arch enhanced by stone quoins and decorative stone voussoirs. An attractive and elaborate corbeled brick cornice surrounds the building on the north and west facades. The west elevation, facing Fulton Street, has an entrance and four 1/1 double hung windows with sills and lintels similar to the main facade on the first floor. Three full-sized 1/1 double hung and two smaller 1/1 double hung windows illuminate the second floor. The south facade has a covered entryway and three 1/1 double hung windows on the first floor, with seven 1/1 double hung windows piercing the second story. Two wooden porches, one above the main entrance and one attached to the northeast corner of the

nt

(cont.)

**HISTORICAL INFORMATION:** Describe the persons, important events, and/or historical patterns associated with the structure/site and surrounding area.

Edward Donlan may probably be the most significant individual in Thompson Falls history. Born to Irish parents in Quebec, Canada, Donlan left home at the age of twelve to work as a teamster in the lumber camps. In 1889 he came to Montana and worked laying railroad track in Neihart, south of Great Falls. He quickly left that for the timber camps of western Montana. By 1895 he owned his own saw mill. Donlan joined the Republican party and in 1902 was elected state senator from Missoula. He ran three more times for the post, in 1906, 1910, and 1918, and won each time. Linking himself to Anaconda Copper Company interests, he ran for governor in 1908 and lost by less than two thousand votes. In the early 1900s, Donlan extended his operations to then western Missoula County. He operated a saw mill near Eddy and held extensive land holdings in and around Thompson Falls. He started the Thompson Falls Mercantile Company in town and held vast amounts of land to the west and east of town. He unsuccessfully tried to entice European immigrants to settle on the flats to the east of town in what his granddaughter called his bid to make Thompson Falls "timber capitol of Montana." Failing this, Donlan worked doggedly to make Thompson Falls the county seat for the newly designated Sanders County. In a bitterly contested political fight between Thompson Falls and Plains, the other candidate, Donlan scored a personal victory over J. C. McGowan and heavily Democratic Plains. A compromise plan gave the seat to Thompson Falls, but the first political appointments to Plains people. Still, the naming of Thompson Falls as the county seat ushered in a boom period that continued up to and through the building of the dam at the falls. Donlan played an important role in this as well. Donlan owned several small dams on the Clark's Fork, and there can be little doubt he helped to persuade John Ryan and other members of the future Thompson Falls Power Company to invest here. Just as Donlan sold Sanders County the lots where (cont )

**INTEGRITY:** Assess the degree to which the structure/site, and surrounding area accurately convey the historical associations of the property.

This building has lost some of its integrity. The porches are gone and some of the bottom floor windows appear to be modern. The swamp cooler and signage are not compatible. The west side has been changed as noted, as has the east and south. The interior, particularly the basement and first floor have undergone extensive remodeling. Selected rooms on the second floor do keep some of their integrity.

**HISTORICAL and/or ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:** Justify how the persons, important events, or historical patterns associated with structure/site lend the property significance and/or describe the ways in which the structure embodies the distinctive characteristics of a particular period, building type, or style.

The Ward Hotel is significant as one of the most important commercial buildings along the Main Street in Thompson Falls, Montana, and for its association with Edward Donlan, a successful politician and businessman in the town's early history.

Construction for the Ward Hotel began in September, 1907 and was completed in May, 1908. Edward Donlan, the owner, named the hotel after his eldest son, Edward. The original design called for 30 sleeping rooms, an office, a bar, a restaurant, and full basement for a power plant and a laundry room. Jessie R. Pruden did the excavation and foundation work, James Lyons of Missoula was the contractor and J.B. Franklin of Missoula did the electrical work. Pruden employed seven men to lay the stone foundation. Ten carpenters under J.W. Kennedy nailed up the timber frame from lumber supplied by the Graves saw mill. Furniture was purchased from Chicago, and on May 24, 1908 the hotel opened for business. In 1911, a back kitchen was added and the restaurant

<b>FORM PREPARED BY:</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:</b>
Name: John Lazuk	Acreage: Less than one acre.
Address: 350 Strand Ave., Missoula, MT	USGS Quad: Thompson Falls, MT
Date: October 5, 1984	UTM's: 11/624300/5272350

8/2/18

**INVENTORY #18: The Townhouse Hotel**

**Physical Description: (cont.)**

structure, were removed at an undetermined date. The east wall adjoins a one story brick addition that originally served as the hotel annex. The annex has been extensively remodeled.

The interior of the Ward Hotel has been altered since its construction. In 1911, the kitchen, which occupied the southeast corner of the hotel, was moved into the new brick annex to the east, and the dining room was expanded into this vacant space. Adjacent to the restaurant is a vestibule which leads into the lobby where the staircase to the second floor rooms is located. This lobby area has been remodeled with modern light fixtures and a suspended ceiling. A barber shop occupies space in the northwest corner where the hotel office was, and a realty company is at the rear of the building where the bar was formerly located. The 20 hotel rooms on the second floor have either been remodeled, expanded or converted for storage. Several rooms still contain small corner sinks that may be original. The basement, which at one time provided dormitory space, has been partially finished with showers and a kitchen in one room.

---

**Historical Information: (cont.)**

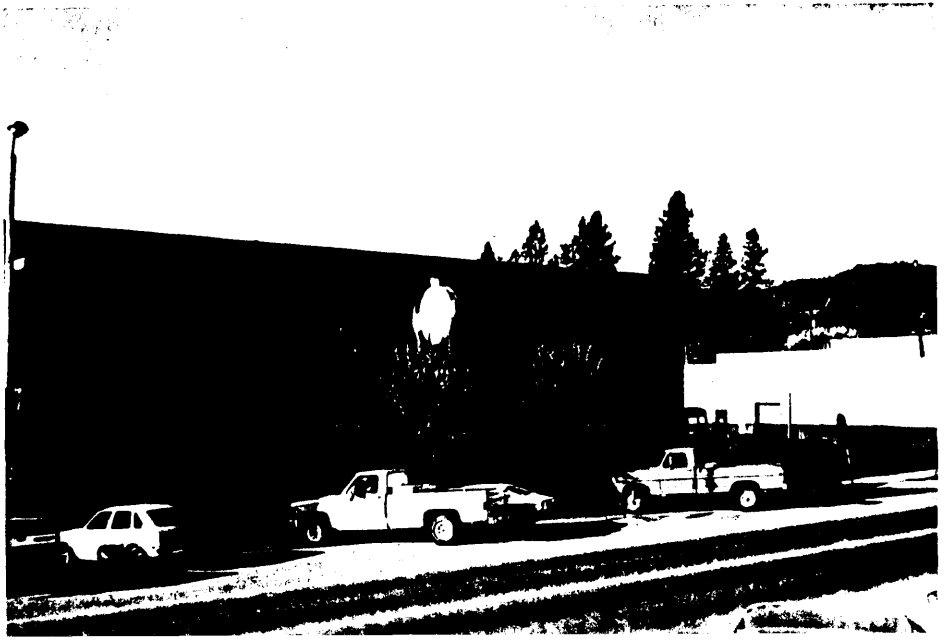
they ultimately built the county courthouse and jail, he sold property to the Thompson Falls Power Company to help construct their dam. Donlan continued to buy land around the town. He became the leading property owner of city lots. But in 1913-1914, after deciding not to run again for the legislature, Donlan began to sell his Sanders County holdings and moved his operations to Milltown outside of Missoula. Much of the Thompson Falls property went to the Thompson Falls Improvement Company and some to the Thompson Falls Water Company. (It is probable that Donlan was a stockholder in each.) The land he sold west of town soon became incorporated into the town as Donlan's Additions #s 1 & 2. Donlan spent most of his remaining years in Missoula, running again and winning the state senate seat in 1918. In Donlan's later years much of his prosperity dissipated. Forever linked to the Anaconda Company, who may have actually engineered his defeat for governor in 1908, he was awarded a pension for his services. He died in 1952.

**Historical Information:** (cont.)

Construction of this hotel started in September, 1907 and was finished in May, 1908. Its design called for 30 sleeping rooms, an office, a bar, a restaurant, and a full basement for a power plant and laundry room. Jessie R. Pruden did the excavating and foundation work, James Lyons of Missoula was the contractor, and J. B. Franklin of Missoula did the electrical work. Pruden employed 7 men to do the stone foundation. They dumped the massive amount of dirt dug up into neighboring streets so to level the grade. Ten carpenters under J. W. Kennedy nailed up the frame from timber supplied by Graves saw mill. Furniture was ordered from Chicago, and on May 24, 1908 the hotel opened for business. Donlan named it The Ward Hotel after his oldest son Edward. At the time of its construction, it stood as one of the finest hotels in western Montana. In 1911, a back kitchen area was added and the restaurant expanded. Earlier that year, he started building a nearby two-story brick annex to the hotel which increased its capacity to 50 rooms. (See Inventories #16 and #17.) Two years later Donlan sold the hotel business to James Rhoades, then mayor of Missoula, and John Scott. Rhoades quickly sold out to Scott who became the first in a series of owners and proprietors with that surname. Donlan ultimately sold the building too in 1915. It passed into the hands of the Thompson Falls Improvement Company. They sold it in 1922 to C. H. Stanclift who kept it till 1930. A series of owners since, including Katherine Fessler, the First State Bank Thompson, and the Huff family, have had possession of the property. The name changed from the Ward to the Hotel Thompson in the 1920s, to the Black Bear Hotel in the 1930s, to the Townhouse Hotel in the 1970s.

**Sources:**

- Deedbooks: 6, p. 91; 7, p. 123; 26, 422, 33, p. 207; 37, p. 503; 48, p. 95.
- Sandborn maps 1910, 1914, 1922, 1927.
- Tom Haynes Collection, University of Montana Archives.
- Interview of Donlan relatives by Ramona Roedl
- Interview with Beth Scott by John Lazuk
- Sanders County Ledger: 9/6/07; 9/20/07; 9/27/07; 10/4/07; 1/10/08; 1/31/08; 2/21/08; 3/13/08; 5/22/08; 5/5/11; 5/12/11; 5/26/11; 1/26/12; 7/14/11; 11/28/13; 12/26/13; 1/12/38; 7/11/57.
- Sanders County Signal: 11/24/07; 2/6/08.
- Early photographs of Thompson Falls.



8/2/16

Significance (cont.)

expanded. Earlier that year, Donlan had started building a two story brick annex which increased the hotel capacity to 50 rooms. A 1928 fire destroyed a majority of the addition resulting in the removal of the entire second floor.

When it was constructed in 1907 the Ward Hotel was the largest and best-equipped hotel in Thompson Falls, and argueably one of the finest facilities for providing room and board to travelers and local residents in northwestern Montana. Early photographs show the hotel as a prominent and decorated gathering place for social and recreational events including horse races and Fourth of July celebrations.

Edward Donlan may have been the single most significant person in the history and development of Thompson Falls. In ca. 1890 he came to western Montana to work in the lumber camps, and by 1895 he owned his own saw mill. In 1902 Donlan was elected as a Republican state senator from Missoula, a position he held again in 1906, 1910 and 1918. After linking himself to the powerful Anaconda Copper Company, he ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1908, losing by less than 2,000 votes in an election which was rumored to be fixed by the Company itself. In the early 1900s, Donlan extended his lumber operations to what was then western Missoula County with a saw mill near Eddy (about 10 miles to the southeast). He had extensive land holdings in Thompson Falls as well as to the east and west of town which he eventually sold to Sanders County and the Thompson Falls Power Company. Donlan founded the Thompson Falls Mercantile Company and was a central figure in the bid to name Thompson Falls as the Sanders County Seat. He proved instrumental in persuading John Ryan and other members of the soon-to-be-formed Thompson Falls Power Company to construct a dam adjacent to the town, which proved to be a major factor in the growth of Thompson Falls.

Many of the original commercial brick buildings located on Main Street in Thompson Falls are no longer extant due to fire or new construction. The few buildings that remain today, including the Ward Hotel, represent well the growth and sense of permanence that Thompson Falls was experiencing in the early 1900s. The Ward Hotel, despite minor alterations to the facade, is clearly the most substantial commercial building remaining in the downtown business district in Thompson Falls.