

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received JUN 26 1984  
date entered AUG 1 1984

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

1. Name

historic John T. Murphy House

and/or common Murphy Apartments and Turning Point Psychology Clinic

2. Location

street & number 418 N. Benton Ave. n/a not for publication

city, town Helena n/a vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Lewis and Clark code 049

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>n/a</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Anne M. Pincus and Revel R. Miller

street & number 522 Hollins

city, town Helena n/a vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clerk and Recorder's Office, City-County Building

street & number 316 North Park Avenue

city, town Helena state Montana

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

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

Built during the early 1870's along the Benton Road, Helena's earliest major transportation route to outside markets, the John T. Murphy House is one of the earlier fine residences to be erected on the west side of Helena. Later, this part of the city became one of the most desirable and fashionable residential neighborhoods. Located one block from the currently listed Helena Historic District, the Murphy House adds significantly to the historic quality of the area due to its strong association with one of Helena's earliest and most successful entrepreneurs.

The Murphy House features a central hall plan and is irregular in shape. The floorplan and detailing of the interior indicate that the structure may have been built in two stages. To date, little written documentation has been found that accurately portrays the early construction history of the building. Significant material evidence regarding the original plan and design of the Murphy House will likely be revealed as the present owners remove 20th Century wall finishes, room partitions, false ceilings, and exterior siding in the course of their rehabilitation efforts. The first Sanborn Fire Insurance map available for Helena shows that the Murphy House had attained its present configuration by 1884. The front portion of the house is a simple one and one-half story intersecting gable with a projecting front entry and bay window. The rear portion is a full two stories in height with a flattened gable roof that fits neatly behind the ridgeline of the front portion. The house has experienced a number of major 20th Century modifications but still retains sufficient historic integrity of design and association to qualify for listing in the National Register.

Set back approximately 30 feet from the street, the Murphy House retains the overall appearance of a single family dwelling. This wood frame building is set on a rubble stone foundation. Wide wooden stairs rise to the major, double door entrance to the building; the vestibule projects slightly from the wall plane of the front facade. The wrap around front porch provides access to a second front entry that is located to the south of the main entry and is also part of the original building design. Paired Doric columns mark the main entry; groups of three columns and wall pilasters are used otherwise for porch roof support. The primary and original windows in the building are 2/2 double hung wooden sash. Later dormer windows and replacement windows are either of fixed glass or smaller scale 1/1 double hung wooden sash. The 1935 earthquake in Helena may have spelled the demise of two of the original interior chimneys.

The rear portion of the house extends 40' to the west, rising to a full two stories in height with a full attic above. Evidence of the conversion of the house to apartments is more visible on this portion of the building. The side, south exterior door was moved approximately 4' to the west during the late 1950's. Also added at that time is the bay with a large, center, fixed glass that looks out to the garden area. Although the south side porch resembles its original configuration and the original support columns appear to have survived, a concrete slab was poured for the porch floor and the porch roof was rebuilt to accommodate the bay window addition. An early hipped roof kitchen addition is appended to the west end of the house. The original clapboard siding is apparent on the south wall of the kitchen addition. An exterior chimney rises from the kitchen along the west wall of the house. The back door to the house is located on the west facade at the end of the central interior hallway.

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Early in the 20th Century, the original Victorian period front porch and main entrance stoop were removed and a wide, Neo-Classical style wrap-around porch was added. This was a common modification to historic Helena houses during the 1910's, an especially popular treatment for Gothic Revival residences as the wide porch served the de-emphasize the vertical "excesses" of that style. Also at this time, the front balcony doorway may have been replaced with the pair of 1/1 double hung Prairie glass windows. A hipped roof dormer with a triplet of leaded glass double hung windows was added to the front of the cross intersecting gable. The south side second floor balcony survived this remodeling, and remains in place today.

During the late 1940's, the Murphy House was divided into several apartments. The upstairs living space was enlarged considerably by the construction of a shed roof projection that runs the length of the back portion of the house and a larger shed roofed dormer on the front portion that replaced the earlier hipped roof dormer.

During the 1950's asbestos siding was applied to the entire structure, including the porch balustrade. The original wood shingle roof covering was overlaid with asphalt shingles in 1970. The present owners plan to remove the asbestos siding and restore the original clapboard and detailing of the corners and gable ends.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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** ca 1872-3

**Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John T. Murphy House is significant due to its association with one of Montana's more successful pioneer businessmen and as a representative example of early settlement and residential development in Helena, Montana. The house was built during the early 1870's and, although remodeled several times, retains a primary association with the early establishment of Helena as the foremost commercial center in territorial Montana. The Murphy House is situated along the historic Benton Road, which was the first major transportation and supply route between the head of steamboat navigation on the Missouri River at Fort Benton and the Montana gold mining camps. Helena emerged during the 1870's as the leading supply center for the Western Montana mining camps and John T. Murphy became intimately associated with many facets of early trade and finance in the city and the Territory at large. Murphy arrived in Montana Territory in 1864, hauling a load of supplies from Colorado to be sold in Virginia City. A few months later he traveled on to Helena, where he remained and initiated numerous mercantile and private banking associations, invested extensively in mining, and later expanded most profitably into stock raising. Branches of his mercantile establishment opened in most larger settlements of the Territory; a number of the business buildings associated with John T. Murphy still exist. His residence in Helena is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places due to its long association with this very successful early entrepreneur and because it remains one of only a few houses in the city dating from the early 1870's to retain a relatively high degree of historic architectural integrity.

The construction of the John T. Murphy House appears to have occurred between September, 1871, and April, 1874. Amasa G. Garrison, a freighter in the business of transporting goods between Fort Benton and Helena, owned the property during this period, having purchased the designated lots for \$500.00 in 1871. Little is known about Garrison's exploits but he apparently fell into serious arrears by 1874 when his Benton Avenue property with its "elegant residence" was sold at sheriff's auction to a competing freighter, John T. Murphy, for the sum of \$6,000.00. An 1874 newspaper article described the house as "one of the most desirable homes in Helena...the dwellings and outbuildings in best repair...with household and kitchen furniture the finest of the lot ever sold in the Montana Territory".<sup>1</sup>

The chances for financial success in the Western Territories during the later 19th Century would appear to have been enhanced by a timely diversification of business interests. John T. Murphy's career reflects such a pattern. Venturing from his childhood home in Platte County, Missouri in 1859 at the age of seventeen, Murphy secured employment as a clerk in a Colorado mining town. Quickly recognizing the opportunities available in trade, he opened his own store the next year in Nevada City, Nevada. After operating this enterprise for a year and a half, Murphy sold out and got into the freighting business.

<sup>1</sup>Helena Herald: Helena, Montana, March 21, 1874; April 4, 1874; April 7, 1874.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Helena, MT

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>2</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>
	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

Storey addition to the townsite of Helena, Montana, Block 1, Lots 1,2 and 58' of 3. T. 9N; R4W, Section 25

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

state	n/a	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne M. Pincus and Revel R. Miller

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 1984

street & number 522 Hollins telephone 442-9341

city or town Helena 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 *Marelda Steffy*

title SHPO date 6-7-84

### For NPS use only

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

<u><i>for Melissa Byan</i></u> Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register	date <u>8-1-84</u>
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Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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A very lucrative gold strike was made in Alder Gulch, Montana Territory in 1863. Murphy was close behind the gold seekers with his wagon train of merchandise, carefully selected to meet the demands of the mining population. The next year, after replenishing his stock in Nebraska City, Nebraska and returning to the Territory via a steamer on the Missouri River, Murphy opened a store in Helena on July 1, 1864. Trade was active and prices high. As his capital increased, Murphy established branch stores in Fort Benton (Murphy, Maclay & Co.); Deer Lodge (Murphy, Higgins & Co.); another Helena store (Tutt, Murphy, & Neel); Choteau and Great Falls (Murphy, Neel & Co.). Murphy served as the director of the Helena Board of Trade in 1878. By the late 1880's, he had expanded his fortune by investing in gold and silver mines of Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties, Montana as well as mines in the Couer d'Alene area. For a time, Murphy served as the president of the Jay Gould Mining Company and as vice president of the Helena and Livingston Smelting and Reduction Company. A more stable addition to Murphy's portfolio during the 1880's was his investment in the Montana Cattle Company, or the "79" Ranch, located between the Yellowstone and Musselshell Rivers. He also gained title to the Teton Ranch in Teton County, and later the Powder River Land and Cattle Company, which consisted of 24,153 acres in Custer and Carter Counties. During Murphy's early years in Helena, he acted as a private banker; numerous notes found in the Murphy Papers at the Montana Historical Society attest to his personal loans and financial dealings. He was one of the organizers of the Helena National Bank in 1890 and the Montana Savings Bank in 1891. Murphy also served as the president of the Montana National Bank for a time and as an officer of the Great Falls National Bank and the Merchants National Bank in Billings. The diversity and breadth of Murphy's holdings extended to investments in Florida citrus groves, where on a business trip, shortly after his first wife had died, he met his second wife, Clara Cobb, in 1897.

John T. Murphy died on May 23, 1914 in Helena. He was described as a millionaire at the time, enjoying an income in excess \$75,000/year. The house at 418 North Benton remained in the ownership of the Murphy family until 1936.

The John T. Murphy House has been subjected to numerous alterations during the 20th Century, but retains primary integrity of location and association. Early replacement of the smaller Victorian period porches and second floor balcony with a wide, wrap around porch of Neo-Classical design represents a common trend in home renovation during the 1910's in Helena. The later addition of shed roof dormers to increase the upper level useable floor space marks the adaptation of this property to multi-family use, another pattern typical of post World War II residential reuse in response to the increased demand for housing. The wide gauge asbestos siding that was applied during the 1947 remodeling will be removed by the present owners and the original clapboard siding and decorative detailing restored.

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Helena Herald, March 21, April 4, April 7, 1874, Helena, Montana.

Helena Independent, May 5, 1914, Helena, Montana

Helena Daily Independent, April 10, 1897 and June 5, 1939, Helena, Montana

Helena Independent Record, May 29, 1974, Helena, Montana

River Press, January 28, 1891, Fort Benton, Montana

John T. Murphy Papers, Manuscript Series #84, Montana Historical Society Archives,  
Helena, Montana

Progressive Men of Montana, A.W. Bowen & Co., Chicago, IL, ca. 1902, p. 104

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of Helena, Montana, 1884, 1888, 1890, 1930, Montana  
Historical Society, Helena, Montana