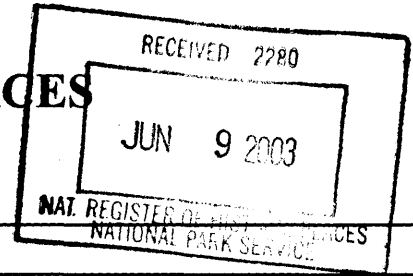


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Benton Avenue Cemetery

other name/site number: Helena Cemetery

2. Location

street & number: 1800 North Benton Ave

not for publication: n/a

vicinity: n/a

city/town: Helena

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Lewis and Clark

code: 049

zip code: 59601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- Entered in the National Register 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):

7/24/03

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property: PRIVATE

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

Category of Property: SITE

0 1 building(s)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

1 0 sites

0 0 structures

0 0 objects

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

1 1 TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: FUNERARY/Cemetery

Current Functions: FUNERARY/Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification: n/a

Materials: stone

foundation: stone

walls: stone

roof: stone

other: wrought iron (fence)

Narrative Description

The Benton Avenue Cemetery is among the oldest burial grounds in the city of Helena, Montana. Organized in 1870 primarily by the Protestant community, the grounds encompass ten acres of fenced area in the gravel alluvium and lake deposits on the south end of the geophysical area known as the Helena Valley. The broad valley stretches to the north away from the original Helena townsite for several miles and terminates in low hills and mountains.

The cemetery lies on the west side of present-day Benton Avenue within the modern-day city limits although when originally planned in 1870, the cemetery was outside the Helena townsite. Across the street to the immediate southeast is the campus of Carroll College, a Catholic liberal arts institution of higher learning founded as a boys' high school in 1910. To the north is a large open area bisected by train tracks that run perpendicular to Benton Avenue and parallel to the north edge of the college campus and the cemetery grounds. Farther north of the tracks are residential neighborhoods. Several residences and yards border the immediate south and west sides of the cemetery grounds.

A wrought iron fence interspersed with granite gateposts, erected in 1928 at a cost of \$10,000, encircles the grounds. A locked gate at the Benton Avenue entrance allows entry to authorized vehicles, but smaller unlocked gates to each side also invite pedestrians to freely come and go. The cemetery's ten acres are perfectly flat and informally landscaped. Several conifers guard the entrance and trees and other vegetation grow intermittently around the site. Mature lilacs dot the grounds, planted during the historic period by family members. The bushes grow largely unchecked, some entirely covering headstones. Tall grass, weeds and brush are intentionally left untrimmed in many areas allowing the cemetery to remain unwatered and minimally maintained as it was historically. The surrounding grasses are cut short.

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Two perpendicular lanes or wagon paths most pronounced in the section from the gate west to the center, divide the grounds into four quadrants. A circular clearing marks the center of the ground; a modern metal storage shed lies in its center. Maps of the cemetery drawn in the 1880s and 1913 show that historically, three of the quarters were subsequently further divided into quarters with a circular clearing in the center of each, more for ease of access than for appearance; the northeast quarter lacks this division and center feature. Time, however, has minimized the smaller paths in the three quarters and even in aerial photographs they are not discernible. The simple geometric divisions, randomly planted bushes, and natural vegetation are evidence that the cemetery plan well predates the architecturally designed and elaborately landscaped grounds found later in the nineteenth century at Helena's much larger Resurrection and Forestvale cemeteries.

The northwest quarter section is most visibly different from the others, lacking upright markers. Tightly packed rows, clearly visible in aerial photographs, are its main features. These graves are only occasionally marked, an indication that most of the original tombstones were either not constructed of permanent materials or that the burials were intentionally left unmarked. Toward the western edge, evidence of graves becomes less precise, suggesting a pauper's field for indigents or an area used for transference of unmarked graves of unknown persons during the early historic period. It seems likely that this block was reserved for individuals—perhaps of lesser means—rather than for families, since the gravesites are visibly smaller and very close together. The northeast quadrant was exclusively reserved for members of the Masonic orders and their families. Records show that many individuals interred in this section were moved after the 1880s from Benton Avenue to the newer and increasingly more utilized Forestvale Cemetery.

Within the enclosed grounds are approximately 896 (excluding footstones) burials documented by the presence of tombstones and/or footstones; an additional 116 burials at the Benton Avenue Cemetery were documented as relocated during the period of significance to Forestvale Cemetery and elsewhere.¹ Reinterments from the City Cemetery were removed to Forestvale during the early historic period and provide an important record of the social development and maturation of the gold camp that became the territorial and, later, state capital. An aerial photograph reveals dozens of depressions throughout the grounds that imply additional unrecorded burials.²

Family monuments and fenced family plots dominate the landscape. In keeping with early burial practices in western communities, family plots were often fenced. Plots were purchased by families who were expected to maintain them; fence barriers were the preferred method of keeping plots private. There are many styles and examples ranging from the 1870s to the 1890s. Standardization is apparent with at least one fencing system appearing in several locations. This is an iron pipe and cast iron connector arrangement accompanied by heavily adorned gates and finials. From the dates of the burials surrounded by this type of fence, it can be inferred that the system was available during the 1880s and early 1890s. Simpler iron spike fences are present as well. One elaborate beautiful fence incorporates a lyre in its design, recalling classical influences.

¹ Benton Avenue and City Cemetery Records, compiled by Charleen Spalding, are housed with the cemetery records at the Montana Historical Society library, Helena, Montana.

² Montana Department of Transportation photograph, roll 62, negative 117, 7/18/89. Courtesy Charleen Spalding.

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Grave markers consist of stone, wood and cast metal. Of these, most are stone and vary considerably in type, size, shape, condition, and age. Obelisks and tapering shafts in particular, drawing upon ancient models and symbolizing eternal life, represent the 1870s and 1880s. Light-colored, imported marble predominates as the earliest grave stone type. These are followed by various kinds of local granite from the 1880s on, illustrating the activity of local monument makers such as A.K. Prescott, Montana Marble Works, and after the turn of the twentieth century, the Kain Brothers Company. Simple carved blocks and a scattering of markers flush to the ground are also common. In the Masonic section, traditional images of that organization abound as appliquéés and carvings. There are occasional tree trunks, floral and faunal decorations, and special memorials to children. One lovely example is a carved chair with a hat tossed upon it and little shoes tucked underneath. There are three of these imported tombstones marking graves of children who died in 1885. The intricately carved monuments were likely ordered at the same time by catalogue. One is for the Kuehn children, a young brother and sister who succumbed to diphtheria in December of 1885. The standardization of some gravestones, and those intricately carved like the Kuehn children's monument, suggest that customized monuments were not always readily available and temporary markers were often replaced later with more substantial tombstones. Local suppliers sometimes relied on imported blanks in the historic period. Military tombstones were also imported. In 1891, several crates of marble headstones and footstones arrived from Washington D.C. to mark the graves of Union soldiers buried in the "Helena Cemetery" (Benton Avenue and Forestvale), replacing deteriorated wooden markers which could no longer be read.³

A few wooden markers are still extant at Benton Avenue, extremely rare survivors of what undoubtedly once served as the most common type of monument. As family fortunes changed for the better, more permanent markers replaced the wood. One rare surviving wooden tombstone, legible only in a graphite rubbing, reads: "Sacred to the memory of Azubah S., wife Ben J. Dailey." Azubah died in 1876, and so the marker dates to around that time.⁴ Occasionally, a deteriorated wooden fragment of others has been discovered, and these are scattered around the grounds. A very unusual wooden obelisk, which once had an attached metal plaque, stands near the west fence in the southwest section. Markers and fences in this area at the extreme west edge of the cemetery are in a dilapidated state, exposed to water runoff due to poor drainage making the preservation of this obelisk remarkable.

Several metal markers, bearing up well to weather and time, remain in place, notably in the Masonic section. A small group of these also appear in a plot in the southeast quadrant. Unlike their Masonic counterparts, which are small standardized pieces, these are larger and more elaborate models. Some small metal plaques on stakes are present in certain plots, identifying the person interred as a member of a military or social organization. Joseph and Lettie Horsky erected a unique metal and stone monument in the Masonic section in memory of their 15-month-old daughter Josie who died in April of 1886. A lantern-like metal structure, originally locked with glass sides, provided a place for small offerings of food or trinkets. The family came from Bavaria, and the inscription

³ Campbell, William C., *From the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch (QLCG)* (Helena: Bell-Arm Corporation, 1964) II, 29.

⁴ *Helena Daily Herald*, September 30, 1876

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reads, "OTEC BIL CECH." The language is misspelled Czechoslovakian and should read, "OTEC BYL CECK" which roughly translates, "Fatherhood has been golden."⁵

A one-story granite tomb sits at the center of the southeast quadrant. It is the cemetery's only mausoleum, likely built by the Kain Granite Company that operated the Ten Mile quarry in the early 1900s. The structure faces south and is constructed of massive granite ashlar blocks. Granite slabs, notched for shedding water and laid on top, serve as a roof. The bottom row of stone at ground level extends slightly away from the wall to create both a water-course and a focal point. Rectangular in plan with gable ends at the narrow sides, the building lacks fenestration or openings on three sides. On the south façade is an entry flanked by engaged columns set upon the foundation. The columns, flat faced and of a simple classical form, support large radiating voussiors with two family names, Connor and Dingle. The entry gates are set back into the arched opening and consist of an iron grate and massive inner doors. Above, the granite roof-cap end bears the date 1908. The overall effect is both classical and Celtic, faintly reminiscent of primitive Irish or Anglo-Saxon chapels.

A flagpole with a plaque at the base, erected in 1974 by the American Legion, is in the center of the grounds. The metal storage shed was installed within the last decade.

No burials occurred at Benton Avenue until 1870. Markers of the 1860s, like that of James Anthony whose date of death is recorded as 1867, are reinterments from the earlier mining camp cemetery which had to be relocated when it became the site of Central School in 1875. Records show that some of the burials at Benton Avenue dated between 1870 and 1875 are also reinterments from this older burial ground; others of this early period are original Benton Avenue interments.⁶ The majority of burials occurred from 1875 until 1890 when Forestvale Cemetery opened. After this time, a number of disinterments at Benton Avenue took place, but primary interments there also continued with regularity until circa 1910. After 1910, burials steadily decreased. The cemetery remains active, however. The most recent interment at Benton Avenue, that of James Kitterman, occurred in 1994 (ashes).

⁵ Translation for Charleen Spalding by Jim Cross, 5928 Abbott Avenue South, Edina, MN 55410.

⁶ Benton Avenue Cemetery Records.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT;
SOCIAL HISTORY; RELIGION

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): D

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1870 – 1930

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1870, 1875, 1882, 1890, 1922, 1928

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder:

Narrative Statement of Significance

Benton Avenue Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C. The Benton Avenue Cemetery physically reflects the settlement period of the pioneer community of Helena, Montana in its simple layout, natural landscaping, remnant wooden markers, fenced family plots, simple obelisk monuments, and imported marble tombstones indicative of frontier burial practices.

The Benton Avenue Cemetery is also eligible under Criterion A. The cemetery was established in 1870, and events that impacted the early community also impacted and are represented in the burial ground on Benton Avenue. Helena's designation as territorial capital in 1875 brought increased status and changes to the former mining camp including a focus on educational opportunities in the new capital city. Construction of the first substantial high school necessitated removal of the early mining camp interments. Further, upon statehood in 1889, establishment of a more desirable cemetery in 1890 prompted disinterments in the Benton Avenue Cemetery in favor of the grander, larger, and professionally designed Forestvale Cemetery. Removal of the graves of some prominent families is a significant aspect of cemetery's history. However, hundreds of pioneers remain interred there. These well represent all social, professional, and economic facets of early Helena as well as the strong Masonic presence that was so important to the fledgling gold camp. The remains of those still interred at Benton Avenue as well as those of others who were moved, provide a unique perspective of the growth of a mining camp, its expansion, and maturation. For these reasons and for its significant place in Helena's complex and evolving interment history, Benton Avenue Cemetery qualifies for listing in the National Register under Criterion A.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Rush to Last Chance Gulch

Helena, Montana sprang to life with the discovery of gold along a narrow gulch on July 14, 1864. The party of four discoverers had made a previous unsuccessful swing through the area. They were low on supplies, but decided to make one last try along the gulch. The men hit a rich lode along the stream that ran through the gulch and named it "Last Chance." Stampeders from Virginia City's Alder Gulch, where thousands had rushed the year before, and from myriad other far-flung places, soon staked claims all along the gulch. The discoverers were dubbed the Four Georgians, a name whose relevance was quickly forgotten.⁷

⁷ The late Richard Roeder, preeminent Montana Historian, proposed his theory in November, 1995 in conversations with Ellen Baumler. Roeder believed that the name came about because the discoverers, only one of whom was from Georgia, practiced the Georgian method of placer mining.

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The mining camp at Last Chance boomed and soon earned the name "Helena" after a town in Scott County, Minnesota.⁸ Miners, merchants, and settlers of varied ethnic groups from diverse places flooded Last Chance Gulch in the newly-created Territory of Montana. Scarcely a foot of ground was left unclaimed and undisturbed. Immigrants to the new settlement came overland from distant points via Virginia City and up to Helena, or they came by steamboat to Fort Benton and followed the Helena-Fort Benton Road, established soon after the discovery in the summer of 1864.⁹ This road proved a critical link and saw heavy traffic until the railroad supplanted stage travel and freighting enterprises in 1883.

With Helena's first recorded death, that of Dr. L. Rodney Pococke of tuberculosis in the spring of 1865, the mining camp had need of a burial ground.¹⁰ Although no written record exists describing the place of Dr. Pococke's burial, the funeral was conducted with great formality and fanfare by the deceased's fellow Masons, and it was the first formal gathering of the order in Helena.¹¹ Presumably he was buried where, within several months of his demise, a cemetery was established on high ground overlooking the gulch. Among the earliest interments were Argyle Parkinson, infant son of William and Jeannette Parkinson who died May 1, 1865, and ten-year-old Anna Davenport who died in September of 1865 from measles contracted aboard the steamship *St. John* en route to Fort Benton. The Davenport and Parkinson family members confirmed in reminiscences that their loved ones were buried in the City Cemetery "where the High School is today."¹² By 1868, at least two more cemeteries had been established in Helena, the Catholic Cemetery on Oakes (today the site of Robinson Park) and the Jewish Home of Peace adjacent to present-day Capital High School. Both these cemeteries were well outside the original townsite; the "in town" cemetery (referred to as the City Cemetery before the mid-1870s), is clearly marked on Helena's first maps, generally served the Protestant, non-sectarian and Masonic population.¹³

Helena Cemetery (Benton Avenue Cemetery)

In 1870, County Commissioners formed a committee charged with finding a suitable ten-acre parcel for a county cemetery in the "vicinity of Helena." The county purchased land "situated a little north of Helena on the Benton Road" from Lizzie and Rachel Brooke in January of 1871; lots were being sold by 1872 and interments followed

⁸ See Vivian Paladin's account in "Naming Helena," *More from the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch Volume II* (Helena: American & World Geographic Publishing, 1996) 122-127.

⁹ Jon Axline, "Rutted Road Links the Gulch and the 'States,'" *More from the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch Volume I* (Helena: American & World Geographic Publishing, 1995) 121.

¹⁰ Notice of his death appears in the *Virginia City Montana Post*, March 18, 1865.

¹¹ Campbell, *QLCG*, V.I, 13.

¹² Unpublished memoirs of Sallie Davenport Davidson, SC606, MHS library archives and Montana News inserts, "Captain William Parkinson's Wife Made Trip to Virginia City..." 4/18/40. Helena High School, completed in 1893, stood on the lot next to Central School.

¹³ Meticulous records kept by the Catholic Church document the earliest burials, causes of death and location of burials; these show burials in the Catholic Cemetery on Oakes as early as 1868. Records are housed in the MHS cemetery records for Lewis and Clark County compiled by Charleen Spalding; the Home of Peace appears as "Hebrew Burial Ground" on a GLO map drawn by B. F. Marsh, surveyor, dated 1868. Housed at the Dept. of Environmental Quality, Helena. The City Cemetery, marked "cemetery grounds" appears on a plat map drawn by A.C. Wheaton in 1868, MHS map collection.

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steadily thereafter.¹⁴ Maps of the early decades indicate that the Benton Road that ran alongside the west edge of the cemetery parcel. This road is not the same as the main route of the Helena-Fort Benton Road, a thoroughfare some distance to the east. Maps of the 1870s show that the roads to Fort Benton, Virginia City, Gallatin City, Prickly Pear and Deer Lodge converged at the crossroad, or couplet, where North Main Street led directly into Helena's commercial center. The road that runs along the cemetery was an alternate, shorter route that broke off from the main road at Silver City north of Helena serving stagecoaches, spring wagons and other lighter traffic. In the late 1860s, this secondary Benton Road followed a route west of the cemetery. In 1870 it was rerouted from the west side to its present location along the section line east of the burial ground following the same route as modern Benton Avenue.¹⁵

Events that impacted the Benton Avenue Cemetery

Montana Territory was created May 26, 1864, just weeks before the discovery at Last Chance Gulch. Bannack was the first territorial capital and in 1865 it moved to Virginia City where most of the population east of the continental divide had gathered. By 1875, however, the placers at Alder Gulch had played out, and much of the early population had removed to Helena. After several indecisive elections, the populace chose Helena as the territorial capital and offices moved from Virginia City to the new capital in the spring of 1875. On July 29 of that year, ground was broken for the first graded school in the territory that, along with the new federal assay office on Broadway, was to be an important symbol of Helena's new status. The school board decided that the ridge then occupied by the City Cemetery would be the perfect place for a prominent schoolhouse. Many, but not all, of the graves were removed to the Helena Cemetery at this time to make way for Central School. A perspective map of 1875 shows Central School nearly completed and behind it are remaining family plots, each surrounded by a fence.¹⁶

The county of Lewis and Clark began to issue deeds for plots at the new Helena Cemetery as early as January of 1872, but there were burials certainly between late 1870 and early 1872 despite the fact that there is no known official record of plot ownership. Over the years the practice of issuing formal deeds for the cemetery plots changed to granting receipts for lots, possibly because of administrative questions regarding the absolute ownership of property within the cemetery's confines. In April of 1872, Lodge #3, F&AM of the Masonic Order purchased one-fourth of the Helena Cemetery's ten acres for ninety-nine dollars.¹⁷ Afterward, the northeast quadrant of the cemetery was devoted exclusively to Masons and their families. The northwest quadrant appears to have primarily individual burials, possibly unidentified reinterments. The southern half of the cemetery was favored for the use of family plots.

Title to the cemetery apparently remained, however, questionable and the Brookes retained interest in the land.

14 Book B, Lewis and Clark Co. Commissioners, p. 209; Deed Book L, p. 334. Clerk and Recorder's Office, City-County Building, Helena, MT.

15 Road Book A, February 9, 1870, p. 13, "Benton Road to be changed." Office of the Clerk and Recorder, City-County Building, Helena, MT.

16 Bird-Eye View of Helena, Montana drawn by E. S. Glover (Helena, M.T.: C. K. Wells, 1875)

17 Deed Book L, p. 384.

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On February 21, 1876, Rachel Brooke deeded her interest to Elizabeth (Lizzie) Brooke and on July 15, 1881 A.H. Barrett, Lizzie's husband, deeded the property to Colonel Charles H. Broadwater. In 1882 Broadwater traded the land known as the Helena Cemetery or the Benton Avenue Cemetery for other property in an arrangement with Lewis and Clark County.¹⁸ Broadwater, who later built the far-famed Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, subsequently owned property surrounding the cemetery grounds, but after this transaction the county gained clear title to the property.

On May 30, 1883 Helena celebrated the first observance of Decoration Day with a mile-long procession that assembled at Harmonia Hall on Broadway and made its way out of the city to the Helena Cemetery. Nearly 1500 people participated in the march, including some fifty veterans of the Civil War and a few veterans of the war with Mexico, accompanied by the Silver Coronet Band. Ladies and gentlemen in carriages joined the crowd at the cemetery, and flowers and evergreens were laid upon the graves of veterans. Wilbur F. Sanders gave a lengthy address while the Rev. T. V. Moore officiated as chaplain. This observance, the *Helena Daily Herald* pointed out later, brought to light the deplorable condition of the city's protestant and Catholic cemeteries whose wooden head and foot boards had deteriorated and could not be deciphered:

Some of the noblest men and women ... lie buried there; yet their resting places cannot be identified. After considerable inquiry, we do not find that plot of the lots ... is kept. The county gravedigger keeps no record of interments. He digs a hole and covers a corpse and the name of the dead is buried in the same oblivion as is his body....¹⁹

Only one-fourth of the graves in the city's several cemeteries were marked. This informal tally included the now-forgotten graves that remained in the old City Cemetery near the grounds of Central School and the Catholic Cemetery on Oakes.

In 1890, the opening of Forestvale Cemetery (listed in the National Register in 1990) with its beautiful landscaped grounds became the favored burial place for Protestant and non-sectarian families. Many prominent pioneer families, who had parents and children buried at Benton Avenue, moved their relatives to the more desirable new Forestvale. Argyle Parkinson and Anna Davenport are examples of this movement. Both the Davenports and the Parkinsons, prominent early pioneer families who settled at Last Chance with the first waves of the gold rush, moved their children first from the City Cemetery to Benton Avenue, and again from Benton Avenue to Forestvale where their headstones today are included in their respective family plots. Interment records indicate that sometimes, as in the case of these children, a disinterment and reinterment actually occurred, but in other cases headstones at Forestvale may be commemorative only.²⁰

18 George Barker to the Brookes, 1869, Deed Book K, p. 101; Rachel to Lizzie, 1877, Deed Book Q, p. 384; A. H. Barrett to Broadwater, 1881, Deed Book V, p. 589; Deed Book Y, p. 321 shows Broadwater deeded the "Helena Cemetery" to Lewis and Clark County on September 4, 1882.

19 *Helena Daily Herald*, June 2, 1883.

20 This conclusion comes from comparing cemetery lists of Benton Avenue and Forestvale. Headstones are present in Forestvale with no

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The opening of Forestvale coincidentally paralleled the construction of Helena High School next to Central School at the corner of Warren and Lawrence streets. The high school was long in completion from 1890 to 1893. During this three-year period, additional graves that still dotted the former grounds of the old City Cemetery were moved, some to Forestvale and some to Benton Avenue. Forestvale records specifically indicate some of these reinterments by name and date (late 1880s-early 1890s), but there is no record of reinterments at Benton Avenue from this time period. However, the dozens of unmarked graves, very close together, especially in the northwest quadrant, are indicative of this activity. Unidentified bodies from the old City cemetery were a problem during this period in Helena. The *Helena Herald* reported on April 14, 1893 that a coffin washed out of the Lawrence Street cut after a heavy rain and burst open in the street. The well-preserved, unidentified miner was reinterred at the "new cemetery." However, according to Mrs. Lucille Topping:

Of course, many were found later, nameless. When my uncle graduated from high school in 1885—he was attending H.S. in what is now Central—remains were still being found.

When I was in 7th grade in the stone building [i.e. the new Helena High School]—Lawrence Street was being cut though and bodies found. We spent our recess periods sitting on the bank.²¹

Some of these unknown persons most certainly ended up at the older, less frequently used Benton Avenue Cemetery, and all those that came to light before Forestvale's opening in 1890 would have necessarily been reinterred there.

The cemetery on Benton Avenue operated as a county institution from November 1870 to June 26, 1922 when the Benton Avenue Cemetery Association incorporated and the property was deeded to them.²² This was done on the heels of the passage of state legislation that provided for the establishment of such associations to manage public cemeteries.²³ In 1928, the fence extending 640 feet around the cemetery was installed with money donated by William Boyce Thompson of New York, a wealthy relative of Major James R. Boyce who was buried at Benton Avenue. The donation was bestowed upon three community cemeteries: Benton Avenue in Helena, Hillside Cemetery in Virginia City, and to Mount Moriah Cemetery in Butte. Thompson had relatives buried in all three places. The \$10,000 fence was installed around the Benton Avenue Cemetery by a Butte contractor with the granite work furnished by the Butte Monument Works. The fence was finished by December except for installation of the gate.²⁴ The Helena contact for disposition of the expenditures was Ollie Connor whose son was buried in the Mausoleum (see below). The inscription over the entry reads, "This memorial enclosure erected in memory of Major James R. Boyce and other Pioneers."

record of interment, and interments listed in Benton Avenue are not marked there, but are marked at Forestvale.

21 Undated letter from Lucille Topping to Mrs. Lucy Baker, (circa 1960s) SC 1012, folder 1/7, MHS library archives.

22 Certificate of Incorporation of the Benton Avenue Cemetery dated June 24, 1922; copy in the State Historic Preservation Office, National Register of Historic Places file on Benton Avenue Cemetery.

23 Revised Codes of Montana 1921, Section 6469-6502.

24 *Boulder Monitor*, 12/22/28.

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The Masons in Montana

Masonry is an important thread in the history of Montana that began with the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The explorers left little tangible evidence, but among features named by the Expedition are three rivers in Madison County. The Wisdom, Philosophy and Philanthropy rivers are named for Masonic ritual. Meriwether Lewis, likely the first Mason to set foot in the region, left this evidence of his Masonic affiliation.

Half a century later in September of 1862, Captain James Fisk's wagon train camped on the western edge of the Rocky Mountains. Nathaniel Langford, George Gere and Richard Charlton - the only Masons in the company - climbed to the summit of Mullan Pass where they opened and closed an informal lodge of Master Masons. This meeting of the three Masons, according to Masonic tradition and as an alternative to other theories, is one of three events represented in the vigilante ultimatum "3-7-77" that symbolizes Montana's turbulent early history and survives today as part of the insignia of the Montana Highway Patrol. The second event was the funeral of William Bell whose death of mountain fever on November 12, 1862, was the first natural death at Bannack. His funeral brought 76 Masons together for the first formal fraternal gathering. Bell himself was the 77th Mason. The third momentous event was the forming of the vigilance committee, or Vigilantes, at Virginia City on December 22, 1863. This came in the wake of the murder trial and conviction of George Ives. The next day 7 men, all reputedly Masons, organized the Vigilantes and adopted the "3-7-77" signature. Not all Vigilantes were Masons and although this theory has been often challenged, Masons undeniably played a very important role in laying the strong foundation upon which the state of Montana rests.

After Rodney Pococke's funeral in Helena precipitated the first local gathering of Masons, this fraternal group "...not only provided benevolences for their members but also worked for law and order, community improvement, and cultural and charitable activities."²⁵ Masons played a prominent role in Helena as they had in most of Montana's frontier communities.

Although some prominent Masons like well-known grocer Michael Reinig were later moved to Forestvale, many still lie buried at the Benton Avenue Cemetery among them are:

George Booker, the second recorder of the Algeria Shrine Temple serving from December, 1888 until his death in 1914. He was also secretary of Helena Lodge #3, AF&AM for 40 years. (*QLCG II*, 265)

Ben R. Dittes was selected Helena's first public librarian in 1868 at a salary of \$100 a month (*QLCG*, 145).

Ira Bateman, who settled in Helena in the 1860s and practiced carpentry for a number of years was skilled in this line of work. According to Helen McCann White in *Ho for the Gold Fields*, he helped to build Helena's fire tower, known today as the Guardian of the Gulch. He also served three terms as Justice of the Peace (obit. *HDH*, 10/13, 1884)

Valentine Priest, pioneer road builder, built Priest's Pass west of Helena. It opened in 1880 and Priest operated a toll road that served as the highway to Missoula during the 1880s (*QLCG I*, 91; *II*, 2).

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John Kinna came to Helena in 1865 and engaged in the hardware business. He was elected Treasurer of Lewis and Clark County in 1872 and when the City of Helena incorporated in 1880, Kinna was elected the first mayor. (obit. *HH* 10/4/1887).

Thomas Jefferson Lowry was a pioneer attorney who served in the territorial legislature in 1866 and 1868. He practiced law in Helena in partnership with John Shober and in 1880 was elected attorney of the Third Judicial District. (obit. *Helena Weekly Independent*, 12/2/1886).

George Beatty has one of Benton Avenue's more unusual tombstones with an epitaph that has a story behind it, told in Roberta Carkeek Cheney's *Names on the Face of Montana*. Beatty was prominent among the first ranchers in the Winston area in Broadwater County. He came west from New York convinced that his illness – likely tuberculosis – was fatal but hoping the mountain air would add a few years to his life. He brought his tombstone with him. Carved upon it was: "My mother's prayers kept me out of Hell. Thank God for a blessed hope beyond the grave." Beatty recovered from his illness and stowed the tombstone away in a shed. When he died at ninety-two, relatives placed it on his grave.

Physicians were especially important to the early community and many of them put their own lives in jeopardy caring for patients. Most of the community's best known gold rush doctors were Masons and are buried at Benton Avenue in the Masonic section. **Cyrus S. Ingersoll** was Helena's first homeopathic physician. He attended many victims of stabbings, mine accidents and contagious diseases, once even accompanying a patient recovering from smallpox to the "pest house."²⁶ **Calista Gay Ingersoll**, his wife, delivered some of the first babies born in Last Chance Gulch. **Dr. Ira Maupin** traveled to remote places with his partner **Dr. J. S. Glick** (see below). On one such trip in 1873 Dr. Maupin was thrown from his horse and died. His funeral was a tribute to the dedicated doctor. So many people attended the service that they could not fit inside the church. Two hundred Masons, sixty carriages and fifty horsemen wound their way to the Benton Avenue Cemetery. When the casket was laid in the grave, Dr. Maupin's white apron – symbol of his Masonic affiliation – was placed with him. Each brother in the fraternal order filed past and deposited a sprig of evergreen on the coffin. (*Helena Daily Herald*, 3/16/1873).

Others interred at Benton Avenue

The hundreds of individuals and families buried at Benton Avenue represent the diverse social strata that made up the early community and their lives reflect the tragedies and triumphs of early settlers. A random sampling of some of these pioneers include:

William C. Child, register of the US Land Office and later wealthy rancher and the founder of the White Face Farm (now the Kleffner Ranch) east of Helena lost his fortune in the Panic of 1893 and ended his life with an overdose of narcotics.

Massena Bullard who practiced law in Helena from 1871 until his death in 1915 (obit. *Helena Independent*, July 25, 1915).

26 Ellen Baumler, "Gold Rush Doctors" in *More From The Quarries of Last Chance Gulch I* (Helena: World Geographic Publishing, 1995) 28-31.

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Dr. J. S. Glick, in partnership with Ira Maupin (see above), was a beloved Gold Rush doctor with a reputation as a fine bone surgeon. He once operated at gun-point on Henry Plummer who had taken a bullet in his shooting arm (*More from the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch, Vol. I, 32-33*).

Elijah M. Dunphy built the Dunphy Block on Last Chance Gulch. It was reputedly Helena's first two-story brick building and survived the conflagrations of the late 1860s and early 1870s. It stands today.

Mrs. E. M. Dunphy who died of diphtheria contracted nursing the Kuehn children; their charming tombstone has been previously described. (obit. *Helena Daily Herald*, December 24, 1885).

Gussie Bach, whose epitaph reads: "Thus clinging to that slight spar within her arms, the mother drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea." Gussie had given birth to two previous children, both of whom died at birth. Her third child also died at birth, and Gussie died with her (*Helena Daily Herald*, July 22, 1889).

Edwin Warren Toole was a longtime Helena attorney and brother of Montana's first governor, Joseph K. Toole. Warren Street is named for him.

Mr. and Mrs. James Anthony. James Anthony, who died in 1867, was reinterred from the old city cemetery on the site of Central School. Jane died in 1870. The Anthonys came to Montana in 1864.

Millie (Molly) Mockton Breck is buried next to her parents, the James Anthonys. Of the Anthony's seven children, only Millie, the wife of the Yellowstone National Park Transportation Company superintendent, is buried with her parents (Breck obit, *Helena Daily Herald*, September, 11, 1903).

David Churchill served as sheriff of Lewis and Clark County from 1885-1888.

John Hanchild (1859-1912) was a policeman, deputy sheriff and bartender.

T.J. Holihan was killed in a mine accident in 1898.

Lewis (Louis) Reeder, stonemason and builder of the territorial period tenements known as Reeder's Alley, died of injuries suffered in a fall from a scaffold. (obit. *Helena Herald*, August 27, 1884.)

Eliza O'Neill was the long estranged wife of Joseph O'Neill whose business enterprises on West Main Street included early lime kilns, livery and early horse-drawn taxis between the depot and downtown.

Van Hayden Fisk, brother of James Liberty Fisk of the Fisk Expedition, was a veteran of the 1st Minnesota Infantry.

Joseph Weggenman practiced the trade of blacksmith.

Lulu Morrell, two-month-old infant, died of pneumonia at the Crittenton Home.

Interments in the Connor Family Mausoleum

The largest family monument and the only enclosed tomb at the Benton Avenue Cemetery is the Connor family mausoleum. It was constructed in 1908 after the death of Albert J. "Bert" Connor in November, 1907. Connor, a junior partner in the family grocery concern, drowned in Lake Bowdoin near Malta while on a hunting trip. His grandmother and grandfather, Olivia (Dingle) and Peter J. Connor, were next interred in the mausoleum in 1920 and 1922. The Connors operated an early-day hostelry called the Farmer's House and later operated the grocery. Charles "Ollie" Connor, a member of the cemetery association when it formed in 1922, was interred in the mausoleum in 1939.²⁷

²⁷ *Helena Independent*, November 13, 1907; *Helena Independent*, June 26, 1922; *Helena Independent*, September 29, 1939.

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Later History of the Benton Avenue Cemetery

There is no record that the Benton Avenue Cemetery Association held meetings or organized any activities. A number of those present when the Articles of Incorporation were prepared in 1922 included persons who were eventually themselves buried in the cemetery. Among these were, C. Ollie Connor, who passed away in 1939. He is interred in the cemetery's only mausoleum. Adah H. Kelly (1924), Annie Vinson (1928), Orlene Bower (1935), and Clara Bower (1963) are some of the others. The property and its function gradually faded from public view until, in the early 1950s it is no longer mentioned in the city directories. Weeds grew high covering the resting places of pioneers and the area became a dumping ground for trash and refuse. The iron fence began to rust.

By 1966 the Benton Avenue Cemetery was a tangle of neglect and debris. Lucille Baker, a secretary in the office of Governor Tim Babcock, passed by the cemetery each morning on her way to work at the Capitol. She was so distressed at this lack of respect for Helena's early settlers that Mrs. Baker determined to do something about it. She challenged the community to help her.²⁸ Recruiting friends and neighbors with rakes, shovels, and hoes, she organized a cleanup. One hundred volunteers carted out trash, weeded and raked. The one-time call for help stretched into months, and then into several years. Mrs. Baker arranged for students at Carroll College to take care of the grounds and organized a campaign to finance it called "Pennies from Heaven." Media took up the cry for help and offered support. On Memorial Day, May 30, 1968, the Benton Avenue Cemetery was rededicated. Lucy Baker received a citation from Keep America Beautiful for her unique reclamation project and a representative came to officiate at the ceremony.²⁹

During the next seven years, Lucy Baker recorded markers, names, and dates compiling a list of interments at Benton Avenue. The American Legion donated a flagpole and a plaque that was installed in the middle of the grounds, and the Governor's Commission on Historic Preservation designated the cemetery a historical site in 1974.³⁰ Lucy Baker moved out of state, but continued her crusade through voluminous correspondence, now housed at the Montana Historical Society library archives. But despite her continued efforts, her dream of listing the cemetery in the National Register of Historic Places did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, in 1998 the Benton Avenue Cemetery Association reorganized and now is an active group taking the lead in bringing recognition to it and keeping the cemetery clean and well maintained.

²⁸ *Independent Record*, May 17, 1966.

²⁹ United States Brewers Association, Inc. *Newsletter*, "Montana Landmark Restored," Vol. 1, No. 103, July 5, 1968.

³⁰ *Independent Record*, June 13, 1976.

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Architectural Significance

A few wooden tombstones remain to mark burials. These are evocative, rare monuments that chronicle the earliest decades of territorial history. Tall marble obelisks are also a distinctive feature at Benton Avenue and are indicative of the early 1870s and 1880s. The original simple layout with a central pathway remains, separating the two distinct halves of the grounds, and the central circle, shown on the earliest maps, is clearly delineated. A majority of the numerous original iron fences marking family plots survive in near pristine condition as do the majority of the marble and granite markers from the 1890s through the period of significance. The iron fence that encloses the entire ten acres, installed in 1928, and the vehicular gate flanked by the two pedestrian entrances retain their original functions and appearances.

Integrity

Although the site has been affected by natural forces of deterioration, vandalism and theft, the majority of the stone markers remain well intact. Many iron fences encircling family plots are wholly intact. Wooden markers have greatly deteriorated and are rare, but this was true even within the period of significance. A modern flagpole and a metal storage shed are the only modern intrusions. The fence encircling the cemetery grounds appears exactly as it was when installed in 1928. The pioneer cemetery remains in remarkably good shape, retaining the simplicity of its original layout, four distinct sections, circular central feature and rather sparse, natural vegetation with occasional plantings around family plots from the historic period.

Criteria Consideration D:

Justification

The Benton Avenue Cemetery well reflects the burial practices of pioneer communities of the western frontier. Individual family plots enclosed by iron fencing; tall, slender light-colored imported marble obelisks; simple layout of the grounds in four sections; and little formal landscaping except around individual family plots are indicative of the early settlement period of Helena, Montana. Stones dating to the latter decade of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrate the evolving, stable community as local artisans began to supply this demand. The iron fence around the grounds, added in 1928, marks the symbolic end of Benton Avenue Cemetery's more active history by commemorating the pioneers buried there.

The Benton Avenue Cemetery illustrates significant associations with historic events and patterns of social development as Helena grew from gold camp to capital city. The cemetery's interment history mirrors the major events that impacted the community. Burials began in the late camp phase in 1870 and continued through Helena's designation as capital city in 1875. With this designation Helena gained status and its resources needed to reflect this elevation. One significant outcome was the construction of the first graded school in the Territory of Montana. This, however, necessitated removal of burials from the original mining camp cemetery, which was the intended site of the new school. Reinterments began at Benton Avenue during this period. With statehood in

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1889 came the need for a grander cemetery and Forestvale replaced Benton Avenue. This resulted in a period of disinterments from Benton Avenue to Forestvale. New status for the capital city came again with statehood in 1889 and construction of a grand high school near the grounds of Central School was one visible expression of Helena's prominence. Some burials came to light during this construction phase, and some of those remains were reinterred at Benton Avenue. Finally, after the turn of the twentieth century, interments at Benton Avenue drastically decreased and few families buried their loved ones in the simple the pioneer burial ground.

Benton Avenue Cemetery also possesses important historic associations from Helena's early period of settlement. The Masons were a cornerstone of the state's foundation, and the strong Masonic presence in early Helena is evident in the separate Masonic section and in the Masonic emblems carved upon many of the stones. Stones predating statehood are often marked with "M.T." for Montana Territory indicating this early period. Military graves of the various branches of service illustrate the wide experience of nineteenth century veterans of various wars who came together to settle on the western frontier. Finally, multiple deaths of children especially, as in the year 1885, illustrate the toll of epidemics on the early community.

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Name of Property

County and State

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

Acreage of Property: 10 Acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	420110	5161620
B	12	420300	5161620
C	12	420300	5161420
D	12	420110	5161420

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): NE ¼ SE ¼ SE ¼ of Section 24, Township 10 North, Range 4 West

Verbal Boundary Description: SE ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 24, Township 10 North, Range 4 West beginning at the SE corner of the cemetery from which the easting ling of Section 24 bears East 33 feet distant to SE corner thereof; bears south 2 degrees, 51 minutes East 655 feet 5 inches; running north 660 feet to the NE corner to 660 feet to the NW corner; thence South 660 feet to the SW corner; thence East 660 feet to beginning and containing 10 acres.

Boundary Justification: The boundary is drawn, based on legally recorded boundary lines, to include the land that historically has been associated with the cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ellen Baumler

organization:

date: January 19, 2003

street & number: 729 11th Avenue

telephone: 406-449-3062

city or town: Helena

state: MT

zip code: 59601

With contributions by

name/title: Paul Putz

organization: Helena/Lewis & Clark Preservation Commission

street & number: 316 N. Park St.

telephone: 406-447-8357

city or town: Helena

state: MT

zip code: 59624

name/title: Charleen Spalding and the Benton Avenue Cemetery Association

Property Owner

name/title: Benton Avenue Cemetery Association

c/o Robert Werner, president

street & number: P.O. Box 4212

telephone: (406) 443-4806

city or town: Helena

state: MT

zip code: 59604

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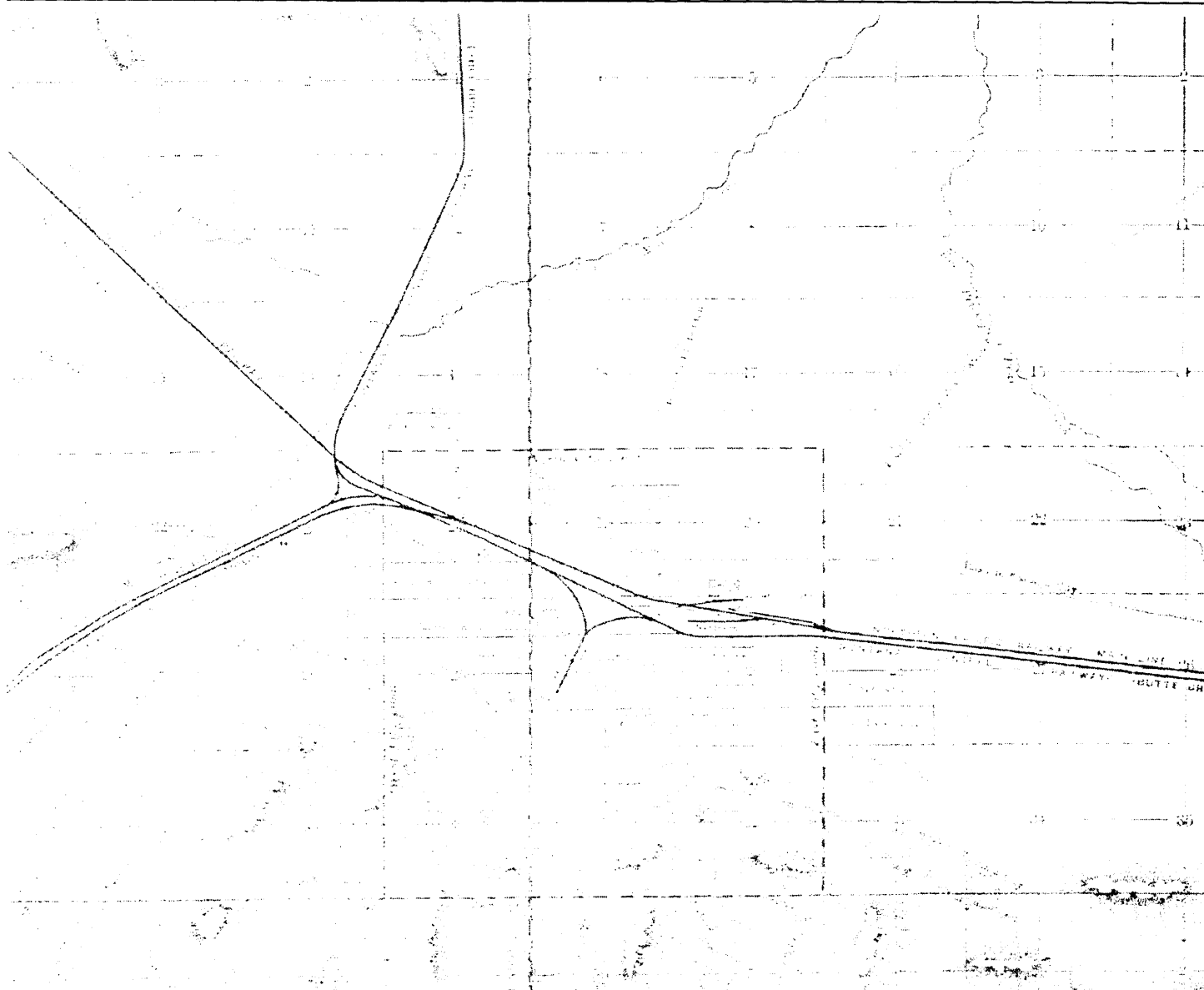
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Roads and Railway Routes to Helena, undated, untitled (post 1887). MHS Map Collection.

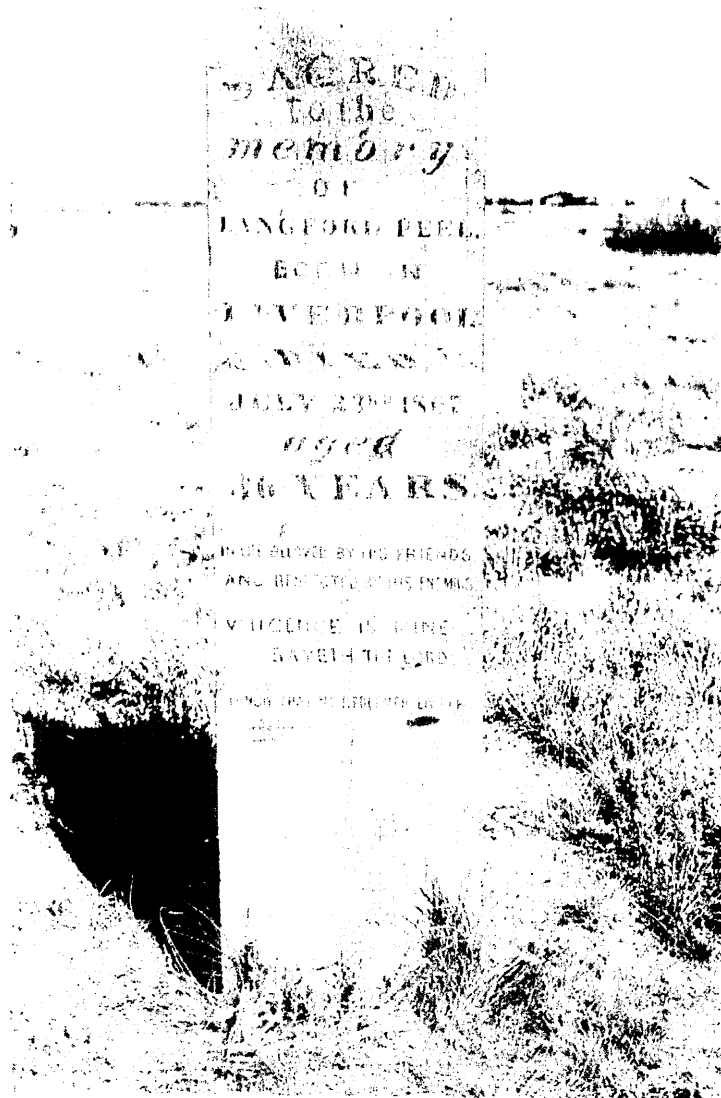
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Photographs #1-14 accompanying this nomination were taken by Jesse Aber of Helena, MT in November 2002. The negatives are housed in the "Benton Avenue Cemetery" National Register File, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, 1410 8th Avenue, Helena, Montana 59620.

Photo #1
Main Gate
Direction of View: West

Photo#2
Connor Mausoleum – Southeast Quadrant, Plot A-08
Direction of View: North

Photo #3
Felix and Norma Kuehn Marker – Southwest Quadrant, Plot B-11
Direction of View: West

Photo #4
Repaired Headstones
Direction of View: Northwest

Photo #5
Wooden Obelisk – Eva Medora Heidlinger – Southwest Quadrant, Plot -12
Direction of View: West

Photo #6
Josie Horsky – Masonic Section, Plot M-06
Direction of View: Northwest

Photo #7
Wooden Head and Footboards
Direction of View: West

Photo #8
Thomas J. Lowry – Masonic Section, Plot M-12
Direction of View: West

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Photo #9

John Kinna – Masonic Section Plot M-01

Direction of View: West Northwest

Photo #10

Tree of Life/Tree Trunk Tombstone

Direction of View: West

Photo #11

Valentine Priest -- Masonic Section, Plot M-02

Direction of View: West

Photo #12

Henry Francis – Masonic Section, Plot M01

Direction of View: North

Photo #13

Obelisk Monument

Direction of View: North

Photo #14

Obelisk Monument/Fenced Family Plot

Direction of View: Northwest

Photo #15

Aerial View of Benton Avenue Cemetery

Helena, Lewis and Clark County, MT

Photographer: Montana Department of Transportation

Date of Photograph: 1989

Location of Negative: Copy Negative at MTSHPD, Helena, MT

Direction of View: Aerial, Top of Photograph is West