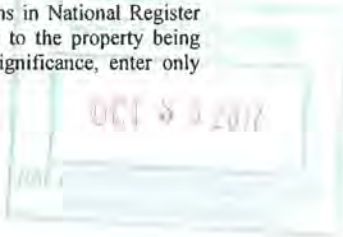


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

56-1895

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1000 U.S. Highway 191

City or town: Lewistown State: Montana County: Fergus

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<p><u>Mark F. Funder/SHPD</u></p> <hr/> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p><u>MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p><u>10/26/2017</u></p> <hr/> <p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Jon Edson H. Beall 12-14-17
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Neoclassical Revival

OTHER: Agricultural Pavilion

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Structural Clay Tile (walls) BRICK (exterior trim) CONCRETE (foundation walls); METAL (roof covering); WOOD (doors, windows, interior framing, roof structure and stalls).

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Draft Horse Barn stands near the northeast entrance of the Fergus County Fairgrounds, an approximately 50-acre property situated 1½ miles north of Lewistown, Montana along U.S. Highway 191. Built in 1917 as part of a livestock auction complex and fair-time exhibition space, the barn was thoroughly rehabilitated for modern use in 2012-2013. The \$200,000 rehabilitation project ensured the building meets current safety code, while also repairing and restoring many original architectural features. Significant components of the rehabilitation project included: masonry restoration and stabilization, restoration of the fanlight window on the façade, rehabilitation of four sliding wood barn doors, replacement of one barn door, and the rehabilitation or replacement of original wood windows.

The 100' x 56' Draft Horse Barn is a gable-roofed, one-story structure that rests on poured concrete foundation walls. Exterior walls are built with variegated red structural clay tile produced locally by the Lewistown Brick & Tile Company. Dimensional lumber is used extensively on the interior of the barn for framing, stall construction, bracing and the collar roof structure. The roof rises from 7' along the side elevations to a height of 15' 6" at its ridge, and is currently covered with corrugated sheet metal. Two decorative metal ventilators extend from the ridge of the roof. The symmetrical gable ends of the barn face north and south. The south end serves as the barn's façade where fairgoers are greeted by a fanciful parapet wall. Here, the gable roof is hidden behind a graceful semicircular parapet that frames a fanlight window. Heavy corner pilasters flank the façade. Another prominent feature on the gable ends of the barn are two, evenly-spaced, sliding wood doors with a decorative "double British brace" pattern. These large doors indicate the interior layout of the barn, which features double alleys flanked by four rows of stalls. A fifth sliding door on the west elevation provides access to an interior cross alley that terminates at a

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framed-in office. The interior floor of the barn is dirt, with concrete footing beneath wood posts and concrete pads situated in front of some entrances. The longer east and west elevations of the barn are dominated by a series of evenly-spaced wood windows that provide ample interior light.

Stylistically, the Draft Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fairgrounds sits at the intersection of recreation, agriculture and commerce. The overall structure is relatively straightforward, but several design features set it this barn apart from similar structures used exclusively for agriculture purposes. This begins with the use of structural clay tile, a construction material rarely used on Montana's farms and ranches. It is also a rarity on fairgrounds across the state, suggesting the use of structural clay tile at the Fergus County Fairgrounds was the result of strong promotion from the Lewistown Brick & Tile Company. The fanciful façade, with its semicircular parapet and fanlight, is also atypical of barn design. In some ways, the façade of the barn echoes the classic "false front" design of early commercial buildings in the American West. Indeed, the elaborate entrance is meant to attract and impress visitors, from curious fairgoers to potential livestock buyers. The focus on visitor experience continues upon entering the Draft Horse Barn. Natural light floods through the fanlight and numerous windows, while the collar beam roof provides an openness that is befitting of an exhibition hall. Outside of its status as a "specialty barn" or "agriculture pavilion," the Draft Horse Barn also exhibits subtle nods to a more formal architectural style: Neoclassical Revival. Character-defining features of Neoclassical Revival displayed in the barn's design include the fanlight and heavy corner pilasters that flank the façade.

Narrative Description

Location: Lewistown and Big Spring Creek

The nominated property stands at the north entrance of the Fergus County Fairgrounds, an approximately 50-acre property located about 1½ north of Lewistown, Montana along the west side of U.S. Highway 191. A community of nearly 6,000 residents, Lewistown is nestled in the southwest corner of the Judith Basin—very near the geographic center of Montana. The Judith Basin is lined by isolated "island" mountain ranges on three sides, with the Judith River running north to its confluence with the Missouri River. These ranges include the Big Snowies to south, the Little Snowies to the southeast, the Judith and Moccasin Mountains to the east, the Little Belts to the southwest and the Highwood Mountains to the northwest. The wind-swept Judith Gap between the Little Belts and Big Snowies links the Judith Basin and the Musselshell Valley to the south. Together, these two drainages make up the bulk of "Central Montana," a vast region defined by the Missouri River to the north and west, and the Musselshell River to the south and east. Because of its unique geographic setting, Lewistown is the only community of substantial size within a 100-mile radius. As such, it serves as the seat of Fergus County, but also as the de-facto cultural and commercial capital of Central Montana. Helena, the state capital, is located approximately 125 miles to the southwest.

Founded in 1873 as a trading post, Lewistown is located near the confluence of Big Spring Creek and its western tributary, Little Casino Creek. The town was selected as the seat of Fergus County in 1885. Just six years later, a group of businessmen and boosters formed the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association with the aim of inaugurating an annual county fair at Lewistown. One of the association's first acts was to secure a roughly 50-acre property about 1½ miles north of Lewistown for the development of a fairgrounds.¹ Situated just northeast of the confluence between Big Spring Creek and Breed Creek, the Fergus County Fairgrounds sit at an elevation of about 3,900 feet. Overall, the site is relatively flat with a slight downward slope from northeast to southwest. The foothills of the Judith Mountains begin their steady rise immediately to the east of the fairgrounds.

The stretch of Big Spring Creek occupied by the Fergus County Fairgrounds figured prominently in the early history of Lewistown as a transportation route between Camp Lewis (the site of present day

¹ The legal description of the property is Tract 1, Certificate of Survey 968. It is roughly situated in the NE¼, NW¼, Section 10, T15N, R18E, Montana PM.

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Lewistown) and Reedsfort along the Carroll Trail. A few decades later, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad (commonly known as the Milwaukee Road) selected the Big Spring drainage for their northern expansion out of Lewistown. The railroad built track along the eastern edge of the Fergus County Fairgrounds in 1911, eventually reaching Hilger, Roy, Winifred and Great Falls. A state automobile highway soon followed the Milwaukee Road north to Roy. Built in 1920, the Lewistown-Roy Road included a 1¼ mile stretch of concrete surface between Lewistown and the Fergus County Fairgrounds.² This road was eventually incorporated into Montana State Highway 19 and, in the early 1960s, U.S. Highway 191. Due to its location along these important early transportation routes, the Fergus County Fairgrounds long served as a “welcome sign” for travelers entering Lewistown from the north. Today, the distinctive structural clay tile Draft Horse Barn at the northeast corner of the fairgrounds remains an important landmark for motorists on U.S. Highway 191.

Setting: the Fergus County Fairgrounds

The Draft Horse Barn is a component feature of the Fergus County Fairgrounds, which can be defined as a designed cultural landscape. Unfortunately, multiple changes to the fairgrounds occurring after its period of historical significance (1891-1967) render it ineligible for consideration as a National Register historic district. Moreover, the lack of surviving individual resources from the historic period also means the Fergus County Fair a poor candidate for a Multiple Property Document. Today, only three buildings of historical significance remain at their original location on the fairgrounds: the Draft Horse Barn (1917), Agricultural Hall (1917) and the 4-H Livestock Building (1930). Other historic resources at the fairgrounds include a series of shed-roofed horse stalls, circulation systems, building clusters, vegetation and the 4-H Park (c. 1940). Most resources, however, date from after the fairground’s currently-defined period of significance (1891-1967). It is also important to note that several historic buildings were recently removed. This list includes the Cattle Barn (1917), Office-Restaurant / Rodeo Office (1917) the Sheep Barn (1927), the Swine Barn (1930), the Grandstands (1910) and the 4-H Exhibition Building (1929).

The fairgrounds stretch approximately one-half mile along U.S. Highway 191. On the rolling foothills to the east of the highway stand the Central Montana Stockyards (1950) and the remnants of the Arrow Refinery (non-extant, established in 1921). Approximately one-fourth mile wide at their southern end, the fairgrounds taper off gradually as they extend north. The south and east boundaries of the fairgrounds are well-defined by U.S. Highway 191 and Breed Creek, respectively. Agricultural fields are found to the north and west. A row of evenly-spaced green ash trees and a low concrete fence adorn the east boundary of the fairgrounds along the highway. The fairgrounds are accessed via U.S. Highway 191 at five entry points, with main entrances found at the end of Fairgrounds Drive. This semi-circular route loops around the Grandstands and racetrack and provides access to most facilities at the fairgrounds. In general, the fairgrounds developed around the Grandstands and racetrack, with a cluster of administrative, agricultural and community buildings found to the south and a cluster of livestock-related facilities to the north. The Draft Horse Barn is located immediately inside the main north entrance of the fairgrounds, with its façade fronting Fairgrounds Drive.

Since its inception, activities at the Fergus County Fair (later the Central Montana Fair) focused on the racetrack and grandstands. Originally built as a kite-shaped track in 1891, the racetrack was soon converted into a more typical oval-shaped course. A series of grandstands stood along the west side of the track, with the current structure dating from 1992. Over the years, a rodeo arena and stage area developed in the infield immediately below the grandstands. The oval track was eventually abandoned, as auto-sports supplanted horseracing at the Central Montana Fair. In the 1990s, an irregular-shaped dirt track was built to facilitate “bump-n-run” racing. At about the same time, the fair’s long-running demolition derby was moved to its own rectangular dirt arena on the eastside of the former infield. The rest of the fairgrounds developed alongside the racetrack and grandstands. Most early structures at the fairgrounds were temporary, but a more permanent development program began after Fergus County assumed

² For early trails in the Lewistown vicinity, see the original survey plat of T15N, R18E completed by the U.S. General Land Office in 1875; “From Lewistown to Roy,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 29 February 1920.

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ownership in 1917. By the early 1920s, two distinctive building clusters had developed on either side of the grandstands. Immediately to the southwest stood the administrative, agricultural and community buildings. Livestock-related buildings, in contrast, were built near the north end of the fairgrounds. The fair's temporary "midway" is typically built to the northwest of the grandstands. Large grass parking areas are found at the north and south ends of the fairgrounds.

Nestled against Breed Creek and the heavily wooded 4-H Park (c. 1940), the "community" cluster at the Fergus County Fairgrounds evokes a cozy domesticity. This feeling is enhanced by the cluster's location in the back (southwest) corner of the fairgrounds, which requires visitors travel a substantial distance along Fairgrounds Drive to reach its buildings. Historically, this cluster was anchored by Agriculture Hall, a two-story structural clay-tile building erected by the Fergus County Fair Board in 1917. By 1930, Agriculture Hall was joined by four frame buildings: the School Exhibits Building, the Poultry Building (1922), the 4-H Exhibits Building (c. 1929) and a small ladies parlor. Of these, only Agriculture Hall remains intact. All of the other buildings were removed to make way for a new "commercial building."³ Completed in 1981, the Trade Center now serves as the administrative focal point of the fairgrounds. Agriculture Hall, however, remains the historic heart of the fairground's south end. When the building was threatened with demolition in 1999, there was immediate pushback. It has since been rehabilitated, and is currently used as fair exhibit space and for other community events.

In contrast, the livestock-related facilities at the north end of the fairgrounds are more open and efficient in character. The eleven buildings making up this cluster stretch along Fairgrounds Drive between the fairground's main north entrance and the Grandstands. There are few trees and shrubs, just a series of buildings lining the main drive, with a few others set back to the north and west. In general, the buildings share a similar scale and overall form (rectilinear and gable-roofed), with most buildings constructed to shelter livestock. The main outlier in terms of scale is the Livestock Exhibition Building (1984; Addition, 1992). This massive, metal-clad, arch-roofed structure, which replaced the original Cattle Barn (1917), dwarfs its smaller neighbors. Less intrusive are a series of three small, gable-roofed buildings located to the west of the 4-H Livestock Building. These buildings, which all post-date the period of significance, serve as space for offices, concessions or restroom facilities. Wood frame (sometimes covered in metal siding) is the dominate construction material, with the metal Livestock Exhibition Building and the tile Draft Horse Barn (1917) being the most significant exceptions. It must be noted, however, that until recently there were four structural clay tile buildings at the fairgrounds. The Draft Horse Barn, Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant (or Rodeo Office) were all built in 1917 by the Fergus County Sales Corporation, while the Sheep Barn was erected ten years later to emulate its stylish predecessors.

With the exception of a series of sheds for racehorses, there were no permanent livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds until 1917. The livestock sales complex built that year by the Fergus County Sales Corporation was comprised of a large, T-shaped Cattle Barn flanked by the Draft Horse Barn to the east and a small Office-Restaurant to the west. All three were built with the same variegated red structural clay tile and were aligned with the same setback. Over the next few decades, the livestock cluster grew to include the Sheep Barn (1927, non-extant), the Swine Barn (c. 1930, non-extant), the 4-H Livestock Building (1930) and several additional horse facilities. The Sheep and Swine Barns were built immediately west of the Cattle Barn, but with a substantial setback. Both mimicked the overall form of the Draft Horse Barn, with two large openings on their gable-end façade, but only the Sheep Barn was built with structural clay tile. The 4-H Livestock Building was constructed immediately across Fairgrounds Drive from the Cattle Barn and Draft Horse Barn. Although a frame structure that was not fully enclosed until c. 1945, this building did follow the overall form and setback of predecessors. Aside from the 1917 Draft Horse Barn, horse-related structures were erected west of the main livestock cluster and closer to the racetrack. In fact, the earliest horse barn (No. 1) is an elongated, shed-roofed structure that runs along

³ The Poultry Building (later known as the Commercial Building) was moved to a new location at the south end of the fairgrounds, while the other buildings were either dismantled or moved offsite.

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the racetrack with a diagonal orientation.⁴ Another horse barn (No. 3) was built in c. 1930, but it runs parallel to the other livestock buildings. Three more horse barns (No. 2, 4 and 5), and the Cooley Riding Arena (1969, non-extant) were added after the period of significance.

In essence, the three buildings erected by the Fergus County Sales Corporation in 1917 set the tone for livestock facilities at the fairgrounds for decades to come. The Sheep Barn (1927, non-extant), Swine Barn (c. 1930, non-extant), 4-H Livestock Building (1930) and Horse Barn Nos. 3 – 5 all were influenced by the original tile livestock buildings. It was not until construction of the Livestock Exhibition Building that the historic scale and arrangement of the livestock cluster was compromised. The subsequent loss of several historic buildings over the past few decades further damaged historic integrity. This includes the removal of the Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant to make way for a southern expansion of the Livestock Exhibition Building in 1995 and the subsequent demolition of the Sheep and Swine Barns due to safety concerns. Even so, the remaining historic livestock buildings exhibit several character-defining features that reveal agricultural influences. The two historic frame horse barns (No. 1 and 3), for instance, exhibit a long row of iconic Dutch stall doors with double Z-bar bracing. Despite its unusual construction material (structural clay tile) and fanciful façade, the nominated Draft Horse Barn also has obvious ties to agricultural design and construction. The sliding wood doors feature double British bracing, a relatively common design for American barn doors. The long row of evenly-spaced, four-light windows on the long side elevations and the metal ventilators at the roofline are other common hallmarks of barn design.

The Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fairgrounds

One of three structural clay tile buildings constructed by the Fergus County Sales Corporation in 1917, the Horse Barn is a 56' x 100', gable-roofed, one-story structure that rest on poured concrete foundation walls. Exterior walls are built with variegated red structural clay tile produced locally by the Lewistown Brick & Tile Company. The tile bricks are elongated, measuring 12" x 5" x 8", and have a ribbed surface. Dimensional lumber is used extensively on the interior of the barn for framing, stall construction, bracing and the collar roof structure. The roof rises from 7' along the side elevations to a height of 15' 6" at its ridge, and is currently covered with corrugated sheet metal. Two decorative metal ventilators extend from the ridge of the roof. The symmetrical gable ends of the barn face north and south. The south end serves as the barn's façade, where fairgoers are greeted by a fanciful parapet wall. Here, the gable roof is hidden behind a graceful semicircular parapet that frames a fanlight window. Heavy corner pilasters flank the façade. Another prominent feature on the gable ends of the barn are two, evenly-spaced, sliding wood doors with a decorative "double British brace" pattern. These large doors indicate the interior layout of the barn, which featured double alleys flanked by four rows of stalls. A fifth sliding door on the west elevation provides access to an interior cross alley that terminates at a framed-in office. The interior floor of the barn is dirt, with concrete footing beneath wood posts and concrete pads situated in front of some entrances. The longer east and west elevations of the barn are dominated by a series of evenly-spaced wood windows that provide ample interior light. In general, these are the original four-light, awning-style wood windows (often referred to as "barn sashes"), although some were replaced or moved during the 2012-2013 rehabilitation project. Unless otherwise specified, windows have wood framing and are deeply recessed into the barn's masonry wall face.

Setting and Location

The Draft Horse Barn stands just inside the north entrance of the Fergus County Fairgrounds. It is the first building visitors see when they turn onto Fairgrounds Drive from U.S. Highway 191. Fairgrounds Drive is a semi-circular route that runs behind the grandstands and provides access to most fairground facilities. The Draft Horse Barn stands approximately 80' west of U.S. Highway 191 and 10' north of Fairgrounds Drive. Standing about 60' to the east on an equal setback is the Livestock Exhibition Building. Originally constructed in 1984, this massive (325' x 125') metal building was significantly expanded with a south

⁴ The construction date for Horse Barn No. 1 is unclear, but it is depicted on a 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. It likely predates the Horse Barn and Agriculture Hall (both built in 1917), and is, therefore, the oldest structure at the Fergus County Fairgrounds.

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addition in 1995. This addition led to the demolition of the tile Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant, both of which were built alongside the Draft Horse Barn in 1917. A secondary gravel drive runs between the Draft Horse Barn and the Livestock Exhibition Building. The 4-H Livestock Building (1930; enclosed, 1945) stands across Fairgrounds Drive between the Draft Horse Barn and the Livestock Exhibition Building. A trio of smaller, gable-roofed buildings are found to the west of the 4-H Livestock Building. Still farther west are a series of frame horse barns, two of which (Nos. 1 and 3) date from the historic era.

Grass lawn surrounds the Draft Horse Barn, with slender strips running along the south façade and west elevation. A wider strip runs between the barn and U.S. Highway 191, while a large grass parking area extends to the south. Low-profile earthen ramps rise from grade to meet each of the barn's five entrances. There are two entrances on each of the gable ends (the façade and rear elevation) and a single entrance on the west elevation. These entrances correspond to the interior layout of the Draft Horse Barn, which has two long east-west alleys and a cross alley, but also reveal its historic relationship to the Cattle Barn that stood immediately to the west until 1995. A gradual slope in the building site from east to west is apparent, with the concrete foundation on the west half of the barn being slightly more exposed. Finally, a new concrete fence runs along U. S. Highway 191 at the east edge of the fairgrounds. This fence was designed to replicate an earlier stone fence reputedly built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. At the north entrance to the fairgrounds, this fence turns west to follow Fairgrounds Drive until meeting the southeast corner of the Horse Barn.

South Façade

The symmetrical south façade of the Draft Horse Barn runs 56' along Fairgrounds Drive. It is divided into three bays: a 20' wide central bay crowned by the barn's distinctive semi-circular parapet and two 18' wide flanking bays. Each flanking bay is defined by a heavy corner pilaster and livestock-scale entrance covered by a sliding barn door. Stylistically, the façade successfully evokes an association with early "false front" commercial architecture in the American West, while at the same time nodding to the more formal Neoclassical Revival style that dominated architectural design during the early 20th century. In general, the façade retains much of its original integrity of design, materials and workmanship, although some design features were altered during a 2012-2013 restoration project. Work on the façade during this project included: restoration of the fanlight, replacement of door tracking, replacement or repair of brick coping, masonry repointing and repair where needed, and the rehabilitation of the sliding wood doors.

Aside from its unique construction material, the most impressive feature of the Draft Horse Barn is the semi-circular parapet and fanlight. The parapet is approximately 20' wide and rises about 8' above the main wall face of the façade, effectively hiding the barn's simple gable roof. A course of header brick is used as coping for the rounded parapet. Perfectly centered in the parapet is a decorative fanlight. This feature was removed at some point in the barn's long history, with the opening infilled to accommodate an insensitive rectilinear widow. Restoration of the fanlight, which involved removal of the infill and the installation of a new metal widow unit, occurred in June of 2012 at a cost of over \$8,000. While the current fanlight does not date from the building's construction, it is a faithful reproduction of the original design. Just like the original unit, the restored window has a typical fanlight design with two "rows" of lights. The inner row contains four triangular lights and the outer row has eight trapezoidal lights. A segmental arch lintel supports the fanlight opening. The lintel is constructed with dark red, rough-face brick laid in alternating pattern of single soldier bricks and paired rowlock bricks. Below the parapet, the clay tile wall surface of the central bay is unbroken until it reaches the concrete foundation wall. The only exception is the metal tracking for the large wood barn doors, both of which slide inward to the center of the building. There is only a small space between the individual door tracks, which are attached to a continuous wood plate. Bracket-style metal door stops are found at the concrete foundation.

Identical entrances to the barn's interior alleys are situated in the flanking bays of the façade. At over 8' wide and 7' tall, these entrances are large enough to accommodate livestock of any size, as well as most standard wagons and pickup trucks. The entrance openings are supported by segmental arch lintels similar in design to the fanlight lintel. Here, however, the lintels feature a distinctive keystone (a three-

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holed sailor brick) and a lighter “pink” coloration. Both entrances are protected by original (and fully restored) sliding wood doors. Currently painted white, the doors feature a “double British brace” with diagonal beaded paneling and new metal hardware. Incidentally, the double British brace mimics Britain’s iconic Union Jack, a design motif commonly used in the Neoclassical Revival style because it evokes Roman grating and latticework.⁵ A final defining feature of the façade are the corner pilasters. Built with structural clay tile of varying dimensions, the corner pilasters are over 3’ wide and extend almost 2’ above the main wall face of the façade. A projecting course of stretcher bricks below the top row tiles provides the pilasters with a simple capital. Between the parapet and the corner pilasters, the main wall face of the façade is crowned with a protruding course of stretcher brick coping.

Rear (North) Elevation

The symmetrical rear elevation of the Draft Horse Barn lacks the “false front” parapet, presenting only a wide gable end wall with two windows and two entrances. The rake of the wooden gable roof extends slightly over wall face. It is augmented by a wide wood frieze board, which continues around the corners of the barn to the side elevations.

The window openings are centered in the gable end and set apart by about four feet. The openings are supported by segmental arch lintels constructed with soldier and rowlock brick. Each opening contains its original four-light, awning-style wood window sash. The entrances correspond to those found on the façade and are linked by parallel interior alleys. In design, they are quite similar to their southern counterparts. Each entrance is covered by a large wood sliding door with double British bracing. On this elevation, however, the doors feature vertical (not diagonal) interior paneling and the west door is a replacement unit. Just like on the façade, these doors slide inward along a new metal tracking system.

Side Elevations

Both side elevations of the Draft Horse Barn are protected by overhanging eaves with partially exposed rafter tails. There are no soffits, just a simple wood fascia board and (as mentioned above) a wide wood frieze board beneath the roof structure. Visually, the frieze board acts as a continuous lintel for the many windows that puncture the side elevations. With only one exception, these windows openings are 1’ 8” x wide and 2’ 4” inches tall, with their head located directly under the frieze board. Unless otherwise specified each opening holds a typical four-light, awning style wood windows that is deeply recessed in the wall face. The exception is found in the central section of the east elevation, where two elongated, four-over-four light, double-hung wood windows light the interior office.

In general, the 100’-long side elevations can be divided into three sections: a central section that corresponds to a wide interior cross-alley and two flanking sections characterized by long rows of windows. On the west elevation, the central section is dominated by a large entrance that is similar in design to those found on the façade and rear elevation. This entrance indicates a strong historic link to the Cattle Barn, a second tile building constructed in 1917 that has since been demolished. On the east elevation, the central section contains two elongated four-over-four light windows that provide light to the interior office at the end of the cross alley. On each side elevation, the south flanking section is about 12’ wider than the north flanking section. The corner pilasters adorning the façade serve as a southern terminus for the side elevations. At each of these junctions, the eave is fitted around the pilaster.

The west elevation is arranged around a wide entrance that is offset about 12’ to the north. This entrance, and the barn door that covers it, are almost identical to the entrances found on the gable ends. The main difference is that it is significantly (about two feet) wider than its counterparts on the gable ends. A second difference is that the sliding wood door here is centered on its new tracking system, which allows it to slide in either direction. In design, the barn door on this elevation is similar to its counterparts on the façade. Like those doors, the west door is original to the building and features a double British brace with diagonal beaded paneling. Moving south of the entrance, there is a series of ten typical windows. These

⁵ Loth, Carl. “Classical Comments: Roman Lattice,” Posted to *The Classicist Blog* by the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art on December 1, 2010. Accessed online at <http://blog.classicist.org/?p=1506>.

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are arranged in sets of two, with the center of each window situated about 4' from its companion and about 6' from the neighboring set. The north section of this elevation contains four evenly-spaced windows. From their center line, these windows are set apart by about eight feet.

Sixteen windows perforate the east elevation. Much like the windows on the south end of west elevation, these windows are arranged in sets of two. From their center line, each window is situated 4' from its companion and about 8' from the neighboring set. The only exception is at the central section of the elevation, which corresponds with an office at the end of the barn's interior cross-alley. Here, the paired windows are four-over-four double hung wood units.

The 30 window openings on the side elevations present a combination of original units, moved units and new replacement units. Fifteen of the window openings hold their original wood sashes. These included the four openings on the north end of the west elevation and the following windows on the east elevation (moving north from the façade): 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 & 10 (office windows), 12, 14, 15 and 16. Unfortunately, ten windows (five on each elevation) were missing at the onset of the 2012-2013 renovation project. It was decided to move the five remaining sashes on the west elevation to the east elevation. As such, openings 3, 5, 6, 11 and 13 on the east elevation hold original wood units moved from the west side of the building. This action left all ten windows openings on the south end of the west elevation in need of replacement sashes. In sum, half of the windows on the side elevations are original sashes in their original openings, five are original sashes in a new location, and ten are new replacement units.

Interior

The distinctive structural clay tile used on the exterior walls on the Draft Horse Barn is largely exposed on its interior. Outside of limited wood bracing and paneling installed during the 2012-2013 renovation project, there is no attempt to insulate the building or dress the interior walls. The overall floorplan includes four 9' wide rows of stalls arranged along parallel 9' wide alleys. A 12' 8" wide cross alley transects the interior, with its center about 57' from the south façade of the building. As such, the cross alley divides the interior into two sections: a longer (about 50' wide) south section and a shorter (about 36' wide) north section. The parallel alleys terminated in large-scale entrances at the north and south gable ends of the barn. The cross alley, in contrast, is accessed through a single large-scale entrance on the west elevation. A 9' x 16' framed-in office stands at the east end of the cross alley.

In general, the stall rows conform to the barn's gable roof structure. The roof, which rises from 7' at the wall plate to 15' 6" at the ridge line, is supported by two purlins on each slope. The interior (or upper) purlins are set about 18' apart and are supported by nine, evenly-spaced wood king posts set in concrete footings. Collar beams support the rafter structure between the interior purlins. Exterior (or lower) purlins are set about 10' outside their interior counterparts. These are supported by closely-spaced posts with various bracing to the north of the cross alley, and more typical king posts to the south. Overall, the roof structure creates a soaring central span reminiscent of a clerestory or monitor. The central stall rows run back-to-back under this 18' wide span, with four stalls per row to the south of the cross alley and three stalls per row to the north. There are no permanent wood stalls at either end of the central rows, but temporary stalls built with metal panels currently stand at the north end. The east and west stall rows run between the side walls of the barn and the exterior purlins. In the east row, there are four stalls to north of the framed-in office and four stalls to the south. The west row has a similar arrangement with four stalls to the north of the cross alley and five stalls to the south. Currently a fresh coat of white paint brightens the lower level of the barn, while the roof structure remains unpainted.

Most stalls are between 8' to 12' wide with 6' tall wood plank walls reinforced by various arrangements of wood bracing. Hinged metal panels close the exterior end of most stalls, although there are a few examples of wood picket gates and fencing. These are found on the north end of each exterior row of stalls, and may be original to the building. The wood plank walls of the framed-in office extend from a concrete footing up to the roof on the its north, south and west elevations. A paneled wood door with historic hardware is situated in the south side of the west elevation. Directly to the north hangs a hand-

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painted sign that reads "DRAFT HORSES," alongside a charming depiction of a draft horse. The sign likely dates from c. 1981, when the barn was converted to once again serve draft horses (as opposed to saddle horses).

Integrity and Preservation

Overall, the Draft Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fairgrounds easily retains sufficient integrity to convey its stated architectural and associational significance. Since its construction in 1917, the most significant alterations were the removal of the distinctive fanlight window on the façade, the replacement of the original roof (1948) and the re-arrangement of the interior stalls on at least two occasions (1962 and 1981). Other changes date from a 2012-2013 rehabilitation project that largely restored the building to its original appearance, while also ensuring that it meets current safety codes. Significant components of the rehabilitation project included: masonry restoration and stabilization, restoration of the fanlight window on the façade, rehabilitation of four barn doors, replacement of one barn door, and the rehabilitation or replacement of original wood windows. In all phases, this project was carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This team included Ken Sievert, a preservation architect from Great Falls, and Robert Valach, a local mason and grandson of one of barn's original builders.

More specifically, the Draft Horse Barn retains each component of physical integrity (location, setting, design, materials and workmanship). The building stands at its original location and retains its original overall design and dimensions. The setting is somewhat compromised by the recent (c. 1995) demolition of its companion tile buildings (the Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant) and the subsequent construction the Livestock Exhibition Building, a massive metal structure that does not conform to the scale and design of the other livestock buildings at the fairgrounds. Also impacting the integrity of setting is a new concrete fence abutting the southeast corner of the building. That said, the building is neighbored by a cluster of related buildings that continue to be used as exhibition space during the annual Central Montana Fair. The building also retains much of its original materials and workmanship. This includes distinctive structural clay tile from the Lewistown Brick & Tile Company used for the exterior walls, much of the building's original carpentry work, the original metal ventilators, and a majority of the original windows. Those elements that were replaced (including the fanlight, a handful of windows, some brick trim, and one sliding barn door) are faithful reproductions of the original design. Whenever possible, the team also tried to retain or replicate historic materials and workmanship as they repaired the historic fabric of the building and repointed the masonry. The need to stabilize the end walls and interior framing also resulted in minor "additive" alterations. These include a new concrete "grade beam" and the installation of new wood and metal bracing just inside the north and south elevations.

In sum, the well preserved physical integrity of the Draft Horse Barn evokes a powerful sense of its historical and architectural significance. With its Neoclassical façade, oversized entrances, rooftop ventilators, and distinctive clay tile construction, the barn is clearly understood as an "agricultural pavilion" or "specialty barn" associated with the local livestock industry and annual county fair. As such, the building also possesses the more abstract components of historic integrity: feeling and association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
AGRICULTURE
COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1917 – 1967

Significant Dates

1917
1949

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Link & Haire (architect)
John Plank (builder – carpenter / contractor)
John Valach (builder - mason)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Draft Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fairgrounds is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the areas of agriculture, commerce, and entertainment/recreation. As one of three buildings constructed by the Fergus County Sales Corporation in 1917 for use as a year-round auction yard and fair-time exhibition hall, it is importantly associated with the development of the livestock industry in Central Montana. Furthermore, the barn is also significant for its association with the Fergus County Fair, one of Montana's earliest and most significant county fairs. Established in 1893, the fair was known as the Central Montana Fair by the early 1920s. The building is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a lovely example of a small-scale exhibition pavilion built with locally-produced structural clay tile. The period of significance begins in 1917, the date of the building's construction, and ends in 1967. The arbitrary "fifty-years from the present" was selected because the Draft Horse Barn continually served as a livestock exhibition hall during the Fergus County Fair (or Central Montana Fair) from its construction in 1917 through c. 2009. The barn has since been completely restored by a local preservation advocacy group and was reopened for public use in 2013.

Situated in the geographic center of Montana, Fergus County was created in 1885 with Lewistown as its county seat. The idea for an annual county fair was launched six years later with incorporation of the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral, and Stock Association. The first Fergus County Fair was held in 1893 and for the next 23 years it remained a private enterprise. Early development of the fairgrounds centered on the racetrack, as indicated by the construction a large grandstands in 1910. When Fergus County agreed to take over ownership of the fairgrounds in late 1916, they found an ambitious partner in the newly-formed Fergus County Sales Corporation. This organization hoped to make Lewistown the leading cattle market in Montana, and pledged to erect a series of stock barns at the north end of the fairgrounds for use as a year-round livestock auction. During the fair, the barns would be available for livestock exhibits. By the date of their first sale in July of 1917, the Fergus County Sales Corporation had erected three tile buildings at the fairgrounds: a T-shaped Cattle Barn, a rectilinear Draft Horse Barn, and a small Office-Restaurant. Fergus County also sponsored a major improvement that year with the erection of an impressive Agriculture Hall near the grandstands.

The Fergus County Fair experienced occasional setbacks due to war and economic depression, but endured as a significant local event offering a variety of entertainment and exhibition opportunities. Like the fair itself, the fairgrounds continued to evolve. Buildings were continually added and subtracted from the landscape, with many modifications occurring after the period of historic significance (post-1967). Recent additions to the fairgrounds include the Trade Center (1981), the Livestock Exhibition Building (1984, addition 1995) and new grandstands (1992). The construction and expansion of these structures led to the demolition of earlier buildings, most significantly the Cattle Barn (1917), the small Office-Restaurant (1917) and the historic grandstands (1910). Other historic buildings demolished over last decade include the Sheep Barn and Swine Barn.⁶ As such, there are only a few buildings on the fairgrounds that can successfully convey the historical significance of the Fergus County Fair. Of those buildings, it is the Draft Horse Barn that best speaks to the centrality of livestock to the experience of historic fairgoers and exhibitors. The barn's use as part of a livestock auction business, which operated sporadically under various management until 1949, and its architectural significance further solidify its individual eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

⁶ The Fergus County Fairgrounds is not eligible for the National Register as a historic district due to a lack of historic integrity. Furthermore, a dearth of qualifying individual resources makes the fairgrounds a poor candidate for Multiple Property Documentation. Outside of the Draft Horse Barn, the only other significant historic buildings are Agriculture Hall and the 4-H Livestock Building. Both have significant integrity issues, but are still worthy of individual assessment for National Register eligibility.

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In sum, the Draft Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fairgrounds stands as a wonderful, and unique, example of a “specialized barn” in Central Montana. “Once the center of life for entire communities,” write the authors of *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*, “these barns are still vital to the continued marketing and sale of livestock and the celebration of all things agricultural.”⁷

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

CRITERION A (Entertainment/Recreation, Agriculture & Commerce)

THE FERGUS COUNTY FAIR

Fergus County, Montana was formed in 1885 with Lewistown as its county seat.⁸ Beginning in 1893, residents of Central Montana could look forward to the excitement of the Fergus County Fair (almost every year. While the fair sometimes fell victim to bad weather, lack of funding or wartime preoccupation, its status as one of the region’s most important cultural events is undeniable. The fair offered entertainment—horse racing and rodeos, carnival rides and concerts—as well as stiff competition in the agricultural and domestic arts between exhibitors. It also served an important social function by bringing together the entire community. In this regard, the fair provided an opportunity to forge business deals, catch up with friends and family, and even spark romance. For the purposes of simplicity, the history of the Fergus County Fair can be broken down into two periods. The first period (1893 - 1916) is defined by the management of a private organization, the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association. In 1917, Fergus County took over management of the fair, marking the beginning of the second period. Today, the fair is still managed by Fergus County, although it has been called the Central Montana Fair since the early 1920s.

The Rise of Fairs and Horse Racing in Montana

The push for a fair in Fergus County was part of a diffusion of such events into the stock growing districts of central and eastern Montana during the early 1890s. This included the establishment of fairs at Miles City (1890), Glendive (1891), Billings (1892) and Lewistown (1893). Montana’s first fair (known as the First Territorial Fair) was held in October of 1868 at Madam Coady’s Two Mile House, a “favorite resort for pleasure seekers,” located near the mining camp of Helena. Two years later, the Montana Agricultural & Mineral Association purchased a site just north of Helena for development of a fairgrounds. This location hosted privately-sponsored fairs through 1895 and in 1903 was selected as the site for the Montana State Fair.⁹ Helena’s Territorial Fairs quickly spread to other early agricultural centers, with the Eastern Montana Agricultural, Mineral and Mechanical Association holding a fair at Gallatin City (near present-day Bozeman) in 1872 and Missoula hosting its first fair in 1874. These early fairs established a model that would spread across Montana over the next few decades. Basically, each local fair organization used horse racing—a sport popular among both the elite and working classes—to finance its primary goal: the promotion of local agricultural and industrial interests. In 1876, for instance, one astute reporter offered this commentary on the fair in Missoula:

The trails of speed occupied an undue prominence, both in the programme and upon the grounds, for a purely agricultural and mechanical association; but it was no worse in this respect than most others of its kind, and it was asserted, and I presume it to be true—however humiliating—that if racing were left out, the fair would not be self-supporting.¹⁰

⁷ Jiusto, Chere and Christine Brown. *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*, Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2001, 13.

⁸ For an overview of Fergus County History, See Additional Documentation.

⁹ Baulmer, Ellen. “Montana State Fairgrounds Racetrack,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2006.

¹⁰ “The Missoula Fair,” *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, 5 October 1876.

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While the residents of Montana's central and eastern hinterlands might have enjoyed a good fair during the Territorial Era (1865-1888), there were simply too few of them to support such a gathering. By the 1880s, however, this was beginning to change due to a several interrelated factors. Completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 and the Great Northern Railroad in 1893 opened the area to settlement, but so did the culmination of Indian Removal—perhaps the most tragic chapter in Montana's history. A final significant factor was the severe winter of 1886-1887, which had a devastating impact on the open range livestock industry. Following that disaster, ranchers were more likely to consolidate their herds and settle permanently on Montana's prairies and grasslands. The result was a slow and steady climb in population seen most readily in Custer County. Centered on Miles City and nearby Fort Keogh, Custer County's population rose from just 38 in 1870 to 5,308 by 1890. Finally, it seemed, the population centers of eastern and central Montana were ready to establish their own county fairs.

Due to the influence of Fort Keogh, a U.S. Army fort established in 1876, and the Northern Pacific Railroad, Custer County quickly developed as a livestock and horse breeding center in the 1880s. In an effort to capitalize on their favorable location, local businessmen organized the Custer County Horse Sales and Fair Association in 1890.¹¹ Centered in the railroad town of Glendive, the Dawson County Horse Fair and Sales Association was formed the very next year. Eastern Montana's first fair organizations were quick to join the "Montana Circuit." By 1891, this statewide horse racing circuit offered \$125,000 in purses and stakes at events in Glendive, Miles City, Deer Lodge, Anaconda, Missoula, Butte, Great Falls and Helena.¹² While still lacking a railroad connection, the leading citizens of Fergus County in Central Montana were eager to hold their own annual county fair. However, the Fergus County fair association, organized in 1891, would attempt to bridge the gap between the "agricultural and mechanical" fairs in Missoula, the Gallatin Valley and Helena, and the fairs at Miles City and Glendive, which focused almost exclusively on livestock sales and horse racing. As such, the organization settled on an inclusive name that featured the region's three main interests: farming, mining and ranching. Even so, the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association was eager to take its rightful place on the lucrative Montana Circuit. In July of 1891, the *Fergus County Argus* reported:

Glendive has just had its first race meeting and the result, financially and otherwise, is very gratifying to the people of that place. There is no reason why Lewistown, situated in the center of a great horse-raising region should be behind such towns as Miles City and Glendive. All we need is a few men of public spirit and enterprise to put their shoulders to the wheel.¹³

When Fergus County did finally host its first fair in 1893, horse racing remained an integral component. The same could be said for Yellowstone County, which held its inaugural fair at Billings the previous year. Advertising for this event highlighted the keen competition among exhibitors, who were vying for \$4,000 in premium money, but also stated, "the race programme an important feature each day."¹⁴ In short, there could be no fair without horse racing in early Montana.

"A Fair! A Fair!" for Fergus County

On May 27, 1891 articles of incorporation were filed for the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association. In addition to information on the organization's financial framework, the document stated:

The objects for which the corporation is founded are as follows: To purchase and acquire lands in the County of Fergus, State of Montana, and improve the same for the purpose of holding exhibitions and fairs to promote the agricultural, mineral, stock, mechanical and industrial interests of said County of

¹¹ "Sunday Salad: The Custer County Horse Sales and Fair Association is an Accomplished Fact," *Daily Yellowstone Journal*, 16 February 1890.

¹² "The Montana Circuit," *Great Falls Tribune*, 4 April 1891.

¹³ "The Fair Association," *Fergus County Argus*, 2 July 1891.

¹⁴ Advertisement. "First Annual Exhibition of the Yellowstone Fair Association," *Red Lodge Picket*, 24 September 1892.

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Fergus, to improve the breed of horses by promoting the interests of...American racing and trotting...., and for such other purposes as may be necessary to advance said interests.¹⁵

Locally, the new "Fair Association" was greeted with enthusiasm. In just a matter months, the organizers were able to raise the necessary \$4,000 in stock and secure land for the development of a fairgrounds. The 53-acre site, located 1½ miles north of Lewistown, was provided by D. M. Crowley, by far the association's single largest stockholder. A prominent local rancher and horse breeder, Crowley's investments in the Fergus County Fair were one part public-spiritedness and one part financial shrewdness, with his horses dominating the racecourse during early fairs.¹⁶ While the association made some progress on improving the fairgrounds during their first year—including the construction of a mile-long, kite-shaped track—it soon became evident there was not sufficient time or funding to hold a fair in 1891.¹⁷ Even so, the *Fergus County Argus* remained confident the fair was destined for success. "It is something in which the people of Lewistown and the whole county should take interest," insisted the paper in July of 1891:

A fair will do much toward developing the resources of our county and advancing our stock interests. While it may be too late to accomplish anything in the way of an exhibition this year, the organization could be perfected on a sound financial basis, and important work done on the grounds, so that there will be ample time for a good exhibition and race meeting the next year.¹⁸

Unfortunately, financial difficulties continued to plague the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association. In 1892, the association was forced to double their capital stock from \$5,000 to \$10,000, but it was still not enough.¹⁹ There was no county fair in 1892 and prospects looked increasingly bleak as a devastating financial panic crept steadily across the nation in early 1893. By this time, however, the local citizenry was growing impatient. When, for the third consecutive year, the Fair Association announced there would be no fair, "on account of the stringency in money matters," local residents raised over \$1,000 in a matter of hours. The happy news was posted in the *Fergus County Argus* on July 26, 1893. "A Fair! A Fair!" ran the headline, under which the paper offered the following preliminary plans:

The officers of the association are elated and promise to leave no stone unturned to make the fair an unqualified success. The fair will be held on the 26th, 27th and 28th of September. Work will be begun at once in erecting a grand stand and other necessary buildings. The fancy work, floral and horticultural exhibits will be displayed in Culver's hall. The live stock and other exhibits will be on the fair grounds, where the races will be held. On the last night of the fair a grand ball will be given.²⁰

Scarcity of money continued to threaten the fair's success over the following weeks, but the *Argus* remained optimistic. "While it is not expected that our first exhibition will be equal to the Chicago show [the World's Columbian Exhibition]," posited the editor, "we believe an entertaining program will be provided." The horse racing promised to be exciting, while the other exhibits would be, "all the citizens of the county see fit to make them."²¹ Ultimately the first annual Fergus County Fair was deemed a success with exhibits in the following classes: needlework and fancy work, culinary, art, floral, agriculture,

¹⁵ Fergus County. "Articles of Incorporation, Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association," May 27, 1891.

¹⁶ "Fergus County Fair Organization," *Fergus County Argus*, 4 May 1891; "The Fair," *Fergus County Argus*, 5 October 1893.

¹⁷ "Fergus County Fair Association," *Fergus County Argus*, 4 May 1891; "The Fair Association," *Fergus County Argus*, 16 July 1891.

¹⁸ "The Fair Association," *Fergus County Argus*, 2 July 1891.

¹⁹ "Notice to Stockholders," *Fergus County Argus*, April 7, 1892.

²⁰ "A Fair! A Fair!" *Fergus County Argus*, 27 July 1893.

²¹ "The Fair," *Fergus County Argus*, 14 September 1893.

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taxidermy, lumber, mineral and livestock. Not surprisingly, the horse racing and a baby show proved most popular.²²

The Fergus County Fair continued to grow over the next few years, despite a few brushes with bad weather. Fairs were held annually at Lewistown through 1901, when the Fair Association was unable secure enough attractions or exhibitors to justify the expense. Despite this setback, the Fergus County Fair bounced back in 1902 with a successful event that featured horse racing (of course), a rock drilling contest, an art display by the Lewistown Commercial Co., a mechanized irrigation plant, a bronc riding contest and balloon ascensions by famous aeronaut, Professor Baldwin.²³ According the *Fort Benton River Press*, the 1905 Fergus County Fair was the most successful yet:

The Fergus County Fair closed today with the largest attendance present ever known upon a similar occasion in this county. The weather was splendid, the program was attractive, and the people turned out by the thousands to take advantage of it. There were hundreds of visitors in from the country and the residents of the city were almost all on hand.²⁴

The organizational structure of fairs in Montana also evolved during the period, with the first official State Fair held at Helena, the capital city, in 1903. Three years later, the Montana Fair and Racing Circuit was formed to avoid conflict schedules and attractions. In 1906, the organization included eleven members, with fairs scheduled in Butte, Anaconda, Livingston, Big Timber, Billings, Lewistown, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell and Missoula.²⁵ The new organizational structure proved fortuitous for Fergus County, with successful fairs in 1906 and 1907, but even the Montana Fair and Racing Circuit could not account for the weather. Disastrous storms would plague Fergus County over the next few years, cancelling at least portions of the fair in 1908 and 1909.²⁶

Unfortunately, it was during this period that the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association made its greatest investment in the Fergus County Fairgrounds. While the fair proved relatively successful during its first two decades, the Fair Association was reticent to make improvements to the grounds with most structures being temporary. In 1902, for instance, the only structures mentioned were the original grandstand, the exhibit hall, and a pavilion erected by the Bank of Fergus. With the arrival the railroads and the onset of the homestead boom, however, the association was feeling more confident in 1910. "Undaunted by the disastrous experience of the last two years," wrote the *Fergus County Argus* in August of that year, "the directors of the fair association are already at work arranging for the fair this fall and propose to make it the biggest and best one ever held in this part of the state."²⁷ To that end, the association commissioned the erection of a "handsome and commodious" grandstand. Designed by local architect George Eastman, the grandstand was built for about \$5,000 by general contractor, Jeff Tubbs. At 150' long and 50' wide, the new grandstand included fifteen tiers of seats and five semi-circular boxes, all of which provided a "perfect view of the race course" for an estimated 1,500 individuals.²⁸ Other improvements undertaken that year were more stables for the race horses, a new well, and a big tent to house the livestock department. The money and effort expended in advance of the 1910 Fergus County Fair practically assured it would be "the greatest event in [the] History of Central Montana."²⁹ But, once again, the weather failed to cooperate. Scheduled to begin on Tuesday, September 6th, the Fair

²² "A Successful Meeting," and "The Fair," *Fergus County Argus*, 5 October 1893.

²³ "Is Called Off," *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 September 1901; "The Fair is in Progress," *Fergus County Argus*, 10 September 1902.

²⁴ "[Fergus County Fair]," *Fort Benton River Press*, 27 September 1905.

²⁵ "Fergus Fair Next August," *Fergus County Argus*, 9 January 1906.

²⁶ "County Fair Called Off," *Roundup Record*, 2 October 1908; "Storm Again Wrecks Fair," *Fergus County Democrat*, 7 September 1909.

²⁷ "A New Grandstand for Fair Grounds," *Fergus County Argus*, August 1910.

²⁸ "Ready for Big County Fair," *Fergus County Argus*, 2 September 1910.

²⁹ "County Fair Opens Today," *Fergus County Democrat*, 6 September 1910.

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Association first attempted to postpone the fair until the following week. But, as reported by the *Fergus County Democrat*:

...the heavy snow and rain of Sunday put the final 'kibosh' on that plan, and it was decided that it would be folly to further tempt the evident wrath of J. Pluvius, especially as there are a large number of ranchers who want clear weather so that they may complete their threshing.³⁰

The cancellation of the fair in 1910 was disastrous for the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association and the next two fairs proved only marginally better. In 1911, the fair barely broke even, while in 1912 it was bested by a nearby rival in Harlowton. At least, boasted the *Harlowton News*, their local fair, "not only paid all debts but produced a surplus."³¹ The failures of 1910, 1911, and 1912, meant the Fair Association was unable to pay off its recent improvement program. By early 1913, the association was carrying an estimated debt of \$17,000 spread between several local banks and the Montana Lumber Company. Then, in February 1913, the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association reorganized, putting up the fairgrounds as collateral for their debts. As summed up by the *Fergus County Democrat*, "This does not mean there may not be fairs or race meets in the future held at the fair grounds, but they will not be under the auspices of the association."³² Fortunately, a new (and much more stable) investor would soon emerge to revive the Fergus County Fair.

The County Takes Over

That the Fergus County Fair languished during the height of Central Montana's homestead boom defies logic, but a combination of poor financial management and disastrous weather eventually proved ruinous for the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association. Before long, however, a plan was hatched to transfer ownership of the fairgrounds to Fergus County. In November of 1915, the stockholders of the former Fair Association drafted a resolution to start the process and the County Commissioners signed off on the plan almost a year later. By December of 1916, the *Fergus County Democrat* could happily report that a fair was assured for the following year. The new County Fair Board was made up of five county residents, with the first members being C. L. Wentworth (who had connections to the State Fair in Helena), Amos Snyder, Thomas Nicholson, Ben Hill and Oden Romanstadt. They were ably assisted by Louis D. Blodgett, then Secretary of the Lewistown Chamber of Commerce. In contrast to its predecessor, with its heavy focus on horse racing, the County Fair Board was backed primarily by local stockgrowers and farmers. Moreover, the new organization was also beholden to the public, whose tax dollars would directly fund the fair. Of course, Fergus County had every reason for optimism in 1916. Central Montana was experiencing an unprecedented period of agricultural and commercial development, and area residents were excited to exhibit the fruits of their labor. Fergus County could also take comfort in the success of Gallatin County, who had recently purchased the fairgrounds at Bozeman from a private association. Requiring just a one mill tax increase from the public, the Gallatin County Fair quickly became one of the region's "leading institutions."³³

One of the first actions of the newly-formed Fergus County Fair Board was to improve the fairgrounds. At a meeting held in January of 1917, the Fair Board considered the construction of several new buildings, including an agriculture hall, a machinery hall, an open grandstand and barns for sheep, swine and poultry. Conspicuously missing from this list were barns for cattle and horses—arguably the county's most important livestock resources. As it turned out, the County was depending on a private "stock sales corporation," to erect these structures. Hints of such an organization first appeared in the *Fergus County Argus* in December of 1916 and by the following month news of the Fergus County Sales Corporation

³⁰ "Fair is Called Off," *Fergus County Democrat*, 13 September, 1910.

³¹ "[Fergus County Fair]," *Judith Gap Journal*, 1 September 1911; "[Fergus County Fair]," *Harlowton News*, 20 September 1912.

³² "Fair Association Finances its Debt," *Fergus County Democrat*, 25 February 1913.

³³ "Proposition as to Fairgrounds" *Fergus County Democrat*, 18 November 1915; "Commissioners Proceedings," *Fergus County Democrat*, 2 November 1916; "Fair is Assured for Fergus," *Fergus County Argus*, 15 December 1916; "Fergus Commission Votes to Hold Fair," *Cut Bank Pioneer Press*, 20 October 1916.

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was spreading across Montana. The new sales corporation did indeed erect three fine structural clay tile buildings on the fairgrounds (a cattle barn, a horse barn and a small office), holding their first sale on July 17, 1917. [See Below]. For their part, the Fergus County Fair Board settled on construction of a fine new Agriculture Hall near the south end of the grandstand. Designed by local architect O. F. Wasmansdorff, this \$10,000 building was in place to greet fairgoers when the Fergus County Fair opened in mid-September.³⁴ In addition to Agriculture Hall, the Fair Board also moved forward with beautifying the grounds, painting the older buildings, securing entertainment, and recruiting exhibitors. As explained in the *Argus*, "It will be by an effort on the part of the people only that the fair will be a success, for while everyone will want to go to it, there must be some who will help to get it ready and worthwhile for others to look at."³⁵

Despite the best efforts of the Fair Board and its army of volunteers, the Fergus County Fair again faced bad weather in 1917. Originally slated for September 11th through the 14th, a severe storm pushed the fair back one day and ruined the final day entirely. Even so, the fair was still considered a success. An estimated 4,000 individuals visited the fair on its best day and, despite the storms, the Fair Board nearly broke even financially. More importantly, the agricultural and livestock displays were considered especially fine, and the excellent attendance proved the Fergus County Fair could be a "tremendous success" in the future with cooperative weather.³⁶ Unfortunately war and drought would disrupt the fair over the next few years. In 1918, with World War I in full swing, the Fair Board decided to throw an old-fashion, "no frills" fair devoted entirely to livestock and agriculture. Finally blessed with good weather, the 1918 fair proved successful, drawing an estimated 5,000 attendees. The following year, however, Fergus County faced a third consecutive crop failure and the fair was eventually called off.³⁷ As such, it was not until the early 1920s that the Fergus County Fair experienced a period of sustained growth and relative stability. Around this time, the fair also took on a new name to better reflect its regional significance: the Central Montana Fair.

Into the Modern Era: The Central Montana Fair in the 1920s

Fairs in Montana experienced unprecedented success in the 1920s. Only nine fairs were held statewide at the height of the drought in 1919, but that number jumped to fourteen in 1920 and nearly 20 by 1923. Eventually, Montana's fairs fell into a hierarchy based on size and significance. Held each year in Helena, the Montana State Fair reigned supreme. It was followed in significance by a handful of regional "state fairs," which in the 1920s included: the Western Montana Fair at Missoula, the Midland Empire Fair at Billings, the Intermountain Fair at Bozeman, the Eastern Montana Fair at Glendive (later Miles City), the Northern Montana Fair at Great Falls, and, of course, the Central Montana Fair at Lewistown. Next came the county fairs, which were numerous but sporadic. As seen with the Fergus County Fair in the early 1900s, the fortunes of a county fair fluctuated widely based on funding, management, weather, harvest conditions, and community will. At the bottom of the hierarchy were a series of community fairs, which were also quite numerous. In 1923, for instance, the *Great Falls Tribune* listed at least 23 community fairs scheduled across Montana.³⁸ The proliferation of fairs in Montana and neighboring states led to the creation of Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs (RMAF) in 1926. The Central Montana Fair figured prominently the founding of this organization, with Lewistown hosting its first meeting and Larry H. Fitton,

³⁴ "Fair is Assured for Fergus," *Fergus County Argus*, 15 December 1916; "Wentworth Head of Fair Board," *Fergus County Argus*, 12 January 1917; [Call for Bids, Agriculture Hall], *Fergus County Argus*, 25 May 1917; [Contract Let to B. Stanton for Agriculture Hall], *Fergus County Argus*, 22 June 1917; "Up and Down the State," *Butte Daily Post*, 30 June 1917.

³⁵ "Fair is Assured for Fergus," *Fergus County Argus*, 15 December 1916.

³⁶ "Rain Delays Opening Fergus County Fair," *Great Falls Tribune*, 13 September 1917; "Attendance is Large at Fergus County Fair," *Great Falls Tribune*, 15 September 1917; "Rail Closes Fair, Two Days are Lost," *Great Falls Tribune*, 16 September 1917; "Fergus County Fair Had Big Attendance," 3 October 1917.

³⁷ "No Frills for Fergus Fair," *Great Falls Tribune*, 17 August 1918; "Great Crowds Help Close Fergus Fair," *Great Falls Tribune*, 20 September 1918; "Fergus County Fair to be Held...," *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 June 1920.

³⁸ "Fourteen County Fairs Scheduled for Current Year," *Great Falls Tribune*, 1 July 1920; "State and County Fairs Due in '23," *Great Falls Tribune*, 3 September 1923.

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Fergus County Treasurer, serving as its first president. By 1930, the RMAF represented approximately 30 Montana fairs and ten others located Idaho, Wyoming and Utah.³⁹

The growth of the Central Montana Fair during this period was impressive. Held in late September, the 1921 Central Montana Fair shattered previous attendance records—even besting that year’s State Fair in Helena—with an estimated 8,000 visitors on a single day. Out-of-town fairgoers traveled to Lewistown by train, with the railroads offering a reduced rate, or by the increasingly popular automobile. After 1920, motorists could drive the newly-paved stretch of highway running between Lewistown and the fairgrounds.⁴⁰ Fairgoers were treated to a wide range of exhibits and entertainments during these years. According to an advertisement for the 1923 Fair, fairgoers could expect to see “the county’s products cleverly arranged and displayed in the finest agricultural, livestock and poultry show in Montana,” as well club work and school exhibits by local youth and an “especially fine and interesting,” women’s department. The local exhibits were augmented by entertainment programming, which in 1923 included: the Gates Flying Circus (featuring “every stunt known to aeronautics”), fireworks, auto polo matches, daily concerts from the Elks band, horseshoeing and bucking contests, Indian dancing, and “fancy and difficult trick riding” from eight-year-old Doris Ranger. Finally, the 1923 Fair offered an “exceptionally well balanced track program, including fast harness races, running races, relay, novelty, Indian races and parades, pony, auto and motorcycle races.” While fairgoers focused on the sheer spectacle, participants were locked in stiff competition for \$15,000 in purses and premium money.⁴¹ Also on the line were bragging rights and advertising potential. No one could deny the beauty of a winning needlework project, the speed of a victorious race horse, or the quality of a Grand Champion Herford Bull.

Under the leadership of local stockman Ed Cooper, the Central Montana Fair intensified its focus on purebred livestock in the late 1920s. Cooper’s first attempt at a livestock market in Lewistown (as VP of the Fergus County Sales Corporation) was a failure, but the stock barns and corrals built by that organization in 1917 were still standing at the north end of the fairgrounds. That facility offered a prime opportunity to revive livestock sales in Lewistown without much capital investment. With past failures in mind, Cooper proceed cautiously. The first sale was held in conjunction with the Central Montana Fair of 1927, a scheduling move that assured strong attendance. The group also promised to limit the number of sales and keep the quality of livestock high. Open to all registered cattle, horses, sheep and swine, the first Central Montana Purebred Livestock Sale was a great success. The sale remained a highlight of the fair for the next several years with a spring sale added in 1928.⁴² In conjunction with his focus on livestock, Cooper also promoted youth participation at the Central Montana Fair by expanding the role of 4-H. Founded in the upper Midwest during the early 1900s as a rural youth program, 4-H was formalized with passage of the Smith Lever Act in 1914. This landmark legislation created the Cooperative Extension Service, a public outreach branch of the USDA and the parent organization of 4-H clubs across the nation. In 1927, the Central Montana Fair welcomed an estimated 145 4-H exhibitors and by 1930 that number had more than tripled. That year, over 450 4-H members were hoping to exhibit in the following areas: home economics, sheep, gardens, poultry, dairying, swine, potatoes, corn, baby beef and “specialized classes.”⁴³

³⁹ The Rocky Mountain Fair Association was original called the Northwest Fair Association and included members from Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota. “Fair Directors will Meet Today,” *Lewistown Democrat News*, 1 February 1926; “Arrange Dates for the Fairs in the State,” *Lewistown Democrat News*, 2 February 1926; “Fair Association to Hold Conference in Havre,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 25 October 1930.

⁴⁰ “Fergus Fair Breaks Attendance Records,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 2 October 1921; “Industrial News,” *The Producer News*, 9 July 1920. “Railroads Make Rates for Central Montana Fair,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 26 September 1921.

⁴¹ Advertisement for Central Montana Fair, *Moore Independent*, 27 September 1923.

⁴² “Livestock Sale is Planned for Lewistown Fair,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 21 July 1927; “Fergus Area to Have Sale for Livestock,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 23 February 1928.

⁴³ “145 Fergus County 4-H Club Members Plan Many Exhibits,” 2 September 1927; “450 Members are Enrolled in Club Work,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 40 July 1930.

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Development at the Fergus County Fairgrounds reflected the priorities of the era. A new poultry building was constructed in 1922, followed by a sheep barn (1927), a 4-H exhibit building (c. 1929), a swine barn (c. 1930), a 4-H livestock pavilion (1930), and race horse corrals (1930). The Poultry Building and 4-H Exhibit Building were built near Agriculture Hall, while the remaining buildings were clustered around the cattle and horse barns at the north end of the fairgrounds. Because sheep figured prominently into the Central Montana Purebred Livestock Sale, the Fair Board elected to link the new Sheep Barn to the Cattle and Horse Barn built by the Fergus County Sales Corporation in 1917. Visual continuity was achieved through use of the same construction material, structural clay tile. The Sheep Barn, however, was a simplified version of the earlier structures, lacking the fanciful rounded parapet and fanlight found on their façades. In contrast, the remaining buildings constructed between 1920 and 1930 were typically frame, gable-roofed structures covered in horizontal wood siding. To design and construct their buildings, the Fair Board typically used local architect and builders, although they sometimes turned elsewhere. The swine barn, for instance, was designed by W. S. Devine of Lewistown, while the Sheep Barn was built by Haugen & Brurs, a contracting firm headquartered in nearby Great Falls. Ultimately, the vast improvements at fairgrounds between 1917 and 1930, made the Central Montana Fair “one of the best equipped and most modern in the state.”⁴⁴

The Central Montana Fair in Turbulent Times

The Central Montana Fair came of age in the 1920s and early 1930s, but it could not escape the global upheaval of the next two decades. During this period, the fair was called off at the height of the Great Depression (1933-1935) and again during World War II (1942-1945). As economic conditions worsened in the summer of 1933, Fergus County cancelled the annual fair at Lewistown for the first time in almost two decades. Their reasoning—that struggling rural taxpayers were unwilling to support the fair—was justified when county residents voted to cancel the fair indefinitely later that year. The cancelation of the 1933 fair was a disappointment to exhibitors, but many, especially kids in 4-H and FFA, entered that year’s Northern Montana Fair at Great Falls. Here, as reported by the *Great Falls Tribune*, “Central Montanans prepared for...an attack on awards offered in many classes.” After a three-year hiatus, the Central Montana Fair resumed in 1936, albeit on a smaller scale. That year, the Fair Board offered just \$2,000 in premiums and prizes—a far cry from the \$15,000 promised in 1923.⁴⁵ The remainder of the 1930s were marked by increased activity at the fairgrounds. In 1935, livestock sales were revived at the fairgrounds through the efforts of W. C. McLaughlin. The Lewistown Livestock Commission Co. would operate under various management at the fairgrounds through 1949. Another noteworthy development at the fairgrounds was the establishment of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in 1938. The camp, which housed about 200 CCC enrollees, was built near the northwest end of the racetrack and included over a dozen frame buildings.⁴⁶ The fairgrounds also benefited from another Depression Era “make-work” program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA). During the summer of 1939, for instance, WPA labor was used to put up light posts in the stock yards and make needed repairs to the Cattle and Horse Barns.⁴⁷

The six fairs held between 1936 and 1941 were marked by an evolving program of entertainment. Horse racing remained popular, especially after the opening of pari-mutuel betting in 1928, but there was an increased focus on providing other attractions.⁴⁸ New flood lights were installed at the grandstand area in

⁴⁴ “Want Poultry Display,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 26 September 1922; “Fergus Fair Board Awards 2 Contracts,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 1 July 1927; “Lewistown Fair Group May Visit,” *Havre Daily News*, 5 June 1929; “Extensive Displays for Lewistown Fair by Boys and Girls,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 August 1929; “Members of Baby Beef Club Point Way...,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 31 August 1930; “Lewistown Fairs Date Back to 1891,” *Lewistown Democrat-News*, 4 July 1957.

⁴⁵ “Central Montana Plans Assault of Falls Fair Prizes,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 20 August 1933; “Central Montana Ousted When Voters Buck Plan,” 14 December 1933; “Central Montana Fair,” *Helena Independent Record*, 20 March 1936.

⁴⁶ “Winnett CCC Camp Moves to Lewistown,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 20 March 1938.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 10 March 1939. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁴⁸ “Fergus County to Use Pari-Mutuel System to Boost Fair Racing,” *Helena Independent Record*, 16 August 1928.

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1937, and that year's fair featured a night rodeo. Afternoon entertainment included a band concert, horse racing, a clown act, parachute drops, a balloon ascension, a display by the State Fish & Game Commission and a variety of "high class entertainment and rides," on the Midway. Four years later, the fair secured the "Follies of the Golden West," for its night entertainment. Managed by Williams & Lee, a circus attraction company headquartered in St. Paul, this musical revue featured "gorgeous girls," in a "stupendous parade of magnificent production numbers, catchy new tunes, beguiling dances, fresh, clean jokes, enchanting music, and magical scenery." This display of "color and gaiety" was followed by "the most splendorous program of fireworks displays ever arranged for Central Montana."⁴⁹

While the program continued to evolve, the competition and comradery of the local exhibitors remained the heart of the Central Montana Fair. Competition at the fair was divided into two basic divisions: open and youth. The "open" division was typical open to everyone living Central Montana (including Fergus County and all adjacent counties) and by 1941 included the following classes: Horses, Cattle, Swine, Sheep, Poultry, Agriculture, Horticulture, Vegetables, Floral, Home Economics, Needlework, and Arts. The youth division featured typical schoolwork (penmanship, arts and crafts, science demonstrations, history studies, etc.), work completed in agricultural education programs funded by the Smith-Hughes Act (including the local FFA chapters), and work done through one of Central Montana's numerous 4-H clubs. Youth competed in an astonishing number of classes that included (just to name a few): livestock, livestock judging, range management, conservation, grains, insect activity, tool sharpening, clothing, advanced food preparation, canning, handicrafts, scrapbooking, and room improvement.⁵⁰ In short, there was a place for almost all ages and interests at the Central Montana Fair.

The success of the Central Montana Fair following the Great Depression, however, was short-lived. Even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States was becoming increasingly ensnared in the global conflict of World War II. Fergus County planned for a fair in 1942, but by summer such an event seemed increasingly superfluous. On July 11th, the fair was cancelled indefinitely, with Fair Board Secretary, Hall Cement, explaining:

Cancellation of this year's fair was entirely the result of what the board deemed to be for the best interests of the community and the nation...A great amount of labor is needed in preparing for a fair and the board did not feel justified in competing with farmers for the little potential labor that would be available at fair time.⁵¹

In short, the residents of Fergus County had more important tasks on their agenda: like helping to feed the allied troops. With the fair on hiatus during World War II, the Fair Board took an opportunity to further improve the Fergus County Fairgrounds. By June of 1945, the Fair Board could list the following accomplishments: the planting of 125 trees, 25 lilac bushes, 25 shrubs and five acres of grass lawn; dismantling of the abandoned CCC Camp; removal of several "old barns"; the remodeling and maintenance of all remaining buildings (including the enclosure of the 4-H Livestock Building); improvements to the 4-H Park; and the hiring of a fulltime caretaker.⁵² These wartime improvements ensured that, when the Central Montana Fair was revived in 1946, fairgoers were treated to up-to-date facilities and a well-manicured landscape.

The Postwar Period and the Revival in Horses at the Fair

Following World War II, the Central Montana Fair returned with a renewed focus under the leadership of C. W. Cooley. Owner of Cooley Chevrolet in Lewistown, Cooley began his long service on the Fergus County Fair board in 1942, and would be a fixture at the Central Montana Fair for the next three decades. When the fair resumed in 1946, it followed the same basic pattern established before the war. The fair

⁴⁹ Premium lists for the Central Montana Fair, 1937 and 1941. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Fergus County Cancels Fair," *Great Falls Tribune*, 12 July 1942.

⁵² Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 20 June 1945. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

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typically ran Thursday through Saturday with exhibitor judging in the morning, an all-day carnival on the midway, various entertainment in the afternoon (horse racing, rodeo, free acts), and a colorful musical revue by Williams & Lee or Clarence Smith each evening. However, there were changes on the horizon. Commercial livestock sales ended for good at the fairgrounds in 1949, with the Lewistown Livestock Commission opening its new facility across the highway in 1950. This was a significant loss of income for the Fair Board, but also welcome relief from an increasingly tense landlord-lessee relationship. In event programming, there was an increased emphasis on rodeo and a horse show was added the day before the fair in 1953. These changes were reflected in an expanded name, with Fergus County's annual fair since known as the Central Montana Fair, Rodeo and Horse Show. Naturally, the continued growth and evolution of the fair was accompanied by modifications to the fairgrounds. These included: a new roof on the Draft Horse Barn (1948), removal of the cupola from the Poultry Building (1948), remodeling of the grandstand (1953), and expansion of the 4-H Livestock Building (1954).

The establishment of a horse show at the Central Montana Fair represented a revival in popularity for humankind's favorite workmate. Horsepower drove agricultural production for centuries, but inventions like the internal combustion engine revolutionized farming in the 20th century. Slowly, but surely, tractors replaced horses (and other draft animals) on the farm, finally overtaking them in popularity during World War II. The mechanization of agriculture was apparent in the decline of Montana's horse population, which fell from a peak in 1920 of 668,723 to just 141,092 by 1950.⁵³ Of course, horses remained popular for working livestock, rodeos, racing, and pleasure riding throughout this decline, but these activities required a different type than the draft animals typically associated with farm work. The premium lists of the Central Montana Fair reflect the transition from draft horse to saddle horse in popularity during this period. The 1937 fair featured numerous classes for purebred Percherons, Belgians and Clydesdales, as well as a competition for draft teams, but only a single class for saddle horses. By 1946, however, the ratio of draft horses to saddle horses had reversed, with that year's fair offering classes for Palominos, Quarter Horses, Arabians and Morgans, but only a single class for "non-registered stock horses."⁵⁴

When the Horse Show was established in 1953, it focused on western riding with classes for men, women and children. By 1968, the horse show included 23 classes with over 250 participants, and in 1978 a draft horse show was added to the program. The renewed interest in horses at the Central Montana Fair prompted modification to horse-related facilities on fairgrounds. The most significant change was the construction of a 45,000 square-foot arena—named for Charles W. Cooley—just north of the livestock barns.⁵⁵ The Draft Horse Barn at the northeast corner of fairgrounds also received renewed attention. In 1962, more stalls were added to accommodate the growing number of 4-H horses. Then, in 1981, the Draft Horse Barn came full circle when it was converted to house the fair's growing number of draft horses. At that time, the Central Montana Harness Club undertook a renovation project to double the width of the stalls and give the barn a fresh coat of paint.⁵⁶ Over its long life, the Draft Horse Barn bore witness to the evolution of horse-related activities at the Central Montana Fair. Built by the Fergus County Sales Corporation to house draft horses (both for sale at auction and as fair exhibits), the barn was later converted to accommodate saddle horses, before being returned to its original use in 1981. There was, however, one significant difference. In 1917, draft horses were an essential component of agricultural production, but upon their return to the fair in the late 1970s, they were better described as a cherished novelty. Today, the 1917 structure (and the subject of this National Register nomination) continues to be

⁵³ United States Department of Agriculture. United States Agricultural Censuses, 1920-1950; White, William. "Economic History of Tractors in the United States". EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples. March 26, 2008, accessed online at <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/economic-history-of-tractors-in-the-united-states/>.

⁵⁴ Premium lists for the Central Montana Fair, 1937 and 1946. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁵⁵ "Horse Show Planned July 29th at Lewistown," *Great Falls Tribune*, 6 May 1953; "Two New Classes added to Lewistown Horse Show," *Great Falls Tribune*, 28 June 1969; "Fergus Fair Opening in Lewistown," *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 July 1969; "Draft Horse Show Set," *Great Falls Tribune*, 23 July 1978.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board: 2 June 1962, 11 August 11 1962, 2 March 1981, 8 April 1981 and 22 June 1981. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

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known as the Draft Horse Barn, but only because it was saved from demolition by community activists. Its other tile companions (the Cattle Barn, Sheep Barn, and Office-Restaurant) would not be so fortunate.

Expansion and Modernization in the Late 20th Century

Nineteen sixty-eight was a pivotal year for The Central Montana Fair. For the first time since World War II, the Fair Board elected to drop the professional musical revue as the main evening entertainment at the fair. Instead, the fair would extend to four days with a night show on Wednesday, followed by three days of professional rodeo with go-rounds held on Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday afternoon. A raucous demolition derby sponsored by the local Jaycees would close out the fair on Saturday night. Finally, there was a return of pari-mutuel horse racing after a ten-year hiatus.⁵⁷ The night concerts started off as relatively modest affairs—with a University of Montana theater troop performing in 1968—but soon drew increasingly popular talent, with a particular focus on country-western performers. Just a few of the legends to perform in front of the grandstands during this period include: Kitty Wells (1972), Barbara Mandrell (1977), Don Williams (1979), the Forester Sisters and Patty Loveless (1989), Dan Seals (1990), Holly Dunn (1992), and Tanya Tucker (1992). The emphasis on entertainment provided a much needed boost in popularity for Central Montana Fair, but it also left some of the more traditional exhibitors feeling left behind. Rural residents, in particular, were concerned with the direction of the fair, a sentiment brought to light at a contentious public meeting held in Lewistown on September 15, 1980. Their main concern, it seemed, was that the Fair Board included only one “rural” member and was, therefore, dominated by Lewistown interests. There were a few specific examples of this happening, such as livestock and 4-H events being left off the fair schedule, but most complaints centered on general neglect of rural matters. Livestock producers, for instance, informed the Fair Board that “the livestock entries are about twenty years behind,” without much explanation as to the meaning behind that claim.⁵⁸ Ultimately, this “airing of grievances” led to the creation of an independent Livestock Advisory Board and the eventual construction of a new Livestock Exhibit Building in 1984.

Before the livestock people could secure their new structure, however, the Fair Board pressed forward with plans for a new “commercial building.” Since the early 1950s, commercial exhibits at the fair were housed in the former poultry building near the grandstands, but by the late 1970s this arrangement was increasingly unacceptable. When funding through the county’s revenue sharing program became available in 1980, the Fair Board jumped at the opportunity. Plans for the new commercial building (eventual known as the Trade Center) were drawn up by architect Gene Vogl, in May of 1980, with Haugen Construction of Lewistown receiving the general contract in September. Built at a cost of \$400,000, the Trade Center was ready for use in advance of the 1981 Central Montana Fair. Since its completion, the Trade Center has served the Fair Board as vital exhibit and office space, while also supplying a profit stream through rental fees. Of course, construction of the Trade Center also led to the removal of several earlier fair buildings that today would be considered historic. The Schools Exhibit Building, 4-H Exhibit Building and “Ladies Comfort Station” were all disposed of, while the old Commercial Building (originally the Poultry Building) was moved to a nearby site for further use.⁵⁹

With the Trade Center complete, members of the Livestock Advisory Committee began lobbying for their own new building. They first approached the Fair Board with a proposal in October of 1981 and by the following March were able to submit preliminary plans from Ed Vogl, architect of the Trade Center. Vogl’s plan called for the construction of a massive 120’ x 250’ metal building immediately north of the 1917 Cattle Barn. Unfortunately, neither the Fair Board nor the County had available construction funds. In fact, the Central Montana Fair was about to experience a financial crisis that would only further exacerbate tension between the Fair Board and livestock interests. Following a severe budget cut in 1982, the Fair

⁵⁷ “Central Montana Fair Given New Look,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 27 June 1968, “Central Montana Fair has New, Varied Events,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 July 1968.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 15 September 1980. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁵⁹ “Fairgrounds, Road and Airport Projects Highlight Fergus List,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 21 February 1982; Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 27 May 1980, 30 July 1980 and 30 September 1980. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

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Board decided to forgo premium money at the 1983 Central Montana Fair. This one-time cut was grudgingly accepted in 1983, but when the Fair Board made a similar proposal in 1984 (even after funding was restored) the Livestock Advisory Committee threatened open revolt. In a pointed letter submitted to the Fair Board in February, the committee resolved to “discourage the participation of livestock exhibits at the Central Montana Fair, until premiums are reinstated.” Luckily cooler heads prevailed, and the Fair Board and Livestock Advisory Committee settled on the following terms: premiums were cut by 26%, a gate fee was implemented to cover the remaining premiums, and plans for a new livestock building would move forward immediately. While smaller than Vogl’s original proposal, all parties agreed upon a 100’ x 120’ building. Bids for the building were opened by the County Commissioners in July of 1984, and Don Bost’s \$83,053 estimate was accepted.⁶⁰ Completed later that fall, the Livestock Exhibit Building was a “bare bones” Behlen structure with concrete sidewalls and a dirt floor that could easily be expanded and improved to meet future needs.⁶¹

Modernization of the Fergus County Fairgrounds continued into the 1990s, but often these improvements resulted in the loss of significant historic structures. The first significant change was the replacement of the grandstands. Built in 1910 by the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association, by the 1980s the original grandstands “buckled in nine or ten places,” and were, “shot through with wood rot.” To design the new 3,000-seat grandstands, the Fair Board turned once again to Gene Vogl. Construction started in 1991 with the demolition of the old grandstands, which were buried in the infield of the track. The new grandstands were completed in advance of the 1992 Central Montana Fair, along with other improvements like an enlarged rodeo arena.⁶² A second major change to the fairgrounds occurred in 1995 with the demolition of the Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant to make way for an addition to the Livestock Exhibition Building. Like the Draft Horse Barn, these buildings dated back to 1917 and the brief rise of the Fergus County Sales Corporation. The loss of the Cattle Barn was a wake-up call for preservation advocates in Central Montana. When the fairground’s remaining historic structures were threatened over the next few years, preservation-minded community members jumped to their defense.

Preservation and Planning in the 21st Century

When the Fergus County Fair Board announced plans to tear down Agriculture Hall following the 1999 Central Montana Fair, they were met with passionate resistance. The first building erected by Fergus County after assuming control of the fairgrounds, Agriculture Hall was completed in advance of the 1917 Fair. Built with locally-produced brick covered in white stucco, the building served the county well for decades. Nevertheless, by the 1990s the Fair Board saw little value in continuing to maintain the aging structure and decided to move forward with its removal. Fortunately, the building had numerous champions in the community. Shirley Barrick, then County Superintendent of Schools, put together a petition to save the building and Emma Light, longtime director of the Floral Department, lobbied the Fair Board. Eventually the Fair Board relented, giving Light permission to seek funding to maintain and restore Agriculture Hall. With assistance from the Central Montana Foundation, Light was able to secure \$12,500 in donations by the following year. In addition to saving a significant piece of county history, rehabilitation of Agriculture Hall also proved to be a cost-efficient alternative. Preservation of the historic building cost approximately \$50,000, while replacing it with a comparable new building would have required an estimated \$350,000.⁶³

With Agriculture Hall saved from the wrecking ball, preservation activity turned to the remaining historic livestock barns at the north end of the fairgrounds. These buildings, which included the Draft Horse Barn (1917), the Sheep Barn (1927) and the Swine Barn (c. 1930), remained in use through the 2008 Central

⁶⁰ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board: 9 October 1981, 3 March 1982, 1 March 1984, 8 March 1984, 19 July 1984. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁶¹ “New Fairgrounds Livestock Barn to Increase Show and Sale Space,” *Lewistown News-Argus*, 10 October 1984.

⁶² “Grandstands, New Rodeo Arena Spruce of Central Montana Fair,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 19 Jul 1992; Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 1985-1995. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁶³ Byrne, Judy. “Lewistown Fair Fan Helps Old Ag Building Blossom,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 26 July 2000; “Emma Light Helps Preserve Central Montana History,” *Fergus Features*, April 2002.

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Montana Fair. Then, in March of 2009, all three barns were declared unsound for public use following an onsite engineering assessment. The potential loss of the barns prompted local preservation advocates to band together, forming the Save the Barns Committee in early 2010. Led by Jim Dullenty, the committee originally hoped to save all three barns, but eventually focused their efforts on the Draft Horse Barn. With full restoration of the Draft Horse Barn as their stated goal, the Save the Barns Committee began an aggressive fundraising campaign that raised nearly \$200,000 over a three year period. To guide the restoration process, the committee selected Sievert and Sievert, CRC, a Great Falls architectural firm specializing in historic preservation. Bids for the "Masonry Stabilization and Restoration," of the Draft Horse Barn were opened in September 2011, with the general contract going to John Valach and Son, Inc. of Lewistown. Valach was, no doubt, familiar with the Horse Barn. It was one of the first masonry jobs worked by his grandfather (also named John Valach) in Montana, a Czech immigrant who came to Lewistown in 1916.⁶⁴

With a highly skilled team assembled, restoration of the Draft Horse Barn was completed in four phases between 2011 and 2013. Phase I involved stabilization of the structural clay tile walls, replacement of unsalvageable masonry elements, exterior repointing and the installation of interior bracing. This structural work was followed by lead paint abatement and the repair or replacement of thirty-four windows along the barn's side elevations (Phase II). Next came reconstruction of the fanlight window in the semicircular parapet that crowns the south façade of the barn (Phase III). From an aesthetic viewpoint, the return of this original design element was probably the most significant component of restoration project. In the final phase of the project (Phase IV) four of the barn's large exterior doors were repaired, while a fifth was replaced. The Save the Barns Committee celebrated completion of the restoration project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 3, 2013. For their efforts, the committee was honored with the Preservation Excellence Award from the Montana Preservation Alliance in 2014. With the award came the following praise:

Your efforts to organize the Save the Barns committee, very creatively raise public and private funds and gather volunteers for multiple events and workdays are a model to follow for other preservation groups. Moreover, your attention to detail and sensitivity to preserving character-defining features of the barn (the fan window and the lovely doors) are especially notable and worthy of much recognition. You have truly given a great gift to the residents of Fergus County.⁶⁵

Recent preservation victories at the Fergus County Fairgrounds are a credit to the community. Thanks to the efforts of Emma Light, Save the Barns, and other concerned citizens, Agriculture Hall and the Draft Horse Barn remain integral components of the Fergus County Fairgrounds. Maintenance funds exist for both buildings, ensuring their upkeep for the foreseeable future. Both buildings are also included in a proposed master plan for the fairgrounds that was recently prepared for the Fergus County Fair Board. Today, the Draft Horse Barn and Agriculture Hall continue to serve their original purpose as fair-time exhibit space. Furthermore, the recent preservation work completed on both buildings greatly enhances their functionality. Over the last few years, the Fair Board has successfully rented out their showpiece historic buildings for a wide range of community events.⁶⁶ If their solid construction and passionate supporters are any indication, both buildings will continue to serve Fergus County for years to come.

LIVESTOCK SALES at the FERGUS COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS, 1917 – 1950

The same forces of war and drought that disrupted the Fergus County Fair during the late 1910s, also spelled disaster for the Fergus County Sales Corporation. Formally organized in February of 1917, the

⁶⁴ Great West Engineering. "Fairgrounds Buildings Investigations," 3 April 2009. Available online at <http://www.centralmontanafair.com/images/EngReport.pdf>; Dullenty, Jim. "Remarks for Ribbon Cutting Ceremony dedicating the restored 1917 Draft Horse Barn," 3 October 2013; Save the Barns Committee. Souvenir Program from Ribbon Cutting Ceremony dedicating the restored 1917 Draft Horse Barn, 3 October 2013.

⁶⁵ "Draft Horse Barn Project Receives State's Highest Preservation Award," *Lewistown-News Argus*, 13 August 2014.

⁶⁶ Central Montana Fair. Website accessed online at <http://www.centralmontanafair.com/>.

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business was completely bankrupt in just a matter of months.⁶⁷ While short-lived, the Fergus County Sales Corporation left an enduringly legacy at the Fergus County Fair Grounds with three impressive buildings: the Cattle Barn, the Draft Horse Barn and the small Office-Restaurant. Constructed with locally-produced structural clay tile, these structures served dual purposes for much of their life. During fair week, the barns were filled with the best cattle and horse stock in Fergus County. These animals were pitted against each other by area ranchers to determine which best represented its breed or class, with bragging rights and premium money on the line. During the rest of the year, the barns were used for their other intended purpose: a livestock auction. While the Fergus County Sales Corporation only held a few successful sales, the barns were subsequently used for events such as the annual Central Montana Purebred Livestock Sale. Then, in 1935, the stockyards took on new life as the Lewistown Livestock Commission, an enterprise initially run by W. C. McLaughlin. Livestock auctions at the fairgrounds continued through 1949, when a new stockyards facility was built directly across U.S. Highway 191. The barns, however, continued to be used for livestock exhibitions through the historic period, while the smaller building was utilized as a rodeo office. The Cattle Barn, which also included the sales ring, and Office-Restaurant were demolished in 1995 to make way for an addition to the Livestock Exhibition Building. As a result, only the Draft Horse Barn remains to convey the important contributions of the livestock industry to the Fergus County Fair and all of Central Montana during the early twentieth century.

While livestock sales at the Fergus County Fairgrounds were held intermittently from 1917 – 1949, this nomination focuses on the two most significant periods of activity: the Fergus County Sales Corporation (1917-1918) and the Lewistown Livestock Commission (1935-1949). Other sales were either connected to the fair or were short-lived efforts by private entrepreneurs.

The Fergus County Sales Corporation

On December 15, 1916, the *Fergus County Argus* introduced its readers to the idea of a regional livestock sales corporation headquartered in Lewistown. “In connection with [the fairgrounds] it might be well to state that there is a scheme afoot to incorporate a Stock Sales company,” reported the paper, before offering this sketch of the proposed organization:

The company would be organized and subscribed to by the people of Fergus county, and every stockman or farmer who wished to take a block of the stock would have the privilege. The three county commissioners have stated that if such a corporation is formed for the purpose outlined, that they will allow it the free use of the fairgrounds, for they believe in it to that extent. The new building would be adapted to handing of sales, and would have an enclosed sales ring...During the fair week, they would be used for the exhibition of stock and would be a great addition to the efficiency of the fair equipment.⁶⁸

Most everyone, it seemed, saw a partnership between Fergus County and an emergent livestock market in Central Montana as a win-win situation.

Over the following weeks, area newspapers detailed the formation of the Fergus County Sales Corporation. Led by Richard A. Harlow, builder of the Montana Railroad and subsequent owner of a cattle ranch in Fergus County, the new corporation hoped to cater to a livestock industry in transition. Livestock entered Central Montana in the late 1870s, with famed Montana pioneers like Conrad Kohrs, T.C. Power, Granville Stuart and James Fergus leading the way. The severe winter of 1886-1887, however, had a disastrous impact on the open range cattle industry in Montana. In Central Montana, this was compounded with the rise of wheat farming after 1900, which led to the fragmentation of rangeland. Central Montana’s livestock industry was not completely dead, but an evolution was required if it hoped to thrive once more. With less land available, livestock producers turned to smaller herds developed through

⁶⁷ Ferdinand, Duane. “Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds,” Montana Historic Property Record Form, 2012. On file at the Montana SHPO.

⁶⁸ “Fair is Assured for Fergus,” *Fergus County Argus*, 15 December 1916.

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more careful breeding. This trend was reflected in the formation of the Fergus County Purebred Livestock Association in February of 1916. Led by Amos Snyder and Ben Hill—who both also happened to serve on the Fergus County Fair Board—this association was made up of progressive ranchers and diversified farmers interested in improving their stock of cattle, horses, sheep and hogs.⁶⁹ The evolving livestock industry created a demand for better stock and closer markets. As Harlow explained:

In the early days, when a cattleman bought from 1,000 to 10,000 steers he could afford to travel all over the western country to find them, but the man who wants from five to 50 head cannot afford to travel far. He must find them in some convenient, accessible place...A man who runs a few cattle on high-priced land cannot afford to handle scrubs. It costs no more to feed a pure-bred animal than a poor one, but the difficulty has been to get high-grade stuff.⁷⁰

Economies of scale also controlled the supply side of the livestock industry. Small-scale operators simply could not afford to ship their animals to the sprawling Midwestern markets. A local market, where buyers might consolidate enough stock to justify the shipping expense, would address this problem as well.

The growing demand for a local livestock market met with two other factors—one local and one global—to create a seemingly perfect economic climate for Harlow's scheme in 1917. Locally, the proposed development of the Fergus County Fairgrounds offered a prime opportunity. By designing their sales complex to double as exhibition space, the Fergus County Sales Corporation could appear "public-spirited," while also benefiting from the "free use of the fair grounds." Globally, the onset of World War I created a heightened demand for all livestock and livestock products. It is little wonder, then, that the Fergus County Sales Corporation appeared destined for greatness. In fact, many predicted Lewistown would become the leading market for Montana cattle, repeating the success that Miles City had found with horses.⁷¹ In addition to cattle, the Lewistown market would also deal in horses, sheep and hogs. Financial backing for the project came from its stockholders, who ranged from area farmers to the leading banks of Lewistown. To lead the organization, President Harlow was joined by three other men: Ed C. Cooper, "considered one of the best judges of stock in the west;" H. L. Hull, an experienced sales manager and auctioneer; and L. D. Blodgett, Lewistown's most determined booster. In addition to his role in the new sales organization, Blodgett also served as secretary of the Fergus County Fair Board and the Lewistown Chamber of Commerce.⁷² From his various posts, Blodgett pushed hard for the Fergus County Sales Corporation, even claiming that it was the region's "most important" commercial development during an annual report to the Lewistown Chamber of Commerce in March of 1917.⁷³

With success almost assured, the Fergus County Sales Corporation moved forward with an ambitious construction plan at the north end of the fairgrounds. The plans, as reported by the *Ronan Pioneer*, originally included:

...an up-to-date cow barn, fitted throughout with the most modern appliances for handling high grade animals and caring for them...A horse barn will also be part of the building equipment, and this will be as fine a building of its kind as can be found in any of the larger stock sale centers...An office building, bunkhouse for stock tenders, and a lunch room will be completed shortly, so that the breeder who takes his stock to the sales ring will be afforded every accommodation. Trackage is to be built to the stables and corrals, which will be a great convenience in handling all kinds of stock.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ "Organization is Completed," *Fergus County Democrat*, 10 February 1916.

⁷⁰ "First Cattle Sale Held at Lewistown," *Ronan Pioneer*, 27 July 1917.

⁷¹ "An Adjunct to the Fair," *Fergus County Democrat*, 21 December 1916; "Cattle Market for Lewistown," *Ronan Pioneer*, 26 January 1917.

⁷² "Cattle Market for Lewistown," *Ronan Pioneer*, 26 January 1917; "Fergus Livestock Mart is Ready for Business," *Ronan Pioneer*, 6 July 1917.

⁷³ "Annual Report of Secretary L. D. Blodgett," *Fergus County Argus*, 9 March 1917.

⁷⁴ "Will Soon Open Cattle Market," *Ronan Pioneer*, 6 April 1917.

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Ultimately, the livestock complex was edited to include just two barns, a small office building, and the associated corrals. To design their livestock buildings, the Fergus County Sales Corporation selected Montana's premier architectural firm, Link & Haire. Founded in Helena in 1906, the firm soon opened branch offices in the Montana cities of Butte, Billings, Miles City, Missoula and Lewistown. Earl Bryan, an architect working in the Lewistown office, was responsible for the design of the livestock barns, which included a 48' x 150' cattle barn with a sales annex and a 56' x 100' horse barn. Bryan's plans were ready in early April, allowing construction to push forward under the supervision of local contractor, John Plank.⁷⁵ By early June, the *Fergus County Argus* could report that the livestock complex would be complete in advance of the Corporation's first sale on July 17, 1917. "A large force of men is at work... getting the new buildings of the corporation into shape for the sale," stated the article, which continued:

The sale arena, which will seat about 300 people, is located in one of the compact buildings of the corporation and bad weather will have no effect on sales as there will be ample room under the big roof to take care of the business at all times. Just now a force of workers are laying water mains into the barns, three in number...Already more than 100 head of thoroughbred and grade stock has been listed for the sale and additions to the list are being made daily. Vice President Cooper and Secretary Blodgett are touring the country today and tomorrow, in interests of the first big sale.⁷⁶

The first sale of the Fergus County Sales Corporation was deemed a success. An estimated 600 people crowded into the newly-completed sales arena to see approximately \$10,000 spent on 100 head of cattle. There was much praise for the Corporation's officials, particularly Cooper and Hull, but the buildings also received favorable mention. The *Fergus County Democrat*, for instance, noted that:

Everything is arranged so as to obtain the maximum efficiency. The sales pavilion is arranged so that every spectator has a full view of the sales ring and so the auctioneer has a full view of the spectators. In the same building as the sales ring are the cattle pens, and behind these and out of doors are the large corrals. The second building is for horses only and in which there are double, single and box stalls, and also running water.⁷⁷

The first sale struck a congratulatory tone, but it also revealed a troubling trend for the Fergus County Sales Corporation. While grade cattle headed for slaughter sold well, the demand for purebred cattle, "was not as good as expected," leading to depressed prices.⁷⁸ Over the following months, the reluctance of area ranchers to increase their breeding stock would plague the Fergus County Sales Corporation. The uncertainty surrounding hostilities in Europe gave Americans ranchers pause, especially after President Woodrow Wilson initiated a compulsory military draft in May of 1917. The draft, which required all men between the ages of 21 and 31 to register for military service, threaten to uproot a large portion of the nation's labor force. For some Montana stockmen, the specter of military enlistment (whether it be their sons, their hired hands, or themselves) made them more likely to divest of their livestock than add to their workload. Still more crippling for Lewistown's nascent local livestock market was a poor harvest in 1917 that led to a severe hay shortage. Understandably, very few farmers and ranchers were interested in buying livestock they could not afford to feed through the winter.⁷⁹ Ironically, the factors that assured success for the Fergus County Sales Corporation at the onset of 1917—high wartime prices and an increased local demand for breeding stock—had dissipated by year's end. The global food shortage brought on by World War I still offered plenty of opportunities for profit, but Montana farmers and ranchers

⁷⁵ McDaniel, Susan R. and Dena L. Sanford. *Beautiful City of Miles*, Miles City, MT: Star Printing, 1989; "Plans Complete for Sales Buildings," *Fergus County Argus*, 6 April 1917; "The State - Lewistown," *Ronan Pioneer*, 27 April 1917; "First Sale of Stock Success," *Fergus County Democrat*, 19 July 1917. Scans of the original plans, which are on file at the City of Lewistown's Planning Office, are found in Additional Documentation.

⁷⁶ "First Sale will Start July 17th," *Fergus County Argus*, 6 June 1917.

⁷⁷ "First Sale of Stock Success," *Fergus County Democrat*, 19 July 1917.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ "Fergus County Aids Soldiers," *Great Falls Tribune*, 6 September 1917; "Buy \$50,000 Worth of Hay to Aid Farmers of Judith," *Ronan Pioneer*, 24 August 1917.

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could only benefit by keeping their crops and livestock alive. As drought began to spread across Montana in 1917, even this fundamental task became difficult.⁸⁰

With their odds of success dwindling, the Fergus County Sales Corporation still mounted a valiant (if ultimately misguided) effort to stay afloat during the fall of 1917. The Corporation offered to help deployed servicemen dispose of their herds and, through the efforts of Ed C. Cooper, lobbied the Lewistown Commercial Club to purchase \$50,000 worth of hay to help local ranchers through the winter. Unfortunately, such altruism did not prove profitable. Livestock sold off by departing servicemen only further glutted the local market, while area farmers and ranchers likely found it difficult to repay the Lewistown Commercial Club as drought conditions worsened in 1918 and 1919. Through all the upheaval, the Fergus County Sales Corporation continued to hold sales at the fairgrounds. A modest sales program might have weathered the storm, but the Corporation decided to go for broke. After a few modest sales in August and September, the Corporation began advertising for “the Greatest Sale of Livestock Ever Held in the Northwest.” Scheduled for October 3rd, 4th and 5th, this sale promised plentiful buyers and good prices. In newspapers across Montana, the Corporation enticed ranchers to “list your stock with us now,” with this optimistic claim:

There will be a big demand for feeders, milk cows, range cows and heifers. The sale is being advertised extensively throughout Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Illinois. Hundreds of buyers are expected who will be in the market for feeders. GOOD PRICES CERTAIN TO PREVAIL.⁸¹

While the shift from breeding stock to feeder cattle was a savvy move, even the Northwest’s “greatest ever” livestock sale was not enough to save the Fergus County Sales Corporation. The organization appears to have dissolved shortly after the sale, with the officials going their separate ways. Richard A. Harlow continued on as a “capitalist,” dividing his time between Washington, D. C. and his ranch in Central Montana until his death in 1932. L. D. Blodgett resigned from his various posts in Lewistown and moved to Three Forks, Montana to work for the Adams Investment Company. H. L. Hull, the Corporation’s young manager and auctioneer, returned to a successful career in Iowa after serving in the military during World War I.⁸² Only Ed C. Cooper remained a prominent figure at the Fergus County Fairgrounds. In the 1920s, Cooper became president of the Central Montana Fair and was instrumental in developing the fair’s purebred livestock department. Ownership of the organization’s stockyards, including the three newly-erected red tile buildings, reverted back to Fergus County.

The Lewistown Livestock Commission

After the failed experiment of the Fergus County Sales Corporation in 1917, livestock sales at the Fergus County Fairgrounds were rare for the next eighteen years. One significant exception was the Central Montana Purebred Livestock Sale held biannually beginning in 1927. If other sales were held at the fairgrounds, including privately-sponsored events, they were too infrequent to receive much documentation. The lack of activity is consistent with the economic struggles of the 1920s and 1930s. Montana recovered from its post-World War I depression only to be leveled again by the more wide-ranging Great Depression of the 1930s. The livestock industry was hit particularly hard by severe drought and low prices in 1933 and 1934. Rather than take a loss, most livestock producers waited for the market to improve, but this only worsened the situation. Their animals lost value as they aged, while also becoming more expensive to keep alive due to ongoing drought. It was a crisis the progressive Roosevelt Administration hoped to solve through direct federal intervention. In May of 1934, the Drought Relief Service initiated a program to purchase “surplus” livestock from struggling farmers and ranchers. Most of

⁸⁰ Malone, Michael P. *Montana: A Tale of Two Centuries*, 280-281.

⁸¹ “Advertisement for Fergus County Sales Corporation Sale, October 3-5, 1917,” *Ronan Pioneer*, 28 September 1917.

⁸² [Young-Hull Wedding], *Des Moines Register*, 2 November 1924; “Richards Makes Plans for State Convention,” *Daily Missoulian*, 17 November 1917; “Prominent Lewistown Man to Speak in Hamilton,” *Daily Missoulian*, 6 December 1917; “Richard A. Harlow, Montana Railroad Pioneer Dies,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 18 March 1932.

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these animals were slaughtered for food relief programs, but a significant number were simply killed and buried. All in all, it was a tragic episode for the American livestock industry.⁸³

Fortunately, the economic outlook for Montana's livestock producers brightened considerably in 1935. As explained by the *Great Falls Tribune* in September:

While forage and feed conditions are unsatisfactory over a large portion of the state, resulting in a tendency to sell herds and flocks down sharply this fall, the price situation makes that fact of less serious import than it was a year ago...From the Chicago livestock market the summary for the month of August shows the advance of values since last fall quite strikingly.⁸⁴

The article went on to report that the price for lambs on the Chicago market was up 37% over the previous August, while cattle prices were up an impressive 49%. Overall, livestock prices in August of 1935 had rebounded to levels not seen since the Great Depression began in 1929-1930.

It was an opportune moment to revive Lewistown's dormant livestock market, and Walter C. McLaughlin emerged as the man to make it happen. Born in Indiana, McLaughlin came to Fergus County during Montana's great homesteading boom, settling on a farm near Denton with his family in about 1917. From there, McLaughlin also dabbled in road building, real estate, farm auctions and livestock sales. In June of 1928, for instance, he offered up 200 head of cattle at the Milwaukee Stockyards in Lewistown, and two years later he was looking to trade a "choice section of Judith Basin wheat land...for cattle, lambs or young sheep of any number." He also became associated with more formal purebred livestock sales in Lewistown and Great Falls, working as either an auctioneer or ring man.⁸⁵ As such, McLaughlin was already a well-established livestock broker when he opened the Lewistown Livestock Commission at the Fergus County Fairgrounds in late 1935. Thanks to the favorable market conditions, McLaughlin found early success. By August of 1936, he was able to offer biweekly sales that were, "bringing a large number of buyers and sellers to the city," while also acting as, "a general stimulus to trade throughout Lewistown."⁸⁶ In essence, McLaughlin was finally able to achieve what the Fergus County Sales Corporation failed to do in 1917—establish a viable local livestock market in Lewistown.

The Lewistown Livestock Commission continued to run under McLaughlin's management until 1939, when it passed to another area rancher, Matt Wildschultz. Then in 1942, the Fergus County Fair Board transferred lease of the stockyards to Joe M. Finley, who rebranded the business as the Finley Commission Co. With livestock prices on the rise during World War II, the Finley Commission Co. experienced quick success. After just three months of operation, Finley was able to expand his regular weekly program, with sales occurring each Wednesday and Thursday. Finley also held a number of special sales at the fairgrounds, including a sale that featured over 600 horses in February of 1943, and the sale of 3,200 head of "crossbred, open-face" ewes from a single ranch in October of 1945.⁸⁷ Unfortunately, Finley's success did not translate into an easy relationship with the Fergus County Fair Board. In January of 1944, the Fair Board expressed concern that Finley was not "living up the specifications" of his contract in regard to the general upkeep of the stockyards. This tension was exacerbated when the Montana Livestock Commission informed the Fair Board that the stockyards were

⁸³ Lambert, Roger C. "The Drought Cattle Purchase, 1934-1935: Problems and Complaints," *Agricultural History*, V, 45, No. 2 (April 1971), 85.

⁸⁴ "Montana Benefits," *Great Falls Tribune*, 11 September 1935.

⁸⁵ "30 Head of Purebred Stock Listed for Lewistown Sale," *Great Falls Tribune*, 4 March, 1928; "Classifieds: For Sale – Livestock," *Great Falls Tribune*, 16 June 1928; "Classifieds: To Trade," *Great Falls Tribune*, 20 October 1930; "105 Young Sires Available for Association Sale Here," *Great Falls Tribune*, 10 March 1932; Ancestry.com.

⁸⁶ "Many Buyers Attend Livestock Auction," *The Helena Independent Record*, 2 August 1936.

⁸⁷ "Livestock Shipments From Great Falls Area this Month are Heaviest in Several Seasons," *Great Falls Tribune*, 28 September 1939; "Commission Firm," *Great Falls Tribune*, 5 August 1942; "Sales Days Increased," *Great Falls Tribune*, 8 November 1942; "Horse Sale Announced," *Great Falls Tribune*, 6 February 1943; "Special Ewe Sale," *Great Falls Tribune*, 7 October 1945; "Obituary for Alice R. Wildschultz," *Great Falls Tribune*, 27 June 1991.

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not up to code and would eventually need to be paved. The problem, at least from Finley's perspective, was that no one (himself included) was going to invest heavily in the stockyards without some assurance that they would continue to hold the property lease. Instead of a one-year lease, Finley proposed, the County should sell the stockyards parcel of the fairgrounds to a private party. The Fair Board considered this option, but ultimately decided to keep the fairgrounds intact.⁸⁸

The Fair Board and Finley reached an agreement in May of 1946 to renovate the stockyards, with Finley providing the necessary lumber and Fergus County supplying the gravel. In December, however, Finley decided to move on, selling his company to three area businessmen, Forest T. Noel, Ralph King, and Ray Carr. Operating under a new name, the Central Montana Stockyards, this trio immediately announced plans to build a modern, \$60,000 sales complex on adjacent property owned by the Arrow Refinery.⁸⁹ Although this plan meant a loss of revenue for the Fair Board, they probably felt a sense of relief. It was an ongoing challenge to police the activities of the livestock auction, a business that often prioritized economy over aesthetics. The degradation of the livestock buildings, which were still used as exhibition space during the fair, was a significant concern. Moreover, the renovations made during the summer of 1946 were only a temporary fix. As the Central Montana Stockyards struggled to build their new facility (a postwar materials shortage delayed the project until 1950), the State continued pressing Fergus County to modernize the old stockyards at the fairgrounds. In November of 1949, this culminated in a suspended license for the stockyards due to unsanitary conditions. Fortunately, the Central Montana Stockyards was finally in a position to move forward with their construction plans. Their first sale at the new facility—located just across U.S. Highway 191 from the fairgrounds—was held in August of 1950.⁹⁰

Completion of the new Central Montana Stockyards in 1950 brought an end to commercial livestock sales at the Fergus County Fairgrounds. Thereafter, the three tile livestock barns built in 1917 by the Fergus County Sales Corporation, were used primarily for exhibit space during the Central Montana Fair. The Cattle Barn and smaller Office-Restaurant were torn down in 1995, leaving the Draft Horse Barn as the only structure associated with commercial livestock sales at the Fergus County Fairgrounds.

CRITERION C (Architecture)

In addition to its significant association with the history of Fergus County in the areas of agriculture, commerce and recreation, the Draft Horse Barn at the Fergus County Fair Grounds also possesses architectural significance as a wonderful example of the a "livestock pavilion" or "specialized barn." Character-defining features of this class of resources displayed by the Draft Horse Barn include: a simple overall form (a gable-front barn) hidden behind a fanciful façade; oversized "wagon entrances" protected by sliding wood doors with a double British brace; numerous "barn style" windows; and two metal turbine ventilators. The Horse Barn is also significant for its distinctive Neoclassical Revival-style façade, which features a fanlight and exaggerated corner pilasters, and the use of structural clay tile manufactured by the Lewistown Brick & Tile Company in its construction. While not necessarily eligible as the "work of a master," the Horse Barn is also notable for the team behind its construction. The Fergus County Sales Corporation selected Montana's most prominent early architectural firm, Link & Haire, to design their livestock complex, with drawings completed in April 1917 by Earl Bryan, an employee in their Lewistown office. John Plank, a local carpenter and livestock man, was selected as the general contractor, while John Valach was hired on as a mason.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 27 January 1944, 17 January 1945, 10 January 1946 and 12 February 1946. Available at the Lewistown Public Library.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 4 May 1944; "Finley Livestock Firm is Sold," *Great Falls Tribune*, 24 December 1946.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Fergus County Fair Board, 28 September 1945, 24 April 1946, 21 December 1946, 21 October 1947 and June 1949; "Livestock Market to Lose License," *Helena Independent Record*, 25 July 1949; "New Lewistown Stockyards Plans First Sale in August," *Great Falls Tribune*, 14 July 1950.

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Livestock Exhibition Pavilions & Specialized Barns

The original livestock complex at the Fergus County Fairgrounds represented an intersection of agriculture, commerce and entertainment. Built in 1917 by the Fergus County Sales Corporation, the Cattle Barn (non-extant) and Draft Horse Barn were designed to serve two interrelated functions. During the annual Fergus County Fair, the barns would house livestock exhibitions, while during the remainder of the year, they would be used as a livestock auction facility. As such, the design of the complex needed to combine agricultural utility with commercial appeal *and* fair-time whimsy. To achieve this balance, Link & Haire, the architectural firm selected to design the livestock complex, settled on a simplified overall form (the gable-front barn) embellished with a fanciful façade. Both barns featured fanlighted semi-circular parapets flanked by exaggerated pilasters on their south-facing facades. The Cattle Barn, which was T-shaped, also had fanlights in the gable ends of its long east-west wing. The use of exposed structural clay tile as the primary construction material—a rare choice for barns in any Montana setting—provided a sense of permanence and modernity. The use of exposed tile over a more typical wood or stucco finish also provided the flourishing Lewistown Brick & Tile Company with a unique advertising opportunity.

The design of the original livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds drew upon two distinct property types: agricultural barns and exhibition pavilions. In *Hand Raised: the Barns of Montana*, architectural historians Chere Jiusto and Christine Brown trace the evolution of barn design from medieval European origins to diffusion across Montana's landscape. While all barns share a common agricultural heritage, they also exhibit distinctive design characteristics rooted in everything from ethnic building traditions to the availability of construction materials. Jiusto and Brown identify several barn types based on ethnic traditions, interior arrangement, roof shape, agricultural function and specialized use.⁹¹ Designed as both a sales facility and exhibition space, the original livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds would obviously fall into the classification of "specialized barns." Typically, specialized barns reflect traditional agricultural design, but also exhibit a more elaborate public aesthetic.

In overall form, the Draft Horse Barn (and non-extant Cattle Barn) could be linked the ubiquitous transverse-crib barn, a gable-front offspring of the traditional English Threshing Barn.⁹² It also exhibits several iconic agricultural details, such as sliding wood doors, four-light barn windows, and metal turbine ventilators. However, the design of the Draft Horse Barn also deviates from its strictly agricultural counterparts. The interior layout, for instance, features two parallel alleys transected by a cross alley. This arrangement allows for better exhibition of the livestock than the standard center-aisle floorplan of the transverse-crib barn. Another deviation is the absence of a hay loft, a feature deemed unnecessary because of the barn's intermittent use. Like the multiple alleys, this modification to standard barn design creates a better exhibition space. Instead of low ceilings and confined spaces, the Draft Horse Barn presents a soaring open rafter system illuminated by sunshine flooding through the south-facing fanlight. Of course, the feature that represents the greatest distance from an agricultural setting is the fanciful façade. With its semi-circular parapet, fanlight, and exaggerated corner pilasters, the façade conveys a level of cultural sophistication better-suited to public architecture. It is at the façade that the Draft Horse Barn fully transitions from standard agricultural facility to fair-time exhibition pavilion.

The famed Crystal Palace, erected for London's Great Exhibition of 1851, set an impressive modern standard for exhibition halls. The plate-glass and cast-iron structure was both massive and architecturally daring—a fully-realized embodiment of the Industrial Revolution. In the decades that followed, several more "world's fairs" were held across Europe and the United States, each with its own architectural achievement. It was the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition at Chicago that had the greatest impact on American architecture and urban planning. The fair's shimmering "White City," a collection of harmonious buildings arranged around a central lake, solidified Classical Revival as the architectural zeitgeist of the forthcoming Progressive Era. With its balanced façades and democratic connotations, the World's

⁹¹ Jiusto, Chere and Christine Brown. *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*, 1-13.

⁹² *Ibid*, 3.

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Columbian Exhibition offered the “tantalizing vision of a clean, orderly and urban city,” just as Americans were suffering through the harsh consequences of unregulated industrialization: financial panic and widespread social unrest.⁹³ In short, the rational and restrained aesthetic of Classicalism proved a perfect antidote to the perceived excesses of Victorian architecture. From its triumph in Chicago, the Classical (or Neoclassical) Revival style spread across the United States. It was particularly well-suited for public design of all forms, including exhibition halls and fairgrounds. As explained by preservationist, Ellen Seivert, in her National Register nomination for the Montana State Fairgrounds at Great Falls:

The retrospective style and the formal landscape had a lasting effect of [n]early all forms of American public architecture for a considerable period. It was also to have an effect on exhibition architecture and display well into the third decade of the next century. The dignity of the whole concept, by whatever route, “trickled down to the planning of fairs at all levels, each one desirous of providing the necessary ‘magic.’⁹⁴

At the Fergus County Fairgrounds, the influence of the World’s Columbian Exhibition is most evident in the design of Agriculture Hall (1917). With its white stucco finish, carved classical pilasters and landscaped setting, it represents a wonderful example of Chicago’s “White City” transcribed onto a county fairgrounds. Outside of the racetrack and grandstands, such exhibition halls were the most significant structures erected on a county fairgrounds. First published in 1881, J. F. Laning’s highly influential *How to Manage Agricultural Fairs, Industrial Institutes and Similar Exhibitions* noted that most fair organizers erected a hall for each exhibit (agricultural, mechanical, arts, commercial, etc.) or, alternatively, confined them to a single large building. In his estimation, however, quality trumped quantity. “Above all,” he wrote:

...let them be commodious, with good height between the floor and roof, and with good openings so that visitors can readily pass in and out, and plenty of air and light can be obtained. They should also be tastily erected, so to ornament the grounds if possible....Good buildings will readily pay for themselves from the increased attendance they attract to the fair.⁹⁵

While exhibition halls for material goods were early additions to most fairgrounds, the concept of finely-appointed buildings for livestock took a bit longer to develop. At the 1876 United States Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the livestock exhibit was relegated to sideshow status in an “extensive stockyards” outside the fairgrounds. Almost two decades later in Chicago, livestock were better integrated into the World’s Columbian Exhibition. The Livestock Pavilion, a large open structure reminiscent of a Roman circus, was constructed just behind the famous White City. This structure, however, was used exclusively for shows and events. Most of the livestock (save the valuable dairy cattle) were quartered in open stockyards at the south end of the Exhibition Grounds.⁹⁶ Livestock exhibits gradually became more formalized at county fairs as well. In 1881, Laning’s guidebook for fair management suggested livestock be housed in covered “stalls, pens and sheds,” built with rough boards and whitewashed to add “neatness and sweetness.”⁹⁷ Such semi-open structures continue to be used at smaller county fairs across the nation, but for those counties plying for regional significance upgraded livestock facilities became a necessity in the early 20th century. At Lewistown, this was achieved in 1917 with the construction of the Draft Horse Barn, Cattle Barn (non-extant) and Office-Restaurant (non-extant).

⁹³ Gelernter, Mark. *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999, 156 and 203.

⁹⁴ Sievert, Ellen. “National Register Nomination, Northern Montana State Fairgrounds, Great Falls, Montana,” 1988.

⁹⁵ Laning, J. F. *How to Manage Agricultural Fairs, Industrial Institutes, and Similar Exhibitions*, New London, OH: The Fair Printing Company, 1881, 23.

⁹⁶ Gross, Linda P. and Theresa R. Snyder. *Images of America: Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial Exhibition*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2005, 85; Rand McNally & Co. “Indexed Standard Guide Map of the World’s Columbian Exhibition at Chicago,” 1893. Accessed online at <http://dcc.newberry.org/collections/chicago-and-the-worlds-columbian-exposition#the-map-of-the-fair>; Bruegmann, Robert. *The Architects and the City, Holabird & Roche of Chicago, 1880-1918*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, 449.

⁹⁷ *How to Manage Agricultural Fairs*, 24.

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Like Agriculture Hall (also built in 1917), the new livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds were designed with Neoclassical Revival-style façades.⁹⁸ Instead of the typical white finish, however, Fergus County elected a more expensive option: structural clay tile from the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company.⁹⁹ The reasoning for this decision remains unclear, but the result was soon evident. Upon completion, the tile structures brought an aura of permanence and modernity to the fairgrounds. Their distinctive red color, a hallmark of the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company, presented an attractive contrast to the surrounding fairgrounds which, depending on the season, were awash in green, brown or white. So lovely were the new tile buildings, that Dan Bean, the first permanent caretaker appointed by the County, envisioned a day when all structures at the fairgrounds would be constructed with the same material. "Can you imagine anything neater or more substantial," he contemplated in a guest column published by the *Fergus County Argus* in late 1917.¹⁰⁰ The red tile barns, therefore, overtook the iconic "White City" (represented by Agriculture Hall) as an aesthetic model for future development. Ultimately, Bean's vision never came to pass (only one additional tile building was added to the fairgrounds in subsequent years), but his statements reveal the impact of the 1917 livestock complex. More than a simple upgrade of facilities, the red tile barns represented the optimism of Fergus County at the height of its economic and agricultural potential.

Design, Workmanship and Materials

When the Fergus County Sales Corporation selected Link & Haire to design their new livestock complex in 1917, they were choosing one of Montana's most influential and prolific early firms. Established in 1906, the firm represented a partnership between Charles S. Haire and John G. Link. Born in Hamilton County, Ohio in 1857, Haire taught and studied architecture for three years before working as a draftsman for the Union Pacific Railroad. He moved to Butte, Montana with the Great Northern Railroad in 1887, but soon became associated with the realty firm of Wallace and Thornburg. Five years later, Haire moved to Helena to work exclusively as architect. Haire's eventual partner, John G. Link, was born in Bavaria in about 1863, and studied architecture at the Royal Academy in Landau. He immigrated to the United States in 1887 and worked until 1890 for Frank Kidder, author of *The Architect's Handbook*, a standard text on building construction. He then joined an architectural firm in Denver before moving to Butte in 1896. Link partnered with W. E. Donovan and Joseph T. Carter in Butte, but ultimately decided to settle in Helena. After joining forces in 1906, Link & Haire grew quickly in both size and prominence. The firm secured several high-profile contracts, while also opening branch offices at Butte, Billings, Miles City, Missoula and Lewistown.¹⁰¹

Headquartered in the Bank of Fergus County Building, the Lewistown office opened in April of 1912. W. W. Smith, the initial manager of the office, was soon replaced by Earl I. Bryan. It was Bryan's drawings that guided construction of the livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds in 1917. To oversee construction of the new barns, the Fergus County Sales Corporation turned to one of their own members, John E. Plank. A carpenter and rancher, Plank brought an excellent understanding of barn, stall and stockyard construction to the project. His skill is still evident in the original wood construction of the Draft Horse Barn, especially the interior stalls, the collar roof system and the elaborate sliding doors. The decision to use structural clay tile as the main construction material for the barns, however, required that Plank hire a crew of masons. Among this group was 26-year-old John Valach.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ The barn's curved parapet could also suggest the Mission Revival Style. However, parapets used to signal this style are usually more sculptural and paired with other architectural features such as white stucco walls. In this case, the use of a semi-circular parapet and fanlight seems better aligned with the more generic Neoclassical Revival Style.

⁹⁹ Sievert & Sievert. "Partial Historic Structure Report, Horse and Poultry Barns, Fairgrounds, Fergus County," 2010. On file at the Lewistown Planning Department.

¹⁰⁰ Bean, Dan. "Development of County Fairgrounds," *Fergus County Argus*, 20 December 1917.

¹⁰¹ Susan R. McDaniel and Dena L. Sanford. *Beautiful City of Miles*, Miles City, MT: Star Printing, 1989.

¹⁰² [Link & Haire Open Lewistown Office], *Fergus County Democrat*, 2 April 1912; "Plans Complete for Sales Buildings," *Fergus County Argus*, 6 April 1917; "First Sale of Stock Success," *Fergus County Democrat*, 17 July 1917;

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Born on October 23, 1892 in Rostin, Moravia, John Valach was already an experienced brick layer when he immigrated to the United States at the age of 19 or 20. After working in St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas, and Nebraska for a few years, Valach moved to Lewistown in 1916. The livestock complex at the Fergus County Fairgrounds represents one of his earliest jobs in Central Montana. He married Anna Hruska, on June 26, 1917, just as his work at the fairgrounds job wrapped up. The young couple married at Lewistown on June 26, 1917. Valach, who died in 1970, quickly earned an excellent reputation and went on to become one of Central Montana's most prominent builders. As his obituary notes, "...many of the local schools, churches and brick homes stand as monuments to his masonry skill."¹⁰³ Fortunately, Valach passed his skills down to the next generation. His grandson, named Robert Valach, led the masonry team during the 2012-2013 restoration of the Draft Horse Barn.

The Lewistown Brick and Tile Company was the final significant player to shape the design of the Draft Horse Barn. Founded in 1911 by George J. Wiedeman and John Gretencourt, the company manufactured brick and tile from the red clay hills lining the east side of Lewistown.¹⁰⁴ As Ellen Sievert writes in *A Guide to Historic Lewistown*:

The development of the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company in 1911 had a decided influence on the character of the community. The symbolic "Lewistown Red" brick, valued for its quality and unique color, appears on many Lewistown buildings. It was exported throughout Montana and beyond, providing a significant industry for the community.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, the story behind the use of structural clay tile for the livestock complex at the Fergus County Fairgrounds is currently lost to history. The barns were originally planned as frame structures clad in beveled wood siding, but ultimately the Fergus County Sales Corporation chose to go with a more expensive material.¹⁰⁶ While the particulars remain unclear, it is easy to imagine the two companies forging a mutually beneficial deal, especially in a small community like Lewistown. And, at least initially, the resulting structures did represent a "win" for all parties. Fergus County (both the Fair Board and the Sales Corporation) received a fine set of distinctive livestock buildings. The Lewistown Brick and Tile Company, on the other hand, gained immediate financial profit and a lovely advertisement for their product. If the county's caretaker, Dan Bean, could imagine a future fairgrounds dotted by neat red tile buildings, it was entirely possible visitors might see potential uses for tile on their own farms and ranches.

In the end, however, neither company gained much from the deal. The Fergus County Sales Corporation went bankrupt in a matter of months, with spending on facilities a possible factor in its downfall. Moreover, the use of structural clay tile for agricultural buildings never really took off in Montana, a disappointment for the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company. Really, the only clear winner was Fergus County. The red tile barns constructed in 1917 remained essential to fairground operations through the mid-1990s. Although the Cattle Barn and Office-Restaurant are gone, the Draft Horse Barn still stands as one of Montana's only structural clay tile barns.¹⁰⁷ Thanks to the efforts of local preservation advocates, the barn will continue to be an "architectural gem" of Fergus County for future generations.

"Buy \$50,000 Worth of Hay to Aid Farmers of Judith," *Ronan Pioneer*, 24 August 1917. Ferdinand, Duane. "Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds," Montana Historic Property Record Form, 2012. On file at the Montana SHPO.

¹⁰³ "John Valach Dies Thursday," *Lewistown Democrat-News*, 2 January 1970.

¹⁰⁴ Zellick, Anna R. "Interview with Art Wiedeman," 16 October 1981. On file at the Lewistown Public Library.

¹⁰⁵ Sievert, Ellen and Ken. *Montana Main Streets (Volume 3): A Guide to Historic Lewistown*, Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 1999, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Sievert & Sievert. "Partial Historic Structure Report, Horse and Poultry Barns, Fairgrounds, Fergus County," 2010. On file at the Lewistown Planning Department. Scans of the original plans, which are on file at the City of Lewistown's Planning Office, are found in Additional Documentation.

¹⁰⁷ In fact, the Draft Horse Barn may be the *only* structural clay tile barn in Montana. Chere Juisto and Christine Brown make no mention of structural clay tile in *Hand Raised: The Barns of Montana*, which is the most comprehensive (although not exhaustive) study on the subject to date. However, the distinction between "only" and

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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: AN OVERVIEW OF FERGUS COUNTY, MONTANA

Fergus County: The Heart of Montana

Montana Territory was organized in 1864, and its borders remained static even after achieving statehood in 1889. The boundaries of Montana's several regions are more fluid. "The notion of a Central Montana region bounded by other Montanas on all sides is a mental construct," wrote geographer, John Alwin, in his 1993 study, *Montana Portrait*.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the various scales of Central Montana radiate outward in concentric circles. A broad interpretation of Central Montana extends between the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers, while a more focused view might include only the mountain-lined Judith Basin. The borders of Central Montana may be negotiable, but Fergus County is most certainly at its heart. Created by the Montana Territorial Legislature in 1885, Fergus County was carved from two earlier counties: Choteau County (1865) and Meagher County (1867). Lewistown, founded as a trading post along the Carrol Trail in 1873, was declared the county seat. At the time of its creation, Fergus County covered an immense area (7,524 square miles) that contained some of Montana's most promising mineral and agricultural resources. County-splitting during the homestead boom cost Fergus County some of its fringe southern territory, but it still remains Montana's eighth largest county. Today, Fergus County covers 4,350 square miles centered on the Judith Basin.¹⁰⁹ This unique landscape is bordered on the north by the Missouri River and on its remaining sides by four mountain ranges: the Highwoods and Little Belts to the west, and the Big Snowies and Judiths to the east. These mountains drain into the Judith River, which flows north to its convergence with the Missouri River at Judith Landing. On its northern end, the county also spills over the mountains into the drainage of the lower Musselshell River to east and Arrow Creek to the west.

The centrality of Fergus County, however, did not always translate into rapid growth or ready transportation connections. The same mountains and rivers that define Central Montana also create barriers to its penetration. If remoteness is one defining characteristic of Central Montana, the other is desirability. For ranchers in the late 1870s, the Judith Basin was an untapped "grassy paradise," with the most, "luxuriant grasses...to be found anywhere in the world."¹¹⁰ Four decades later, the same landscape was advertised as "The Greatest Non-Irrigated Agricultural Region in the World," to hopefully homesteaders.¹¹¹ There were also mineral riches to be exploited in the surrounding mountains, including gold, sapphires, and enough coal to "supply the northwest for a thousand years."¹¹² Even if these boasts were exaggerated, the region did hold great potential for individuals and families looking to make a new life on one of America's last "frontiers."

Of course, the view of Central Montana as a remote frontier was limited to Euro-Americans. In stark contrast were Montana's historic Indian tribes, many of whom were intimately familiar with the area. The "grassy paradise," coveted by early ranchers supported vast herds of bison and other game, making the Judith Basin a favored hunting ground for several tribes. Native people also utilized the Judith Gap, a windswept pass between the Little Belt and Big Snowy Mountains, for north-south travel between the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers. As such, the Indian tribes of present-day Montana saw the Judith Basin

"one of a few" has little impact on architectural significance. Even if dozens of structural clay tile barns existed in Montana, this barn would still be significant for its association with the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company.

¹⁰⁸ Alwin, John A. *Montana Portrait*, Montana Geographic Series No. 17, Helena, MT: American & World Geographic Publishing, 1993, 112.

¹⁰⁹ State of Montana, Geographic Information Clearing House. "Area of Montana Counties," Website accessed online at http://geoinfo.msl.mt.gov/geography/geography_facts/area_of_montana_counties.aspx; Fergus County, Montana. "Fergus County—the Beginning," Website accessed online at <http://www.co.fergus.mt.us/45-home/home-news-info/285-fergus-county-the-beginning>.

¹¹⁰ Milner, Clyde A. II and Carol A. O'Connor. *As Big as the West: A Pioneer Life of Granville Stuart*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Chapter 9.

¹¹¹ Hilger Loan & Realty Co. "The Judith Basin, Montana," Lewistown, MT: Hilger Loan & Realty Co., c. 1911.

¹¹² Lewistown Chamber of Commerce. "The Judith Basin Montana and Lewistown Its Metropolis," Lewistown, MT: Lewistown Chamber of Commerce, c. 1913.

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and surrounding region as central, not remote. It was a shared and contested space situated between the region's most powerful forces: the Crow to the south, the Blackfeet to the north, and, beginning in the mid-1800s, the Sioux to the east.

Indian Claims and Frontier Settlements

Both the Blackfeet and Crow laid claim to the Judith Basin in treaties with the United States. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and Judith River Treaty of 1855 assigned the area between the Missouri and the Musselshell Rivers to the Blackfeet. Two decades later, however, another treaty promised the Judith Basin to the Crow in exchange for their reservation along the Yellowstone River. This treaty was never ratified by Congress, but it did create the first trading post at present-day Lewistown. Anticipating the relocation of Crow Agency to the Judith Basin, cattleman and trader, Nelson Story, commissioned the construction of "Fort Sherman" near the confluence of Big Spring Creek and Casino Creek in late 1873.¹¹³ The Crow, longtime allies of the United States in the Plains Indian Wars, were pushed out of the Judith Basin in 1874 by a neglectful federal government. President Grant issued executive orders in 1873 and 1874 that supported the new reservation, but then failed to protect it from Euro-American encroachment.

At the heart of the matter was the newly-opened Carroll Trail. This overland route transported freight from Carroll Landing, a new steamboat port on the Missouri River, to the goldfields of Helena via the Judith Basin, Judith Gap and Musselshell Valley. A private enterprise, construction of the trail through tribal territory was technically illegal, but it went forward anyway with freight wagons rolling through the Judith Basin by May of 1874. A military presence protected the trail from the resistant Sioux, with posts situated at strategic points along the route. One of the new military posts, Camp Lewis, was located on Big Spring Creek near Nelson Story's trading post. Sensing the Crow were going to stay put—at least for the time being—along the Yellowstone River, Story sold "Fort Sherman" to another trader, Major A. S. Reed, and his partner, John Bowles. The pair quickly moved the log structure about two miles downstream to where the Carroll Trail crossed Big Spring Creek. Thereafter, it was known as Reed's Fort (or Reedsfort). With the establishment of Reed's Fort, Camp Lewis and the Carroll Trail, the Judith Basin seemed increasingly less remote to Euro-Americans. It was not yet an "inland empire" of vast cattle ranches and prosperous farms, but few familiar with the area wanted to see it revert back to tribal territory.¹¹⁴

Straddling the divide between Indian and Euro-American culture were the Metis. This distinct cultural group formed organically through the marriage of French, Scotch, and Irish fur trappers to Cree, Saulteaux (Ojibwa), and Chippewa women. Metis culture was originally centered in the Red River region of present-day Manitoba and Minnesota, but many Metis settled near trading posts across the Canadian and American West, where they worked as trappers, hunters and traders. In 1879, a group of Metis led by Pierre Berger began a migration that eventually brought about 150 families to the Judith Basin. Another leader of the "Spring Creek Community," as it came to be known, was Francis Janeaux. A seasoned trader, Janeaux quickly homesteaded on the former site of Camp Lewis and established his own trading post. Following quickly on the heels of the Metis was a steady stream of stockmen and gold seekers. As the Judith Basin was cleared of its native bison—the last significant hunt occurred during the winter of 1881-1882—cattle and sheep took their place. At the same time, gold was discovered in the Judith Mountains, spawning the mining town of Maiden. Increased activity in the area also brought a renewed military presence with the construction of Fort Maginnis on the east side of the Judith Mountains in 1880. For the Metis, who had hoped to establish their own semi-autonomous society in the Judith Basin, the

¹¹³ Lewistown Historic Resources Commission, "Lewistown, Montana: A Tour of Historic Lewistown," March 2008; Worthen, C. B. "History of Central Montana before 1871," c. 1926; Hilger, David. "Earliest Records Relating to the Judith Basin Country and Some Stirring Adventures When This Was an Indian Hunting Ground," *Lewistown Democrat-News*, 24 December 1924; Graetz, Rick and Susie. *This is Montana: A Geography-Geographic History of Montana*, Helena, MT: Northern Rockies Publishing, 2003, 337-338.

¹¹⁴ Russell, Steve F. "The Carroll Trail, 1875," Ames, Iowa: Historical Trail Research, 2002, 1; Malone, Michael P. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* [Revised Edition], Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1991, 76-77; Foster, John F. "Early History Revolved Around Carroll Trail, Fort McGinnis," in *Lewistown News-Argus*, 16 Dec. 1984.

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encroachment of Euro-Americans into the Judith Basin was disappointing but inevitable. Some Metis adapted to the increasingly white community that would soon become Lewistown, while others left the Judith Basin for good. Today, Montana's Metis are still a "landless" people seeking federal recognition, but they are recognized at the state level as the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians.¹¹⁵

Fergus County in Transition

Fergus County developed steadily during the remainder of the 19th century, reaching a population of 6,937 by 1900. Livestock and mining interests dominated the scene, but there was also a move toward stabilization and community development. This was evident in the formation of livestock associations, the political organization of Fergus County and the socio-economic development of Lewistown. The Lewistown area's first post office opened at Reedsfort in 1881, but Francis Janeaux, the popular Metis trader, platted a competing village on his homestead (the former site of Camp Lewis) the very next year. In 1884, Janeaux secured a post office for his village, and the community of Lewistown was officially added to the map of Montana. Janeaux also donated property for the town's first school in 1882 and a Catholic church in 1887. In the midst of these important civic contributions, Janeaux faced serious financial difficulties. In 1883, he turned his store over to his wealthy wholesale supplier, Tomas C. Power of Fort Benton. Power, who was already running cattle in the Judith Basin, quickly established the Power Mercantile Co. This general store and wholesaling firm would remain a fixture on Main Street in Lewiston for years to come.¹¹⁶ As the county seat, Lewistown held the most promise for sustained commercial development, but there were other significant communities in early Fergus County. Some, like Maiden and Gilt Edge, were mining towns, while other, like Ubet, Philbrook and Grass Range were important stage stations. Other important civic developments during the late 19th century included the establishment of a newspaper (the *Mineral Argus*) at Maiden in 1883 and, eight years later, the formation of the Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association. The expressed purpose of the latter organization was to establish an annual county fair at Lewistown.¹¹⁷ A final indication of progress during this period was the elevation of Montana to statehood in 1889.

Naturally, the forward march of progress in Central Montana was not without setbacks and frustrations. Most notable of these was the collapse of the open range cattle industry after the severe winter of 1886-1887. Chillingly documented by the iconic work of "cowboy artist" Charlie Russell, this devastating event cost stockmen in Central Montana an estimated 85% of their herds.¹¹⁸ This left the range open (at least temporarily) to the sheep ranchers, whose stock fared somewhat better in Montana's severe winters. Just as significant was Montana's evolving transportation landscape. The Northern Pacific Railroad completed its transcontinental route across southern Montana in 1883, followed by the Great Northern Railway across the northern section of the state 1893. While this spurred growth throughout much of Montana, it left the central section of the state isolated once more. The railroads put an end to steamboat navigation along the Missouri River, rendering the network of overland freight trails that crisscrossed Central Montana increasingly obsolete. Still more frustrating was a stall in railroad development that followed the financial panic of 1893. At the dawn of the 20th century, it seemed inconceivable that Central Montana, with all its agricultural and mineral riches, still lacked one of the most important indicators of contemporary civilization: a railroad. The region's outlook on the railroad situation was captured by the *Fergus County*

¹¹⁵ Montana Office of Public Instruction, Division of Indian Education. *Montana Indian Education for All: Montana Indians: Their History and Location*, Helena, MT: April 2009, 63-67; Annette, Travis. "Where the Buffalo Roam: The Migration of the Red River Metis to Lewistown, MT," Bozeman, MT: Montana State University, Department of History, c. 1991, 19-25 and 32-37; *This is Montana*, 337-338.

¹¹⁶ *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 73 and 150; Mueller, George D. "Francis A. Janeaux: Founder of Lewistown," 10 December 1978. "Where the Buffalo Roam," 28, 30 and 32-33; Zellick, Anna. "A History of Fergus County, 1879-1915," Thesis, University of Chicago, 1945, Chapter III, Page 1.

¹¹⁷ Montana Historical Society. "The *Mineral Argus and Fergus County Argus*." Accessed online <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/essays/631/>; "Articles of Incorporation, Fergus County Agricultural, Mineral and Stock Association," available at the Lewistown Public Library.

¹¹⁸ "A History of Fergus County, 1879-1915," Chapter 3, Page 16.

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Argus in a special “pictorial issue” published on April 1, 1901. Under the headline, “Terse and to the Point,” the editor expounded:

This empire, enriched by the hand of Nature and in the heart of one of the greatest states under the flag, populated with thriving towns, is untouched by the greatest developer of modern times—the railroad...Who can say what will be the increase in various values, and who can measure the possibilities of development when he comes rushing in? Connection with the railroads is now made by stages and freight teams. The business is here, and the Burlington, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern will be, too, before long. To-day Fergus County possesses all the opportunities of a frontier in the midst of civilization. Now is the time for capital and the settler to take advantage of the situation.¹¹⁹

By their own assessment, then, Central Montanans were still living along America’s settlement frontier over a decade after it was declared obsolete by the United States Census Bureau.

Building Tracks to the Inland Empire

When railroad service did finally reach Lewistown in 1903, it was Richard Harlow’s upstart Montana Railroad and not—as one might have hoped—a branch line of the Northern Pacific or Great Northern. Established in the mid-1890s, the Montana Railroad was constructed in fits and starts from its western terminus at Lombard, a small Missouri River town located about 50 miles south of Helena along the Northern Pacific Railroad. Harlow, a Helena attorney and entrepreneur, initially intended to tap into the silver-rich Castle Mountains near White Sulphur Springs, but his railroad arrived too late to capitalize on the mining frontier. Construction then shifted toward the Musselshell Valley, a region that held great agricultural promise. The Montana Railroad reached the hamlet of Merino in June of 1900, where Harlow immediately platted a new town named in honor of himself.¹²⁰ Harlowton would grow into a bustling community of nearly 800 people by 1910 and be declared the seat of Wheatland County in 1917. The ever-attractive Judith Basin, located just north of Harlowton via the Judith Gap, was a natural point of expansion for the Montana Railroad. After months of speculation, Harlow announce his plans to extend his line to Lewistown in the summer of 1902.¹²¹ Construction continued through most the following year, with the “final spike” driven by Lewistown mayor, L. E. Eldridge, on October 30, 1903. The Montana Railroad did not possess the development tools of its more established competitors—there were no land grants or aggressive advertising schemes. It did, however, finally connect Central Montana to the transcontinental transportation system, which was more than enough spark a major construction boom in Lewistown. An estimated \$150,650 was spent on new construction in 1903 and another \$210,000 the following year.¹²²

While Richard Harlow’s independent railroad pushed into the Judith Basin, Montana’s transcontinental lines were in a period of consolidation. The Northern Pacific went bankrupt during the Panic of 1893, only to be bought up by powerful railroad magnate, James J. Hill, and famed New York banker, J. P. Morgan. Known as the “Empire Builder,” Hill already controlled the Great Northern Railway and his acquisition of the Northern Pacific effectively created a railroad monopoly in the American Northwest.¹²³ Unfortunately for Lewistown, Hill’s corporate maneuvering stalled the construction of several branch lines, including one that would link the Great Northern and Northern Pacific lines via the Judith Gap. By 1905, however, Hill was ready to initiate his construction program through Central Montana. The happy news was announced in the *Fergus County Argus* on December 1, 1905. Hill’s new north-south route, eventually dubbed the “Billings & Northern” would bypass Lewistown to the west, but the booming city could expect a branch line as soon as possible. The same issue carried other railroad tidbits. Of particular interest to Montanans was

¹¹⁹ “Terse and to the Point,” *Fergus County Argus*, Pictorial Edition, 1 April 1901, 1.

¹²⁰ Jones, Dale. “Montana Railroad Logo Story,” 2012. Accessed online at <http://www.railroads-of-montana.com/>.

¹²¹ “Railroad Will Be Extended to Lewistown,” *Fergus County Argus*, 2 July 1902, 1.

¹²² “Lewistown Improvements,” *Fergus County Argus*, 28 December 1904, 1; Montana State Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places Sign Text – Fergus County, accessed online at <http://montanahistorywiki.pbworks.com/w/page/21639748/National%20Register%20-%20Fergus>.

¹²³ *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 181-182.

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a brief article on a recently-authorized extension of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad between South Dakota and the Puget Sound.¹²⁴

Backed by William Rockefeller, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul promised to compete with the Great Northern and Northern Pacific—very good news for Montanans. “We want to divide our business between Rockefeller and Hill,” explained the *Helena Independent*:

We want competition. We want the swift growth of business, of profit, of prosperity, that will come when we have a railroad rich enough, independent enough and powerful enough to give the Hill system that kind of argument. In the whole country there is not a combination mighty enough to enter into rivalry with Hill for the business of the northwest except the Rockefellers. Therefore, we want the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul built into Montana before the single interest which now controls our commercial destiny devours us piecemeal.¹²⁵

Over the next two decades, the rivalry between the “Hill lines” and the “Milwaukee Road” would transform Lewistown and Central Montana. The *Fergus County Argus* announced the selected route of the Milwaukee Road through Montana on March 9, 1906.¹²⁶ Unlike earlier transcontinental railroads, who received extensive land grants, the Milwaukee Road secured its right-of-way through the purchase of private property and small, independent railroads. The Montana Railroad, while in need of substantial improvements, provided an important link between the Musselshell Valley and the Missouri River at Lombard. That it included a branch line to Lewistown and the Judith Basin was a valuable bonus. Richard Harlow had mortgaged his railroad to Hill, but the Milwaukee Road was still able to wrestle it away. Lewistown was officially connected to Chicago in early 1908, when Milwaukee Road construction crews reached Harlowton.¹²⁷ The new (and final) transcontinental railroad drove its “golden spike” near Gold Creek, in western Montana, on May 19, 1909. The competition, Hill’s Billings & Northern line, was running through the Judith Gap by late 1908.¹²⁸ For the next three years, speculation swirled about construction of the promised Lewistown Branch. Then, on October 10, 1911, the *Fergus County Democrat* announced that the Great Northern was finally buying right-of-way between Lewistown and Moccasin, located about 20 miles west on the main line of the Billings & Northern.¹²⁹ When the Great Northern reached Lewistown in November of 1912, the city schools closed so that the “children might witness the historic event.”¹³⁰

Boom and Bust in the Judith Basin

The transformation of the Judith Basin following the arrival of the railroads was a captivating story—and not just for Montanans. This excerpt, published on June 17, 1911 in the *Omaha Bee*, expresses the excitement of the era:

The Judith Basin woke up, and the transformation of this range country into a region of farms which than began has proceeded in the most astonishing manner....new towns sprung up like mushrooms. Back of the towns were the farms and the farmers who were making good. Grain elevators became familiar and suggestive features of the landscape.¹³¹

Never before (or since) has Central Montana experienced such wide-spread optimism.

The forces behind Montana’s homestead boom between 1909 and 1920 are well-documented. The advancement of dry-land farming, the liberalization of homesteading laws through the Enlarged

¹²⁴ “Surveyors are in the Field,” and “Milwaukee Road is Coming,” *Fergus County Argus*, 1 December 1905, 1.

¹²⁵ Quoted in “One or Both,” *Fergus County Argus*, 22 September 1905, 4.

¹²⁶ “Route of the Milwaukee Railroad,” *Fergus County Argus*, 9 March 1906, 1.

¹²⁷ “Railroad Men in the City,” *Fergus County Democrat*, 21 January 1908, 1.

¹²⁸ “Through Train Service Soon,” *Fergus County Democrat*, 10 November 1908, 1.

¹²⁹ “G. N. is Buying Right of Way,” *Fergus County Democrat*, 10 October 1911, 1.

¹³⁰ “G. N. Completed to Lewistown,” *Fergus County Democrat*, 26 November 1912, 1.

¹³¹ “Progress of Western History: Judith Basin Transformed,” *Omaha Bee*, 17 June 1911, 9.

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Homestead Act of 1909 and the Stock-Raising Act of 1916, heavy rainfall, high crop prices, and aggressive promotion by railroads, land speculators and community boosters all combined to bring almost 400,000 new people to Montana between 1910 and 1918.¹³² In particular, homesteaders flocked to Central Montana. During the 1913-1914 fiscal year, the Lewistown Land Office led the nation in homestead filings. Of the 20,662 homestead filings made in Montana that year, 7,103 (or 34%) originated from the Lewistown Land Office.¹³³ The population of Fergus County skyrocketed, reaching an all-time high of 28,344 by 1920. During the same period, Lewistown grew from a town of just under 3,000 to a bustling city of over 6,000, while smaller towns sprang up across the landscape at an astonishing rate. When listed alphabetically, the dozens of new towns dotting Central Montana's landscape represented almost every letter of the alphabet—only I, O, Q and X were left out of the town-naming bonanza.

While the proliferation of towns was impressive, most of Fergus County's newest residents settled on small farms that proved remarkably productive during the boom period. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of farms in Fergus County jumped from 2,310 to 4,226, while the population hovered around 30,000 by 1914. Fergus County farms produced an impressive 10 million bushels of grains in 1913, including winter wheat (5 million bushels), oats (3 million bushels), barley (1.5 million bushels), spring wheat (1.4 million bushels) and flax (100,000 bushels). Ranching also continued to be lucrative, with cattle prices reaching record highs by 1914 and mutton prices holding steady.¹³⁴ As food prices climbed with the onset of World War I, so did agricultural profits. In this context, the revival of the Fergus County Fair and the opening of a new livestock auction at the fairgrounds makes perfect sense. The agricultural output of Central Montana during this period was certainly worthy of exhibition and sale.

Tragically, Montana's homestead boom was followed by a bust. Drought conditions and falling agricultural prices after World War I forced many Montana farmers from their land. "The grim statistics tell their story," writes Michael P. Malone in *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*:

During the period 1919-25, roughly two million acres passed out of production and eleven thousand farms, about 20 percent of the state's total, were vacated. Twenty thousand mortgages were foreclosed, and half of Montana farmers lost their land....Between 1920 and 1926, 214 of Montana's commercial banks—over one-half of the state's total—failed, carrying thousands of family savings accounts down with them. Montana had the highest bankruptcy rate in the United States.¹³⁵

By 1930, Montana could claim another unfortunate record as the only state to lose population during the generally prosperous 1920s. Statewide population fell from an estimated 769,590 at the peak of the homestead boom to 548,889 in 1920 to 537,606 in 1930. Fergus County fared better than most during the agricultural depression of the 1920s, but still experienced a steep (41%) decline in population. The number of farms also fell dramatically from 4,226 in 1920 to just 1,918 five years later.¹³⁶ The loss of territory to Judith Basin County (1920) and Petroleum County (1926) accounted for some of the decline, but the worsening agricultural economy played a significant role as well. The population of Fergus County fell to 16,531 by 1930 and has continued to decline—at various rates—ever since. Lewistown also lost a net sum of 762 residents during the 1920s, with its population falling to 5,358 by 1930. Since that point, Lewistown has experienced periods of growth, with population spiking above 7,000 in 1960 and 1980, and decline. The 2010 Census recorded 5,901 residents in Lewistown and 11,586 in Fergus County.

¹³² *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 242. According to "an official state promotional publication," the population of Montana reached 769,590 at the height of the homestead boom in 1918.

¹³³ "Business Done by Land Office," *Fergus County Democrat*, 31 December 1914, 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*; United States Department of Agriculture. *Census of Agriculture: 1925*, "Montana: County Table 1: Farms and Farm Acreage, 1910, 1920 and 1925," 84.

¹³⁵ *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 283.

¹³⁶ *Census of Agriculture: 1925*, 84.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Lewistown Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 47.083789 Longitude: -109.430333

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 12 Easting: 619146 Northing: 5215669

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is a 90' x 125' rectangle centered on the Draft Horse Barn, a 56' x 100' structural clay tile building. It is situated at the north entrance of the Fergus County Fairgrounds.

The Draft Horse Barn is bounded on the south by Fairgrounds Drive, a semi-circular drive off U.S. Highway 191 that travels around the horseracing track. The north edge of the drive runs about ten feet from the façade of the Draft Horse Barn. On the west, the property is bounded by a secondary north-south drive running between the Draft Horse Barn and the Livestock Exhibition Pavilion. Its east edge runs about fifteen feet from the Draft Horse Barn. There is no natural boundary on the north or east sides of the property, where the Draft Horse Barn is surrounded by grass. Here, an artificial line situated fifteen feet from the east and north elevations of the Horse Barn will be used as a boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

As drawn, the boundary encompasses all land historically associated with the Draft Horse Barn not altered by more recent developments at the Fergus County Fairgrounds.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jessie Nunn / Independent Consultant
organization: _____
street & number: 600 Meadowlark Lane
city or town: Livingston state: Montana zip code: 59047
e-mail jessienunn@gmail.com
telephone: 406-208-8727
date: July 1, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: **Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds**
City or Vicinity: **Lewistown (vicinity)**
County: **Fergus** State: **Montana**

Photographer: **Jessie Nunn / Independent Consultant**
Date Photographed: **October 28, 2016 (Photos 2, 3 & 4) and June 6, 2017**

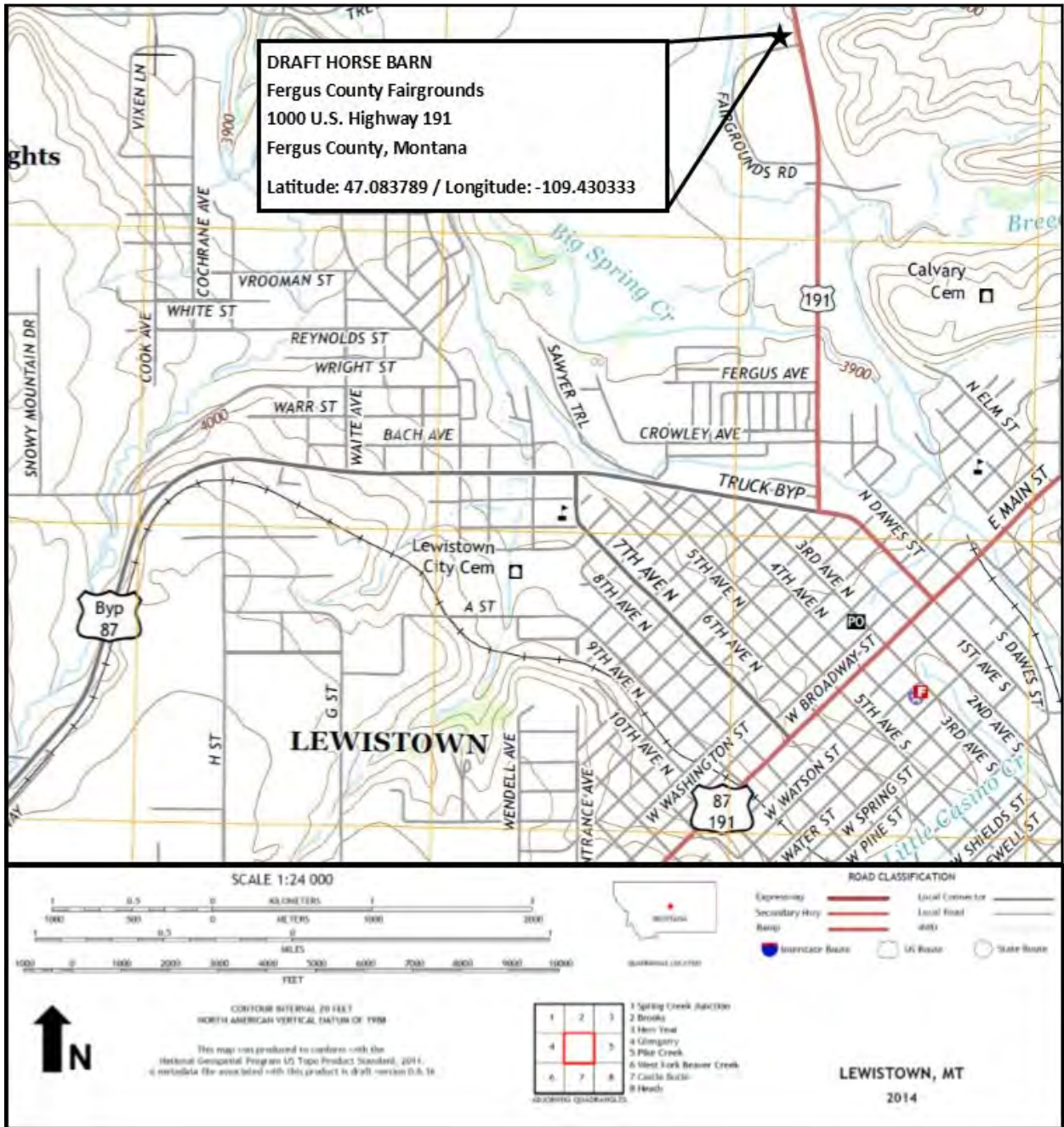
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 10.** South Façade, Facing: N
- 02 of 10.** South Façade and West Elevation, Facing: NE
- 03 of 10.** Rear (North) Elevation, Facing: S
- 04 of 10.** South Façade and East Elevation, Facing: NW
- 05 of 10.** South Façade, Detail of Fanlight, Facing: N
- 06 of 10.** South Façade, Detail of West Door, Facing: N
- 07 of 10.** Interior, East Alley, Facing: S
- 08 of 10.** Interior, Detail of Roof Structure, Facing: N
- 09 of 10.** Interior, Office at end of Cross Alley, Facing: E
- 10 of 10.** Interior, Cross Alley and West Entrance, Facing: W

See below

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
 Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
 County and State



Location of Draft Horse Barn, Lewistown, Montana.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Aerial of the Fergus County Fairgrounds showing location of Draft Horse Barn in relation to other features. North is top of image.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

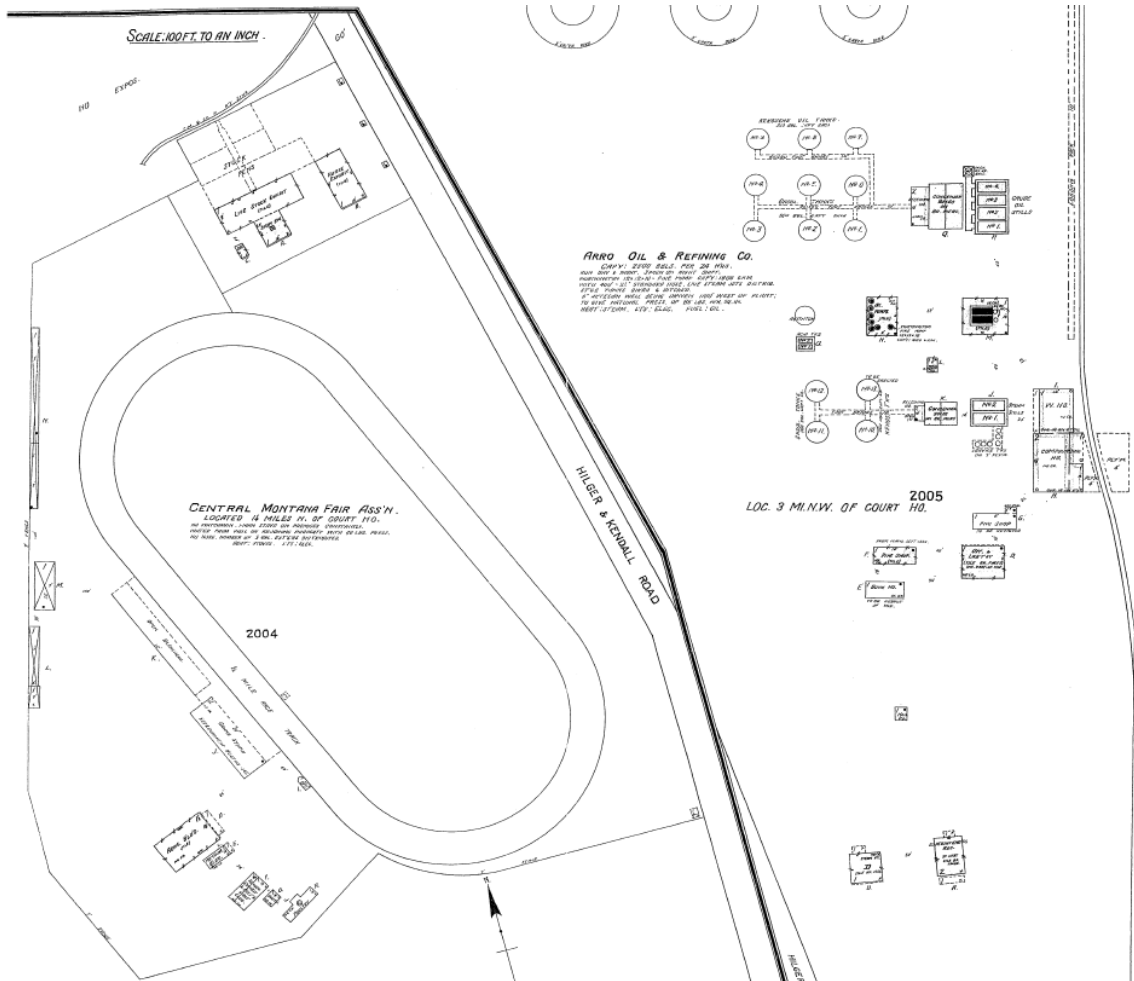
Fergus, Montana
County and State



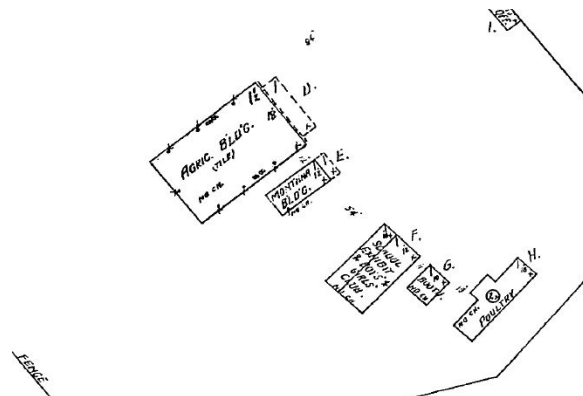
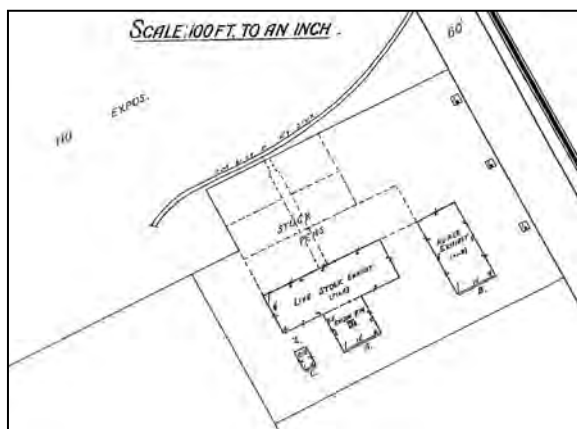
Government Land Office Survey Plat, 1875. The original GLO survey plat for Township 15 North, Range 13 East depicts the early development of the Lewistown area, including Camp Lewis and Reed & Bowles's trading post. The approximate location of the Fergus County Fairgrounds (1891 – present) is marked with a star.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
 Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
 County and State

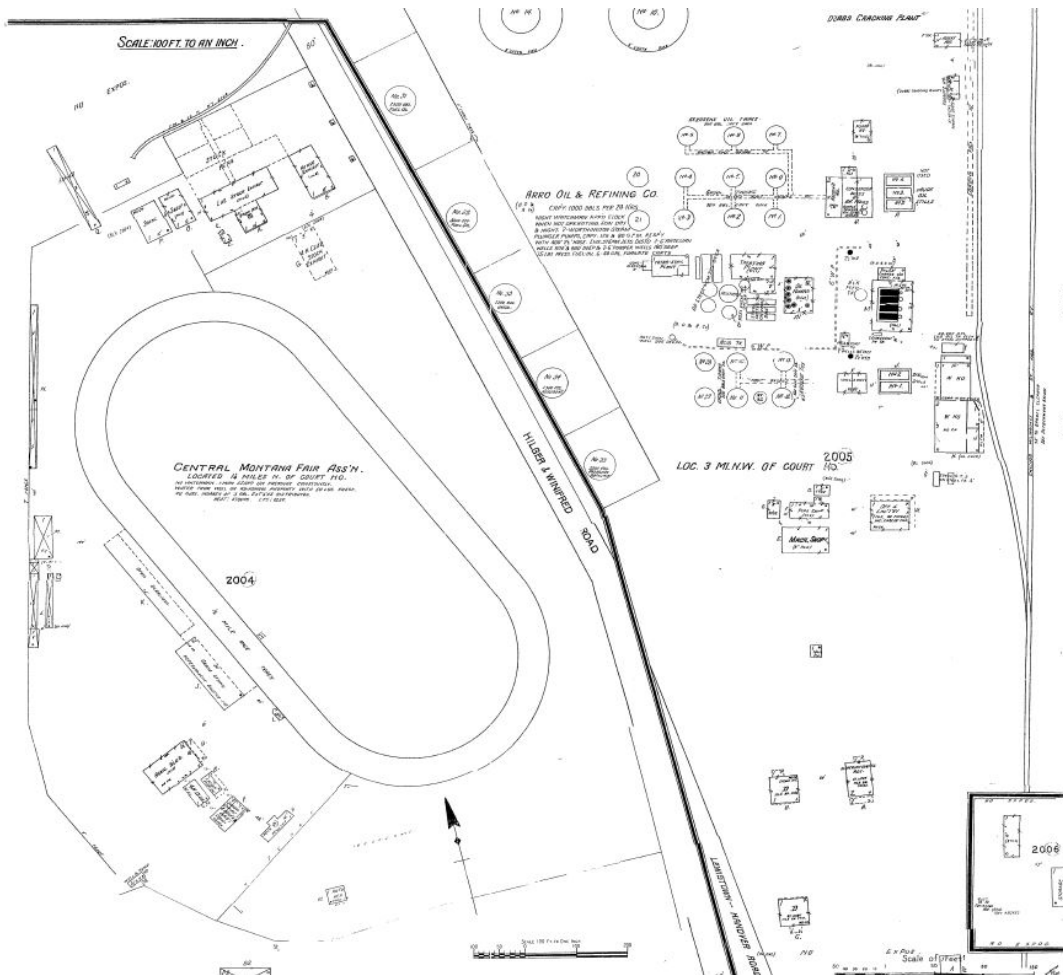


1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. This map depicts the fairgrounds five years after construction of the Livestock Complex (top) and Agriculture Hall (large building at lower left). A close-up view of the Livestock Exhibit (left) and Agriculture Hall (right) is found below.

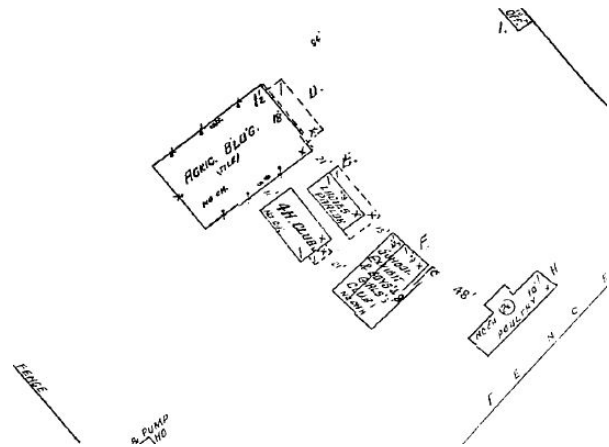
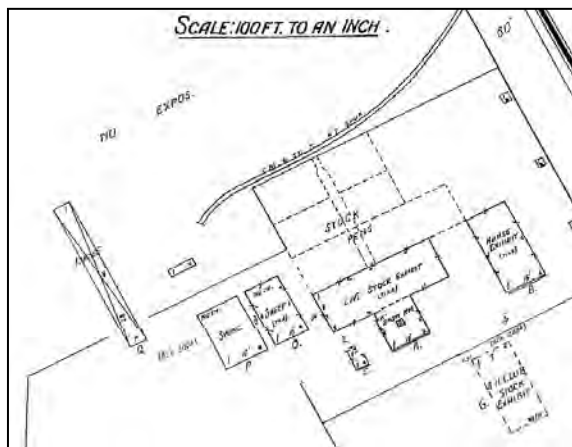


Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State

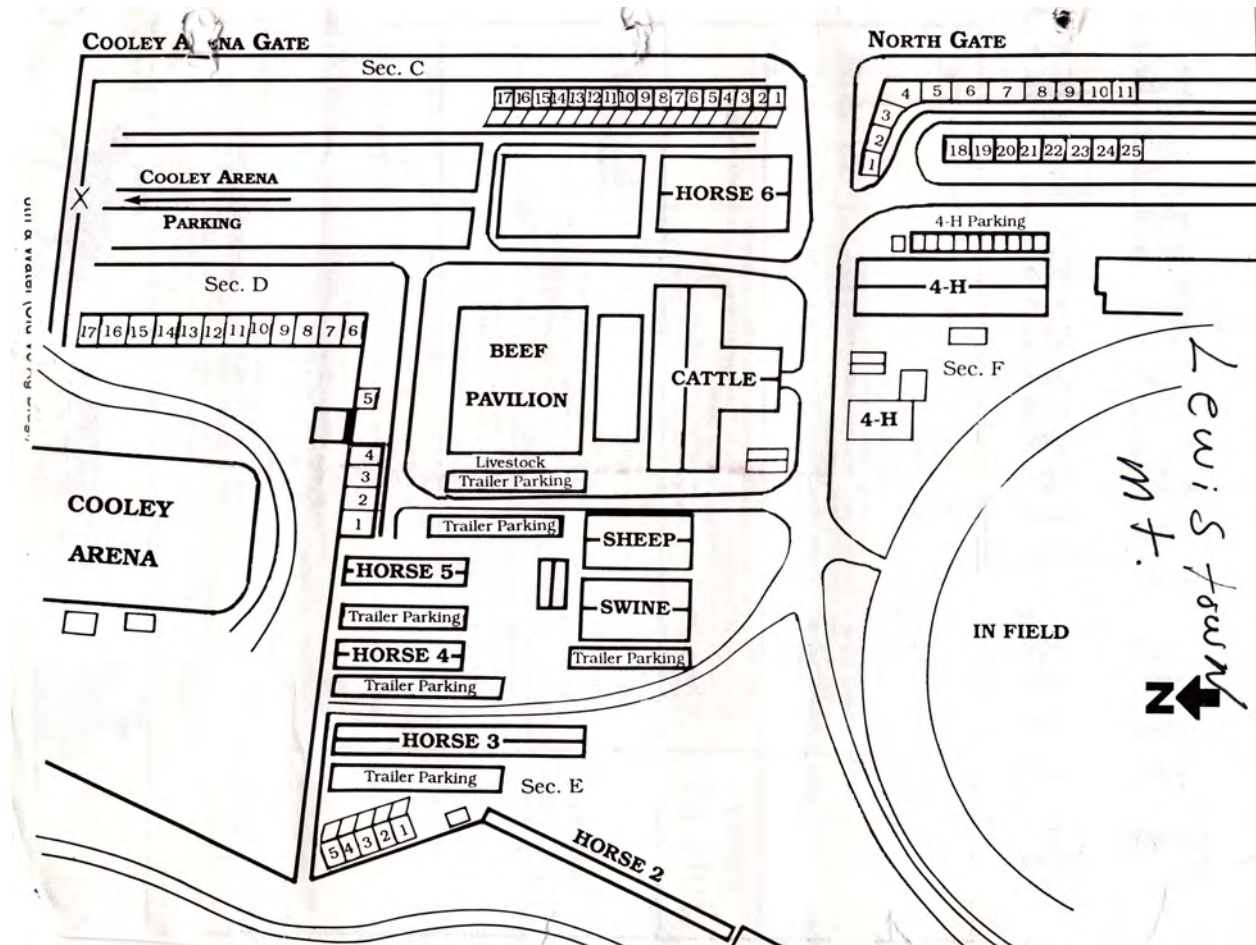


1943 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. This map depicts all most all development at the Fergus County Fairgrounds during the historic period (1891-1967). A close-up of the Livestock Complex (left) and Agriculture Hall (right) is found below.



Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

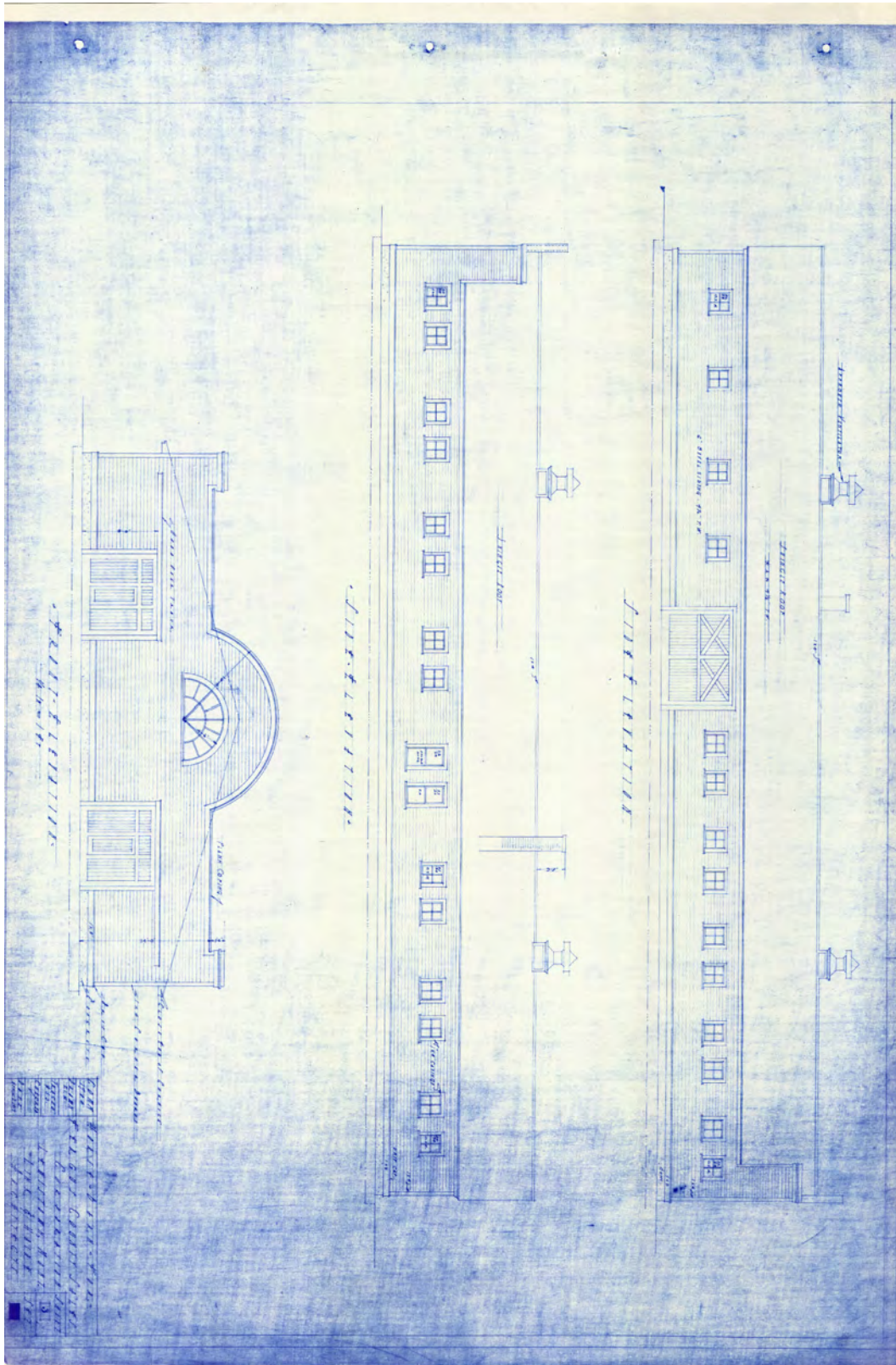
Fergus, Montana
County and State



Map of Livestock Complex, c. 2000. Courtesy Lewistown Public Library.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

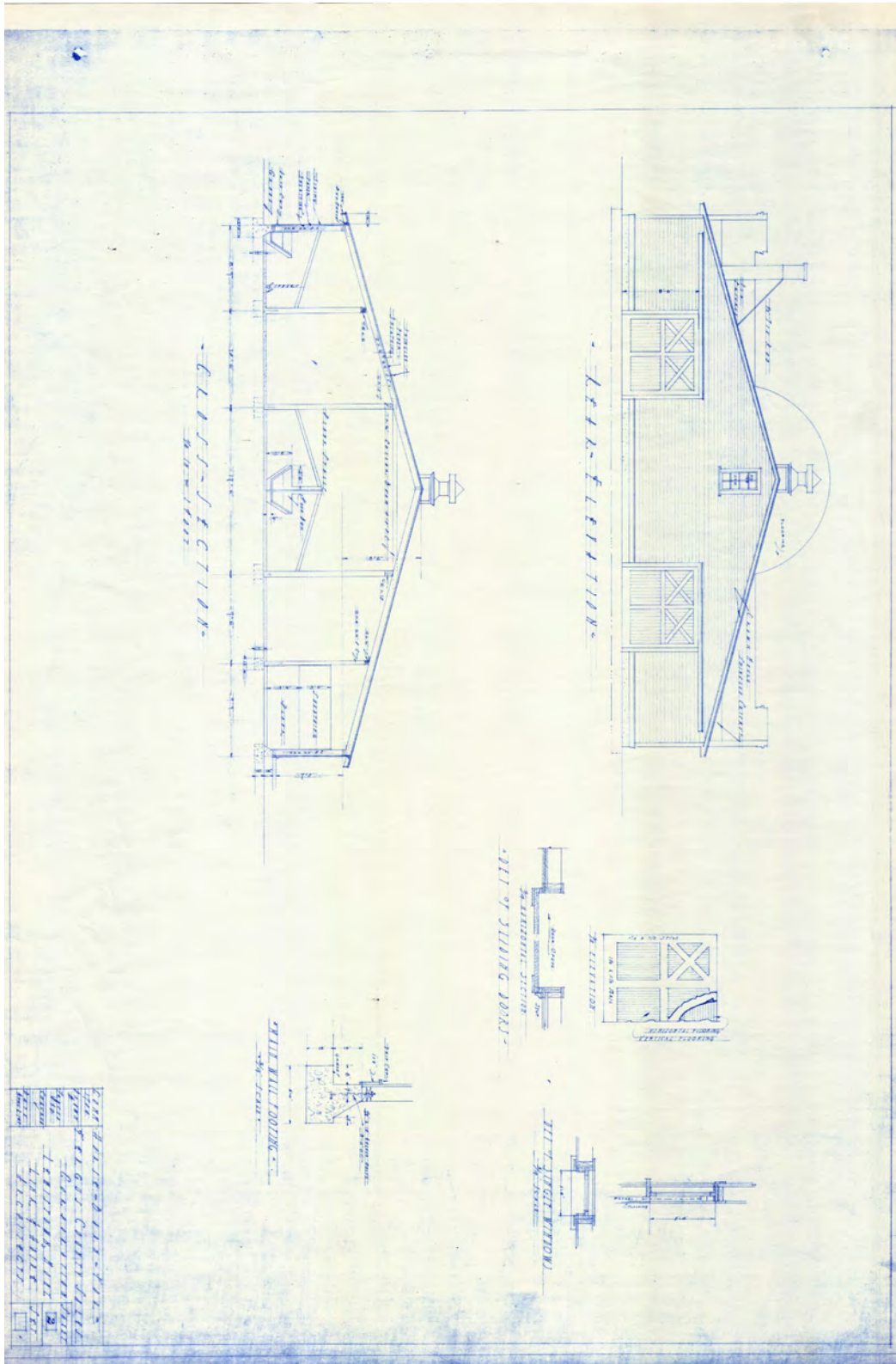
Fergus, Montana
County and State



Elevation Drawing of Draft Horse Barn, April 2, 1917.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

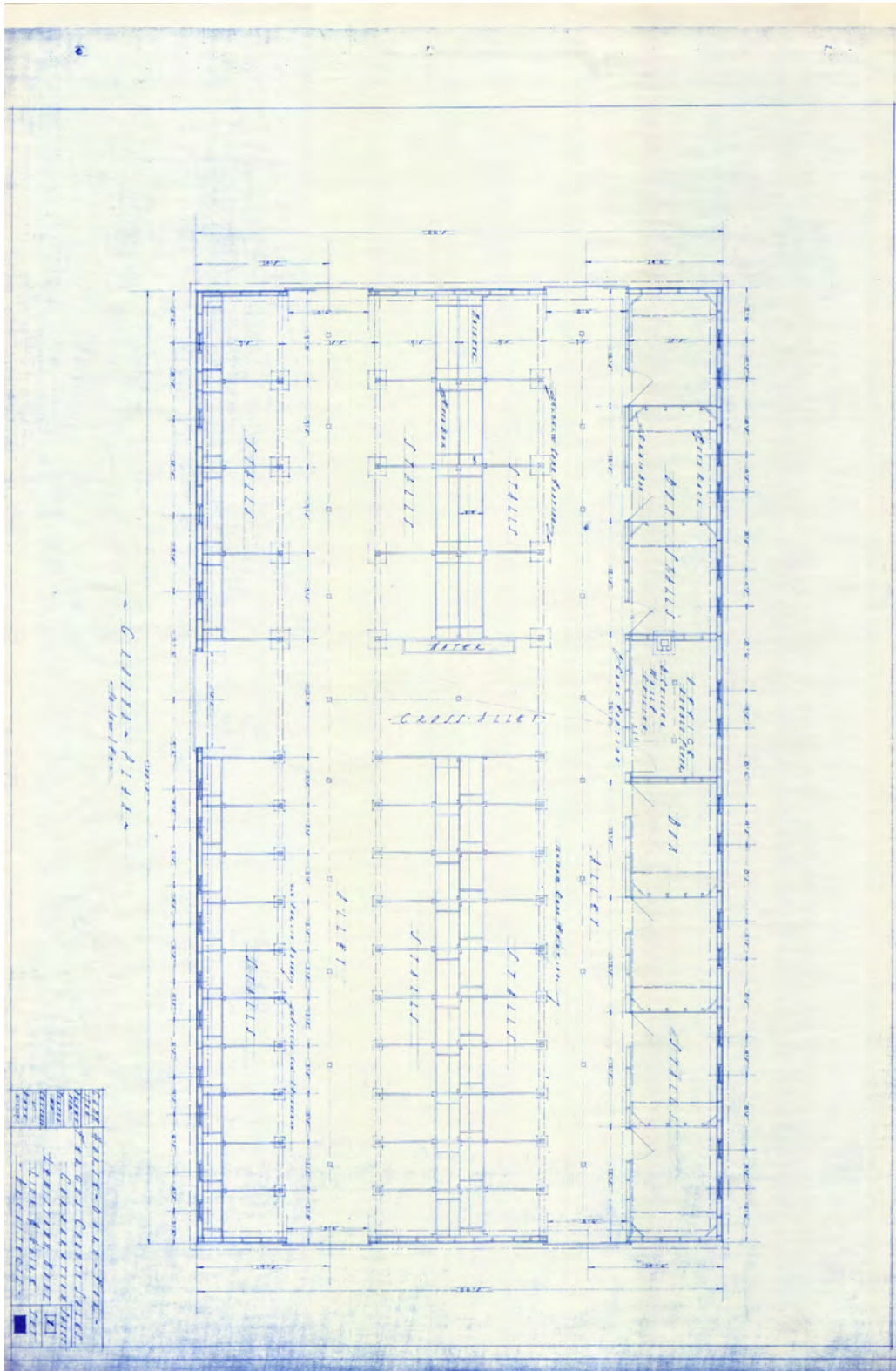
Fergus, Montana
County and State



Rear Elevation and Cross Section Drawings of Draft Horse Barn, April 2, 1917.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

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Ground Plans of Draft Horse Barn, April 1, 1917.

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
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Fergus, Montana
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Historic Photographs



Livestock Complex, c. 1917. The photograph depicts the livestock barns shortly after completion. Draft Horse Barn (right), Cattle Barn (center) and Office-Restaurant (left). Courtesy Lewistown Public Library.



Cattle Show / Parade in front of Grandstands, 1931. This picture depicts the growing livestock facilities at the Fergus County Fairgrounds. The Draft Horse Barn is at far right, followed by the Cattle Barn, Restaurant Office, Sheep Barn, Swine Barn and Horse Barn No. 3 (far left).

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
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National Register Photographs--Photo Log

Name of Property: **Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds**

City or Vicinity: **Lewistown (vicinity)**

County: **Fergus** State: **Montana**

Photographer: **Jessie Nunn / Independent Consultant**

Date Photographed: **October 28, 2016 (Photos 2, 3 & 4) and June 6, 2017**

0001 of 10. South Façade, Facing: N

0002 of 10. South Façade and West Elevation, Facing: NE

0003 of 10. Rear (North) Elevation, Facing: S

0004 of 10. South Façade and East Elevation, Facing: NW

0005 of 10. South Façade, Detail of Fanlight, Facing: N

0006 of 10. South Façade, Detail of West Door, Facing: N

0007 of 10. Interior, East Alley, Facing: S

0008 of 10. Interior, Detail of Roof Structure, Facing: N

0009 of 10. Interior, Office at end of Cross Alley, Facing: E

0010 of 10. Interior, Cross Alley and West Entrance, Facing: W



Photo 0001. South Façade, Facing: N

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0002. South Façade and West Elevation, Facing: NE

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0003. Rear (North) Elevation, Facing: S

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0004. South Façade and East Elevation, Facing: NW

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0005. South Façade, Detail of Fanlight, Facing: N

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0006. South Façade, Detail of West Door, Facing: N

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0007. Interior, East Alley, Facing: S

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0008. Interior, Detail of Roof Structure, Facing: N

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0009. Interior, Office at end of Cross Alley, Facing: E

Draft Horse Barn, Fergus County Fairgrounds
Name of Property

Fergus, Montana
County and State



Photo 0010. Interior, Cross Alley and West Entrance, Facing: W

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

















DRAFT



HORSES





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 10/30/2017 Date of Pending List: 11/27/2017 Date of 16th Day: 12/12/2017 Date of 45th Day: 12/14/2017 Date of Weekly List: 12/14/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 12/14/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

October 26, 2017

J. Paul Loether, Keeper, National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C St., NW - Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Loether,

Enclosed please find the following nominations for your consideration for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

DeSmet (boat) **Flathead County, Montana**
Listed under the Glacier National Park Multiple Property Listing Amended (2016)

Little Chief (boat) **Glacier County, Montana**
Listed under the Glacier National Park Multiple Property Listing Amended (2016)

Grant-Marshall Lime Kiln Historic District **Lewis and Clark County, Montana**

Draft Horse Barn (Fergus County Fairgrounds) **Fergus County, Montana**

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copies of the National Register nominations for the DeSmet, Little Chief, Grant-Marshall Lime Kiln Historic District, and the Draft Horse Barn (Fergus County Fairgrounds) to the National Register of Historic Places.

Owners and public officials were notified in excess of 30 days prior to the Preservation Review Board meeting. In addition, a courtesy notification was provided to Glacier National Park (who waived their right to comment) regarding the potential listing of the *DeSmet* and *Little Chief*. The Lewis and Clark County CLG concurred with listing the Grant-Marshall Lime Kiln Historic District in the National Register. The Review Board unanimously recommended that these properties be nominated and I concur with its recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark Baupler, PhD
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

225 North Roberts Street
P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201
(406) 444-2694
(406) 444-2696 FAX
montanahistoricalsociety.org