

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Socialist Hall

other name/site number: Fran Johnson's Sport Shop

2. Location

street & number: 1957 Harrison Ave.

not for publication: N/A  
vicinity: N/A

city/town: Butte

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Silver Bow

code: 093

zip code: 59701

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally X statewide X locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark F. Zumber, Acting SHPO 4/25/95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
   see continuation sheet

   determined eligible for the  
National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   determined not eligible for the  
National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   removed from the National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson R. Beall Signature of the Keeper Entered in the Date of Action  
National Register 5-26-95

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### 5. Classification

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<b>Ownership of property:</b> private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b> building	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> 0	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> building(s)
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> N/A	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> TOTAL

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### 6. Function or Use

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<b>Historic Functions:</b>	<b>Current Functions:</b>
Social: meeting hall, Industry: communications facility	Commerce: specialty store

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### 7. Description

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**Architectural Classification:**

Other: Western Commercial

**Materials:**

foundation: stone/concrete  
walls: concrete/brick  
roof: wood/asphalt  
other: N/A

### Narrative Description

Socialist Hall is an excellent example of craftsmanship and design in a two-part commercial block style building. It is a two-story building with highly decorative dichromatic brickwork and varied details visible on the upper portion of the main facade. In the mid-1950s (estimated) the lower portion of the main facade was altered, but the building retains a large measure of its original integrity in material and design.

The primary facade (east elevation) faces Harrison Avenue and is clad with chocolate colored and beige brick, all with a high fired face. Brick coursing is running bond, the main body is defined by the horizontal banding of four courses of beige brick with one recessed course of chocolate brick. Common to this type of building, the horizontal divisions create two distinct zones. The horizontal banding is terminated at each side with a vertical area of chocolate brick with a quoin detailing.

Four main window openings and two secondary window openings are introduced into the lower two-thirds of the horizontal banding. The four main window openings are large six-over-six double hung units placed symmetrically at the middle of the facade. The window openings are spanned with beige segmental arches with chocolate brick eyebrows. Each window is joined by a continuous sill of chocolate brick. Flanking the four windows is a small four-over-four double hung window on each side. A flat "jack" arch of beige and chocolate brick cap and sill the openings respectively.

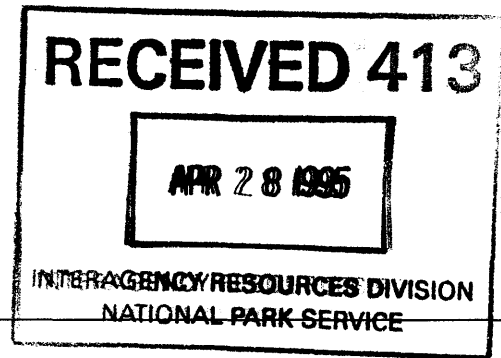
Though the bricks themselves are in good condition, differential settlement toward the south has caused diagonal fractures of the primary facade mortar joints. Approximately fifty masonry anchor bolts dot the main body of the facade. The aged appearance of the bolts would tend to indicate that the movement has stabilized.

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Capping the facade is an intricate pattern of light and dark brick which surrounds the central pediment panel. Projecting beyond the brick parapet cap is the arched top of the sandstone pediment. Within the central panel is a circular logo containing two hands and forearms clasped in a handshake. Surrounding the clasped hands, printed in relief is "\*\* Socialist Party \* Workers of the World Unite." Flanking the circle are large numerals, to the left "19" and on the right "16," indicating the date of construction. Below the circular portion of the panel is a horizontal panel with relief encryption "Socialist Hall." A diamond shape is placed at the start, mid and end of the phrase.

Two large stone piers support the upper facade and frame the store front. The piers are covered with graded tone Norman brick, with a third running bond pattern. This pattern is carried along a 30' veneer stub wall which is the sill for the newer aluminum store front windows. The main door is off center, toward the south, and appears to be the original location. Leading to the second-story hall is an original wood door and some of its original trim. This door is butted against the north pier. All of the aforementioned alterations to the lower portion of the primary facade are estimated to have been done in the mid-1950s. In addition to the alterations to the store front, signage has been added extending across the facades of the Socialist Hall and the adjacent building. Painted masonite panels cover the store front transom lights, depicting ducks and the words "Sports Shop." Above the painted panels there is a sign reading "fishing and hunting information" which visually separates the lower and upper facade. Though somewhat detracting from the building's composition the signs are an easily removable alteration. The one 1950s alteration that does warrant some merit is the large neon sign, which stands in sharp contrast to the pediment reading "Socialist Hall."

The north elevation is common running bond, soft brick. There are nine large window openings, six open to the second floor and three open to the first floor, all of which have lug sills and semi-elliptical arches above. Two of the window openings to the first floor toward the northwest corner have cement patches below them. There appears to be one door opening in the northeast corner. All the openings to the north elevation are covered with plywood. There is also a billboard and wildlife painting on the northeast section of the building.

The west elevation has three large window openings to the second floor. All the window openings have lug sills and semi-elliptical arches and are boarded over. There are two door openings. The one in the Northwest corner is boarded over. The door in the southwest corner is used and has a cement stoop.

The south elevation has seven window openings all of which are the same as that on the North and West elevations. Concealing much of the west elevation is a brick building with a wood addition that abuts Socialist Hall. The brick work on both the west and south elevation is common running bond, soft brick.

The roof is flat with built up roofing materials. The basement is unfinished and reveals the exposed stone foundation. The exterior view of the foundation shows a parch coat of mortar used to seal it from leaks.

The interior of the first floor has had significant modifications to accommodate the retail businesses that have occupied it since 1924. From the first floor interior the window fenestrations are no longer visible having been covered with wooden paneling and mounted shelf units. On the south elevation a door was punched through to the adjacent building in order to use the space as a single retail store.

The interior of the second floor basically remains intact although deteriorated. The original window fenestrations and trim are still evident. Along with high ceilings, the hall's volume still conveys a sense of its original uses as a printing plant and meeting hall.

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Socialist Hall sits at 1957 Harrison Ave. in an area known as the "Flats." Lying a short distance to the south of the downtown district, the area is primarily residential, although the majority of the buildings lining Harrison Ave. are commercial. To the north of the building is a large parking area.

Socialist Hall is an important historic resource linked to the unique political events and turmoil that took place in Butte during the era of the First World War. Despite first floor alterations, the building maintains a large measure of original integrity. The original design and intent are vividly represented, including such important details as the decorative brick work, inscriptions and party symbols. Overall Socialist Hall retains its original integrity in location, design, materials, and most importantly in the feeling it conveys when you read the inscription "Socialist Hall."

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A                      Areas of Significance: Politics/Government, Communications, Social History  
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A                      Period(s) of Significance: 1916-1924  
Significant Person(s): N/A    Significant Dates: 1916  
Cultural Affiliation: N/A    Architect/Builder: J. Frank Mabie

### Narrative Statement of Significance

In the turbulent years leading up to and during the First World War (1900-1920) socialists in Montana played an active and significant role in the state's political and economic life. While their impact was more pronounced in Montana than in most of the rest of the country, their actions reflected nationally significant events associated with the war, labor-management disputes, and one of the greater infringements of civil-liberties in United States history. Built amidst great political turbulence in 1916, Socialist Hall in Butte, Montana was both a symbol of party resilience and the center of socialist activity in the state. It housed the offices of the Socialist Party of Montana, the Butte Local, and the Butte Socialist Publishing Company between 1916-1920. Socialist Hall is eminently eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places on a statewide and national level, under criterion A for its significant contributions on national, statewide and local levels in the areas of Politics/Government, Communications, and Social History.

Historians have tended to dismiss the socialist movement in the United States during the first two decades of the twentieth century as simply another reform movement and have considered its impact as minimal. Upon reconsideration though we see that the socialist movement in the United States did have a significant national impact. For example, Eugene Debs' 1924 bid for president was one of the most significant third party campaigns in our history. Perhaps equally important was the impact of socialism which occurred at the local and state levels. In places like Butte, Montana and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, socialists played significant roles in city government, while at the state level, socialists played a significant role in both urban and rural political movements. Although the movement for socialism in America ultimately failed, its presence helped force the political mainstream to consider reforms that would improve the life of the nation's working class.

Founded as the Social Democratic Party of America in 1898, the Socialist Party established its first local in Montana in Butte the following year. Many of the early members of Montana's Socialist Party were former populists, and included Frank Curran and Henry Davis who in 1911 successfully ran for the Butte City Council on the Socialist ticket.

Butte, once known as the "Gibraltar of unionism," seemed to be a perfect place for the advancement of socialist goals and ideals. (Calvert, p.4) In the first two decades of the twentieth century Butte had a large working class population, of which many were unskilled and thus primarily left outside union organization. The city was also a melting pot of immigrants, mostly from Europe, where some may have already been introduced to socialism. Finally, by the turn of the century Butte along with much of the state was dominated both politically and economically by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) which "personified" all the negative aspects of the capitalist system. (Calvert, p.57) It was under these conditions that the socialist movement spread in Butte and through much of the state.

The Socialist Party of Montana hoped to exploit the economic conditions and demographic make-up of the state to forge a "majority coalition...in which workers would be the leading element."(Calvert, p.7) While the party had revolutionary as well as reformist goals its approach was gradual and peaceful. The party hoped to build a coalition of workers and "use the collective power of the ballot to overthrow capitalism...and begin to construct a socialist society." (Calvert, p.8)

In 1903 the Socialist Party registered its "first municipal electoral success West of the Mississippi" in Anaconda, Montana.(Calvert, p.22) Anaconda seemed an unlikely place for a socialist victory considering ACM domination of the city, but while the company concentrated on fighting opposing mining interests the Socialist Party succeeded in mobilizing the city's working class and electing 6 members to the city's government.

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Following their initial success the Socialist Party of Montana experienced a decline. Conflicts within the party and divisions among organized labor hindered efforts to organize and led to a decline in membership. By "1909 no socialist held an elected office" in Montana. (Calvert, p.22) But in 1910 the party experienced a resurgence under the direction of Louis Duncan, State Secretary, and J. Frank Mabie, State Organizer.

Louis Duncan was a Unitarian minister who joined the Socialist Party in Illinois in 1902. In 1909 Duncan came to Butte to carry out his ministerial duties, but was fired the following year for his socialist activities, which allowed him to work full time for the Socialist Party. J. Frank Mabie was a lather by trade and an original member of the Socialist Party of Montana.

Under the direction of Duncan and Mabie the Socialist Party of Montana began to grow. In 1910 socialists in Montana found encouragement in Milwaukee, where socialists captured the majority of the municipal government in the April elections. They were also encouraged by the election results in Montana where Frank Mabie polled 9% of the state wide vote for Congress. (Calvert, p.35) Realizing the need to promote socialist candidates and principles, the party established the Butte Socialist as a bi-weekly newspaper in 1910. While socialist candidates did not generally fare well in the 1910 elections, there were encouraging signs which the party built on and the following year scored its greatest electoral victory in the state.

In the Butte municipal elections of 1911, eight socialist candidates were elected to the city's government. Besides electing Louis Duncan as mayor, socialist candidates also won races for treasurer, city police judge, and five out of sixteen seats on the city council. Even though Mayor Duncan faced a hostile majority on the council his administration did achieve some of its reform goals. The Duncan Administration was generally credited with ending corruption in government and improving the city's sanitation problems. Hoping to see more reforms the people of Butte reelected Duncan in 1913, making him the "first mayor of Butte to succeed himself." (McGlynn, p.4) While Duncan and other socialists were successful in carrying out a number of reforms larger socialist goals, such as municipal ownership of utilities, never materialized.

Realizing the importance and power of the press, the Socialist Party of Montana at its 1912 convention organized the Butte Socialist Publishing Company, which took over the publication of the Butte Socialist and began publishing the Montana Socialist, a state wide newspaper. The two newspapers, along with the Butte Bulletin established in 1918, played prominent roles in the dissemination of information, publicity, and propaganda for the Socialist Party.

By the end of 1914 the Socialist Party in Montana was again in turmoil. Conflicts with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), and the Butte Miners' Union (BMU) divided the party's constituency. In the summer of 1914 BMU Hall was dynamited by radical unionists. Mayor Duncan responded by cordoning off the area to let the situation diffuse itself, but opponents leveled charges against Duncan for "dereliction of duty." (Calvert, p.88) While the evidence does not support the charges, forces in Butte and in the state government succeeded in having Duncan removed from office and martial law was instituted. The impeachment of Duncan, along with the First World War and a divided working class, contributed to a steady decline in the party until its ultimate demise in 1920.

In 1915 the printing plant of the Butte Socialist Publishing Company, then on Main Street, was blown up by unknown opponents. While no one was ever prosecuted for the crime a number of suspects existed and included ACM detectives and opposition labor organizations. The party recognized the importance of its printing operations and even though it was in decline it managed to organize enough support to construct a new building and re-establish its newspapers.

Socialist Hall was built in the summer of 1916. The women's committee of the Butte Local raised funds for the purchase of the lot and the money and labor needed for its construction were donated. Frank Mabie was in charge of construction and

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the total project, including the lot, was estimated to cost \$6,000. (Montana Socialist, 5/27/16; p.1) The location of the Socialist Hall on the "Flats" (then the suburbs of Butte) is significant, reflecting the strong support Butte socialists enjoyed in the suburban precinct (see Calvert's analysis of voting records).

For the next two years the building housed the offices of the Socialist Party of Montana, the Butte Local, and the Butte Socialist Publishing Company, but by the end of 1918 support for the party had severely declined forcing the suspension of publication of the Butte Socialist and Montana Socialist. In 1920 trustees of the defunct Butte Local Socialist Party of Montana deeded the building to the Bulletin Publishing Company stating "we believe, that the Bulletin Publishing Company in publishing the Butte Daily Bulletin is promulgating the principles of the Socialist Party, and...is reaching more people and can do more propaganda work than the Butte Local Socialist Party of Montana." (Silver-Bow County, Deed Book 149, p.255) The Bulletin was published in Socialist Hall until 1924 when the building was sold at Sheriff's Auction for failure to repay a loan.

As the war in Europe progressed the demand for and the price of copper both increased, but any increase in the miner's wages were offset by inflation. Miners were asked to increase production as part of the war effort, but at the cost of safety. The Socialist Party, IWW, and many labor organizations in Butte protested without avail. Then in June 1917 fire swept through the Speculator Mine killing 164 men. The following day a spontaneous work stoppage spread through the city. In an effort to organize the striking workers William F. Dunne, an electrician and radical unionist, began writing and publishing a strike bulletin. At the end of the following month IWW organizer Frank Little was murdered in Butte and it quickly became apparent that no one would answer for the crime. The situation in Butte was volatile and work in the mines virtually stopped. At the end of August 1917 federal troops were stationed in Butte to maintain order and to insure the mines would stay open. Federal troops remained in Butte until 1921.

By the end of 1917 the strike bulletin had become a regular labor weekly newspaper with its office in Butte. With W.F. Dunne as its editor the paper was "unabashedly revolutionary in its editorial philosophy." (Calvert, p.111) Fearing the power of radical organizations, especially in the wake of the Russian Revolution, the state of Montana and the federal government initiated a campaign to silence and jail its radical critics. With the Socialist Party in disarray the government turned its attention to the IWW and radical unions.

In February 1918 Governor Sam Stewart of Montana called a special session of the state legislature to deal with radicalism in the state. The legislature adopted three measures to suppress dissent: first, the Criminal Syndicalism Act which made it a crime to belong to radical groups like the IWW; second, the Montana Sedition Act, which became a model for the national act, "made it illegal to criticize the government or to incite or inflame resistance." (Calvert, p.112); finally, the legislature provided a legal basis for the Montana Council of Defense. The Council was created by Governor Stewart in 1917 in response to President Wilson's request "that such councils be established to assist the government in carrying on of the war." (Calvert, p.112). In effect the Council became the vanguard of patriotism and with state sanction tried to suppress all forms of dissent in the state. The Council banned the use of the German language and books in public schools. The ban had a tremendous impact on German religious services and caused some of the state's German speaking population to emigrate to Canada. The Council also tried to stop the publication of the Butte Bulletin. While the Bulletin continued to be published, W.F. Dunne and the co-editor, Ed Smith were tried under the Sedition Act for refusing to obey the orders of the Council. Both men were tried and convicted in district court in Helena but remained free until the decision was reversed on appeal in 1920.

With the demise of the Socialist Party in Montana, Dunne used the Bulletin to support the Non-Partisan League (NPL). The NPL, like the Socialist Party, opposed corporate domination of the economy and government. The NPL began as a farmers' protest movement in North Dakota, but in Montana the organization had a large urban constituency. With the

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support of the NPL and the remnants of the Socialist Party, Dunne was elected to the Montana State Assembly, but the NPL lost its momentum and Dunne lost his seat in 1922. Dunne continued to publish the Bulletin in Socialist Hall until 1924 when he lost the building for failure to repay a loan. In the same year Dunne left Montana and joined the Communist Party of America where he was co-editor of the Daily Worker.

Socialist Hall in Butte, Montana stands as a reminder of the efforts of the Socialist Party, industrial unionists, and farm-labor non-partisans to create a "cooperative commonwealth." While there were many reasons for their ultimate failure, including ethnic divisions, economic conditions, electoral rules, company manipulation, suppression by the state and federal government, and internal divisions, the movement for socialism did leave an important legacy.

On a national level, the socialist movement grew from the grassroots and was prevalent across the United States. Socialists were active in many towns and large cities, and such prominent cities as Minneapolis, Cleveland and Milwaukee elected socialist mayors during the 1910s (Weinstein). Such widespread support of socialism pushed the political debate in a direction that ultimately led "to significant economic and institutional reforms that were first implemented during the New Deal." (Calvert, p.150)

Linked by currents of history to the nearby Butte National Historic Landmark District, Socialist Hall is a monument to socialism nationwide, and the turbulent era of labor unrest and political action during the first two decades of the 20th century. Socialist Hall is an important resource in the study of socialism in America, gaining significance as one of a very few socialist meeting halls still remaining in the country. While apparently never numerous, socialist meeting halls were built or rented in a number of towns and cities, some dating back as early as the 1870s and 1880s. However, inquiries conducted by Butte architect and historian Fred Quivik, and John Phillips, nomination preparer, indicated that few remained standing into the latter 20th century. Furthermore, Butte's Socialist Hall is especially noteworthy for the proud and uncommon expression of socialist allegiance incorporated into the facade design (Bills, Curry correspondence, 1984). Built specifically to function as a party hall, the building stands out for its ability to embody and symbolize, through architecture, inscription, and relief symbol, the ideals of the socialist movement in Butte, in Montana and in the United States.



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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Butte City Records, Butte Silver Bow Public Archives.  
*Butte Socialist* 1912-1918, Butte Socialist Publishing Co.  
Calvert, Jerry W. The Gibraltar-Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920. Montana Historical Society, 1988.  
D. Alan Curry Correspondence with Fred Quivik, 1984.  
*Montana Socialist*, 1914-1918, Butte Socialist Publishing Co.  
McGlynn, Terrance D. "Flying the Red Flag in Butte: The Life and Times of Butte's Socialist Mayor, Lewis Duncan," The Speculator Journal. Summer, 1985; Vol.2 Nom.2.  
Polk City Directories, Directories for City of Butte, 1900-1920.  
Bills, Robert (National Secretary, National Executive Committee, Socialist Labor Party) Correspondence with Fred Quivik, March 9, 1984.  
Phillips, John Inquiries to Taiment Institute, Socialist Labor Party of America, Socialist Party U.S.A., World Socialist Party: U.S. Chapter, Eugene Debs Museum & Library, NY Public Library, NY University  
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Butte, Montana (1916).  
Silver Bow County Records, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives.

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other -- Specify Repository:

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	12	382 860	5094 280

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): Located in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 19, T3N, R7W.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The South 10 feet of Lot 13 and all of Lot 14, Cobban Addition, Butte, Section 19, Township 3 North, Range 7 West

### Boundary Justification

The legally recorded boundary of this property encompasses the significant resources.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: John Phillips, History Intern  
organization: SHPO  
street & number: 1410 8th Ave.  
city or town: Helena

date: Oct. 29, 1994  
telephone: 406-444-7715  
state: MT zip code: 59620

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## Property Owner

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name/title: Robert and Mary LeFever  
street & number: 1957 Harrison Ave.  
city or town: Butte

telephone: N/A  
state: MT zip code: 59701