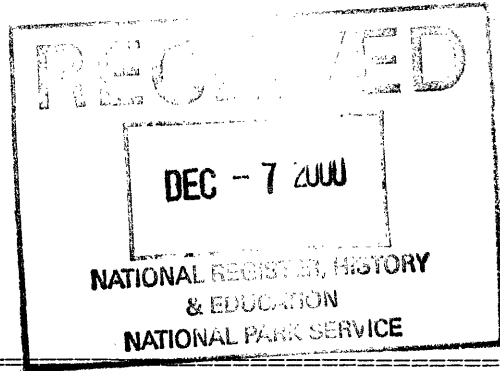


1644

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Morton Mansion

other names/site number 48CO2317

**2. Location**

street & number 425 Center Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Douglas vicinity N/A  
state Wyoming code WY county Converse code 009 zip code 86233

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide  locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Wanda Bandy Wade 11/20/00  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
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      Edson H. Beall      1.11.01  
    See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the  
National Register  
    See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
 removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Boe \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of 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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: hotel

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS

Sub: Vernacular

Cat: LATE VICTORIAN

Sub: Indeterminate

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>stone</u>
roof	<u>asphalt shingles</u>
walls	<u>wood</u>
other	_____
	_____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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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 a grave.
- d a cemetery.
- e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- f a commemorative property.
- g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE

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Period of Significance 1903-1916

Significant Dates     1889 - John Morton arrives in Converse County and establishes successful sheep business  
                              1903 - Morton Mansion built  
                              1916 - John Morton dies  
                              1952 - Sarah Morton Dies and house is sold by Morton family

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder William L. Dubois (architect)  
James Wells (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 - Converse County Clerk & Recorder's Office
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Wyoming State Archives

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property < 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
13	468835	4733940

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS AND ACCOMPANYING MAPS

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title	<u>Jason Marmor, Historian</u>	date	<u>April 2000</u>
organization	<u>Retrospect</u>	telephone	<u>(970) 482-3115</u>
street & number	<u>1512 Briarcliff Road</u>	zip code	<u>80524</u>
city or town	<u>Fort Collins</u> state <u>CO</u>		

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Converse County, Wyoming

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**7. Description**

The Morton Mansion is a large, three story, wood frame, Late Victorian style house situated on the southwest corner of East Center and Fifth Streets in Douglas, Wyoming. The well preserved dwelling has a cross-gabled roof with relatively steeply pitched gables. The main mass of the house is covered by a front-gabled roof, and another three-story height gable faces west. Distinctive features of this home include a partially enclosed wraparound porch on the front (north) and east sides, and pedimented dormers on the east and west slopes of the main roof. The wraparound porch is open on the front side of the house and along part of the east side, and its open portions are enclosed by distinctive wooden rail featuring diamond-pattern cross-bracing spanning a series of square-sided wooden posts supporting the porch roof.

The three main gables (on the north, south, and west sides of the house) feature cornice returns, triple windows, and a projecting apex supported by a cross brace with exposed rafter tails. Imbricated shingles are applied beneath the gables as well as on the exterior of the east side gabled dormer. The wraparound porch is covered by a half-hipped roof. The porch incorporates Classical elements such as a decorative pediment above the main, north side entry, and tapered square-sided columns affixed to a Classical entablature cornice embellished with dentils. Another distinctive features is a two story canted bay window located on the east side of the house, the first floor level of which is enclosed within the wraparound porch.

In addition to the north side main entry, other entries are placed on the east south, and west sides of the house. The east entry accesses the south end of the enclosed portion of the wraparound porch. Another entry is situated on the south side, in an open rear porch with a half-hipped roof. A wooden stairway - supported by vertical pipe posts - leads up the west side of the house to access a third story entry.

The Morton Mansion is fenestrated with a variety of original windows. On the front facade, first floor level windows include a large sash-and-transom window with a stained glass transom, as well as a double-hung, 1-over-1 light window. The second story is fenestrated with two double-hung,

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Converse County, Wyoming

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7c. Narrative Description (cont.):

1-over-1 light windows, and centered under the gable on the third floor level are a bank of three, double-hung 9-over-1 light windows, with mullions separating each window. The east side of the house, facing South Fifth Street, is fenestrated on the first and second story levels with double-hung, 1-over-1 windows, which are also installed on the three facets of the canted bay window. A third story, east side dormer contains a bank of triple, double-hung, 6-over-1 light windows with dividing mullions. The west side of the house is fenestrated at first and second floor levels with several double-hung, 1-over-1 light windows with stepped "entablature" lintels. On the third story level of the west facade are tandem and triple sets of double-hung windows consisting of multi-light upper sashes over lower 1-light sashes.

The Morton Mansion is equipped with two chimneys, including a corbeled red brick chimney rising from the east slope of the main roof, just south of the dormer. A second corbeled brick chimney exits the peak of the east-west oriented gable.

This stately home occupies two contiguous lots enclosed by an ornate cast iron fence manufactured by the W.T. Barber Fence Works of Lafayette, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois. The fence is set into a border of beveled sandstone curbing extending around the perimeter of the property. The concrete walkway to the front entrance includes one panel featuring inset dark stone or concrete block letters spelling the name "MORTON." Adjacent to the curb on the north side of the property is a concrete pad (3' x 6') containing two embedded iron hitching rings for tethering horses.



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Converse County, Wyoming

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**8. Significance**

Built in 1903, the Morton Mansion at 425 Center Street in Douglas embodies considerable historical significance. It qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the regional sheep industry, which transformed the agricultural landscape and significantly boosted the economy of Converse County in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The mansion, built for pioneer sheep rancher John Morton and designed by prominent Wyoming architect William Dubois, serves as a visible reminder of the considerable wealth generated by the sheep industry and its impact on the community of Douglas, the economic hub and county seat of Converse. The home was occupied for nearly five decades by the family of John Morton, a German immigrant whose success in the sheep business led to a diverse career as a prominent banker, elected official, and civic leader in Douglas from the late 1880s until his death in 1916. The Morton Mansion has not been substantially altered and was skillfully restored in the late 1990s. Consequently, it retains excellent physical integrity.

The Morton Mansion was built with profits derived from sheep ranching, an industry of considerable significance to the historical development of Converse County. During the territorial period cattle and sheep ranches were established in the region surrounding Douglas, and after Wyoming achieved statehood in 1890, a federal land office was established in Douglas which facilitated homesteading and expansion of the area's agricultural economy. Located along the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, Douglas was destined to become a regional shipping center for the County's agricultural output, including wool. The establishment of the regional sheep industry in particular - which was well suited to the ecological conditions of Converse County - brought new prosperity to Douglas and initiated a new period of population growth in the community. The profound impact of the sheep industry upon Douglas and Converse County was summarized in 1907 by pioneer lawyer Charles F. Maurer:

“The sheepmen as a rule settle in towns and it is due largely to the sheep business that Douglas was resurrected from a ‘busted boomlet’ in 1888 with 265 poverty-

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stricken people to a wealthy, thriving, prosperous, modern improved city of at least 2000 population in 1907, and the sheep business contributed very materially in elevating Converse County from an insignificant county of the fourth class with poor credit and a debt of \$120,000 to a strong county of the second class on a cash basis with its debt reduced to \$40,000..." (*Bill Barlow's Budget 1907:n.p.*).

Sheep were reportedly first introduced into the Converse County area in 1883, when George Powell brought a band to Lower LaPrele Creek. However, the sheep industry did not flourish until the aftermath of the calamitous winter of 1886-1887, an event that decimated the cattle industry in Wyoming Territory. John Morton, a native of Germany, is credited with being one of the first men to establish a large sheep operation in Converse County, around 1891. Joined that same year by his brother Jacob Jenne, Morton achieved great success in a large sheep raising enterprise which they called the Morton-Jenne Sheep Company. Other large sheep operations were established in Converse County in the 1890s, including the Platte Valley Sheep Company, organized in 1892 by J.M. Wilson, W.F. Hamilton, and Governor DeForest Richards.

During the 1890s the Converse County sheep industry grew dramatically, and a number of sheep ranchers reaped great profits. Between 1890 and 1906, the number of sheep in the county grew from 10,733 to nearly 300,000 head. Several Converse County sheep ranchers who became wealthy from their involvement in the livestock industry, including John Morton, Jacob Jenne, and John T. Williams, built mansions in Douglas that reflected their success. Jenne's intricately detailed Queen Anne style house was built in 1902 on the corner of N. Sixth and Center Streets, while Morton's enormous Queen Anne home was built a short distance away, at 425 Center Street.

This stately house testifies to the success and prosperity of John Morton. Morton was one of a handful of pioneer sheep ranchers - along with Al Myres and George Powell - to settle in the Douglas vicinity, and was instrumental in developing the local sheep economy.

Born John M. Jenne in Germany in 1862, he emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1867. After leaving the new Jenne family home in DeKalb, Illinois, John enlisted in the U.S. Army at Fort

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Leavenworth, Kansas. After an altercation with an officer, John Jenne deserted and changed his last name to Morton. Following an unproductive sojourn to the Cripple Creek mines of Colorado, Morton went in 1880 or 1881 to the Rawlins, Wyoming vicinity where he commenced sheep raising. He was an early entrant into the Wyoming sheep industry, and around 1891 he established a sheep ranch near the young town of Douglas. According to the *Douglas Enterprise* (May 16, 1916), after arriving in Converse County Morton "became at once the largest owner of livestock in central Wyoming." John Morton was joined in this venture by his brother Jacob Jenne; their operation was called the Morton-Jenne Sheep Company. Both Jenne and Morton amassed small fortunes in the regional sheep industry.

A shrewd and hardworking business man, John Morton actively acquired ranch land after his arrival in the Douglas area, and the Morton Ranch grew to become the largest in Converse County. The Morton Home Ranch on the North Platte River was acquired in the early twentieth century. In 1912, the shrewd Morton also obtained the Boot Ranch on lower LaPrele Creek and additional land along Sand Creek east of Douglas following a severe blizzard that bankrupted numerous livestock operators. He was also sole owner of a sizable tract of irrigated land at Fetterman Flats, described by the *Douglas Enterprise* as "one of the best irrigated ranches in the state."

In February of 1894 John Morton married Sarah McDermott, and from this union were born five children, including four sons and one daughter. Later in the decade Morton moved his family in Douglas, and in May of 1899 he announced plans to build a new house in the town. In 1902 he commissioned architect William Dubois of Cheyenne to design a spacious home on lots he owned at the corner of Center and South Fifth Streets. The home was built by contractor James Wells, and was completed by July of 1903. An ornamental cast iron fence around the lot was installed in 1904.

The designer of the Morton house, William Dubois, is recognized as one of the state's most versatile and prolific architects. Educated at the Chicago School of Architecture, Dubois designed numerous major public and private buildings throughout Wyoming in the early Twentieth century. His credits include Carnegie libraries, the Laramie and Albany County courthouses, wings for the state capitol,

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major commercial buildings, hotels, schools, several buildings on the University of Wyoming's Laramie campus, masonic lodges, and residences across the state. In addition to his private practice, Dubois also served as official state architect for a number of years.

William Dubois produced designs for a number of major buildings in Douglas. These include residences for John Morton (1902-03) , John T. Williams (1903), J. DeForest Richards (1904-05), all of which are still extant and unmodified. Dubois also designed the Unity Temple (1902) in downtown Douglas, the Baptist Church (1916) and the South Grade School (1919), all of which have been razed. Another significant building in Douglas designed by Dubois -- the stately, brick, Beaux Arts style Ashlar Lodge No. 10 (1925-26) -- still stands at the corner of Walnut and North Fourth streets.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, John Morton turned his attention to business and public service. From 1904 until his death in 1916, he served as vice president and a director of the First National Bank in Douglas. He invested in numerous enterprises, including the Douglas Electric Light Company, the Douglas Mercantile Company, and the Fetterman Ditch Company. He was elected mayor of Douglas in 1910, and he also served as a member of the state legislature representing Converse County.

After John Morton's untimely death in May of 1916, his wife Sarah and son Jack took control of the vast Morton interests, which were consolidated in 1932 as Mortons Inc. Sarah Morton also led an active life of community service until her death in December 1952. The Morton family sold the Center Street house after Sarah Morton passed away, and since that time (1952) it has experienced a series of ownership changes. The building was used as a private dwelling until 1980, when it was acquired by the County of Converse for use as a supervised home for troubled youth. The building served as the Converse County Youth Home until the late 1990s, when it was sold to Craig and Jill Nohava. The Nohavas have skillfully renovated the Morton Mansion, which they currently operate as a bed & breakfast inn, and use as their residence. Nearly a century old at this time (2000), this stately building stands as a monument and reminder of the sheep industry's prominent role in the historical development of Converse County and the City of Douglas.

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**

*Bill Barlow's Budget*

1899-1904 Various notices concerning construction of Morton house, including 5/17/1899, 7/23/1902, 7/1/1903, 2/17/1904, 3/30/1904, 6/1/1904, 11/16/1904.

1903 "A Handsome Home," 7/8/1903.

1907 *Anniversary Edition, 1907*. Douglas, Wyoming.

Bowman, A.W.

1903 *Progressive Men of the State of Wyoming*. A.W. Bowman and Co., Chicago.

*Douglas Budget*

1916 "Death of John Morton," 5/18/1916.

*Douglas Enterprise*

1916 "John Morton Dies Saturday Morning," 5/16/1916.

1952 "Pioneer Leader Mrs. Sarah E. Morton Dies," 12/23/1952

Gazetteer Publishing Company

1901-1913 *Wyoming State Business Directory* (nearly annual editions), with entries for Douglas. The Gazetteer Publishing Company, Denver, Colorado.

Pexton, John and Catherine

N.d. *Morton-Converse County Child Placing Agency House*. Unpublished typescript (9 pp.) Provided by Mr. John Pexton.

1995 The Morton House. Typescript (5 pp.) of article published in *The Douglas Budget*, March 8, 1995.

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References (cont.):

Sanborn Map Company

Fire insurance maps of Douglas, Wyoming. Available editions include June 1894 (1 sheet), April 1903 (5 sheets), September 1912 (7 sheets), and August 1920 (9 sheets).

Starr, Eileen F.

1992 *Architecture in the Cowboy State, 1849-1940, A Guide*. High Plains Press, Glendo, Wyoming

Trumper, Vera Saul

1986 John and Sarah Morton family history in *Pages from Converse County's Past*. Heritage Book Committee, Wyoming Pioneer Association, Douglas, pp. 412-414.

Wentworth, Edward Norris

1948 *America's Sheep Trails*. The Iowa State College Press, Ames, Iowa, p. 324.

*Wyoming Industrial Journal*

1906 "John Morton, Woolgrower and Banker," September 1906, pp. 16-17.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property boundary is defined as a rectangular line delineating the eastern 90 feet of Lots 1 and 2 in Block 17 of Douglas. The parcel measures approximately 120 feet long (NOS) by 90 feet wide (E-W).

**Boundary Justification**

The property boundary corresponds to the area containing the historic house and surrounding yard, and excludes that portion of Lots 1 and 2 that contain the former Morton carriage house (now developed as a separate residence at 413 Center Street).

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Greg and Jill Nohava

street & number 425 Center Street telephone (307) 358-2129

city or town Douglas state WY zip code 82633

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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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.