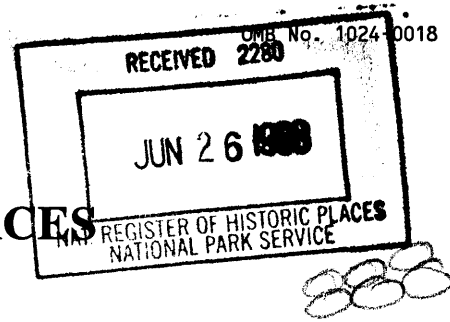


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Square Butte Jail

other name/site number:

## 2. Location

street & number: Salsbury Avenue

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Square Butte

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Chouteau

code: <sup>015</sup>099

zip code: 59442

## 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.

  
Signature of certifying official/Title

6-17-98  
Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

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

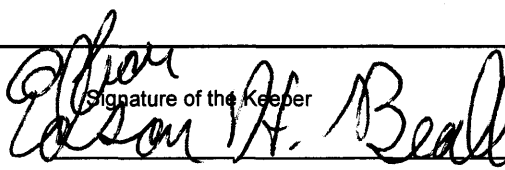
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

7-23-98  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property:** Private

**Category of Property:** Building

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

**Name of related multiple property listing:** n/a

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> building(s)
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> TOTAL

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:**

GOVERNMENT: Correctional Facility

**Current Functions:**

VACANT: Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:**

Other: Square Block Jail

**Materials:**

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Granite  
roof: Concrete  
other: Brick

**Narrative Description**

The Square Butte Jail is located on Salsbury Avenue just to the north of the corporate limits of Square Butte, Montana. The building, completed in October 1916, is constructed of locally-quarried ashlar granite blocks (more correctly described as shonkonite) in randomly coursed rows. The 12 inch thick walls rest on a concrete slab. The roof is also concrete with the wood grain impressions of the forms still evident.

The building measures 17' 5" x 15' 9" and is 10' 3" high. The ceiling height is 9' 4" at the south side and slopes 3 inches to the north. There are windows on the east, west, and south sides. The openings measure 2' 4" x 4' 3" and are barred on the outside. The wood window frames remain, but the sashes are missing. The single exterior door faces south. The opening measures 2' 10" x 6' 9". The barred exterior door is in place, but the inner wooden door is missing.

The interior of the jail is divided into three rooms: an entrance room (15' 6" x 5' 10") and two cells (7' 6" x 6' 11" and 7' 3" x 6' 11"). Each cell has a barred door. The interior partitions are poured concrete, 11 inches thick. The exterior walls of the interior are the granite blocks of the wall construction. They were at one time calcimined a light green color. A brick chimney rises from a concrete pilaster between the two cell doors.

The Square Butte Jail was never serviced by water or sewer.

The building retains excellent architectural integrity. The losses of the door and window sash are the only changes from the time of its construction. The brick chimney was rebuilt in 1997 after it was destroyed by vandals.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1916

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1916

Cultural Affiliation: European-American

Architect/Builder: unknown/Harrington Granite Works

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

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The Square Butte Jail is significant under National Register Criterion C as a representative example of Montana's small town jails constructed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The building's utilitarian design and masonry construction are typical of these jails, but its granite walls are unusual, and testify to the importance of stone quarrying in the local economy.

### Historical Background

The town of Square Butte was a Milwaukee Land Company creation on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific's Lewistown to Great Falls railline laid out in mid-1913. It was important as a coal and water stop for the locomotives since the water was pure and nearly free of minerals. Many considered Square Butte an ideal retirement town because of its neat appearing tree-lined streets and an abundance of good water. The 1921-22 Polk Directory listed Square Butte with a population of 150 along with 20 businesses. The population of the town declined during Montana's agricultural depression of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s as many homesteaders left the area seeking economic relief. Square Butte was never incorporated. A 1997 survey showed a population of 22 and one business.

During the 1910s, the Chouteau County Commissioners apparently had a policy of constructing small jails in various towns throughout the county. In 1914, for example, the Commissioners awarded contracts for the construction of concrete jails in Geraldine, Carter, and Highwood. These small jails probably served as holding cells until prisoners could be transported to the main county jail in Fort Benton, the county seat. The lack of good roads, Montana's severe weather conditions, and limited law enforcement personnel all made such convenient and safe facilities practical if not mandatory.

In 1915, the residents of Square Butte petitioned the Chouteau County Commissioners to appoint a justice of the peace and a constable for the town. The petition stated that Square Butte "has been seriously suffering from an over supply of tramps, beggars and vagabonds." The petitioners felt these individuals presented threats to peace and endangered lives. The Commissioners granted the request.

On July 6, 1916, the Chouteau County Commissioners awarded Harrington Granite Works a contract for construction of "a county jail in the town of Square Butte." The \$1285 contract specified Square Butte granite as the building material. The Harrington Granite Works completed the contract on October 20, 1916, with payment approved by the County Commissioners on November 15, 1916.

The requirement for Square Butte granite seems logical since the stone industry played a major economic role in the area. Two stone quarrying companies operated in close proximity to Square Butte in 1916. The Harrington Granite Works, to whom the contract to build the jail was awarded, began operating a quarry in the summer of 1915. West Quincy Granite Company (name changed to Rudin Bros. and Johnson in 1916) had been quarrying stone since at least March 1914. Experts compared the granite favorably with that from the New England States. From 1914 through 1922, the companies shipped large amounts of stone from Square Butte. Entire train loads went to such western cities as Denver, Boise, and Baker City, Oregon. Rudin Bros. furnished granite for a four-story building in Billings in 1917. The Cahalan Building, which housed a drug store in Square Butte, was built of this granite and still stands. Several state buildings were reportedly built with Square Butte granite as well as a bank in Highwood.

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The Rudin quarry was sold to Carl Johnson in 1943, who continued cutting and preparing granite for grave markers and copings, which he set in many Montana cemeteries until he retired and closed the business in the 1950s.

Only anecdotal information provides documentation that the building served its intended purpose. An oral interview with an early Square Butte resident lends credence to local legend that a prisoner froze to death in the unheated jail. The resident told of remembering well when her brother came home from town and related that story. Research in local newspapers uncovered no report of the incident.

The Chouteau County Commissioners did appoint a local homesteader as Square Butte's justice of the peace in 1917. Again, local newspaper research found that during this period, prisoners were always transported by a deputy sheriff to jail in Geraldine or Fort Benton.

Local legend also presents two disparate stories as to why the Square Butte Jail was never used. Both legends center on William P. Sullivan (1873-1952). For unknown reasons, the county constructed the jail on Sullivan's land, which was part of his 32,000 acre ranch. One story says Sullivan hoped the jail would serve to temper the in-town behavior of the 15 to 20 cowboys in his employ. The other legend states that Sullivan threatened to demolish the jail if any of his cowboys were incarcerated.

William P. Sullivan was prominent in the civic and economic growth of the Square Butte area for 54 years. In 1916, he was one of the organizers of the Square Butte State Bank, serving as its first vice president. Six years later, he purchased a controlling interest in the bank and became its president. Sullivan also was a lifetime advocate of wildlife preservation, and was appointed to the State Fish and Game Commission in 1932. He later served as its president. He set aside a large portion of his ranch as a game preserve in 1926 and is credited with saving the pronghorn antelope from extinction in the area. Although antelope hunting was illegal during those years, hard pressed and poverty-stricken farmers reduced their numbers to near zero outside of "Sullivan's Preserve." He was elected state senator from Chouteau County in 1934, and served until 1938.

Over the years, the jail has seen uses other than the housing of prisoners. It furnished two or three generations of Square Butte children with a unique clubhouse. At other times, it housed men from a road crew, served as a bachelor's residence\*, and with the windows boarded up, functioned as a granary.

At William P. Sullivan's death in 1952, he willed the ranch to a group of friends and employees. The Strand family later purchased the ranch. When the Strands sold the Sullivan property, they kept the land on which the jail is located. Dean and Donna Strand donated the jail to the Geraldine Historical Committee in October 1997. The Committee plans to maintain the Square Butte Jail as a local historic site.

The Montana State Historic Preservation Office featured the Square Butte Jail on its 1993 Montana Preservation poster.

### Architectural Significance

The Square Butte Jail is similar in design to the small jails constructed in many of Montana's homestead and railroad boom communities during the first two decades of the twentieth century. These facilities can be described by no other word than utilitarian. The sole function of these small buildings was to house local lawbreakers on a temporary basis, and they served this

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\* The bachelor who lived in the Square Butte Jail was Matt King. He had a small acreage of farm land and worked at various jobs. He probably lived in the jail during the 1930s.

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function in the most frugal means possible. Their spartan designs included no pretensions of style and they were void of all ornamentation and decorative details.

Masonry is the typical building material for Montana's small town jails; they are found in both brick and concrete. Besides masonry's obvious repellence to escape, it also provided resistance to fire, a potential problem stemming from unattended prisoners. The Square Butte Jail's granite walls are testaments to a locally important industry. Discounting inflation, the Square Butte Jail cost twice as much as the concrete jails built in other Chouteau County towns only two years earlier. At the same time, the crude manner in which the stones were laid up implies the building was not worthy of the attention of a professional stone mason.

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**

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See continuation sheet

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

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

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property:** Less than one

<b>UTM References:</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
	12	560390	5262740

**Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):** Section 3, Township 20 North, Range 12 East

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at the West 1/4 corner of Section 3, T20N, R12E, PMM, Choteau County, Montana; thence S 89°00' E 673.35 feet along the E-W Midsection line of said Section 3 to the Initial Point of the Square Butte, Montana townsite survey; thence due North 351.2 feet; thence due East 501.82 feet to the TURE POINT OF BEGINNING of this survey; thence due North 30.00 feet; thence due East 105.79 feet; thence in a south-easterly direction 35.65 feet along a non-tangent curve to the left (raius 5829.6 feet, long chord length 35.64 feet, long chord bearing S 32°40'04.5" E); thence due West 125.03 feet to the TRUE POINT OF BEGINNING. (Certificate of Survey No. 176D)

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**Boundary Justification**

The boundary takes in the jail and a portion of the surrounding land which has been deeded to the Geraldine Historical Committe.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Marcella Knedler and Henry L. Armstrong	
organization: Geraldine Historical Committee	date: Janaury 1998
street & number: P.O. Box 151	telephone: 406-737-4564
city or town: Geraldine	state: MT zip code: 59446

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**Property Owner**

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name/title: Geraldine Historical Commission	
street & number: P.O. Box 151	telephone: 406-737-4564
city or town: Geraldine	state: MT zip code: 59446

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### Photographic Log

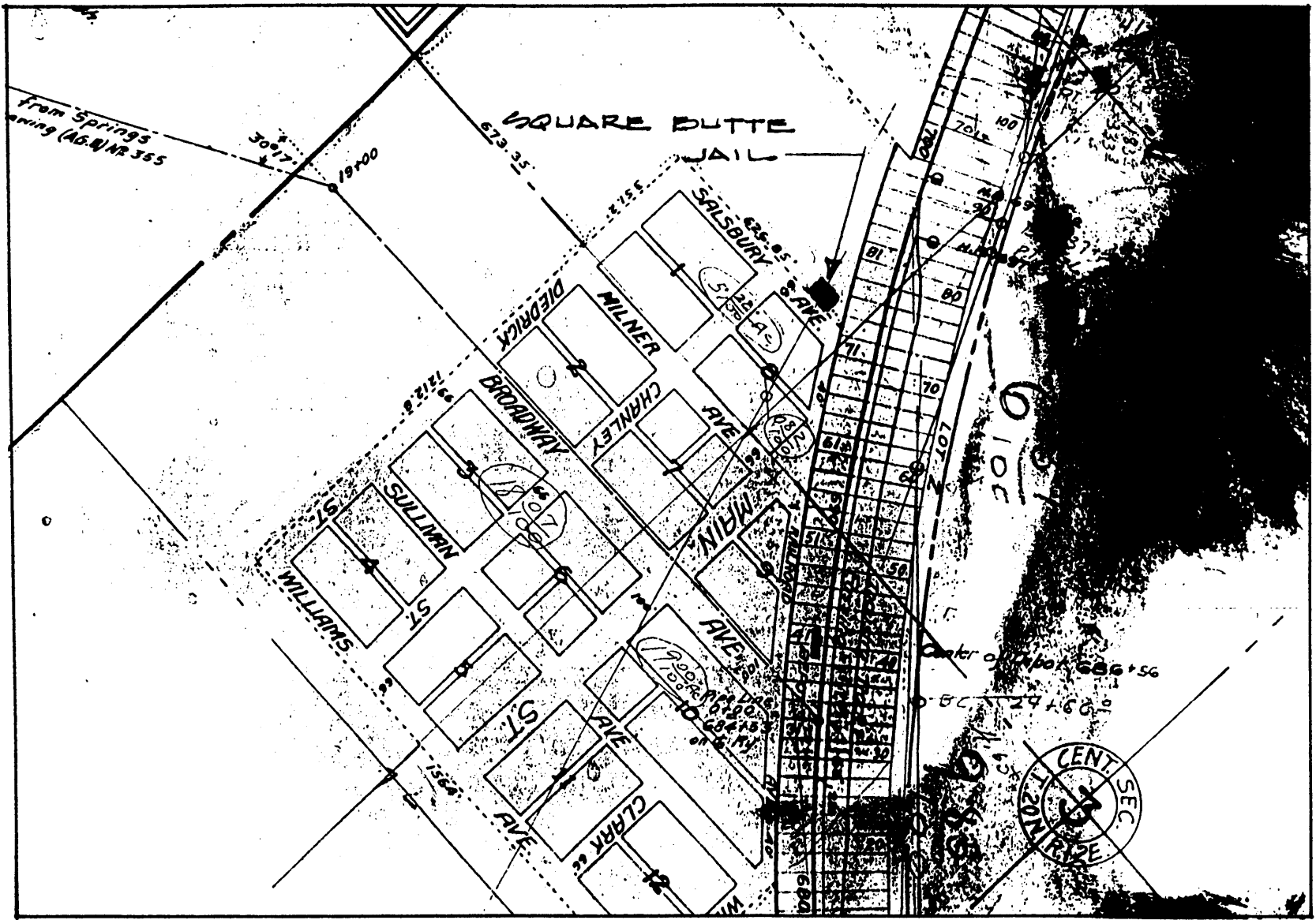
Photographer: Henry L. Armstrong

Date of  
photographs: December 6, 1997

Location of  
negatives: Henry L. Armstrong  
Geraldine, Montana

Photo No. 1	Square Butte Jail	South (front) Elevation	View to north
Photo No. 2	Square Butte Jail	West Elevation	View to east
Photo No. 3	Square Butte Jail	East Elevation	View to west
Photo No. 4	Square Butte Jail	North Elevation	View to south
Photo No. 5	Square Butte Jail	Interior - Chimney and Cell Doors	View to northeast
Photo No. 6	Square Butte Jail	Interior - Cell Door Detail	View to north-northeast
Photo No. 7	Square Butte Jail	Door and Hinge Detail	View to north-northwest
Photo No. 8	Square Butte Jail	Door Hasp (note quarry drill marks on stone)	View to north-northwest





SQUARE BUTTE JAIL  
 Square Butte, Chouteau County, Montana