

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

OCT 23 1987

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South Tracy Avenue Historic District

Historic Name: **South Tracy Avenue Historic District**
Common Name: **800 block of South Tracy Avenue**

Location: **802-824 South Tracy Avenue**
Bozeman, Montana (030)
Gallatin County (031)

Classification: historic district
private ownership
public acquisition: n/a
occupied
restricted access
residential use

Ownership: multiple

Location of Legal Description: Gallatin County Courthouse, Main St., Bozeman, MT.

Representation in Existing Surveys: Historic Resource Survey of Bozeman, Montana, 1982-1986, sponsored by the City-County Planning Office, Bozeman, MT.

Depository of Survey Records: Montana State Historic Preservation Office, 102 S. Broadway, Helena, MT.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: South Tracy Avenue Historic District

Contributing structures: 6
Non-contributing structures: 1

The South Tracy Avenue Historic District, a compact and cohesive group of seven small, one-story, gable front, Bungalow style houses, stretches for one block between College and Harrison Streets, along the east side of S. Tracy Avenue. In the context of this architecturally diverse southeastern section of the city, the district is an especially notable island of architectural consistency. The cohesiveness of the district is enhanced by its location atop a slight hill.

Although the ridge lines of the houses in the district vary, all houses present gables to the street, topping either the main blocks, porches, or both, which together establish a strong unifying rhythm. The predominant house form is that of a broad gable front with a projecting, gable front porch occupying either the left or right half. Common original materials and architectural motifs lend further visual cohesion to the district, such as clapboard and wood shingle sheathing, often in combination, exposed rafter tails, projecting purlins, cross gables, cottage windows, or grouped windows, and concrete foundations.

Within this context of consistency of form, scale and materials, 802 S. Tracy,

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possibly designed by local architect Fred F. Willson, is outstanding for its slightly higher degree of architectural detailing, and its distinctively lower pitched roof. By virtue of its taller and more massive proportions, 810 S. Tracy also stands out in the district. The single non-contributing building, 820 S. Tracy, is the only house to have lost its original porch and fenestration. It nevertheless retains much of its original massing, material and detailing, and therefore maintains the rhythm of the streetscape.

Small garages at the rear of the lots match the main houses to which they are associated in architectural detailing. Being visible from the street, they contribute to the visual cohesiveness of this small district.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: South Tracy Avenue Historic District

Period of Significance: 1916-1923

Areas of Significance: Architecture

An island of Bungalows from the time of its initial construction in 1917 and well into the 1930's, the South Tracy Avenue Historic District remains a cohesive architectural unit, and a particularly vivid example of Bozeman's rapid early 20th century expansion. The seven similar, modest Bungalow style residences that make up the district, each of which has a separate garage behind it, represent the work of four local carpenters. One of the houses, in addition, may have been designed by Fred F. Willson - Bozeman's prolific early 20th century architect.

The district encompasses land in Block 1 of the Butte Addition, which was platted in 1890 along with the Capital Hill Addition and several others. These additions reflect, in part, the prevalent optimism associated with the city's bid to become chosen as the location for the state capital in a statewide vote in 1892. Despite the residents' high hopes of winning the capital, which, it was felt, would surely have triggered a building boom in the new plats and elsewhere, Bozeman instead was allocated the Montana State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts - today Montana State University.

The new institution was initially viewed with disappointment and skepticism, and did little to revive an economy plagued by a depression later known as the Panic of 1893. Butte Addition, among others, remained virtually undeveloped until well into the 20th century. As late as 1916, with the exception of the few college buildings erected in the Capital Hill Addition and several houses built along southern extensions of S. Grand and S. Willson Avenues, there was still only very sparse development south of Alderson Street. Considerable residential construction however had been occurring in the Cooper Park Historic District. Bozeman's emerging role as the economic and cultural center of the Gallatin Valley had created by 1916 a substantially swelled middle class, which in turn created a demand for inexpensive housing.

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At the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, four local carpenters, William C. Smith, Elmer L. Bartholomew, George M. Wimmer, and Guy A. Ensinger, owned land in what is now the South Tracy Avenue Historic District, and began construction of small, modest houses, intended for sale when completed. All the land was purchased from J.H. Baker, an assistant cashier at the Commercial National Bank (104 E. Main St.), acting as a trustee for an unknown land owner. According to Mrs. Hurlburt C. Cheever, a resident of the block since the late 1920's, there was no pre-arranged plan among the four builders to develop the lots. It was, rather, mere "happenstance" that this small isolated development took shape.

The first houses to be built, which went up soon after the land purchases, were 802, 814, 820, 818, and 824 S. Tracy Ave., located in the middle and at the ends of the one-block long district. Around 1923 the other three houses in the district were constructed on the remaining lots in between. Mrs. Cheever (who lived in 824 S. Tracy Ave.), recalls the district from the 1920's and early 1930's as a distinct, isolated residential block, but noted that there was no particularly unique sense of community among the residents. Until the 1940's, open fields buffered the district to the south and east, and for one block to the north and west.

Occupants of the houses in general have changed frequently over the decades, and have represented a cross-section of Bozeman's middle class. Among them were D. Harvey Budd, who owned and probably lived temporarily in 806 S. Tracy Ave. Budd ran the leading early 20th century plumbing and heating company under his name at 30 W. Main Street, which installed the plumbing in a large number of houses in this district, the Cooper Park Historic District, and elsewhere in the city. Charles M. Fisher, whose brother-in-law Fred F. Willson may have designed his house, 802 S. Tracy Avenue, was Secretary/Treasurer of both Owenhouse Hardware Co. (see 36 E. Main Street) and Retail Merchants Exchange. H.F. Judevine, 1920's resident at 806 S. Tracy Avenue, was President/Manager of the Gallatin Valley Creamery (see 25 S. Tracy Avenue), while Harrison Keyser, Judevine's neighbor at 810 S. Tracy Avenue, ran Keyser's Auto Repair shop at 23 N. Wallace Avenue. Because of its proximity to the college, at least five Montana State College professors had owned houses and/or lived in the district during the 1920's and 1930's. Other residents have included insurance and real estate salesmen, an auto mechanic, and a missionary.

Despite the extensive construction occurring throughout the city in the early 20th century (particularly in the Cooper Park Historic District), this district remained an isolated unit, as shown on the 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, until the mid-1930's, when construction finally began filling in the surrounding blocks.

The two houses on the corner lots opposite the district, 801 and 825 S. Tracy Avenue, were both standing by 1922, but have since been severely altered. The latter is a two-story Bungalow style house, more elaborate than any in the

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district, and was built by Edwin T. Rich, president of the Standard Construction Co., and manager of Brackett Creek Lumber Co.

Houses comparable to those found in this district are found on S. 5th and S. 6th Avenues north of College Street, and scattered in the area of S. Black Avenue.

The builders of the South Tracy Avenue Historic District, who are representative of the numerous carpenters and builders listed in the city directories of the 1910's and 1920's, were men of modest means, and changed their places of residence frequently. Often they lived temporarily in one of the houses they had built, before it was sold.

George M. Wimmer was listed in 1927 as living in the Bon Ton Apartments, on the second floor of 34-42 W. Main Street. Similarly, Guy Ensinger resided in modest quarters in the Oxford Hotel, a rooming house on the second floor of the F.L. Benepe Building (104 W. Main St.). Elmer L. Bartholomew, one of the most important early 20th century architect/builders in Bozeman (see the Cooper Park Historic District), had various residences between 1916 and 1927, including 221 S. 3rd and 602 S. 6th Avenues. He also lived for a few years in one of the houses he built in this district, 810 S. Tracy Ave., until it was sold.

Guy Ensinger, who was praised by The Weekly Courier newspaper in 1918 as having been "one of Bozeman's leading contractors and builders" between 1912 and 1918, ran into financial difficulties in 1917. Unable to complete the construction of 824 S. Tracy Avenue then underway, he retired from carpentry, selling the unfinished house to P.C. White. Ensinger had helped to usher in the era of the automobile in Bozeman by the construction of numerous houses with compatible, detached garages, including the one at 824 S. Tracy. Ensinger was also noted in a national magazine, American Builder in 1917, for the construction of five Bungalows, probably on S. 6th Avenue (see Cooper Park Historic District). Upon his retirement, Ensinger played a role in pioneering mechanized farming in Montana by cultivating 1500 leased acres in Big Horn County without the use of horses - termed an "experiment" by The Weekly Courier in 1918.

The South Tracy Avenue Historic District, despite its small size, remains a strong, clearly defined group of buildings representing both the earliest period of automobile use, and the period of near doubling of the size of the city. Being surrounded by houses of much later and more diverse time periods, many of which have undergone extensive alteration in the past 20 years, the historic district retains a sense of its original isolation on South Tracy Avenue.

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2. The Weekly Courier, March 27, 1918, pp. 1,10.
3. City directories, 1916-17, 1922, 1925, 1927, 1933, 1935-36.
4. Bird's Eye Views, 1884, 1898.
5. Sanborn Map, 1927.
6. "Model Homes: This Type Found Popular in the West," American Builder (June, 1917), p.77, as quoted in: Kingston Heath, "Striving for Permanence on the Western Frontier: Vernacular Architecture as Cultural Informant in Southwestern Montana," Ph.D. dissertation presented to the Department of American Civilization of Brown University, February, 1985.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION: South Tracy Avenue Historic District

The boundary for the South Tracy Avenue Historic District is drawn along the centerlines of W. College Street, South Tracy Avenue, and W. Harrison Street, and includes lots 1-13 of Block 1 of the Butte Addition to the City of Bozeman, Montana.

UTM REFERENCES:

ACREAGE: approximately 2 acres

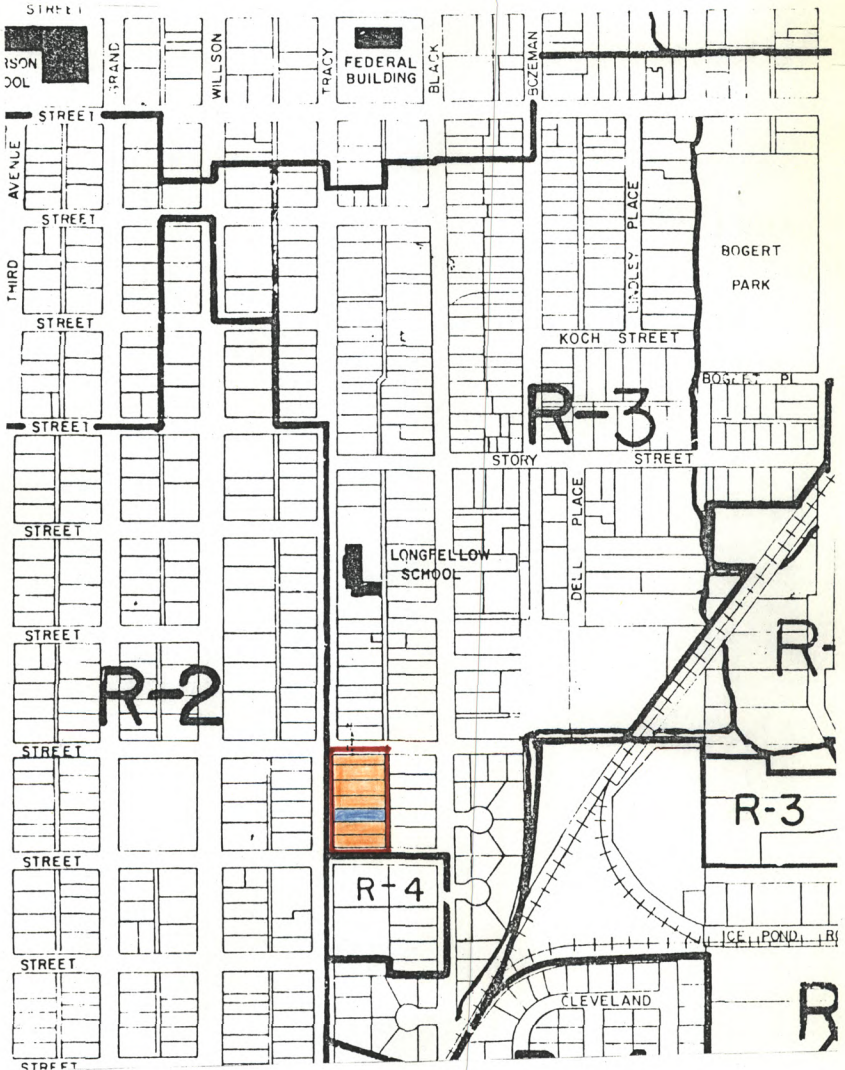
- W(1): 12/497120/5057400
- X(1): 12/497120/5057350
- Y(1): 12/497100/5057350
- Z(1): 12/497100/5057100

South Tracy Avenue Historic District

Street #	Name	Date	Architect/Builder	Status
802 S. Tracy	Charles M. Fisher	c.1916	Fred Willson (attr.)	contributing
806 S. Tracy	D.H. Budd House	c.1920	Wm. C. Smith	contributing
810 S. Tracy	H. Keyser House	c.1923	Elmer L. Bartholomew	contributing
814 S. Tracy	Geo. Wimmer House	1917	George W. Wimmer	contributing
820 S. Tracy		1917	Elmer L. Bartholomew	non-contributing
822 S. Tracy	Bartholomew House	c.1923	Elmer L. Bartholomew	contributing
824 S. Tracy	Ensinger/Waite	1917-18	Guy Ensinger	contributing

SOUTH TRACY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Bozeman, MT



Red: Primary
Green: Park

Orange: Contributing
Blue: Non-contributing