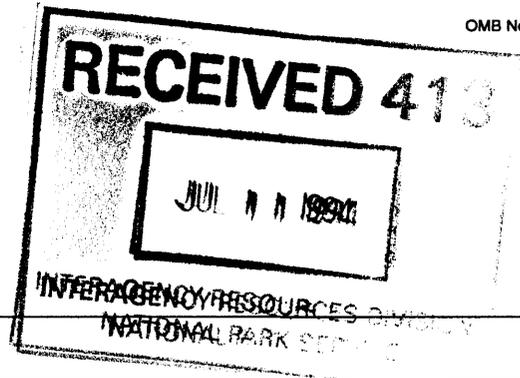


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Equity Supply Company Elevator and Creamery

other name/site number: Farmers' Protective Association Mill 24FH

2. Location

street & number: 50 First Avenue West North

not for publication: n/a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

city/town: Kalispell

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 029 zip code: 59901

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 nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Maevell Shep MT SHPO 6-28-94
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 H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

8-24-94
Date of Action

Entered in the National Register

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: private ___ public-local ___ public-State ___ public-Federal

Category of Property: building(s) ___ district ___ site ___ structure ___ object

Number of Resources within Property

| | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <u>6</u> | <u>0</u> building(s) |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>2</u> structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> objects |
| <u>6</u> | <u>2</u> Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
PROCESSING/manufacturing facility

Current Functions:
PROCESSING/manufacturing facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification:
other: commercial/industrial

Materials:
foundation: STONE; CONCRETE
roof: METAL; ASPHALT
walls: METAL; CONCRETE; WOOD: Weatherboard
other: N/A

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The dominant feature of the Equity Supply Company Elevator and Creamery is the group of metal-sheathed grain elevators topped by triangular cupolas. Located along the railroad tracks and one of the last businesses in Kalispell to still use the railroad, the complex is a physical symbol of Kalispell's roots as a railroad town. The property consists of two warehouses, two grain elevators, modern grain tanks, a creamery, and a shop.

The metal sheathing on the grain elevators is not the original sheathing, but the grain elevators retain much of their original appearance. The elevator is of cribbed construction. This method, the most common in the western United States, involves laying 2x8s, 2x6s, and 2x4s flat in a rectangle to form the walls, holding them together with metal spikes. The larger boards are used on the bottom, and they decrease in size near the top. When built, the high point of the elevator was 58', but by 1927 two sections had been extended to 70' high. Chutes extend from the elevators to the train tracks, which are a spur line that end at the elevators.

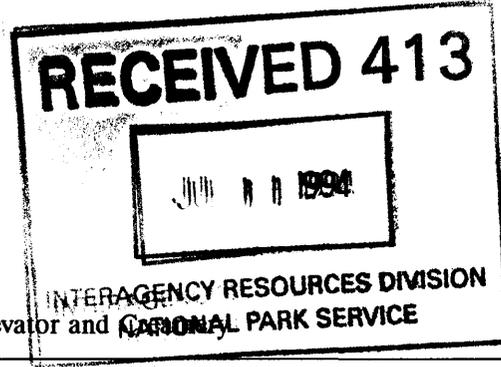
The grain elevator is flanked by one-story warehouses on either side, parallel to the railroad tracks. The original Farmers' Protective Association warehouse is the one just to the west of the FPA elevator. This was later used as an irrigation supply warehouse, and in 1987 it was converted to a feed store. The other warehouse, to the east of the elevator, was built by 1910 and housed agricultural implements in that year. It has a random rubble basement faced with concrete and is metal-clad. There is one loading bay on the east.

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Equity Supply Company Elevator and Creamery



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The creamery is located in the northeast corner of the block. In 1927 the creamery office was moved from the north side of the building to the south side. Four windows were installed to give light, and the new office was 16' X 24'. In 1956 a fire at the Equity Creamery burned off the top floor of the building, causing a \$48,000 loss to the building. At some point (possibly after the 1956 fire) the flat roofline of the creamery was changed to a shallow arched roof. The building is almost completely surrounded by one- and two-story concrete additions. The east side of the original building has shiplap siding, with T-111 in the curved upper section. The building is still in use as a creamery. It has not been significantly remodeled on the interior except for the installation of new equipment such as new bottling machines and tracks in the coolers.

Modern steel grain tanks are located to the north of the elevator complex (considered non-contributing to the property), plus a feed mill, motor room and grain elevator; all but one of these buildings were built between 1927 and 1963.

The warehouse in the northwest corner of the block was constructed in 1941 and is considered a contributing building to the property. The building has been sheathed in corrugated metal since it was constructed (see attached drawings). There is a large bay opening on the west that now also has a smaller door in it. The building is used as a warehouse for company vehicles. A feed and hay storage building that was located just to the south of this warehouse since at least 1910 no longer exists.

Outside of the property boundaries, a new farm store, service station and office were constructed in 1957. The retail store is located on the block to the north of the mill and creamery complex. In 1960 Equity bought out Greig's Dairy and Glacier Dairy, thus expanding the creamery route. In 1962, expanding its business, Equity bought the General Mills grain elevator complex on 5th Avenue West (this property, at 506 Center Street West, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places).

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Areas of Significance: Commerce

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1907-1942

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1908, 1917

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder(s): Hunt, W. H.; Costello, T. F.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Equity Supply Company Elevator and Creamery is significant under Criterion A for their importance in the development of markets for Flathead Valley agricultural products. The complex is a physical reminder of the vital economic link between Kalispell and the agricultural community of the Flathead Valley. One of the few businesses in Kalispell that still relies on the railroad, the property also reflects Kalispell's origins as a railroad town. The significant dates of 1908 and 1915 reflect the years that the grain elevator and first warehouse were constructed on the site by the Farmers' Protective Association and the year that Equity Supply Company took over the business.

The original flour mill on the block was located just south of the northeast corner of the block. The mill and warehouse were loaded onto flat cars and moved to a new site three blocks to the west on a special double track laid for the purpose. The mill was owned by the Bjerneby brothers, who were buying their grain from the FPA. The Bjerneby brothers purchased land and built an elevator on the new site, and their mill became one of the leading mills in the area until 1932 (it was destroyed by fire in 1937).

In 1902 some of the leading farmers in the Flathead Valley met to discuss how to break the monopoly enjoyed by the Royal Milling Company. The group discussed building their own mill, but this did not happen until quite a while later. In the winter of 1905-06 a social club of farmers in the Smith Valley west of town formed. This club soon became a secret order with initiation ceremonies and so on, but their first activities were limited to buying their supplies as a group to obtain lower prices. Their operation soon expanded to other parts of the Flathead Valley. In 1907 the business was incorporated and it purchased the Drew & McDonald grocery store and stock to sell to their members and to the general public as well. In January of 1908 the board of directors decided to build a grain elevator and purchased land next to the Great Northern Railway tracks. That year the 200,000 bushel elevator and warehouse were built, the warehouse by W. H. Hunt of Kalispell and the grain elevator by T. F. Costello of Minneapolis. The warehouse was a 50' X 100' two-story building with double frost-proof walls and a cold storage plant. By 1910 the company bought the entire hardware, harness and agricultural implement stock of the McIntosh Hardware Company, which made it necessary to build two warehouses for storing its surplus stock. The sales of grain, hay, produce, and agricultural implements and vehicles were handled on the FPA property near the elevators. Hardware, harness, and grocery sales were handled at the storefront on Main Street. Nineteen Flathead Valley farmers made up the executive board. Among other accomplishments, the FPA constructed some rural telephone lines and established the Farmers' Mutual Insurance company.

According to a 1926 newspaper article, the Equity Supply Company was the "outgrowth of a miserable failure," namely of the Farmers' Protective Association. The FPA reportedly showed a profit only one year, being hampered by poor judgment, mismanagement, and too rapid expansion, and its final losses were estimated at \$100,000. Faced with the threat of losing all the investments in the FPA, including the grain elevator, the members reorganized the association in 1915. Twelve farmers bought shares of \$25 each, and the first meeting of the Equity Supply Company was held at that time. New officers were elected, a new management system put in place, and the company subsequently grew rapidly. By 1926 Equity had 441 members, all farmers in the valley, a store in Columbia Falls as well as in Kalispell, profits of \$17,000 for 1925, and business of over \$750,000 in 1925.

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One of the founders of the Equity Supply Company explained how the organization was created out of the ruins of the FPA:

There was method in affixing the term 'Equity' to the name selected, for the American society of Equity had some 500 members in the county and 1,200 in the state...Farmers generally were indifferent in the face of past experience. But something had to be done. At a meeting of a few of the faithful, held on May 1 [1915], the secretary was instructed to write President Chryst of the American Society of Equity to come in person or send a good man to hold revival meetings in the various school houses throughout the valley. Mr. Sharp, general organizer of the American Society of Equity, was sent up from Kentucky. He started in on June 15 and held two meetings a day until June 30 and covered practically every part of the county. His talks were somewhat emotional and religiously inclined, but had the desired effect.

A contract for a grain pool for 200,000 bushels of wheat was drawn up. That first season, the Equity Supply Company leased the FPA elevator. Working on borrowed money, Equity began to buy wheat. The organization of the grain pool in 1915 may have made it possible for Equity Supply Company to survive, as it brought in enough money "to tide over the squally times when the cooperative movement was at its lowest ebb." In 1917 Equity was able to raise the money to pay off the indebtedness of the FPA, and the business was formally turned over to the Equity Supply Company.

The manager of Equity Supply Company from its founding in 1915 until his death in 1933 was B. R. McAllester. He was credited with much of the responsibility for the early success of the company, as he was a "cool, conservative business man, well qualified for the position he holds." Bradley McAllester had come to the Flathead from Minnesota in 1909 to work for the Farmers Protective Association as a grain buyer and then manager of the implement department. When that organization was taken over in 1915 by Equity Supply, McAllester was made secretary-treasurer and general manager. McAllester also served as secretary-treasurer of the Flathead Farmer's Mutual Insurance company and as a member of the board of the North Pacific Grain Growers Association. He was active in civic affairs and a leader in the Presbyterian Church. He was affiliated with the Masons, Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, Modern Woodmen and the Yeomen. McAllester took his own life in 1933 at the age of 55. Because of "his widespread acquaintance and the esteem in which he was held," the attendance at his funeral was one of the largest ever in Kalispell.

The next manager of Equity Supply was C. O. Larson, who came to Kalispell from the Missoula Mercantile. Within five years all the company's mortgages were paid off, and in that year Equity built a shop to provide better service to its customers. Larson managed Equity until 1946.

In 1920 Equity Supply took over a creamery that had been operated the previous year at a slight loss by the Flathead Cooperative Creamery. The creamery had been operated on the west side of town since 1916 by Flathead farmers, and previously it had been run by Willis Wells. C. W. Walker of Great Falls became manager in 1916, and in 1917 Equity decided to replace the old building. The new building was a two-story concrete and wood frame 60' X 80' building with an ice plant. Equity's new creamery, located on their property, opened in the fall of 1917. It was built by Kalispell contractor Fred Grinde, and it was designed by Professor Romig of the high school on his vacation. In 1917, the creamery supplied approximately half the local demand for milk and cream. Walker remained as manager until 1919, when he became a partner in the competitor business, the Glacier Dairy. Shortly after the new creamery was built, "the dry, hard years set in, the cows dried up, the source of finances dried up and most of the farmers dried up." Because of difficulties selling butter locally, the creamery shipped butter to Spokane and Seattle, but the firm in Spokane handling their butter went broke. Later the creamery expanded its trade route to hotels within Glacier National Park, then to wholesale routes throughout the Flathead Valley. In 1920, only about 5 % of the creameries in Montana were run by cooperatives (including ones in Stevensville, Drummond, and elsewhere). According to a newspaper article in that year, "The best dairy stock and the most progressive farmers in the state are found in the localities tributary to co-operative creameries." In 1921 the Equity

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creamery installed "the latest equipment" for making ice cream. This included a large viscolizer that heated the pasteurized mixture to 152 degrees and forced it through the aerated cooler and into cans at almost the freezing point. The Flathead Valley had come a long way since 1897, when there was only one creamery in the entire valley.

The creamery, elevators, warehouses, and store are still owned by Equity Supply Company. The company uses all local grains (oats, barley, wheat) in its feed manufacturing except for corn.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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 (City of Kalispell)
 University
 Other – Specify Repository: Flathead County Library,
Kalispell

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:

| Zone | Easting | Northing |
|------|---------|----------|
| 11 | 699460 | 5341800 |

Verbal Boundary Description

Block 27, Section 7, Township 28 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian.

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| name/title: Kathy McKay, Historian | date: May 1993 |
| street & number: 491 Eckelberry Dr. | telephone: (406) 892-1538 |
| city or town: Columbia Falls | state: Montana zip code: 59912 |

Property Owner

name: Equity Supply Company
street & number: PO Box 579
city or town: Kalispell state: MT zip code: 59903

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Equity Supply Company Elevator and Creamery

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Daily Inter Lake: February 21, 1896, p. 8; December 31, 1897; "The Farmers' Protective Association," November 14, 1910, p. 9.

Eckelberry, Keith (employee of Equity Supply 1969-present), interview with Kathy McKay, June 3, 1993.

Elwood, Henry, *Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1980), p. 142.

Flathead Monitor: "Kalispell Has One of the Few," December 23, 1920, p. 8; "The Equity Creamery Makes Fine Showing," May 19, 1921, p. 5; "One of Montana's Co-operative Successes," January 28, 1926, pp. 3, 6; "Institutions and Men Forming Kalispell's Commercial Life," December 16, 1926, p. 20; "Equity Supply Makes Needed Improvement," March 21, 1927, p. 1; "Friends Pay Last Tribute M'Allester," July 6, 1933, p. 1.

Kalispell Bee: "Will Build a Flour Mill," January 29, 1902, p. 2; "Warehouse and Elevator," May 19, 1908, p. 10; "To Move Flour Mill," August 8, 1913, p. 3.

Kalispell Fire Department records, Kalispell, Montana.

Kalispell Journal: April 30, 1908.

Kalispell News: "Dairying Is Progressive Industry," March 22, 1939, pp. 6, 9, part 4.

Kalispell Times: "Job to Build Creamery," May 31, 1917, p. 1; "New Creamery Is Occupied," September 6, 1917, p. 1; "Business Man a Suicide," June 29, 1933, p. 1.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Kalispell, Montana, 1910, 1927, 1956.