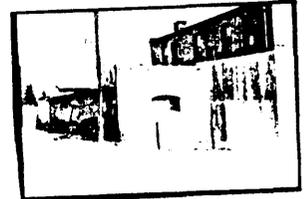


MONTANA HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

BRIDGER SURVEY

Legal Description: Block 7, Lots 1-3 OP  
Address: 102 N. Main  
Ownership: Name: Yellowstone Furniture Manufacturing Company  
%American Furniture Warehouse,  
L. Yeazel  
Address: 5445 Bannock  
Denver, CO 80216

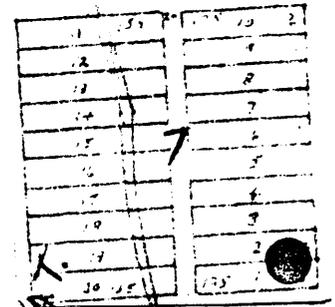


Historic Name: Glidden Mercantile  
Common Name: Yellowstone Furniture Factory  
Date of Construction: 1905  
Architect: J.G. Link, Billings  
Builder: R.R. Croal, Billings Contractor  
Ohilin Weesh, Brick Layer  
Original Owner: Samuel Glidden  
Original Use: Commercial - General store  
Present Use: Industrial - Furniture Factory

3 7  
Roll# 3/Frame# 8  
3 11

Research Sources:

Abstract of Title: Carbon County Courthouse: 1902, Bridger Improvement Company; 1904, Glidden Mercantile; 1905, Samuel Glidden; 1905, Alfred Pillsbury; 1906, Bridger Coal & Improvement Company; 1927, Alfred Pillsbury; 1941, Bridger Mercantile Company; 1957, William Jones; 1965, William A. Jones; 1968, Harold Anderson; 1970, Marjorie Johnson; 1971, Ralph Johnson; 1971, Harold Anderson; 1971, Marjorie Johnson; 1981, Yellowstone Furniture Manufacturing  
Plat Records: Carbon County Courthouse  
Tax Records: Carbon County Courthouse  
Building Permits: Oct. 1941 - Permit to remodel sheet metal garage on rear of property.  
Sewer/Water Permits: N/A  
City Directories: Polk 1907-1922  
Sanborn Maps: 1907, 1916  
Newspapers: (Please see index file)  
Other: N/A



Location Map

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

(Reappraisal Forms) Furniture factory - 6000 sq. ft., 2 story. 1906 constructed. Concrete foundation, concrete on ground floor structure (1st floor), wood joists & sheathing (2nd floor), hardwood floor, no floor covering. Lath & plaster ceiling,

masonry brick and bearing exterior. Wood joists wood deck roof, built-up composition roofing. Timber trusses and beams.

This two story, buff-colored brick commercial block is the finest example of commercial architecture in Bridger. Red sandstone is used as a string course at the upper floor window sill level, for the first floor window sills, and as decorative banding on the corner piers of the front (east) facade. Set on a corner lot, the Glidden Mercantile makes a very strong architectural statement within the commercial district of the community.

Metal framed commercial glazing spans the front facade and wraps around the southeast corner. An unusually wide band of leaded amethyst transom glass remains in place above the commercial windows. The top of the transom glass is approximately 18' above the sidewalk. The central main entrance is recessed on the east facade and the original pair of single light wooden doors is still in place. The wood paneled apron is also intact beneath the commercial glazing. Two commercial glass panels have been broken in recent years and replaced with plywood sheets.

The upper floor windows are one-over-one double hung sash set in a symmetrical pattern. The cornice is finished with decorative corbelling, an attached decorative metal gutter, and buff-brick coping. The effective gutter system on this building may account in part for the high degree of material preservation.

A small shed roof addition has been appended to the rear (west) elevation and serves to connect the small, flat roofed, red brick store house to the main building.

#### HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

The Glidden Mercantile Company began in February 1903 when Samuel H. Glidden acquired a building to move to Main Street, and purchased stock from another store to start his inventory. Just six months later Glidden announced that his store was so crowded he would have to build a new building, which is this one, built in 1905.

Architect J.G. Link of Billings, known particularly for his design of public buildings, was selected to prepare plans. Glidden wanted a store that was spacious, fireproof, and dust proof.

Surveyor Malcolm G. Swan was hired to establish the appropriate grade of the building lot, and Henry Gebo excavated for the basement. A Mr. Johnson, a Billings stonemason was in charge of cutting the red sandstone from the quarries of Bridger Canyon to be used as trim, and William Miller took a crew of men to haul rock for use in the basement, which was to be 7 1/2 feet in height. All this work was completed in late 1903- early 1904. There were several false reports that work would start soon, in November 1904 it was reported that William Lavelle, a Bridger brickmaker, had one half million pressed yellow brick with iron

markings ready for construction of the building, and Matt Marshall was hauling out the red cut sandstone, and John Kanonica was cutting it.

Then in January 1905, the store got a new manager, S.W. Rankin of Minneapolis. Rankin announced in April, then again in July that building would commence, and finally the contract was awarded to R.R. Crool (or Crowe) of Billings, who hired Ohilin Weesh to lay the brick. The walk around the building was completed in October, and by early November the building was enclosed and the furnace running so work could continue regardless of weather. In early January the work was complete and the stock moved in. A brick and stone warehouse was added to the rear of this building, and in 1913, an interior balcony, part of the original plans, was added at the back of the main floor in 1913.

The store carried groceries, dry goods, hardware and agricultural implements at both wholesale and retail prices, and routinely bought out competition as it appeared. In 1915 the corporate title changed to the Bridger Mercantile Company (reflecting Glidden's absence from the firm), and it continued to operate under that name until around 1957. The V & A Distributing Company acquired the structure in 1958, and used it as offices and display room. In 1981 the Yellowstone Furniture Manufacturing Company purchased the structure and now makes furniture there.

Inspite of the delays between the announcement that a new store would be built, August 1903, and the completion in January 1906, this mercantile was the most successful of Glidden's many enterprises. "The young Napoleon of the Clarke Fork" is what Bridger Tribune editor called him in 1904 when Glidden purchased the Carbon County interests of mining magnate, W.A. Clark. The title was well deserved, as Glidden took the valley as if by conquest. In 1903 he bought out the Hiram Haskins store and moved it to Main Street, where he opened a mercantile; he purchased the entire stock of the Bridger Improvement Company store at the mine, and added it to his inventory; then announced that he would construct this business block into which he would move his store. He settled on a homestead on Dry Creek (Golden) south of Bridger, and had a 14 room "mansion" constructed there; took an option on some "stucco fields" 7 miles south east from Bridger, and planned to construct a narrow gauge railroad to the site to haul the stucco to town, where he would erect a modern mill to process it into plaster of paris. In his spare time he incorporated and directed the first Carbon County Agricultural Fair. The following year, 1904, he cultivated 100 acres on his homestead, engaged an Oregon nursery to plant a "model orchard" on his ranch; acquired and developed a "gold mine" just below the mouth of the Clarks Fork Canyon; invested heavily in oil prospecting in the Bridger Canyon; acquired and planned to develop a gypsum mine; purchased the Samlan and Johnson coal mine near town; bought out W.A. Clark's entire interest in the area, including the coal mine and camp, the townsite, the water works,

and the electric power plant. That year he also purchased the Free Press, Bridger's only newspaper, ran successfully as state senator on the Democratic party ticket, and served as Chairman of the Clarke's Fork Water Users Association.

In 1906 Glidden and his brother-in-law, L.A. Corey, who supervised the Bridger Canyon Oil Company prospecting, purchased tracts east of the depot and began the erection of large and comfortable residences. The homes, both still standing side by side in the affluent "Bon-Ton" district of town, were not completed until the spring of 1907. During the construction period the Gliddens and Coreys lived in tents just east of the city limits on the Henry Gebo homestead until winter weather forced them to rent a house to live in.

Glidden announced plans in 1909 to construct a big water power project on the Clark's Fork River, and was elected Director of the Eastern Montana Electric Railway Company, which planned to construct an electric railway from Billings, up the Clarks Fork, through Bearcreek and Washoe, and on to Red Lodge. Neither of the schemes were carried out. In 1910 he sold his Dry Creek ranch to a Minneapolis syndicate, and his home in Bridger to Ed Jenkin. He was last heard from in 1916, residing in Seattle, and working as a traveling evangelist.

Glidden's career was perhaps the most extreme example of over speculation in the Clark Fork Valley and the young town of Bridger. Just how much money Glidden had when he came to town, what he left with, and whose money he spent here, is not known. It was later acknowledged that he represented "Minneapolis Capitalists," one of whom was Alfred F. Pillsbury. Pillsbury ended up owning all of Glidden's investments, except for the ranch and the house in town.

**INTEGRITY:**

Excellent, unaltered

**HISTORICAL and/or ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Glidden Mercantile meets Criterion A for its contribution to the development of Commerce in Bridger and the Clark Fork Valley (1903-57) which is best represented by this structure. The Glidden Mercantile was the largest retail and wholesale dealer to ever operate in the eastern half of Carbon County, and it is the longest surviving business in the area. Groceries, dry goods, hardware and agricultural implements were sold there, and were delivered from that store to various rural settlements in the vicinity. This business would have been patronized by every resident of the area as the closest, most dependable source of a great variety of goods and supplies.

The Glidden Mercantile meets Criterion B as it is the best representative structure associated with Samuel Glidden,

entrepreneur and natural resources speculator who operated in Bridger and the Clark Fork Valley from 1903-1910. Glidden was involved in such enterprise as retail, farming, orchard raising, ranching, irrigation and water power development, coal, gold, stucco and gypsum mining, oil and gas exploration, the Bridger townsite, electric and water plants. While his investments by and large did not profit, he succeeded in securing investment capital, particularly from Minneapolis monied families, the application of which had a major effect on the development of irrigation projects upon which the valley still heavily depends.

The Glidden Mercantile meets Criterion C for its architectural significance. The building was professionally designed by J.G. Link of Billings best known state wide in his partnership Link & Haire. As partners this group designed many of the fine turn of the century public buildings in the state. The retail store was built of locally pressed brick, and trimmed with red sandstone cut in nearby Bridger Canyon. The basement is of rubble stone gathered locally along the Clark Fork River. It is the largest and most ornate masonry building in the Clark Fork Valley, and is a credit to both the designer Link, and to Billings bricklayer Ohilin Weesh. This building has been spared the customary storefront remodeling which occurred on the other business blocks, and is the most intact representative of the historic Bridger commercial district.

**FORM PREPARED BY:**

Name: Carbon County Historic Preservation Office

Address: Box 1651

Red Lodge, MT 59068

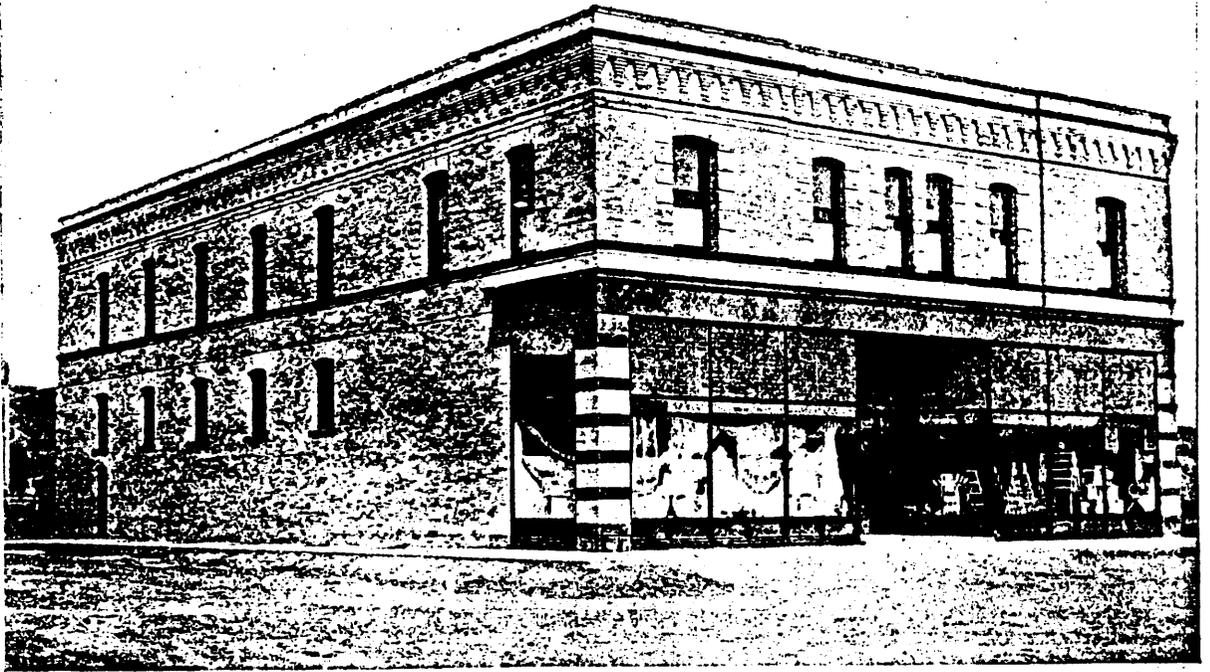
Date: October, 1986

**GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

Acreage: 75' x 135'

USGS Quad: Bridger, Mont. 1956 7.5

UTM's: Zone 12, 663590 E., 5017740 N.



From Booklet City of Bridger 1907

Glidden Mercantile Company

