



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**NATIONAL  
REGISTER**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: Olsen House

other name/site number:

**2. Location**

street & number: 516 N. Park

not for publication: n/a  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

city/town: Helena

state: Montana      code: MT      county: Lewis and Clark      code: 049      zip code: 59601

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

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       |

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

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

**4. 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.   See continuation sheet.

Maule Jeff Signature of certifying official Date 1-16-91

Montana SHPO State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

**Entered in the National Register**

entered in the National Register Deborah Byers 3/22/91  
  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):

for Signature of Keeper Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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Historic: Domestic/duplex

Current: Commerce/professional

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification: Late Victorian: Italianate  
Other: Vernacular

Materials: foundation: limestone  
walls: limestone  
roof: asphalt

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Olsen House on 516 N. Park is a two-story bluestone building composed of two distinct sections. The front (east), two-story section, is of Italianate styling, built in 1908-09, while the back (west) portion was constructed in 1884-85, and is a 2½-story, gabled-roof, vernacular building. The building has been kept in excellent condition, and the exterior maintains a high degree of historic integrity, looking much as it did when it was first built. The Italianate section retains elements of that style which make it easily identifiable, and it has the simpler and cleaner lines characteristic of the type of Italianate buildings built early in the 20th century, long after the original style's heyday. Most of the original buildings around 516 N. Park have been destroyed or drastically altered. The Olsen House is a reminder of what was once a more quiet residential neighborhood on North Park Avenue, now transformed into a busy main thoroughfare.

The original building on this lot was a 1½-story, L-shaped, wooden frame, Gothic Revival cottage built facing Clore Street (now Park Street) in 1874. In 1884, a 2½-story, gable-roofed, vernacular stone addition was started behind the original wood structure, and was probably completed in 1885. The walls of this addition are of stone coursed rubble, about two feet thick. Raised mortar joints are a distinctive feature of the stone work. Fenestration includes double-hung, 2-over-2 windows, with arched brick lintels and stone lug sills. These windows have a head mold filled with a decorative inset of wood. Four such windows are symmetrically-placed on both the north and south sides of this addition, with two on the upper story, and two on the lower story. The lower story windows are taller than those of the upper story. There is a door with a transom window on the south side between the two lower windows, which employs the same lintel and decorative treatment as the windows.

On the rear (west) side, there is an attic window high in the gable end, and a window and door symmetrically placed below it on the second story. The rear door has no transom, and probably opened originally onto the balcony of a porch which wrapped the south and west elevations (now removed) by 1888. Rear access to this doorway is currently provided by a deck and stairway above a rear laundry addition. There are chimneys on the north and south sides, both are made of random ashlar stone built from the ground up, the chimney on the north projects further from the wall than the south chimney.

These disparate portions of the original house were used as two separate residences at the turn of the century, with the owners residing in the stone portion, and tenants residing in the original building in front.

Around 1908-09, the original wooden frame, Gothic Revival building in front was moved to the rear of the lot, where it set for a while, unoccupied before it was finally moved to Knight Street. A stone, two story, Italianate style addition, was built in its place across the front gabled end of the vernacular stone wing, forming a T shape. This addition was one room deep, and included an inside stairway. (Before this, one had to go

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outside to move between levels.) The front addition exhibits Italianate influences, with a low-pitched, hip roof, levelling off at the gutter line, and finished with deep, single bracketed eaves. The stone pattern of the walls is of uncoursed (or "broken-face") ashlar. The roofing is of interlocking, asphalt shingles.

On the east elevation, the main facade of the 1909 addition is spanned by a full-width, covered porch with single-bracketed, extended eaves. The porch roof is supported by Tuscan order columns in groupings of two and three resting upon stone piers. Between the columns, the porch is enclosed by a low balustrade. The main entrance is offset to the north, and marked by a low pediment in the porch roof and low stone walls which frame the wide front, concrete steps. The front doorway has a single-paned, I-panel door, flanked by two single-paned, sidelight windows. Columns, balustrade, eaves and brackets, are all painted white to match the door and window trim. The apron between the stone piers is filled with lattice. A set of small concrete steps with an iron rail was recently added on the south end of the porch to provide easy access to the south parking area.

Fenestration on the front facade includes a fixed cottage window with two lights opening onto the south end of the porch, flanked by two narrow double-hung, 1-over-1 windows. Above the porch on the second story, are two sets of paired windows, symmetrically placed. These windows are double-hung, 1-over-1 units with lug sills like those on the rear, but these have plain, flat, unpainted lintels, in contrast to the distinctively decorated ones of the rear portion. Between these two sets of paired windows, is an oval, decorative, fixed-pane window.

The facade is accented by a short, Palladian type dormer window projecting from the east side of the roof facing the street. The central, arched window houses a 1-over-1, double-hung sash unit, while the two flanking windows are fixed with multi-pane, diamond designs. Other fenestration includes three windows on the north wall, two on the bottom floor on either side of the chimney, and one on the upper floor to the right of the chimney. The two basement windows with wells have segmental, arched stone lintels.

The final addition to the house was made in 1959 when the one-story laundry room was built to the west (rear) end of the house, with plain, concrete walls, and a flat roof. There is one window on each of the three open sides, all of them plain, 1-over-1, double-hung units. A southside door provides access to this rear addition. The window and door are to the right of the staircase which comes down from the roof/porch of the rear addition. This staircase is a wooden one built in 1989, along the south wall of the laundry addition. A wooden deck with a railing was built atop the roof in 1989 as well.

In 1989, the building was rehabilitated, and the interior and grounds were altered to convert the house to several new office suites. However, great care was taken in this rehabilitation, and as a result, the interior retains a remarkably high degree of historical integrity. Historic detailing includes the original balustrade and stairs, wood flooring, doors, and front brick fireplace. The interior window sills in the rear vernacular stone portion of the house angle out to avoid the narrow "tunneling" effect that a straight sill would have on such thick walls, and to give the rooms a roomier feel and look. The front interior window sills do not have this angling cut. There is also wood trim around all the rooms that rests about one third of the way up the wall. Where

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changes in the floor plan were made, this trim was duplicated. Two attractive, stained-wood doors from roughly the same period as the house were added to the front room, and the door frame was lowered quite skillfully to fit the new doors.

The building is presently used for business office space, and to create parking, in 1989 the house next door at 512 North Park was demolished, and a large area at the rear of the house was paved. From the rear stairs, past the laundry room door and the side door on the south side runs a sidewalk, which comes around to the front and connects to the sidewalk leading to the front porch steps. A concrete retaining wall that runs north-south across the property, marks the east edge of the large parking space in the rear. There is a shade tree opposite the rear portion on the south side.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: C                      Areas of Significance: Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a                      Period(s) of Significance: 1885, 1909

Significant Person(s): n/a                      Significant Dates: 1885, 1909

Cultural Affiliation: n/a                      Architect/Builder: Unknown

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Olsen House on 516 North Park Avenue in Helena, Montana, is an unusual architectural composite, combining sturdy vernacular stone masonry of the 1870s with late Italianate architecture. The result is a unique residence in the local area, which is significant for its architectural qualities and eligible for the National Register according to criterion C.

The front portion, completed around 1909, was patterned after the Italianate style of architecture, a style that continued to be popular in growing areas of the West and Midwest long after its heyday in the East, perhaps because it was easy to build, yet attractive in the relaxed way of a country Italian villa. The Olsen House typifies the style by its wide, bracketed eaves, square massing, arcade-like porch, and pyramidal roof. The clean lines and simple patterning reflect early 20th century sensibilities. Although there are a number of Italianate style residences in the Helena area, the Olsen House is one of the latest examples, and is outstanding for its use of stone in a style that locally was usually expressed in brick or wood.

The Italianate styled masonry on the front of the house was wedded quite harmoniously with the vernacular stone wing built over 20 years prior. At the rear, thick stone walls, segmental window lintels with decorative carving in the arches, the 2-over-2 window arrangements, and steeply pitched gable roof all harken to an earlier period of Helena's architectural development, during the 1870s and early 1880s, when simpler vernacular building forms were commonplace. While not indicative of any specific vernacular form, the rear portion of the Olsen House exemplifies many characteristics of masonry construction often employed in emerging Helena. And while gabled, vernacular houses of the late 19th century in wood and brick are represented in the Helena area, the masterful stonework on the Olsen House makes this a noteworthy example in the community.

The addition of the Italianate portion in 1909, also reflects a common pattern of residential development in Helena during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Helena made a stunning evolution from mining camp to regional center and state capital, local architecture reflected the transition. During this period, as Helena assumed a position of permanence and prosperity, the functional vernacular houses of simple design and modest scale constructed during the 1860s and 1870s were commonly replaced with larger, more elaborate, later period homes. And sometimes, as in this case, a substantial addition was made which enlarged the residence and presented a more stylish facade to the public, yet retained the older building as a portion of this expanded structure.

### Background History

The original lot at 516 North Park was purchased in September 1874 in the name of Amelia Dissa Derrick. The first building on the property, a 1½-story frame cottage was built on the site facing Clore Street (now Park Avenue) by Amelia's husband, Louis Derrick. It is not clear whether Louis Derrick died, or if he and Amelia were divorced, but she married Ingebret Olsen sometime after 1875.

Ingebret Olsen was one of the early pioneers to come to the Helena area, arriving in 1865. The house itself was never owned jointly by the Olsens, but was always owned in Amelia Olsen's name alone, something not uncommon in a "boom and bust" mining frontier, where a man might make a fortune in one day, and then lose it all the next. By putting property in the wife's name alone, there was no legal way creditors could claim it as

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compensation for the husband's debts. Amelia Olsen apparently lavished more money on the outside appearance of the house than she did on the quality of material and work for the interior.

In 1884-85, a two-story, rectangular, gable-roofed, vernacular stone addition was constructed behind the original Gothic Revival style, wooden frame building in front. By 1893, the wooden front and stone rear parts of the building began to be used as two separate residences, and the Olsens were listed in the Helena City Directory as residing in the rear. Various individuals rented the front unit including Phillip Huber who is first listed at this address in 1902. His son George Huber was born in the wooden portion of the house in 1906. According to George Huber, his was the last family to live in the front, wood frame before it was moved about 1908-1909. Subsequently, the Huber family moved into the house next door on 512 North Park. (The house at 512 is shown on the Sanborn maps going back to 1884. This building was torn down in 1989 to make room for a parking lot for 516 North Park.)

Amelia Olsen then had the two-story, bluestone, Italianate front section built in place of the Gothic Revival style wooden frame house. The "sizable estate" that the newspapers claimed Olsen left (he died in 1904) apparently made the addition affordable without a mortgage for Amelia.

Amelia Olsen, and her daughter Amelia M. and son Edwin, continued to live at the house after Ingebret's death in 1904, until her death in 1918. Edwin most likely inherited his father's ranch in Fergus County and lived there, while his sister inherited the house in Helena after their mother's death. Amelia M. Olsen never married, and lived in the house until her death in 1946. She died without a will, and the property was left to Edward Theodore Olsen, son of her brother Edwin, and her nearest living relative. Edward sold the house in 1950 to John Conway Harrison who lived there until 1988. Harrison added the rear laundry room at the rear in 1959. Harrison was Lewis and Clark County Attorney from 1954-1960. He has since served as a justice for the State Supreme Court from 1961 until the present. Harrison sold the house to Robert and Brenda Haseman in 1989. The building is used for office space today.

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## 9. References

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Abstract of Title, Quit Claim Deed of Amelia Derrick.  
Abstract of Title, Mortgage for the house on Clore Street (later 516 North Park) owned by Amelia Derrick, from the abstract, entered on March 1, 1875.  
Building Permit, City of Helena, July 1, 1959 (for the laundry addition).  
Helena Daily Herald, December 30, 1874.  
Helena Independent Record, June 25, 1904, p.3.  
Huber, George, Personal communications with Robert Haseman on various dates, primarily in January 1990.  
The Montana Record, December 21, 1918, p.2.  
Society of Montana Pioneers, Membership application for Amelia Olsen.  
Polk City Directory, Helena Montana, 1884-1909  
U.S. Census Bureau, Enumeration for the City of Helena in Lewis and Clark County, Montana, 1900 & 1910.

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 acre

| UTM References: | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|-----------------|------|---------|----------|
|                 | 12   | 420360  | 5160190  |

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Sixty feet of the southerly side of Lot 11 in the Henry Thompson Addition of the City of Helena, Montana, located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 30, Township 10 North, Range 3 West.

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Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes all the property that has historically been associated with the house.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Nathan Latta

Organization: State Historic Preservation Office

Date: August 1990

Street & Number: 225 North Roberts

Telephone: 406/444-7715

City or Town: Helena

State: MT

Zip: 59620