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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

OCT 11 1988

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name First National Bank of Rock River  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 131 Avenue C.; Lot 1, Block 1 N/A not for publication  
city, town Rock River N/A vicinity  
state Wyoming code WY county Albany code 001 zip code 82083

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>      </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Thomas E. Marlean DSHPO 10/6/88  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
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.  
 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:) \_\_\_\_\_  
John Savage 11-21-88  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

GOVERNMENT: post office, city hall

SOCIAL: meeting hall

EDUCATION: library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: fire station

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STUCCO

BRICK

roof OTHER: Gravel/Tar Composition

other TERRA COTTA

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See Continuation Sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G    N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

OTHER: Oil Exploitation

Period of Significance

1919-1938

Significant Dates

1919

1936

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Southern Wyoming Lumber Company

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

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

### UTM References

A 

1	3	4	1	8	6	7	0	4	6	2	1	5	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description The nominated property includes Lot one in Block one, in the original townsite of Rock River, as surveyed, platted and recorded in Albany County, Wyoming. This lot is located at 131 Avenue C in Rock River and measures 25 feet east to west, by 130 feet north to south.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification Lot one in Block one in the original townsite of Rock River constitutes the entire parcel of land that has historically been associated with the First National Bank of Rock River.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title See continuation sheet

organization Wyoming SHPO date October, 1988

street & number 2301 Central Avenue telephone (303) 777-7498

city or town Cheyenne state Wyoming zip code 82002

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First National Bank of Rock River

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The First National Bank building is situated on the northwest corner of Avenue C and Second Street in the small rural community of Rock River. The facade, or south elevation, fronts onto Avenue C while the east elevation parallels Second Street. An asphalt playground, approximately 40 feet by 130 feet lies adjacent to the building to the west. This location was platted in 1901 as lot one of block one in Rock River's original town-site. The street address is 131 Avenue C. The physical setting projects a quiet small town atmosphere that has changed little since the period of significance. Other nearby buildings consist mainly of modest one story houses dating from the same era as the bank. There are also numerous vacant lots, and with the exception of Avenue C, all of the nearby streets are unpaved. Grazing lands are visible beyond the edges of the town, just two blocks north of the bank. Railroad tracks run north to south and are situated less than two blocks to the west. Grazing lands are also visible further west beyond the tracks.

The bank was built in 1919 as a tall one story brick building, rectangular in plan, measuring 24 by 130 feet, with a flat gravel and tar composition roof. In the mid 1950s, an overhead door was cut into the south end of the east elevation for the purpose of housing a fire engine. Subsequently, in the mid 1970s, several wood frame door and window openings on the east elevation were replaced with aluminum. Although the fenestration openings remained the same, wood paneled doors were replaced with glass, and the window glazing patterns were changed. Shortly afterward, beige colored, rough textured stucco was applied to much of the building's exterior surfaces. Although these changes have modified the building's physical appearance, its basic form and dimensions remain the same.

The building's facade fronts directly along the main sidewalk on Avenue C. A brick parapet wall projects slightly above the roof line and is stepped in a simple symmetrical pattern. The topmost course of bricks is finished in a decorative pattern with terra-cotta. Below this a molded cornice line protrudes from the main wall surface. It also is finished with terra-cotta, and is composed of, from top to bottom, an egg and dart motif, a dentil course, and the inscription "FIRST NATIONAL BANK" in large block letters. Beneath the inscription, the facade is vertically divided, in a symmetrical pattern, into three bays. The center bay is composed of the entryway which is topped by a wooden pediment, with S shaped bracket supports. A fixed pane transom

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is set over the pediment, while the entry door itself is of wood slab construction. The two flanking bays are dominated by large, vertically oriented fixed pane windows. Large concrete columns are set on either side of the entry, visually separating it from the two windows. The columns are finished with terra-cotta and have composite capitals with volutes. To the outside of the two windows, at the corners of the facade, stuccoed pilasters are stepped out from the main wall surface.

The east elevation, adjacent to Second Street, is comprised of the previously mentioned remodeled door and window openings. From south to north are: an overhead metal garage door topped by two, two-light fixed pane transoms; two vertically oriented four-light fixed pane windows; a glass plate door with glassed in surrounds; a thirty-six-light industrial sash window; a plate glass door topped by a two-light fixed pane transom; two twenty-four-light industrial sash windows; a plate glass door topped by a two-light fixed pane transom; two vertically oriented four-light fixed pane windows; and a plate glass door topped by a two-light fixed pane transom.

The brick below and around these door and window openings has been stuccoed. The top twenty courses of brickwork on this elevation, however, were left intact. The topmost course of bricks is finished with terra-cotta, continuing the pattern from the top of the parapet wall on the facade. Beginning seven courses below this is a band of four courses of corbelled brick extending nearly the full length of the elevation. Below here, vertical segments of corbelled bricks are spaced every eight to ten feet. They project downward reaching into the stucco, above the spaces between the door and window openings.

The west elevation, adjacent to the asphalt playground, has no door or window openings. It is entirely stuccoed but is otherwise unchanged since the period of significance. The north elevation fronts directly onto a graveled alley. It has also been stuccoed, and there is a single metal door on the west end. The door provides access to the building's gas heating system and is topped by a metal transom.

The building's interior is one room wide east to west, and is divided into four basic spaces south to north. It has been remodeled at various times to accommodate the changing uses of

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the building. In the second space from the south, the position of some interior partition walls have been changed. This area contained offices for the bank during the 1920s. It then became apartments and later the town jail. Rest rooms installed here in 1921, have been remodeled in modern times. The still intact bank vault is also located in this area. The building's flooring is concrete throughout, and is covered with either tile or carpet in most areas. Most walls and ceilings are plaster lath with a painted finish. Some of the newer partition walls are sheet rock, and dropped acoustical tile ceiling has been installed in a few areas.

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The First National Bank of Rock River is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is significant because of its initial association with the development of the oil industry in the region and because it later became the focal point for Rock River's social and cultural activities. The bank was constructed in 1919 at the height of an oil boom occurring in Albany and Carbon Counties. After its initial use as a bank during the 1920s, the building became the property of the town. Since that time it has been used by the community for many diverse civic purposes, playing a key role in the continuing development of the town. Today, in spite of having been adapted to serve a variety of purposes, the building still retains a large measure of its architectural integrity. The physical setting also possesses a high degree of integrity, providing a strong sense of feeling and association for life in Rock River during the period of significance.

The period of significance begins in 1919, the year in which the bank was built. Although the building continued to function as an integral part of the community until the mid 1980s, the year 1939 was chosen as an arbitrary ending date for the period of significance. This is to avoid including dates within the past fifty years as the property is not judged to possess exceptional significance. The year of construction, 1919, and 1936, when the town of Rock River acquired the property, are listed as significant dates.

As is typical of towns across southern Wyoming, Rock River can trace its beginnings to the Union Pacific Railroad Company. During the 1890s the Union Pacific completed a new survey for the route of the transcontinental railroad between Laramie and Medicine Bow. At the conclusion of the survey this section of the railroad was shifted several miles southward in order to eliminate some thirty miles of track. By moving southward the railroad abandoned its station at Rock Creek and instead established a new station at the site of Rock River eleven miles to the south. In the spring of 1899 a number of buildings were erected at Rock River and newly established businesses soon opened their doors to surveyors, timbermen, coal miners and other workers associated with the railroad. Two years later, when the shortened route was completed, the Union Pacific filed a plat for the original townsite of Rock River.

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Although the town owed its beginnings to the railroad, it also developed as a regional service center for surrounding ranches. Only the ranches in the immediate vicinity, however, provided a large measure of support for the town's economy. This was because Laramie and Medicine Bow were already firmly established as the region's major service centers. For this reason, and because the initial boom associated with the railroad's construction soon passed, it appeared that Rock River would see only limited growth. This prognosis changed dramatically in 1917 when the Ohio Oil Company discovered oil on the Alvy Dixon Ranch approximately twelve miles west of Rock River. An oil camp named Ohio City quickly sprang up near that location, across the county line in Carbon County. The name of the camp was soon changed to McFayden after a prominent member of the oil company. When a post office was established there in 1920 the spelling was changed to McFadden.

In addition to causing the establishment of McFadden, the discovery of oil also created a sizable boom in Rock River. The population of the town increased significantly and construction was begun on many new buildings, including the First National Bank. The United States Treasury Department granted a charter for the bank in April, 1919, and construction on the building was begun later that month. The bank was built by the Laramie based Southern Wyoming Lumber Company. This company was a newly formed entity having incorporated on February 24, 1919 with E.J. Travis as President. Interestingly, three members of its board of directors; L.H. McAlister, W.F. Shields and Fred (F.R.) Richards were also on the board of directors for the bank. Construction was completed and the bank opened for business in February, 1920.

The bank was built on lot one of block one in the original townsite of Rock River. This was a prominent location at the northwest corner of Avenue C and Second Street in the middle of downtown. This parcel of land had been part of a larger tract which the Union Pacific had sold to Albany County School District Number Five in 1912. In 1919 the School District sold lot one of block one to Alvy Dixon (President of the Bank) and Fred R. Richards. They in turn immediately sold the property to the First National Bank which they controlled.

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During the early 1920s the building also housed the medical practice of Dr. Florence Patrick, one of the few women doctors in Wyoming at that time. Her office was located in the back, or north end of the building, and was accessible from Second Street. Dr. Patrick retired and closed her practice circa 1925.

The bank got off to an auspicious start during the midst of the boom with both depositors and prospective borrowers filling the lobby. The boom, however, was based more on speculation than on an actual yield of oil. Although the nearby drilling did provide some positive results, actual production levels were fairly modest. By the early 1920s, overproduction throughout the state and a decrease in oil markets after the end of the First World War brought the short-lived boom to a close. The First National Bank came to a close as well, shutting its doors on April 11, 1923, less than four years after they had opened.

After the bank closed, its national charter was suspended, and on June 14, 1923, it went into receivership. It was more than six years later, on December 31, 1929 when the bank's finances were finally settled and the receivership was closed. The bank's downfall, however, was caused by more than just the poor economy. Perhaps the most immediate factor causing its demise was that it was being looted from within. Lewis C. Butler, Vice-President and Cashier for the institution, was charged with embezzlement and misappropriation of several thousand dollars of the bank's funds. In March, 1924 he was convicted of the charges in Federal Court in Cheyenne and sentenced to a prison term at Leavenworth, Kansas.

On February 8, 1927, the bank property was sold to the newly formed Citizen's State Bank. This institution, although not plagued by embezzlement, met with only modest success. The stagnant economy and the proximity of larger banks in Laramie, less than forty miles to the southeast, precluded any significant financial growth. In 1934 the building was issued to Albany County on a tax deed after Citizen's State Bank failed to pay property taxes, and a public sale on July 14, 1931 failed to sell the property for the amount of taxes due. With this action the building's history as a financial institution came to a close.

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On June 9, 1936 the property was sold by the county to the town of Rock River. From that date forward, until the mid 1980s, the bank building was used by the community for a variety of purposes becoming the town's social and cultural center. In the mid 1930s, the United States Post Office for Rock River moved into the front, or south end, of the building where the bank lobby was previously located. The post office operated there for approximately twenty years before moving to a new location in the mid 1950s. Between 1935 and circa 1941, the area immediately behind the post office was used as an apartment by the postmaster. Citizens of Rock River today recall that two school teachers in about 1930 and 1931 also used this space for living quarters. During the 1940s and '50s, the area where the apartments had been located became the town jail. After the post office moved, the front of the building was leased to the Rock Creek Fire Zone for use as a fire garage. At this time an overhead door was cut into the south end of the east elevation so that a fire engine could be stored there. As of 1988 the building is still serving this purpose.

The next room, behind or to the north of the apartments, is known as the Community or Council Room. Between circa 1935 and 1985 the Town Council met here on a monthly basis to discuss the business of the town. The officials comprising the Council were the Town Clerk, Treasurer, Marshall, and the Justice of the Peace. Many other organizations also met here on a regular basis including the School Board, 4-H club, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

This room is also significant because it was the community's primary social center. Events that took place here included numerous weddings, receptions, bridal and baby showers, dances, and other social affairs. This room also served as the official polling place for Rock River and was the scene of many political meetings. A kitchen, located at the north end of the community room, was utilized on many occasions, most often between 1958 and 1960 when the school's hot lunch program was prepared here and served to the students in the community room.

Between circa 1940 and 1985 the room at the north end of the building housed the Rock River Branch of the Albany County Carnegie Public Library. Mrs. James (Myrtle) Mallery served a

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long tenure as librarian, from the late 1930s until 1970. Her daughter-in-law, Mrs Howard (Edith) Mallery has served as librarian since 1970. In 1984-1985 the library and the town offices moved to a new location at 321 Avenue D. A newer building here was obtained by the town from the local school district and has replaced the bank as the community's primary social center. The First National Bank building, meanwhile, still houses the fire engine and is otherwise used primarily for storage.

The First National Bank of Rock River was evaluated on a local level against other buildings associated with the regional oil boom, and with the subsequent development of Rock River as a community. It is especially significant because it was built at the height of the boom, and because it later became the town's cultural and social center. Although its architectural integrity has been impaired somewhat, the bank is clearly the best extant example associated with these themes.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

[Primary sources are arranged chronologically.]

- Plat. "Union Pacific First Addition To The Town Of Rock River." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, March 14, 1901. Book of Plats, n.p.
- Patent. "United States to Union Pacific Railroad Company." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, February 19, 1902. Book Q, Page 596.
- Plat. "Union Pacific Third Addition To The Town Of Rock River." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, April 23, 1911. Book of Plats, Page 54.
- Warranty Deed. "Union Pacific Railroad Company to School District Number Five." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, April 30, 1912. Book 107, Page 381.
- Articles of Incorporation. "Southern Wyoming Lumber Company." Filed with the Wyoming Secretary of State's Office, February 24, 1919.
- U.S. Treasury Department. Office of Comptroller of the Currency. Report Of Organization Of National Bank. "The First National Bank Of Rock River." April 30, 1919.
- Warranty Deed. "Trustees, School District Number Five to Alvy Dixon and Fred R. Richards." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, November, 1919. Book 113, Page 232.
- Warranty Deed. "Alvy Dixon and Fred R. Richards to First National Bank of Rock River." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, November 18, 1919. Book 115, Page 520.
- Quit Claim Deed. "First National Bank of Rock River to Citizens State Bank." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, February 8, 1927. Book 123, Page 602.

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Tax Deed. Property was issued to Albany County after the Citizens State Bank failed to pay property taxes. Filed with the Albany County Clerk, July 15, 1934. Book 131, Page 108.

Deed. "County Commissioners of Albany County to Town of Rock River." Filed with the Albany County Clerk, January 9, 1936. Book 121, Page 324.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Brown, Robert Harold. Wyoming: A Geography. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980.

"Community Development In Wyoming 1867 - ." Draft Historic Context, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1987.

Gillespie, A.S. "Reminiscences of Rock Creek." Works Projects Administration Subject File, Number 224, 1937. On file at the State of Wyoming; Archives, Museums and Historical Department; Historical Research and Publications Division.

"Hooves to Wheels: Rock River Bicentennial." Rock River, Wyoming, 1976.

Huntoon, Peter W. "The National Bank Failures In Wyoming, 1924." Annals Of Wyoming 54 (Fall 1982): 34-44.

Kafka, Olive. "Rock River." Works Projects Administration Subject File, Number 1159, 1941. On file at the State of Wyoming; Archives, Museums and Historical Department; Historical Research and Publications Division.

Larson, T.A. History Of Wyoming. 2nd ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978.

"Transportation In Wyoming 1742 - 1945." Draft Historic Context, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 1987.

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Wyoming: A Guide To Its History, Highways and People. New York:  
Oxford University Press, 1941. Compiled by the Writers'  
Program of the Works Projects Administration in Wyoming.

Newspaper Articles

[Newspaper articles are arranged chronologically.]

"First National To Be Valuable Asset To Town." Rock River Review,  
circa April 11, 1919.

"First National Bank Annual Meeting." Rock River Review, January  
23, 1920, page 1.

"First National Ready For Opening." Rock River Review, February  
27, 1920, page 1.

"First National To Hold Open House." Rock River Review, March 5,  
1920, page 1.

"First National Installs Rest Room." Rock River Review, November  
11, 1921, page 1.

"First National Bank Closed Wednesday." Rock River Review, April  
12, 1923, page 1.

"Rock River Bank May Be Reopened." Rock River Review, June 7,  
1923, page 1.

"Wyoming Banker Arrested in Denver." Rock River Review, October  
18, 1923, page 1.

"Lewis C. Butler Is Under Indictment." Rock River Review,  
November 22, 1923, page 1.

"New Bank Opened With A Big Rush." Rock River Review, February  
21, 1924, page 1.

"The Butler Trial Now In Progress." Rock River Review, February  
28, 1924, page 1.

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"Butler Hearing To Be Held Saturday." Rock River Review, March 6, 1924. page 1.

"Butler Sentenced To Term At Leavenworth." Rock River Review, March 27, 1924, page 1.

"Notice To Patrons of First National Bank." Rock River Review, May 8, 1924, page 1.

Oral Interviews

Joanne Lemler, Rock River Town Clerk, July 7, 1988.

Lee White, former Mayor of Rock River, July 15, 1988.

Gladys White, July 15, 1988.

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# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

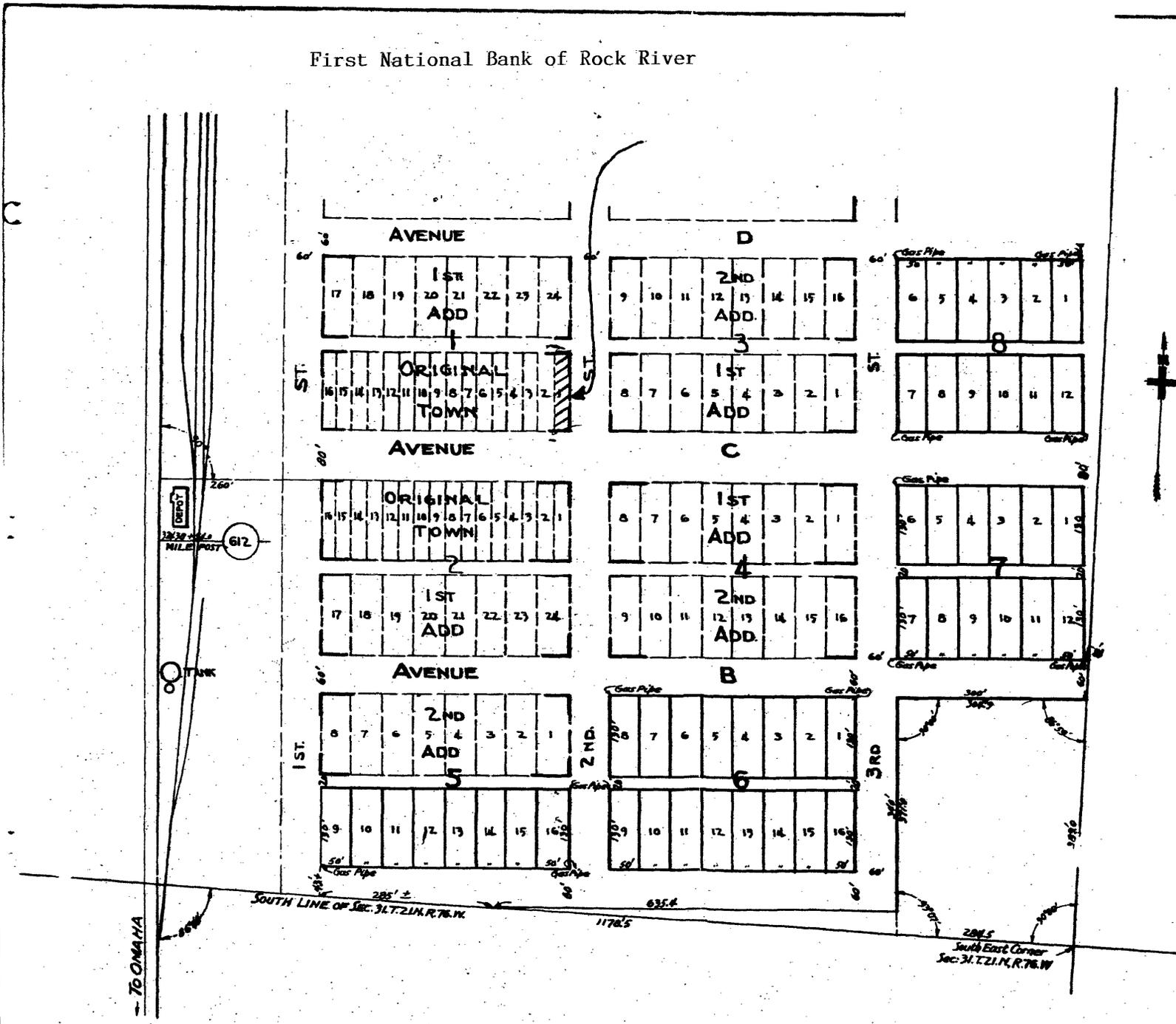
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Work on this nomination was begun in 1986 when citizens of Rock River formed an "Historical Society Committee" for the purpose of nominating the First National Bank to the National Register of Historic Places. Eva Mae Emerson, Committee Chairperson and Joanne Lemler, Rock River Town Clerk, wrote an initial draft which was submitted to the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office in November, 1986. During 1987 and early 1988 Diane Cole, Intern with the Wyoming SHPO, revised the nomination. Carl McWilliams, Wyoming SHPO Survey and Registration Historian, then prepared the final draft, editing and revising the nomination to conform with current NPS National Register Standards.

SKETCH MAP

First National Bank of Rock River



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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88002532 Date Listed: 11/21/88

<u>First National Bank of Rock River</u>	<u>Albany</u>	<u>WY</u>
Property Name	County	State

Multiple Name \_\_\_\_\_

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*St. Betty L. Savage*  
Signature of the Keeper

11-21-88  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

The architectural style listed on the nomination form is Greek Revival, although Classical Revival would correspond more closely with the resource's construction date. As a result, the style will be officially listed as Classical Revival and will be entered as such in the National Register database. This matter has been discussed with Sheila Bricher-Wade, National Register coordinator in the Wyoming SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)