

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001118

Date Listed: 7/21/88

Mtn. States T. and T. Company
Property Name

Custer
County

MT
State

Multiple Name

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.

for Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

7/21/88
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The garage included in the nomination has been defined as a structure. The garage should be categorized as a building. Pat Bick with the MT SHPO agreed that the form should be changed on 7/21/88.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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JUN 20 1988

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company
other names/site number Rowland - Thomas Co. Building

2. Location

street & number 908 Main Street n/a not for publication
city, town Miles City n/a vicinity
state Montana code 030 county Custer code 017 zip code 59301

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</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.

Signature of certifying official Maeville Shroy Date 6-9-88

State or Federal agency and bureau Montana SHPO

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. Patrick Andrews 7/21/88
 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Communications facility: Telephone
company

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Business: office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Renaissance Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls brickconcreteroof asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company building at 908 Main St. in Miles City is a detached, two-story masonry building designed in the Renaissance Revival style. Built in 1914, the body of the building is of pressed red brick, with rusticated piers of buff-colored brick. The building achieves additional height due to the use of a full daylight basement and a tall, finely detailed, pressed metal cornice with a high parapet above. The Telephone Company building remains in excellent condition and claims a prominent position on Main Street, standing well above the adjacent one-story buildings. The small garage to the rear of the lot, built by the Telephone Company in 1931, is a contributing element of the property.

The main entrance to the building is set at the street level and marked by an ornate, pressed metal canopy. A small bell motif is incorporated as part of the canopy design directly above the wooden entry door, and reinforces the identity of the building as the headquarters for the local telephone exchange. The canopy is supported by a pair of chains anchored above and hangs out about 4' from the facade. Originally the canopy featured a pair of globe lights, which have since been removed. Above the entry, the bell motif is repeated in a small, buff-colored terra cotta bas relief panel. Although the words "Telephone Exchange" have been removed from the facade, the original function of the building is readily recalled by the decorative detailing.

The front of the building is divided into four bays, which are separated by heavy, rusticated, buff-colored brick piers. Stone belt courses run at ground level, at the first floor window sills, and beneath the panelled frieze. Smoothly tooled decorative stone is also used for the second story window sills and to cap the brick piers. The massive, metal cornice is supported by pressed metal consoles rising from the pier caps. The facade cornice line is echoed by five-course brick corbelling that surrounds the building on the secondary elevations.

The windows are one-over-one, double hung, metal sash units set in a regular 1-2-2-1 rhythm on the first and second floors of the facade. The transoms above the front facade windows have been infilled with panels, reflecting the lowering of the ceilings of the interior during a 1970's remodelling. The windows of the daylight basement also were removed during the 1950's and the openings were infilled with glass block. Windows of the east and west elevations are also one-over-one units, while those of the south (rear) elevation are three-over-three.

See continuation sheet

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

An iron fire escape provides egress from the first and second floors to the rear.

Correspondence in the archives of the Mountain Bell Telephone Company in Helena indicates that Mesker Bros. Iron Co. of St. Louis gained the contract for the hollow section steel window sash and the cast iron stairs. The Mesker Co. may have also provided Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph with the decorative entrance canopy and cornice.

The interior of the building retains its basic floor plan, with some new partitions added since 1956 when the building was renovated for private office use. The interior stairs are iron, and rise one-half flight from the street entrance to the first floor, and descend one-half flight to the basement. The floors are of slab concrete construction, and original bathroom fixtures are still present in the operator's room of second story and in the basement. The original, concrete lined cable vault is also still in place in the basement.

The one-story, flat-roofed, three-bay, wood frame, stucco-covered garage located to the rear of the Telephone Company building retains excellent historic architectural integrity. Built in 1931, this garage served as a functional adjunct to the main building and makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the main building. The garage has three-over-three, wooden double hung windows, and wooden, multi-lite overhead garage doors on the south elevation.

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Communications

Architecture

Period of Significance

1914-1931

Significant Dates

1914

1931

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

architect: unknown

builder: C.E. Walker Contracting Co.

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

The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company building is architecturally significant as a sophisticated example of Renaissance Revival styling in Eastern Montana. The building has been a major commercial landmark since its construction in 1914 and survives in near pristine condition as one of the most "high-style" buildings on Miles City's Main Street. Designed by an unnamed architect working for Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co. and built by the C.E. Walker Contracting Co. of Denver, Colorado at a cost of \$30,000, the building "...was the same type that the company erects in other cities," according to contemporary newspaper accounts.

Inventory information demonstrates that C.E. Walker also built substantial exchange buildings for the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph company in the Montana cities of Lewistown (1912), Havre (1925), Helena (major addition 1926), Missoula (major addition 1926-29), Great Falls (1930) and Billings (1930). All of these brick and terra cotta buildings were designed in the Renaissance Revival style, with the exceptions of the telephone exchanges in Havre (Prairie style), Great Falls (Art Deco) and Billings (Collegiate Gothic). The early 20th century building program of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company had a significant impact on the appearance of these Montana communities, and the Miles City exchange gains additional significance as one of the only buildings that has retained a high degree of historic architectural integrity.

Construction of a new telephone exchange building in Miles City in 1914 was the direct result of the increase in population and telephone usage following the completion of the new Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway to the city in 1907. The building gains additional significance due to its association with expansion of communication systems of the early 20th Century, as Miles City became a prosperous and modern city at the center of vast ranch lands.

The first telephone service in Miles City was located in the general store on Main Street operated by the firm of Bullard and Lansing in 1881. The Rocky Mountain Bell Company took over the operation of the telephone service in 1884 and boasted of 16 subscribers their first year. The exchange grew little and was

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography:

Buchanan, A., Seeing Miles City, 1915, p. 12

Miles City Star, November 17, 1978, p.9

Independent, Miles City, June 19, 1914, p. 3; December 6, 1914, p.3

Correspondence between Mesker Bros. Iron Co. and Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co., March 17, 1914 and March 25, 1914.

Miscellaneous historical photographs and archival materials deaccessioned from Mountain Bell archives, in the private collection of Paul Bovee, 1327 University, Helena, Montana.

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
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: less than one acre

UTM References

A 13 435000 5139420
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 15 and 16 of Block 64 of the Original Townsite of Miles City, Montana.

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{2}$ of Section 33 T8N;R47E

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes only the city lots upon which the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co. building and garage are situated.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Goff and Patricia Bick

organization State Historic Preservation Office date April 1988

street & number 102 Broadway telephone (406) 444-7715

city or town Helena state Montana zip code 59601

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1

closed in 1887, on the heels of the devastating winter of 1886-87 that hurled the local ranching economy into a severe depression. Minimal service was maintained between 1887 and 1900 when a single telephone line ran from Miles City to Ekalaka that was owned and operated by the Miles City-Ekalaka Telephone Company. In 1900, a new Rocky Mountain Bell telephone exchange was opened in the Stebbins Block with an updated switchboard that could handle 50 subscriber lines. Rural lines were established to Ekalaka, Rosebud, Terry, and Forsyth. In 1906, the Miles City central telephone office was moved to 15 S. Tenth. In 1911, the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company purchased the phone exchange, at a time when there were 367 subscribers. The engineering department of Mountain States Telephone began to plan for increased capacity and a new central office as early as 1912. The new exchange building was constructed on Main Street in 1914 and the magneto-type switchboard was replaced with a common battery manual system. The northern transcontinental pole line went through Miles City in 1926, which provided long distance connections to nearly every section of the country. The company hired local contractor J.C. Boespflug to build a garage in 1931 to the rear of the exchange building on Mains St. to house line maintenance trucks and supplies. In 1930, Mountain States Telephone served 1,942 subscribers, and by 1950 there were 3,911. Prior to the conversion of the Miles City telephone exchange to the dial system in 1957, the company erected a new telephone exchange building, and the 1914 exchange building was sold in 1956 for reuse as an office building. The 5,000th telephone in Miles City was installed on April 11, 1957.