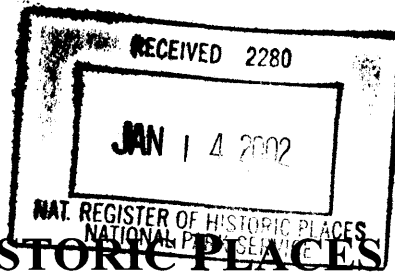


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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Dr. Don L. Byam House

other name/site number: Fenner House

## 2. Location

street & number: Main Street

vicinity: n/a

city/town: Nevada City

state: Montana code: MT county: Madison code: 057 zip code: 59755

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

*Mark F. Zimmerman / SHPO*  
Signature of certifying official/Title

*1/8/2002*  
Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

(  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

*Robert Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
*3-1-02*

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property: Public - State

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

Category of Property: Buildings

2

\_\_\_ building(s)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_

\_\_\_ objects

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

2

\_\_\_ TOTAL

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions:

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE/museum

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

Other: False-front

foundation:

walls: wood

roof: wood

**Narrative Description**

The Dr. Don L. Byam House stands along the main streetscape of Nevada City, Montana, a historic townsite encompassing more than 90 buildings. Of these, a dozen are original historic buildings, the rest are moved period buildings that recreate the atmosphere of a historic 1860s gold camp. There are two buildings on the property that contribute to its significance, the Byam House and to the rear, the George Ives jail.

Byam House

Original to the townsite, the Byam House is a two-story house of frame construction. As originally built in 1863, it was rectangular in mass, measuring roughly 18' x 40' with a false front. Two windows illuminated the second floor; a single doorway and two windows were located on the first story. The gable roof was set perpendicular to the street.

The Byam House was apparently remodeled in the 1870s, removing the false front and completing the gable front that remains today. The two windows were replaced with a single 6-over-6 double-hung window on the second floor. The first floor has two 6-over-6 windows and a door offset to the right. The primary entrance opens from a wooden boardwalk into the parlor of the home.

The house is framed with light timbers, with board and batten on the side walls. Wooden shingles cover the roof. Two brick chimneys are centrally located at the front and rear above the gables. A shed addition measuring about 14'x20' was added at the left rear in the nineteenth century. It has a fixed six-light window and a later brick chimney.

The interior of the house is little changed from when L.A. Fenner lived here. There are three rooms on the ground level, plus the shed addition. The second floor, reached by an enclosed staircase, has a finished bedroom and a larger unfinished attic. The downstairs and bedroom still retain the original muslin wall coverings, while in the parlor and middle rooms the 1890s wallpaper remains in good condition.

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## George Ives Jail

In association with the house, and located to the rear, stands a small cabin used to jail George Ives during his 1863 trial. At center, the original portion of the building is a single room log cabin with a gable roof. Logs are joined with crude saddle notching, and on the interior are whitewashed. Two layers of boards cover the roof. Later pole additions were made to extend the building to the front and rear and convert it to garage storage. The building has a dirt floor and the additions are finished with board and batten siding. Garage doors were added to the southwest wall; the latch is stamped 1919 suggesting that date for the additions. A fixed 9-pane window lights the south end of the building.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Significant Person(s): Dr. Don L. Byam

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT,  
ARCHITECTURE, POLITICS

Period(s) of Significance: 1863 - 1950

Significant Dates: 1863, 1864, 1869, 1875

Architect/Builder: unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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The Dr. Don L. Byam House of Nevada City is an important building in Montana, dating to the gold rush era and early territorial period of Montana settlement. Dr. Byam, the original inhabitant, was politically active during the turbulent territorial era, playing a key role in Nevada City's vigilance movement of the 1860s. During his occupancy, the residence gained prominence in territorial politics, serving as a meeting place for the local chapter of the Union League of America. It was early Union League leadership of Montana's Republican party that served as a balance to the more numerous pro-Confederacy Democrats in the gold camps; and ultimately led to the admission of Montana into the Union by a Republican Congress in 1889. The Byam House gains significance for its architectural values, in design and construction it is representative of the log buildings that comprised Montana's early gold camps and helped to define the rustic building traditions of the frontier West. For these reasons, the property is eligible at the state and local levels of significance for listing in the National Register of Historic Places according to Criteria A, B and C.

#### The Gold Rush Period in Alder Gulch

Following the discovery of gold at Bannack in 1862, miners swarmed over the region of western Montana working their claims and searching for even richer gold finds. In 1863, the greatest placer rush in Montana's history was set off by the strike at Alder Gulch. On May 26, 1863, Bill Fairweather, Henry Edgar and a prospecting party happened to strike gold along Alder Gulch as they were returning to Bannack from a failed rendezvous with the James Stuart party and a prospecting foray into the Yellowstone area. Word of the strike leaked out, drawing a great deal of interest and a large group of miners who trailed them back to Alder Gulch where the Fairweather Mining District was formed. In its first five years, it is estimated the gulch produced between thirty and forty million dollars worth of gold.<sup>1</sup> The amount of gold mined from this Gulch to date is valued at \$130 million, or approximately \$2.5 billion in today's values.

Virginia City and Nevada City were initially populated in late May and early June of 1863, launching one of the great gold camps of the American West. Within a year and a half, some ten thousand persons were living and working in the towns of Virginia City, Nevada City, and an assortment of other towns strung along the gulch for roughly fourteen miles. The town of Nevada City in 1865 held dozens of stores and cabins, and had the distinction of becoming the first incorporated town in the Montana Territory. From the earliest days, Nevada City, Center City and other small camps in Alder Gulch were tied economically to Virginia City, where businesses, services, a post office and a booming population were located. Virginia City emerged as the hub of the greater mining district, and achieved prominence from 1867-1875 as capitol of the Montana Territory. Meanwhile, as gold prospects fluctuated, the fortunes of the gold camps throughout Alder Gulch declined. As early as 1869, the population of Nevada City had fallen to just 110 persons; by 1876, the townsite was all but abandoned.

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<sup>1</sup>Malone, Michael and Richard Roeder, *Montana - A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, Revised Edition 1991), p. 65-67.

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The placer mining of Alder Gulch extended for eight decades, through the 1930s, and experienced numerous fluctuations. The first wave of placer mining extended from the discovery of Alder Gulch in 1863 to the late 1860s. Once the initial rush period had subsided, large amounts of capital were required to build the ditches necessary for hydraulic mining and the dredges that chewed the streambeds. Hydraulic mining was practiced extensively beginning in the 1870s. By the close of the nineteenth century, placer mining had run its course. The dredge period began in the mid-1890s and extended into the 1940s.<sup>2</sup>

### Dr. Don Lorenzo Byam & the Vigilance Committee of Nevada City

During the 1860s, the ninety miles of road between Bannack and Virginia City was the territory of infamous road agents that robbed, and in some cases killed, people who traversed this major transportation link.<sup>3</sup> Much gold was moved along this route and the road agents that preyed upon travelers carrying gold dust and coin appeared to locals to be organized and protected from prosecution. In an irony of history, it was the sheriff of Bannack, Henry Plummer, who was ultimately captured and named by the Vigilance Committee as the leader of this gang. They hanged him for this in a gulch near Bannack still known as Hangman's Gulch, in January of 1864.

The first important miner's trial in Montana's history was the murder trial of George Ives, which led to the organizing of the Vigilance Committee. This trial was held in the open air on the Main Street of Nevada City between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1863. Dr. Don L. Byam was selected as the judge for this trial, indicating the miners' respect for his intelligence and integrity. Dr. Byam was in the process of having this house built when the Vigilance Committee was in its embryonic stage (it might have been finished just before the trial began), and the Byam House provided a backdrop to one of the most dramatic episodes in Montana history.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Byam was born in Vermont about 1814 and is reported to have received his early education in New York. His children recorded that he later attended William and Mary College in Virginia, but did not graduate. After graduating from an unspecified medical school, he began practice in Ohio. There he married Frances A. Slider of Dayton and started a family that grew to contain three sons, Oliver O., Henry Clay and Charles, and two daughters.<sup>5</sup>

The Byam family moved to Iowa in the 1840s, followed the Pike's Peak gold rush in Colorado, and subsequently arrived in Bannack, Montana on March 1, 1863. Dr. Byam pursued mining over medicine at Bannack, but moved on to Nevada City after his claim was jumped. There he was elected Judge of the Miners Court and was positioned to make his mark in history in December of 1863, when four men – George Ives, "Long John" Franck, "Old Tex" Crowell, and George Hilderman – were arrested for the murder of a young German immigrant worker named Nicholas Tbal.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Pace, Dick, "Golden Gulch: The Story of Montana's Fabulous Alder Gulch" (Virginia City, Montana: Bovey Restorations, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> See Dale Gray, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Bannack to Virginia City Road" (Helena, Montana: Montana State Historic Preservation Office, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Pemberton, W. Y., "Montana's Pioneer Courts" in *Contributions of the Historical Society of Montana*, vol. 8 (Helena: Montana Historical Society, p. 99).

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, Paul C., *Medicine in the Making of Montana* (Missoula: The Montana Medical Association and Montana State University Press, 1962), p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Eukes, F. L., "Judge of Famed Vigilantes Miner's Court Lies Buried in Cemetery near Emigrant" *Park County Times*. (Livingston, Montana: March 8, 1956), p.3. Note: Thomas Dimsdale does not include "Old Tex" Cromwell among those arrested.

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George Ives was the first of those arrested to be tried. After his arrest, Ives was held in Nevada City, where he and the others were separated and held in different cabins. A number of citizens of Nevada City and Virginia City were angered by the release of Charley Forbes and Haze Lyons after being convicted of murdering Dillingham, the only honest deputy that Henry Plummer had appointed. Tensions were heightened when Nicholas Tbolt's body was carried into Nevada City on a wagon belonging to William Palmer, and parked in front of his business. This site inflamed the people of Nevada City, and motivated them to seek justice and the murderers of Tbolt.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Wilber Fisk Sanders, a Bannack resident, was in Virginia City at this time and was appointed to conduct the prosecution. The trial scene set the Judge, Dr. Byam in a wagon on Nevada City's main street with the jury of 24 men in a half circle around a big wood fire. Twelve of the jurors were from the district of Nevada and the other twelve were from the district of Junction. An attempt to get twelve men from Virginia City was defeated, and despite the fear of reprisals from friends of the accused, the trial began on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December. Over fifteen hundred miners, merchants, women and children, along with some road agents were in attendance. The trial ended with the conviction of George Ives and his execution by hanging,<sup>8</sup> at a location just a few doors down from Dr. Byam's newly constructed house. The main beam of another building under construction at the time was used as the gallows.

Of the role that Dr. Byam played in this trial, Thomas Dimsdale wrote the following:

*Judge Byam, who shouldered the responsibility of the whole proceeding, will never be forgotten by those in whose behalf he courted certain, deadly peril and probable death.*<sup>9</sup>

It was Judge Byam who sentenced Ives to be hanged immediately after the guilty verdict was given, who organized the preparation for the execution, and after Ives dropped, declared him dead from a broken neck. The Vigilantes formed soon after this trial and most believe that Dr. Byam was on the secret list of members.

Dr. Byam lived in Madison County and worked both as a doctor and a miner until 1869. He then spent the rest of his life in Gallatin County first as a farmer, (which he failed at), then as a doctor in Bozeman. After Byam wrote some articles on eclectic medicine, orthodox physicians criticized his methods, badly impacting his practice. He next moved to Emigrant, Montana where he ran a ferry and a store with a post office, and practiced medicine on the side. Dr. Byam also discovered a coal mine shortly before his death on March 25, 1882.<sup>10</sup> Although Dr. Byam did not make his mark as a medical doctor, he made an indelible mark in Montana history by his leading role in the era of frontier justice.

Between 1869 and 1875 Samuel B. Wonderly owned the house, and it appears likely that he had the front of the building remodeled, by removing the false front and replacing the two upstairs windows with one in the middle. Wonderly sold the house to Lawrence Alexander Fenner on June 9, 1875.

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<sup>7</sup> Dimsdale, Thomas, *The Vigilantes of Montana*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> Phillips, *Medicine in the Making of Montana*, p. 95.

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### Alder Gulch and the Union League of America<sup>11</sup>

When Dr. Byam owned the house, he would host meetings of the Union League in the upstairs room. Lawrence Fenner, a Union League chief officer in Colorado and fellow vigilante, likely did the same thing.

Confederate sympathizers dominated the early history of Alder Gulch, just as they did in the rest of Montana. Estimates of "Secessionist" supporters during the Civil War range from two-thirds at Bannack, to four-fifths of the entire Territory. Though definitely in the minority, the Union Republicans as one author put it "[made] up in spirit and vociferation what they lacked in numbers." Three of Montana's most outspoken Republicans – Wilbur Fisk Sanders (whose uncle was appointed Territorial Governor by President Lincoln in 1864), Nathaniel Langford and Robert Fisk – founded the Montana Chapter of the Union League of America on August 19, 1863.<sup>12</sup>

In his book Vigilante Days and Ways, Nathaniel Langford, president of Bannack's League chapter, described an offer by the United States Marshall of Idaho Territory (Montana was part of Idaho Territory at the time) to let him name a Deputy United States Marshall for Montana. Langford took the question of a suitable candidate before the Union League. The Bannack chapter's 30 members cast a unanimous vote in favor of Henry Plummer, much to Langford's chagrin, since by that time he was convinced of Plummer's complicity with territorial Road Agents. Langford ignored the Union League's vote "rather than incur the responsibility of recommending so dangerous a person for the office." There are strong indications that the Union League of America controlled the Republican party in the state; and there were active League Chapters in Virginia City, Bannack, and Helena.<sup>13</sup>

Accounts of the origins of the Union League of America are many and contradictory, including one account that attributes the idea of Union Leagues directly to Abraham Lincoln. No matter where it began, the Union League of America became the single most important political force supporting the federal government during the Civil War. Typical of the early Leagues, the Union League of Philadelphia, founded in December 1862, wanted "a social and political organization" to counteract the efforts of traitors in the Northern States. Its goal was the total and complete destruction of the Confederate military machine and the restoration of the Union. The Union League of Philadelphia, with a large and wealthy membership, actively promoted the formation of Union Leagues throughout the northern states. Through massive mail campaigns, organization of Union Leagues rapidly followed, and by December 1863, between 3,000 to 5,000 Union Leagues had been organized with a membership of 650,000 to 725,000.<sup>14</sup>

The Union League held its first national gathering in Cleveland on May 20 and 21, 1863. Congressman James M. Ashley from Ohio, a member of the League's executive committee and speaker at the convention, would soon be well known to Montanans. With the backing of his good friend and future Montana Territorial Governor Sydney Edgerton, Ashley sponsored the bill creating Montana Territory in 1864. After losing his Congressional seat in 1869, President Grant appointed him Montana's territorial governor. Ashley's radical Republican stance offended Montana's Democratically-

<sup>11</sup> Information on the Union League of America is condensed from Maggie Buckingham, Ken Sievert and Lon Johnson, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Union League of America Hall, White Sulphur Springs, Montana (Helena: Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Feb 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Spence, Clark C. *Territorial Politics and Government in Montana, 1864-89* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p.21-22.

<sup>13</sup> Leeson, Michael, *History of Montana, 1739-1885* (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Company), p. 1153.

<sup>14</sup> Guy James Gibson, "Lincoln's League: The Union League Movement During the Civil War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1957) as cited by Buckingham, et al..

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controlled territorial legislature, and it refused to approve any of his appointments. After only a few months in office, Grant fired him.<sup>15</sup>

After the Civil War, Union League members are described as those Republicans with the strongest feelings against the South, and eager to press home all the advantages won during the war.<sup>16</sup> In the South, it became largely a black organization advocating civil rights. In Montana, the Union League may have moved from a clandestine organization to a secret society building support for the Republican party, in particular opposition to Montana's secessionist Democrats, who continued unrepentant support for the Confederate cause after the war.

### Lawrence Fenner and the Dredge Mining of Alder Gulch

Lawrence Alexander Fenner was born in Durham, New York on February 13, 1837. After his early education in Medina, New York, the Fenner family moved to Illinois. Between 1855-1859, Fenner was educated at the Rock River Seminary in Mt. Morris earning a degree in civil engineering. After a short stint in St. Louis looking for work, L. A. Fenner moved with the western gold rushes to Pike's Peak, Colorado and for about four years through the placer mining districts of California. He then moved on to Virginia City, Montana in May of 1864. In Virginia City, Fenner drew upon his engineering background and his mining experiences to invent various pieces of equipment for his mining operations.<sup>17</sup>

In 1878, L. A. Fenner received the U.S. Mineral Patent on the Nevada City townsite;<sup>18</sup> his claims extended for a half-mile along Alder Gulch. He became noteworthy for being the first placer miner in the area to use a dredging system to rework the initial placer claims,<sup>19</sup> pulling many thousands of dollars worth of gold from the gulch.<sup>20</sup> With his invention of a rock separator machine, Fenner was able to glean a goodly income from Alder Gulch dirt. In fact, it was L.A. Fenner who took out many of the gold camp's historic buildings as his small scale dredging operation moved along the gulch. Fenner's separator likely consisted of a drag line which had works, floated on pontoons while a dragline shovel on the bank would feed gravel into it.

Whether others benefited from Fenner's invention is unknown, but his ingenuity was overshadowed by the arrival of the "Maggie Gibson" -- a boat-type steam dredge moved over from Grasshopper Creek and put up in the lower part of the gulch. This type of dredge removed gravel and dirt from the creeks, bars or banks with connected-buckets, and processed it to extract the gold. All works on the Maggie Gibson were on board. The gravel and dirt was then extruded forming long piles, which are still evident all along Alder Gulch from Alder to Virginia City.<sup>21</sup>

The Conrey Mining Company (in which Harvard University was the major stockholder) owned the land worked by the Maggie Gibson, but the company did not own the dredge. By 1899 the company had its own Conrey Dredge No. 1 working the gulch, and the Maggie Gibson was gone. The Conrey Company worked Alder Gulch from 1899 to 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Gibson, "Lincoln's League", p. 110; Malone and Roeder, *Montana*, pp. 95-96 and pp. 105-106.

<sup>16</sup> Spence, *Territorial Politics*, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Obituary, L.A. Fenner, *Madisonian Times* (Virginia City, Montana: March 12, 1915).

<sup>18</sup> Ellingsen, John D., "Nevada City, Montana." (Bovey Restorations, Virginia City, Montana: October 3, 1994), Unpublished paper, in the National Register files of the Montana State Preservation Office, Helena.

<sup>19</sup> Obituary, L.A. Fenner, *Madisonian Times*, March 12, 1915.

<sup>20</sup> *The Madisonian*, (Virginia City, Montana: March 14, 1930).

<sup>21</sup> Pace, "Golden Gulch."



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During this period, some local landowners dealt with the Conrey Company, both selling them land and, since some deals included adjoining lots, working with other local people in land deals with the Company.<sup>22</sup>

The Conrey Company closed operations in 1922, causing the local economy to decline. Conrey had used four dredges; the first two were steam driven as the Maggie Gibson had been, and the last two were cutting-edge electrically driven. Six small operations pulled out a total of \$13,800 in gold in 1923, and a few made a living for years after the Conrey Company left. In 1935, Humphrey's Gold Corporation worked Alder Gulch with a dry-land dredge for two years; another dry-land dredge operated therein 1940-1941 recovering about 1,180 fine ounces of gold.

Lawrence A. Fenner was one of the more successful miners in the Nevada City area and his family lived in Nevada City long after gold deposits were exhausted and most other miners had left the area. L. A. Fenner had married Miss Amanda Spicer at Virginia City in 1870. They had a family of seven children, but only four -- Herbert L., Oscar F., Raymond H., and Leon Arthur -- survived infancy. On October 7, 1914 while Lawrence A Fenner was ill and in his last year of life, his wife Amanda transferred ownership of the house to her four children. Three of the children moved from Montana and in 1930 when Amanda died, only Leon Arthur was living with her. Following the death of their mother, the siblings living out of state sold their quarter interest in the place to him. In 1942, the county sold Arthur Fenner's property for back taxes to L. W. Hansen, who in turn reassigned the property to Mabel Fenner on May 18, 1946.<sup>23</sup> It is not clear who Mabel was but it is believed she married into the Fenner family.

### Architectural Significance of the Byam House

During the 1860s, the gold camps of Montana featured a range of architecture built of locally available materials, particularly stone and log. By nature of their construction and their materials, these buildings were sturdy, naturalistic and aesthetically suited to the rugged mountainous environment of the mining districts. Transplanted from the eastern United States and Europe, the builders of these camps carried with them the log-building and carpentry traditions of Europe and colonial America. Combining this know-how with a sense of architectural style and spatial patterning that emanated from urban settlements to the east, these builders created towns of permanence and solidity almost overnight.

The architecture of the American West was born of this parentage, and in young camps and budding towns the built environment was characterized by rectangular buildings built in close proximity to one another, generally fronting onto a main thoroughfare. Most commonly at the outset, gabled log buildings were erected and aligned side by side, with only the fronts of some receiving special treatment. To create a more uniform streetscape, to lend a larger than life effect to otherwise plain buildings, and to create a more stylish façade for gold camp businesses, many buildings were masked with false wooden fronts. Homebuilders and particularly business owners could create a stylish look by adding a false front onto a simple gabled building with a minimal amount of milled lumber, thus reserving that material for the critical building of flumes and other elements of a camp's mining infrastructure.

During the early history of Virginia and Nevada Cities, these patterns applied. In a historical and architectural survey of Virginia City completed in 1990, the territorial period architecture was categorized in three phases: settlement phase,

<sup>22</sup> L. A. Fenner Papers, SC 315 (Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena).

<sup>23</sup> Madison County land records, Deed Books, (Madison County Court House, Virginia City, Montana).

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gold camp phase and town phase.<sup>24</sup> The historical and architectural legacy of these closely built townsites is intertwined, and the architectural patterning observed in Virginia City appears to fit the early history of Nevada City as well. The settlement phase was reflected in a short, energetic burst of log and stone construction during the first years in the Alder Gulch diggings. By 1864, sawmills in Alder Gulch were milling lumber and balloon frame buildings sprouted. The style for residences was typically vernacular: single story, gable roof, simple rectangular or L-shaped buildings with clapboard, plank or board and batten siding. The camp phase was followed by the town phase, where national architectural styles began to take root and late 19<sup>th</sup> century revival styles including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Italianate predominated. In Nevada City, the remaining dozen original buildings relate to the settlement and camp phases of architecture.

The Don L. Byam House is one of the more substantial buildings constructed in Nevada City, and as such, has always been a local anchor on the streetscape. The building had an interesting architectural history, following the false front pattern during its early life, and then being reborn to reflect patterns of settlement phase architecture. During its first incarnation, Don L. Byam's house epitomized the era of false front construction, with its gable roofed, simple rectangular massing and its pedimented false front. After a remodel that appears to date to the 1870s, the building reflects balloon-frame construction, and the front appears more residential with gable roof facing the streetscape and siding of clapboard. Fenestration in both phases included the multi-pane, double-hung windows which were standard fare throughout early periods when glass panes made their way upriver to Montana via steamboat.

Since that time, the house has gone virtually unchanged, and today, a century and a quarter later, it strongly represents the construction methods and architectural elements characteristic of the settlement and town phases. As well, the building remains an exceptional illustration of period interior design, retaining the original spatial divisions, woodwork and muslin wall treatments. The Dr. Don L. Byam House still had some of its original interior furnishings when Bovey restored it in 1959 and they remain in place, more fully reflecting the total interior ambiance during the historic period when the Fenner and Byam families were in residence here.<sup>25</sup>

### Summary

The Don L. Byam House was the most prominent of about a dozen original buildings remaining in Nevada City when Charles Bovey started his restoration efforts in the 1940s. As an exceptionally-preserved period example of gold camp architecture, this significant building will only grow in importance as buildings associated with territorial life in Montana become increasingly rare over time. Nevada City and its sister town Virginia City provide a view back into that past, and no doubt will continue to attract visitors to explore and appreciate the legacy of Alder Gulch and the history of the budding territory of Montana.

<sup>24</sup> See discussion by Paul Friedman, "Final Report of the Architectural, Historical and Archaeological Inventory of the Virginia City National Historic Landmark, Madison County, Montana," sec. 4.2.6 Architecture. The phases outlined were modeled after those identified in Colorado mining towns by C.E. Stoehr, *Bonanza Victorian*, 1975.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



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### Legal Description of Dr. Don L. Byam Property:

Beginning at the SE Corner of Section 16, T 6 S, R 3 W., M.P.M., thence due North about 125 feet to the northeast line of the Main Street of Nevada City, Montana, (said line also being the northeast edge of the right of way of State Highway 287 as it exists on December 6,2000.)

Thence Northwest along and parallel to said northeast line of Highway 287, approximately 670 feet, to Corner No. 1 of the Fenner Property, the point of beginning.

Thence, (1<sup>st</sup> Course) Northeast (at an approximately 90 degree angle to Main Street) 100 feet to Corner No. 2;

Thence, (2<sup>nd</sup> Course) Southeast along Brewery Street approximately 130 feet, to Corner No. 3;

Thence , (3<sup>rd</sup> Course) Southwest (at an approximately 90 degree angle to Main Street) 60 feet; to Corner No. 4;

Thence, (4<sup>th</sup> Course) Northwest (on an approximate parallel to Main Street) 80 feet; to Corner No. 5;

Thence , (5<sup>th</sup> Course) Southwest (at an approximately 90 degree angle to Main Street) 40 feet; to Corner No. 6;

Thence , (6<sup>th</sup> Course) Northwest (along Main Street) 50 feet to the point of beginning.

For further illustration see enclosed sketch map of property.

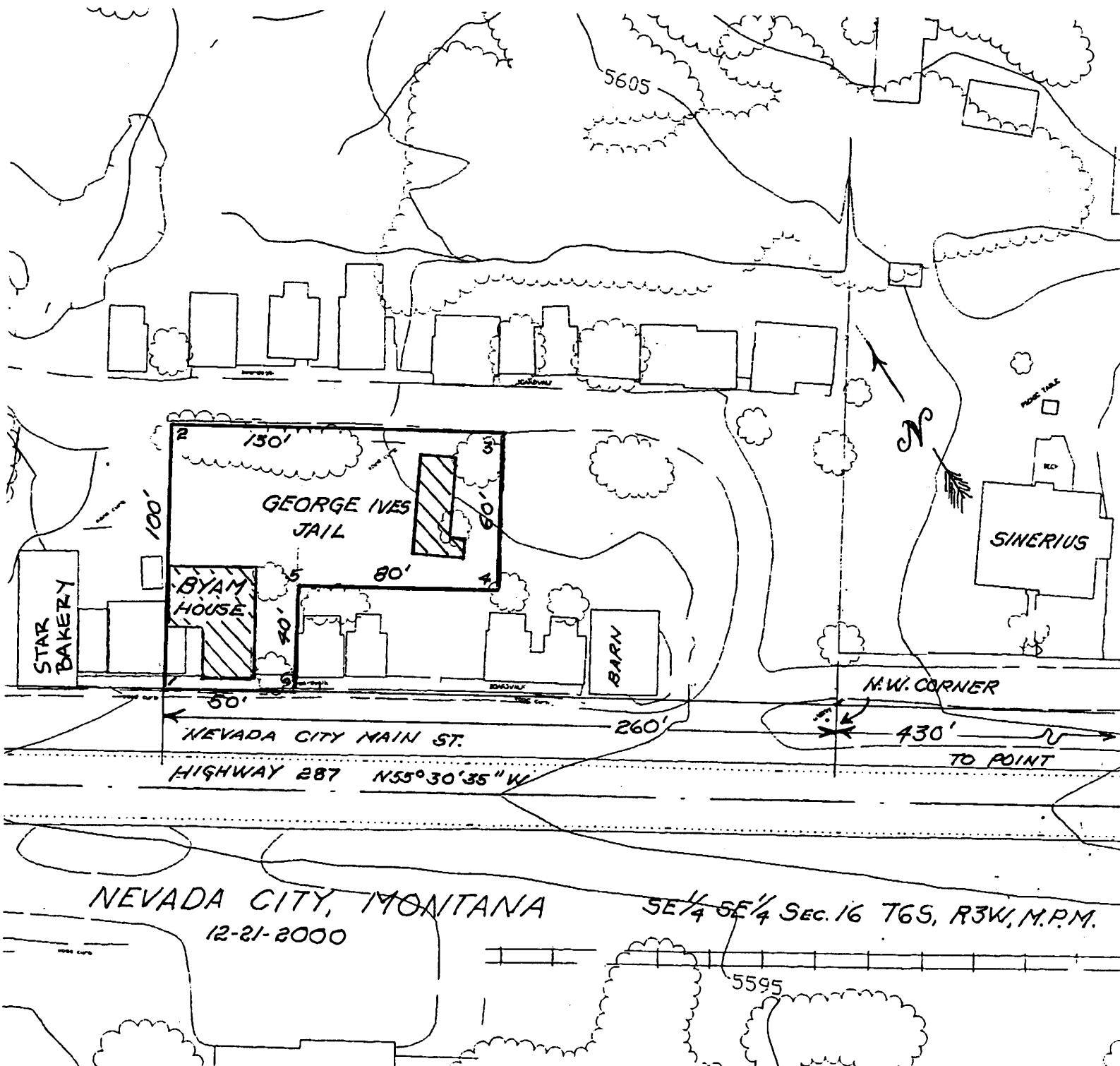
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