

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Montana Soldiers' Home Historic District

other name/site number: Montana State Veterans' Home
24FH356

2. Location

street & number: Veterans Drive

not for publication: n/a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

city/town: Columbia Falls

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 029 zip code: 59912

3. State/Federal Agency 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Marcella Slafy Montana SHPO MARCH-16-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

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

 other (explain): _____

for
Signature of the Keeper
Edson H. Beall

Entered in the of Action
National Register 9.21.94

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - State	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property: District	Contributing	Noncontributing
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u> building(s)
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> sites
	<u> </u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> objects
	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u> TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: HEALTH CARE/hospital DOMESTIC/single dwelling AGRICULTURE/processing, storage, agricultural field, animal facility FUNERARY/cemetery	Current Functions: VACANT/not in use DOMESTIC/single dwelling HEALTH CARE/hospital FUNERARY/cemetery
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7. Description

Architectural Classification: Colonial Revival Queen Anne	Materials: foundation: STONE; CONCRETE walls: BRICK; WOOD/shingle; WOOD/weatherboard roof: WOOD/shingle; ASPHALT other: n/a
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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

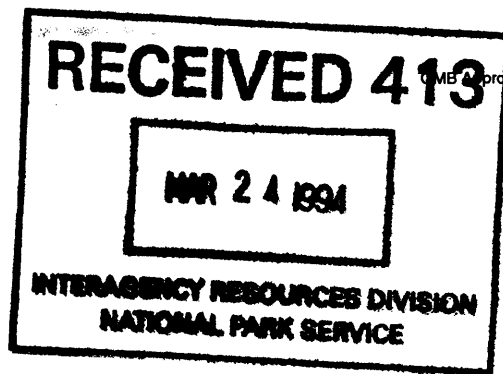
The Montana Soldiers' Home Historic District is comprised of ten contributing buildings and objects dating from 1896 to 1941, six non-contributing buildings and structures, plus extensive grounds and a cemetery that are both considered contributing for a total of twelve contributing resources. The Home is located on approximately 147 landscaped or cultivated acres two miles southwest of Columbia Falls on a high river bench overlooking the Flathead River. The area from the top of the bench down to the river is forested, and the Swan Range dominates the view looking across the farmlands east of the Home.

Buildings within and contributing to the character of the district include:

- 1. Old Main (Home Building, Headquarters Building).** Built in 1896, Old Main is the original building on the site. It is a two-story brick building with a T-shaped plan. The main section is 76x34', and it has a 50x34' rear extension. A one-story flat-roofed brick annex (35x132') built in 1956 flanks the building on the south and runs parallel to it. Old Main was designed by C. S. Haire, a Helena architect who designed many of the state's prominent public buildings (he was chosen over six other architects who submitted plans for the job). The building was constructed by prominent Montana builder and politician, Fred Whiteside, at a cost of \$10,350, and the superintendent of construction was R. F. Tate of Kalispell. The three-story central porch exhibits Queen Anne-style features, while the general massing, balanced symmetry and central cupola suggest a Federal-style influence. The building was designed to house 50 men. Because of the limitation of funds, a local newspaper reported in 1896 that "Less thought had to be given to the beauty of the structure than would otherwise have been done."

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Old Main has a T-shaped hipped roof. Its front facade is composed of two hip-roofed wings perpendicular to and leading away from the top of the T. The wings are joined by a first-story porch and a second-story balcony. The balcony is covered by a gable-ended wing which also is perpendicular to and leading away from the top of the T. A large semi-circular opening in the gable end encloses a second balcony. Both balconies are balustraded and supported by four columns rising from the porch. A flagpole rises from the peak of the gable-ended roof above the second balcony. The porch was originally painted white and buff, and the roof was stained black. The first-floor porch is now glazed in. At the intersection of the main roof lines is a large, octagonal, tent-roofed cupola. The cupola is windowed and provides a panorama of the surrounding countryside.

Three of the building's four tall brick chimneys have been removed. The roof eaves are bracketed, and two brick string courses circle the building between the first and second levels. The building has a random rubble native rock foundation and a lattice screen below the porch. The building's first-floor walls are 16" thick, and the second floor walls are 12" thick.

A description of Old Main in November of 1896, before it was occupied, is as follows:

The main entrance to the Home building is on the east. A short flight of steps leads up to a wide portico from which double doors open into a large hall. On the left, facing the rolling Flathead, are the reading room and parlor. On the right, in the same wing, are the hospital and drug rooms. The large room facing the river in the stem of the T...is the dining room. Off from this pleasant apartment are the kitchen, butler's pantry and a lavatory.

On the second floor are the apartments of the commandant and other sleeping rooms with another large lavatory. The third floor, which is still in an unfinished state, contains a large receiving tank. This primitive system of water works will obtain for the present but later a more elaborate apparatus, with constant pressure, will be put in.

The building is wired for electric lights and furnished with all the requisites for heating with hot air or water. The large rooms on the north side of the structure are made additionally cozy by commodious fireplaces.

Native wood, principally larch, has been used almost entirely in finishing the interior. The deep set windows, with their wide ledges, constitute an attractive feature, making most desirable corners for tete-a-tetes or talks over old times.

The Women's Relief Corps of Butte, Helena, and Deer Lodge (and possibly of Columbia Falls) each furnished a room at the new Home. The building originally had plumbing for five water closets, three bath tubs, 11 wash bowls, and flues for stoves in all rooms except "the middle bed room." A 1500-gallon water tank was located in the attic. In 1897 part of the basement under the kitchen was converted to a laundry.

In addition to the 1956 annex, another alteration of the original design of the building was the enclosure of the front porch (date unknown). Although it covers an attractive arched doorway, the enclosure does not dramatically change the appearance of the building, and an open porch could readily be restored. The impact of the 1956 annex is diminished by its low profile (10') and its location on the least visible side of Old Main.

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Old Main was originally used as the Home's kitchen, sleeping quarters, cafeteria, library, and lounge area. It has been used for storage since 1969. It is structurally sound, but because of a leaky wood shingle roof, plaster is falling from the ceiling in several rooms. The 1956 addition was vacated in 1980. The interior still has much of the original woodwork, doors, and so on, but the fixtures and furniture are gone.

A 1917 photograph of Old Main shows a pathway leading east from the front entrance with a row of shade trees flanking the path on both sides.

2. Commandant's House (Hospital, Headquarters Building). Built in 1900, this 1½-story brick building was also designed by C. S. Haire and built by Fred Whiteside. The building is 27x32', with a 25x26' rear extension that is of wood frame and brick construction. The building has an axial, gabled roof covered with composition shingles, with a shed roof on the rear porch. The four gable ends have decorative wood shinglework. The front gable facade has a Palladian window and projects over the enclosed front porch (originally open). The two double-hung windows on the upper story of the south elevation have been replaced with a modern window. The foundation is native rock, and the interior woodwork is larch. Typical Colonial Revival-style features include the overall symmetry, the dentils under the eaves, and the Palladian window.

The building served as the Home's hospital and then as the administration building for several years. In 1908, after the construction of the new hospital, this building housed offices on the first floor, the Commandant's apartment on the 2nd floor, and rooms for female employees on the 3rd floor (the latter reached their rooms by an outside stairway).

3. Women's Dorm (Family Home). This two-story brick building was also designed by Helena architect C. S. Haire, and the contractor was J. E. Moody of Missoula. It was built in 1904 and has an L-shape, 87x36' plus a 36x43' north wing. The 21x43' brick two-story south wing was added in 1914 replacing a two-story porch, giving the building a T shape. The east facade of the south wing has a wood frame, two-story enclosed porch. The building has a hipped roof, with a capped chimney at the peak of the roof on each wing. The rock for the random rubble foundation was hauled from a local quarry.

In 1956 the north wing was extended. This addition has a wood exterior, is flat-roofed, and is one story except for a two-story section along a portion of the east facade of the original building.

The Women's Building was originally constructed to house married veterans and their wives, as well as the widows of deceased veterans. It is currently vacant.

4. Service Building (Chapel). The two-story brick Service Building was constructed in 1917 by Kalispell contractor Caesar Haverlandt for \$18,000. The building has a T shape with a 32' x 72' section and a 17' x 34' section that contains the main entrance. The building contains a number of Neoclassical features such as the modillioned cornice, the Doric-columned portico topped by a balustraded balcony, and symmetrical massing. It was designed to "conform with the present appearance of the other buildings." These features combine with various Georgian features such as the fanlight central entrance and first-story windows, the quoining, the lantern, and the hipped roof. The building was constructed to be the Home's service and headquarters building in response to crowded conditions at the Home; it was felt that its construction would allow for the admission of an additional 12-15 applicants to the Home.

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A January 1917 description of the proposed Service Building is as follows:

The lower floor will be one large room, 32x72 feet, suitable for holding religious services, public entertainments, etc., with entrance hall and cloak room at the front. The upper floor will have 10 bedrooms, two bath rooms, large parlor and reception room, and will be exclusively for the employes [sic] of the institution, who are now housed in the other buildings...The new building will have an individual heating plant.

These original plans for the building had to be modified, however, because all of the bids were too high. The modified plans called for a two-story building with a basement 40x70 feet in dimension, with the first floor used for religious services and an auditorium and the second floor for employee housing, with 11 sleeping rooms. In the winter of 1917-1918 the building was heated by 50 cords of 2½' cordwood.

5. **Dairy Barn.** The dairy barn was built by Kalispell contractor Caesar Haverlandt for the Home's dairy cattle in 1921. It was located on the former site of the woodyard. The barn has a gambrel roof covered with composition shingles, shiplap siding, and six-over-six-light double-hung and six-light fixed windows. On the south are two modern overhead garage doors, with an older door on a track. There are two sliding doors--one on the east side and one on the north side of the building. There are two metal vents on the roof, one with a weathervane. A large door opening to the hay mow faces north, under the extended peak of the roof. The barn is currently being used for storage.

6. **Root House.** The remains of an early root house still exist on the grounds of the Home. It may be the 14x24' root house built in 1913 with 8' high walls by the Two Miracle Concrete Corporation, although it is identified by the state as having been built in 1922. Identifying features include the two vents projecting from the roof. The double entry door faces south (the vertical-board doors open out), and the building can still be entered, although the roof is beginning to deteriorate. On the interior there are two produce bins on the west and the remains of shelving on the east.

In 1973 another root cellar was built. This earth-covered storage building is just to the west of the dairy barn. The Home raised all its own potatoes, plus some other produce, until approximately 1984.

7. **Heating Plant.** The heating plant, built in 1940 or 1941, is a brick building that is located on the edge of the river bench. A one story building from the north, it extends down the side of the river bank, revealing a basement. Large, 20 paned windows extend almost fully from ground level to ceiling height, illuminating the interior. An enclosed entrance projects from the west side. The interior is a large open space taken up by the Home's boiler.

8. **Utility Building.** This one-story brick building was constructed in 1936 or 1937. The flat-roofed building has three bay openings facing east and two at the rear (west). The windows have concrete sills, and tie into a continuous terra cotta banding. The coping is metal. The utility building historically contained the Home's butcher shop (there is still a freezer inside reflecting this use). In approximately 1950 it was identified as containing the Home's bakery on the north, the butcher shop and coolers in the center, and the fire station on the south.

9. **Laundry.** The laundry was built in 1940 or 1941, according to State records. It was last used as a laundry in approximately 1986; today it is a carpenter shop. The one-story brick building is similar in appearance to the Utility Building and the Heating Plant. On the east elevation, the design features small, fixed 9-pane window units symmetrically placed between wide doorways set to either end. Low rectangular transoms span the doorways, above which terra cotta banding unites the design.

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A 1917 photograph shows an earlier wood frame laundry building, located on approximately the same site and next to the earlier water tank.

10. **Cemetery.** In 1897 the Board of Managers declared that a plat of ground across the railroad tracks and next to the highway be the cemetery for the Home. Today the cemetery is located near the northwest corner of the property, next to the cemetery for St. Richard's Church. Laid out on a rectilinear grid with stone headstones, the cemetery is an integral part of the Home and thus is considered contributing to the district.

11. **Statue.** The 1928 statue of the World War I "Doughboy" is considered contributing to the district on the basis of its artistic value, although it was moved to the Veterans Home some time after World War II. Originally located in the middle of Main Street in Kalispell a few blocks north of the Flathead County Courthouse, the bronze statue depicts a World War I soldier with arm outstretched, carrying a rifle. It stands on a granite base bearing a commemorative veterans plaque.

12. **Grounds.** The cultivated fields and park-like landscaped grounds around the buildings are considered contributing because they contribute to the overall historic feeling of the district and because they reflect the agricultural work of the Home. These include the Veteran's drive, with its long arbor of trees lining the long drive and walkways, the towering conifers framing the entrance and old Main building, the manicured lawns lined with flowers, and the orchard, fields and gardens.

Non-contributing buildings and objects include the following:

13. **Water Tower.** According to State records, the existing water tower and tank was built in 1948. It is a 60' steel structure, a central cylindrical tank on tubular legs, now painted red and white.

14. **Garage.** This garage was built in 1951. Although it was built after the historic period and is thus considered non-contributing, it is a highly compatible resource, designed to match the style of the earlier outbuildings at the Home. The garage has a gabled roof covered with composition shingles, shiplap siding, and exposed rafter tails. There is a modern garage door on the west, and a smaller door on the east. Most of the windows are nine-light fixed or nine-over-nine-light double-hung units.

15. **Plumbing Shop.** The plumbing shop, located west of the laundry, was built in approximately 1977, replacing a ca. 1950 wood frame building painted red like most of the other early outbuildings. The earlier building was identified in approximately 1950 as a chicken hatchery and a machinery garage.

16. **Well House.** The existing well house was constructed in 1977 next to the water tower and tank. It is a small, square concrete block building.

17. **Stairway to Flathead River.** A wooden stairway resting on concrete piers extends from the rear of Old Main down to a dock and cleared area along the bank of the Flathead River. The 90' change in elevation is made with shallow steps, so the stairway "switchbacks" down the slope, with benches on the platforms at the turns. This stairway was built in the 1970s, replacing an earlier version (some of which can still be seen). Before the stairs there was a trail to the river.

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18. **Gazebo.** There is a modern gazebo located to the northeast of the Women's Dorm. This small structure is considered non-contributing to the historic district.

Buildings and structures that no longer exist. Quite a number of pre-World War II buildings and structures built on the grounds of the Montana Soldiers' Home no longer exist. These include a root house built in 1899, another root house built in 1902 surmounted by a granary and wagon shed, a water tank built in 1899, several ice houses, several pump houses, a laundry built in 1907, a barn built in 1897 (replacing a log barn that was previously on the property), the hospital built ca. 1908, a hay barn built in 1912 and located just to the west of the dairy barn, a building to store fire-fighting equipment built in 1916, a chicken house, a brick, steel and concrete entrance gate, and a 40' water tank all built in 1917, a pump house and storage building located on the bank of the river by 1917, a three-car garage built in 1922 just east of the Service Building, a greenhouse built in 1925, a pump house built in 1950 (foundation still exists north of the heating plant), a pre-1952 "killing shed" located just to the east of the earlier root house, a garage/storage building/hog house located ca. 1948 on the bench of the river to the west of the laundry, and various small outbuildings such as garages, tool sheds, and woodsheds (most of these were located behind the Women's Building, the Hospital, and the Utility Building).

The hospital built in approximately 1908 was designed by architect J. H. Kent and built by Kalispell contractor Louis Woll. It was demolished some time after 1950.

Buildings outside the boundaries of the historic district but still on the property of the Home include the Nursing Home/Office. The nursing home is a single story brick building, irregular in plan. The south end was built in 1969, and the 40-bed addition on the north was added in 1973 or 1974. Also located nearby are two metal-clad buildings to the west of the plumbing shop and dairy barn: the North Valley Rescue building, constructed in the 1970s or 1980s (with a recent addition), and the post-1948 "pig shed," a smaller shed-roofed building that is now vacant and that may have originally been used as a smoke house.

Integrity

The Montana Soldiers' Home Historic District today profiles the history and evolution of one of the state's major institutions over a period of almost a century. While a number of buildings have come and gone on the property, the district still represents many aspects of operation of this home for veterans. It is important to note that although a number of early buildings are no longer extant, several of their replacements now remain -- more substantial 20th century buildings erected as the home matured and supportive needs changed.

The most significant impact to the Home's historic integrity came during the 1950s or 1960s when the 1908 hospital designed by J.H. Kent was demolished. A most unfortunate loss, the hospital was indeed a primary building of outstanding architectural interest, which served to help anchor the soldiers' home complex. Remaining on site today, however, are four other major buildings which also anchor the district, as well as several additional outbuildings which complete the historic assemblage. All historic buildings aptly represent their original design and intent, most sustaining few alterations of note. Those most impacted over time have been Old Main and the Women's Dorm. Both have suffered the attachment of most incompatible rear additions. However, in both cases, the wings were affixed on the least visible elevation, are secondary in scale and design to the original buildings, and could be readily removed. When viewed from the primary elevations, within the heart of the district, the original building designs read clearly and the additions are unobtrusive.

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In design, workmanship, materials, setting, feeling, location and association the Montana Soldier's Home retains excellent levels of integrity, clearly conveying a sense of the history, function and design of this important state institution. The buildings, structures and objects at the home reflect the historic activities and functions of this care facility, while the historic grounds, fields, orchard and natural environs create a restive atmosphere most conducive to the mission of the home, through its historic past to the present.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Social History

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1896-1943

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1896, 1900, 1904, 1917, 1921

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: Haire, C. S.; Whiteside, Fred; Woll, Louis; Haverlandt, Caesar

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reflecting the State of Montana's response to the needs and political influence of its Civil War veterans in the 1890s, and its continuing response to the needs of veterans of subsequent wars, the Montana Soldiers' Home Historic District is significant under Criterion A. The district is also significant under Criterion C as it exemplifies several architectural styles noteworthy in Montana. As the governor of Montana commented at the 1896 Memorial Day celebration at the site of the Home, "This edifice...will mean more to the future than it does to-day. Dedicated to the noblest of purposes, expressive of Montana's gratitude to the brave defenders of the nation's honor, it will stand through the long roll of years as an incentive to patriotism." The district's architecture lends further significance as an example of the early work of architect C. S. Haire, a prominent designer in turn-of-the-century Montana.

Historical Significance

When the Montana Department of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) met at its Annual Encampment in 1894, it noted the increasing number of Civil War Veterans needing care. The Department formed a committee to lobby for the establishment of a soldiers' home in the state. The committee's efforts proved successful; the 1895 state legislature, at the urging of Governor J. B. Rickards, authorized the Home and appropriated money for its construction. The effective lobbying of the GAR in Montana reflected the political power the group wielded across much of the nation in the last decades of the 19th century; by 1900, the GAR had been instrumental in establishing soldiers' homes in 27 states. When the Montana Soldiers' Home was authorized, there were approximately 2,500 Civil War veterans in Montana. Twenty-five were county charges living in poor houses in the spring of 1896, and they were expected to be the first occupants of the Home.

The bill authorizing the Home stipulated that it be located on at least 40 acres of donated land that was tillable, had water rights for irrigation, and was located at least one mile from any establishment selling liquor. Eight offers of land in various Montana locations were offered. After visiting each of the sites, the Board of Managers selected the Northern International Improvement Company's offer of a site along the Flathead River, two miles southwest of Columbia Falls. Northern International, a subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway based in Columbia Falls, offered 147 acres of land (less the Great Northern Railway right-of-way and the Catholic cemetery tract of five acres), plus the free installation of a boiler, an engine, pumps, and tanks for supplying water from the Flathead River to the Home. The citizens of Columbia Falls donated \$3,100 through subscriptions.

C. S. Haire, a Helena architect who designed many of the state's prominent public buildings, including the wings of the state capitol building, was hired to design the Home's first building. Fred Whiteside of Kalispell, a prominent builder, politician and agricultural promoter, received the construction contract. The commissioners of the Home selected the building site on a river bench close to the bank of the Flathead River in order to "give a beautiful view from any window of the home." The property had originally been farmed by George Ruth (or Rath), an early Flathead Valley settler who left for Alaska in 1897. The title to the property passed from Ruth to William Conlin and then John Cowan until it was sold in 1893 to the Northern International Improvement Company. The land was donated to the State of Montana "for the use and benefit of the Soldiers' Home...as long as the same may be necessary for the use for such Soldiers' Home, and when not necessary the said Property to revert to and become the Property of the State of Montana."

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The building was dedicated by Governor Rickards on May 30, 1896, before a large crowd of over 3,000 people. The women of the Relief Corps served lunch on the grounds, featuring "good viands," hot tea and coffee, ice cream and cake, and lemonade for 20 cents (there were also fruit and refreshment stands). Many of the participants brought their own picnic lunches. The cornerstone was made of Butte copper, and it contained a great variety of items, including legal documents, a map of Columbia Falls and the area, the text of various speeches, the list of subscribers and contributors to the Home, badges of various lodges, coins and currency notes, various cards and invitations, the state GAR roster, and copies of various newspapers. A large flag was donated to the Home, and a group of veterans prepared a 4-ton 126' larch flagstaff that would be "seen from distant points of the valley."

The first commandant of the Home was J. R. Hillman of Helena, who had served in the Civil War in the Ohio volunteer infantry for over three years and had participated in 20 battles. He left his job as bailiff in the U. S. court for the district of Montana and served at the Home until 1902.

Visitors acclaimed the attractive appearance of the building and the surrounding grounds. The building's location on a wooded bluff overlooking the Flathead River to the south and facing the Swan Mountains to the east led a turn-of-the-century writer to claim that the Home had the look and atmosphere of a "pleasant hotel." It was described soon after its construction as a "monument to the gratitude and patriotism of the state of Montana" that was "comfortably, even luxuriantly apperelled."

Prior to admission, all residents of the Home were required to demonstrate that they were unable to support themselves otherwise. As the 1917 biennial report of the Board of Managers commented, "We do not approve of the admission of capitalists to the Home, or those who are amply able to provide for themselves." Residents had to agree to contribute labor to the Home as required, and to turn over to the Commandant or Board of Managers 2/3 of their monthly pension (unless they had dependents). They had to have been Montana residents for at least one year, never convicted of a felony or a "crime showing moral turpitude," and could not be "habitual drunkards" unless they were reformed. The federal government contributed \$100 per resident per year to the cost of running the Home.

The number of residents in the Home varied over the years. In its first year of operation, the Home at one time reported 6 "inmates," 3 employees, and the commandant. By November of 1917, there were 110 members living at the home, one "independent charge," 28 women (widows and wives of veterans), and 22 civilian employees. At any given time quite a few of the residents were absent with leave, visiting relatives or friends.

Soon after the Home received its first residents, it became apparent that there was a need for full-time health care; the hospital room in Old Main was not adequate. In 1900 a hospital, also designed by C. S. Haire, was built. The Family Home, or Women's Building, was constructed in 1904 to house the increasing numbers of women (wives and widows of veterans) seeking admission to the Home. In 1907 the Board of Managers of the Home changed the existing resolution to allow a widow who had lived at the Home with her husband to continue living at the Home after her husband died "unless she be an objectionable character." The last major building remaining from the Home's first years is the Service Building, also known as the chapel, constructed in 1917. The brick Service Building is two stories tall and has a lantern with ornamental urns at its corners, unusual decorative features in Montana.

The new Hospital, built in approximately 1908, was designed to relieve the crowded conditions at the original hospital. In fact, in 1906, just six years after the original hospital was constructed, the Home purchased two 14x16' wall tents to house eight people because of the overflow of hospital patients and new residents.

More recently, several other buildings have been erected around the cluster of buildings that comprise the Historic District. These outbuildings, such as the dairy barn, laundry, and root house, reflect the self-sufficient nature of the Soldiers' Home. Additions have been made to Old Main and to the Women's Dorm, but the additions do not unacceptably detract from

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their historic and architectural significance. Post-World War II buildings within the district also do not detract significantly from the overall feel of the historic district.

The grounds and surrounding fields at the Soldiers' Home are significant because they reflect the full range of activities necessary to sustain the Home, in an effort to be self-sufficient. Those residents of the Home who were physically able to help with the harvesting and storage of crops were required to do so. For example, residents participated in the canning of fruits and vegetables each fall, and in 1902, 24 of the residents including the commandant and the matron helped harvest the potatoes. The garden and orchard that now exist at the home to the north of the barn are not in the original location. In fact, the garden was relocated several times to take advantage of more fertile ground (originally, two acres of "ground already plowed and harrowed" were used for the garden). The Home generally advertised annually for bids for some of the necessary supplies for each year, such as fresh and salt meats, groceries, lard, canned goods, dried fruits, and laundry supplies. Usually, though, the Home did produce enough hay, grains, potatoes, vegetables, meat, and fruit to meet its own needs. In 1917, for example, the Home farm raised large crops of the following: hay, wheat, rutabagas, turnips, onions, cabbage, potatoes, parsnips, oats, table carrots, beets, apples, peas, corn, and summer squash. In 1908, the Home reported harvesting 400 quarts of strawberries. The orchard was begun by at least 1899, when the Board of Managers ordered 76 apple trees, 12 pears, 12 plums, and six cherry trees. The garden and orchards were probably located where the new nursing facility and the fields to the east now are, as the ca. 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows irrigation lines reaching to the east of the main road but not beyond the buildings on the west. Residents of the Home continued to help with the farming and gardening until approximately 1984, when the State decided it was more economical to purchase food than to raise it. Today there is a much smaller garden and orchard to the north and northwest of the dairy barn. The orchard was planted some time between 1974 and 1980.

A typical 1922 supper at the Home, served family style, included the following: home-made sausage, cold veal, fried potatoes, stewed tomatoes, home-made bread, cottage cheese, pickles, jelly, cake, coffee, tea or milk. As one resident of the Home commented in 1921, "From our gardens we have green corn and cucumbers galore. We live quite well, even though we don't roost on the upper round of the social porch."

The amount of wood required to heat all the buildings at the Home through a Montana winter was staggering. In 1898 the Home required 150 cords of wood, and in 1905 400 cords. By 1917 the Home was contracting for a total of 750 cords of wood. In 1921 the heating system for all of the Home was converted to coal. It later was converted to kerosene, then natural gas, and now it again uses kerosene.

In 1917 the home had several milch cows to provide "plenty of milk for the different tables." The Home also had its own horses and wagons for many years, later replaced by passenger cars and trucks. A portion of the grounds was fenced off for pasture.

The Flathead River, located so close to the Soldiers' Home, has always been a popular recreational spot for the veterans living at the Home. In 1917, for example, a resident mentioned that the ice was out of the river and there was a "great hunting around for fishing tackle" and for grasshoppers. In 1908 the river bottom was cleared of dead and fallen timber, stumps and brush. The Board of Managers commented at that time that "This Park is easily reached by "switchback" walks, and during the summer season is a favorite resort of the inmates of the Home, who spend much of their time in full enjoyment of the luxurious shade and rare scenic effects, and in fishing along the river banks."

Residents of the Home have also always used the grounds for exercise. As early as 1906 the Board of Managers asked the Commandant to place three seats along the driveway leading to the entrance gate so people would have places to rest while walking. After the croquet craze passed, the Home's croquet grounds were planted to flowers ("We prefer flowers to ground billiards," commented one resident).

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Since its founding, the Home has always been landscaped. In 1899 a row of shade trees was planted on each side of the road to the main entrance. In 1915, 33 mountain ash and horse chestnut trees were planted on the grounds. In 1921, the wooden boardwalks around the buildings were replaced with concrete walks. A year later the concrete sidewalk leading from the hospital to the main gate was constructed by J. A. Gudgel of Kalispell. At that time the entrance gate featured a large iron sign over the gate that read "Montana Soldiers' Home."

Today a paved path wide enough for wheelchair use extends from Veterans Drive around the garden and orchard and between the edge of the river bench and the farm fields to the southwest boundary of the property. Several wooden benches line the path, and a swinging bench is located at the turnaround point, which has an unobstructed view to the mountains bordering the Flathead Valley on the north and east. This path was reportedly built in the 1970s, but there was likely an earlier unpaved path.

Architectural Significance

In the designing the original buildings for the Montana Soldiers' Home, architect Charles S. Haire turned to early American building traditions for inspiration. Each is stylistically distinctive, although prevailing design ideas common to the Colonial and Federal periods unify the buildings in the complex. As a group these buildings are strong examples of the revival of Colonial and Federal style architecture during during the very late 19th century and early 20th century, and reflect Haire's facility with those stylistic ideals.

Charles S. Haire was an architect of many talents, whose prolific work is found throughout the state of Montana. He was equally comfortable with styles of the late Victorian period, and those of the early 20th century. For this site, Haire's tribute to the styles popular during the early years of the American republic was a most appropriate symbol in the design of a facility for the veterans of the Civil War which held that republic together.

Born in Ohio, Charles S. Haire worked as a draftsman in construction for the Union Pacific Railroad first in Idaho, then moved to Butte, Montana. In 1888, he associated with the realty firm of Wallace and Thornburg, in Helena. He moved to Helena in 1893, and opened an architectural practice. For the next thirteen years, Haire designed many Montana buildings, including those at the Montana Soldiers' Home. He worked as the State superintendent of buildings and oversaw the construction of numerous State institutions.

In 1906, C.S. Haire formed a partnership with John G. Link of Billings and for several decades they were the most prolific architectural firm in Montana, responsible for the design of hundreds of buildings. They opened offices in Helena, Billings, Missoula, Butte and Lewistown, which trained employed many young, up and coming Montana architects. Their practice covered a full range of buildings from courthouses, schools and hospitals, to commercial buildings and residences.

The buildings at the Montana Soldiers' Home are strong examples of Haire's early talents, and showcase the Federal, Colonial and Queen Anne styles of design. The original building onsite, Old Main, is an impressive blend of Queen Anne and Federal style. Strongly anchoring the district, the general massing, balanced symmetry and central cupola derive from Federal roots, while the porch and detailing reflect a lighter Queen Anne influence. Four years later, the Commandants House drew upon early American ancestry in its Colonial Revival design. Here, the symmetrical massing, Palladian window and dentils enriching the eaves all reflect that style.

The Service Building appears to be a Haire design, although this is not documented. Here again early American traditions surface in the Georgian influences seen in the central fanlight, quoined corners, and hipped rooflines. The building also displays Neoclassical detailing including the modillioned cornice and Doric-columned and balustraded portico.

The Women's Dormitory is less stylistically distinctive than the rest, although it certainly reflects popular building of the period, with the simple massing, double-hung windows, hipped roof and porchlines and brick construction. Elsewhere, the

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gambrel-roofed barn is a fine example of that building type. Along with other agricultural outbuildings, it reflects Montana's agrarian traditions, while later utilitarian buildings reflect institutional, functional purposes.

In 1963 the name of the Home was changed to the Montana State Veterans' Home. Today, although many of the residents are housed in a newer building, the facility continues a century-long commitment to Montana soldiers, functioning as a caretaker of aged and infirm veterans of the armed services, as originally envisioned by the Montana members of the GAR.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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: Department of Corrections
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: approximately 147 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
A 11 706660 5359580

Verbal Boundary Description

The Montana Soldiers' Home Historic District is located in the SW¹/₄ of Section 18, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, Montana Principal Meridian, in Columbia Falls, Flathead County, Montana.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all buildings dating from the Home's pre-World War II years, as well as the adjacent park-like areas and the cultivated fields that contribute to its traditional atmosphere and reflect the original intent of the Board of Managers of the Home that it be as self-sufficient as possible.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kathy McKay (1993 revision of John Westenberg's original form in 1980)
organization: n/a date: July 1993
street & number: 491 Eckelberry Dr. telephone: 406/892-1538
city or town: Columbia Falls state: MT zip code: 59912

Property Owner

name/title: Montana Department of Corrections and Human Services
street & number: 1539 11th Avenue
city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59620

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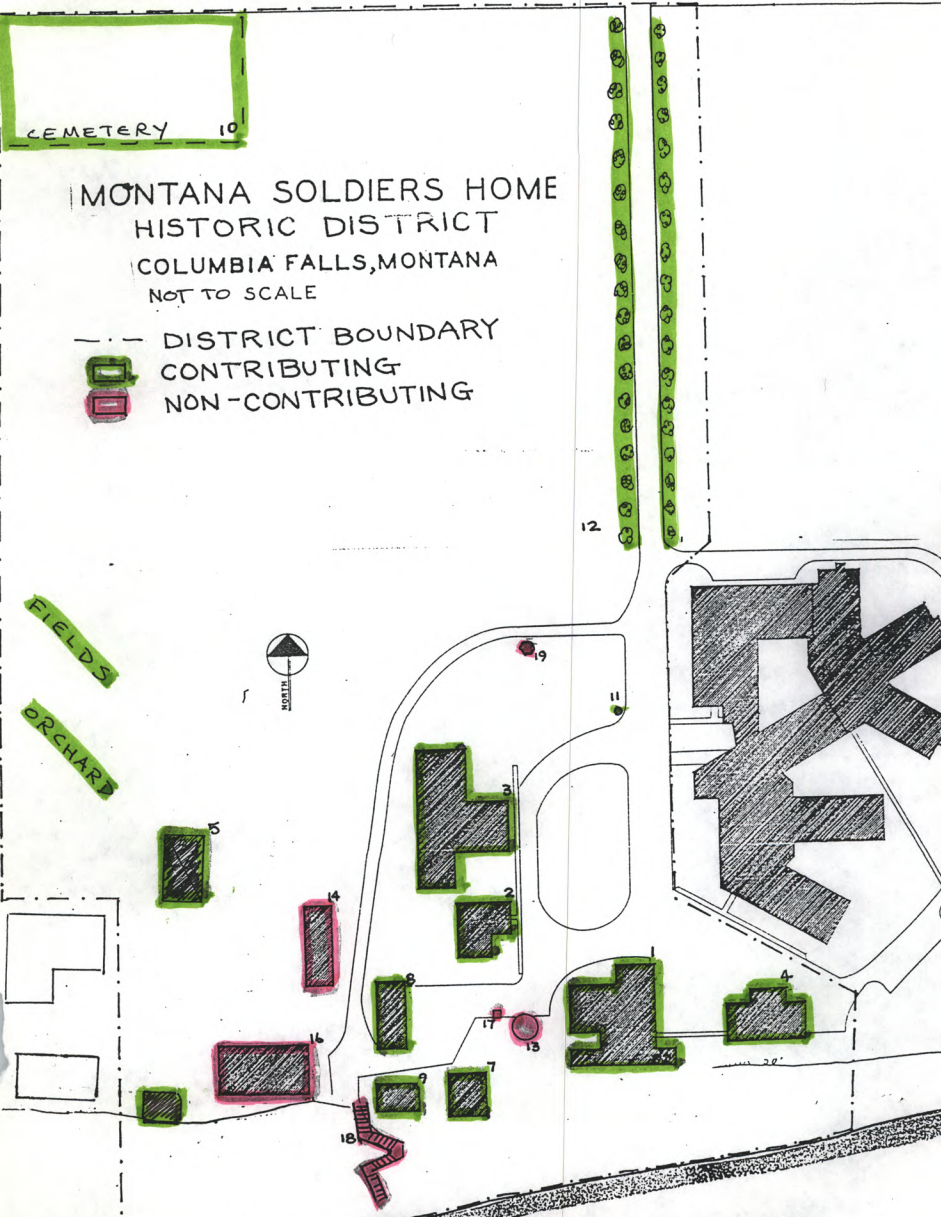
State of Montana, FY91 Property List, 6411 Veterans Home.

CEMETERY 10

MONTANA SOLDIERS HOME
HISTORIC DISTRICT
COLUMBIA FALLS, MONTANA
NOT TO SCALE

- - - DISTRICT BOUNDARY
-  CONTRIBUTING
-  NON-CONTRIBUTING

FIELDS
ORCHARD



FLATHEAD RIVER