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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "NA" 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: FORSYTH MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT  
other names/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 800-1000 Blocks, Main Street, and  
adjoining side streets  not for publication  
city, town: Forsyth  vicinity  
state: Montana code: MT county: Rosebud code: 087 zip code: 59327

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private		<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public - local		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district		<u>24</u>	<u>7</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public - State		<input type="checkbox"/> site			<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public - Federal		<input type="checkbox"/> structure			<input type="checkbox"/> structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>24</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
					<u>7</u> Total
Name of related multiple property listing: HISTORIC RESOURCES OF FORSYTH, MONTANA				Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register <u>0</u>	

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 *Maude S. Duffy* Date 12-21-89

MT SHPO  
State or federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

- hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
  
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Patrick Andrews  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*for* Signature of the Keeper

2/12/90  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store  
COMMERCE/TRADE: business  
COMMERCE/TRADE: department store  
DOMESTIC: hotel  
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant  
COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution  
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store  
COMMERCE/TRADE: business  
COMMERCE/TRADE: department store  
DOMESTIC: hotel  
COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant  
COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution  
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)  
  
Italianate  
Renaissance Revival  
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)  
  
foundation: concrete  
walls: brick  
          concrete  
roof: asphalt  
other: stone  
          stucco

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

The primary commercial district of Forsyth, Montana is centered on the community's Main Street; a series of 25' wide business lots are platted on the north side of this street, while the Northern Pacific (now Burlington Northern) Railroad right-of-way occupies the land south of the street. Early commercial development was centered at the intersection of Main Street and Ninth Avenue, opposite the original Northern Pacific depot, and a near-solid one-sided streetscape of commercial buildings began developing in this area by the late 1880's. As the primary Main Street lots filled, additional commercial buildings appeared on the adjacent cross streets of North Eighth, North Ninth, and North Tenth Avenues.

The earliest construction (1882-c. 1888) in this area were roughly-built, single-story wood-framed buildings, generally with end-gable roofs. False fronts lent

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detail to the streetscape; these facades occasionally displayed cornices exhibiting vernacular Italianate details. Wooden sidewalks and occasional ephemeral tent businesses helped complete the initial streetscape view. This early class of buildings largely vanished from Forsyth's commercial district by 1920.

The district's first brick business block (Hiram Marcy's mercantile, 855 Main St.) appeared in 1888. In scale and design, the building typified design patterns that would follow in the ensuing twenty years: the two-story building extended to its lot lines, was of local brick construction, and displayed a facade with limited Italianate brickwork detailing. Several similar commercial blocks followed on Main Street between Eighth and Tenth Avenues during the 1890's.

An 1888 fire in the 900 block of Main and increased local population and business activity after 1901 accelerated the replacement of early wooden buildings with brick blocks. As the early 1900's progressed, new business buildings became larger, generally occupying two or three lots; nearly all were two stories high, and two three-story buildings appeared. This physical evolution was encouraged by a 1905 city ordinance requiring the use of fireproof materials in the commercial district.

With the exception of the Roxy Theatre building (1930) and an adjoining gas station (1931), Forsyth's central business core had grown to its present configuration by 1917. The streetscape was anchored by the three-story Commercial Hotel (1903-06) on the corner of Eighth and Main; from there, a nearly unbroken row of brick or concrete business structures continued for 2 1/2 blocks to the east. Additional business blocks existed on Ninth Avenue for a block north of Main. More scattered commercial development existed on Main both east and west of this core, and beyond the limits of brick construction on Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Avenues.

With occasional notable exceptions, the brick business blocks shared basic design features. All featured a tri-part facade design consisting of the storefront, upper building body, and cornice. The storefront areas of most buildings were occupied by broad expanses of transomed commercial windows. In contrast, upper-level facades displayed a broader expanse of brickwork, allowing for the expression of individual architectural detail. In most cases, this level of detail was not high. Most buildings featured brick, wooden, or metal cornices and detailing of vernacular Italianate heritage. Relatively late additions to the district boast concrete or terra cotta cornice and medallion detail. Additional textural patterns were provided by concrete or brick lintels and sills, or occasionally by brick pilasters or rusticated quoins.

"High-style" building designs are notably uncommon here, reflecting the town's limited size and resources. Some buildings, though, such as the Commercial Hotel,

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exhibit Renaissance Revival qualities. Prominent examples of other building styles exist only singly or in pairs: the Classical facade of the 1908 Bank of Commerce, the Beaux Arts influences of the 1917 Wachholz Building, and the Spanish Eclectic Roxy Theatre are all examples.

Over the years, changes at the "sidewalk level" of Main Street have been frequent. Many storefront windows and entries were rebuilt every few years, reflecting a change in ownership or use; the general configuration usually remained fairly similar, however. Wood-framed porches sheltering wooden sidewalks were common in the first decade of the century; in the 1910's roll-up canvas awnings became ubiquitous, and concrete sidewalks were installed under the city's guidance. Today, some structures have fixed wood or metal awnings.

In contrast, upper-level facades remained virtually intact through the 1970's. While most retain a high level of integrity today, modifications are beginning to occur. Some second-story windows have been infilled, and the facades of the Yellowstone Pharmacy (1894-5) and the First National Bank (1902) have been completely obscured by modern materials. These modifications degrade somewhat the historic "feel" of the streetscape.

In general, though, Forsyth's Main Street projects an excellent historic image. The overall form, massing and materials of the streetscape exists largely unchanged from 1917, and a high proportion of the facade detail survives as well. It is a good representation of a small-town business district in 1910's Montana.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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

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)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Commerce	1888-1931	1888-1931
Architecture		
Entertainment/Recreation		

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Alexander, Thomas  
Marcyes, Hiram

Architect/Builder

Oehme, Curtis C.  
Link & Haire  
Wood, Charles

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

The Forsyth Main Street Historic District meets criteria "a," "b," and "c" for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The area survives as a significant visual reflection of the commercial development and growth of the community of Forsyth. In its current incarnation, Forsyth's downtown business district remains a physical representation of the era of expansion and optimism prevalent in Forsyth and eastern Montana during the first two decades of the Twentieth Century. The district also contains properties with significant historical associations to the two leading businessmen and entrepreneurs of turn-of-the-century Forsyth: Thomas Alexander and Hiram Marcyes.

### Historical Significance

Although most of the riverbottom land surrounding Forsyth was settled by homesteaders in 1876 and 1877, the number of residents in the region was small, and they were largely self-sufficient. This precluded the development of retail or other commercial ventures in the area. The 1882 arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad, however, caused a rapid shift in this situation. The railroad brought with it numbers of new residents whose livelihood was not dependent on agriculture; this, in turn, created a new local market for retail goods and services.

The Northern Pacific platted Forsyth in 1882 to serve as a base for its local operations, and also to provide a residential and trading center for the new area residents attracted by the railroad. Forsyth's town plat included a one-sided Main Street (facing the railroad right-of-way) intended for commercial development. This Main Street was fourteen blocks long, providing a total of 168

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commercial lots, each 25 feet wide. An equivalent number of commercial lots faced the town's residential avenues in the block immediately north of Main Street. Most of these lots, especially on the west end of town, never saw commercial use and were later utilized as homesites.

Growth of the new business district was hesitant, paralleling the slow growth of the town itself. The first businesses were centered near what rapidly became the town's principal intersection: the corner of Main and Ninth, opposite the Northern Pacific depot. Early businesses were basic: general mercantile establishments, a hotel, cafe, and saloons. This reflected developing, railroad-oriented nature of the commercial district, and its limited service area. It would continue operating in much this fashion until the first years of the twentieth century.

Much of the town's early commercial activity and building construction were direct consequences of two significant entrepreneurs who played predominate roles in "boosting" the Forsyth community: Hiram Marcyes and Thomas Alexander. The men, philosophical and personal rivals, each operated an early Forsyth mercantile, and both rapidly expanded their commercial activities and areas of influence. Alexander erected the American (Alexander) Hotel in 1891; Marcyes countered with the larger Commercial Hotel in 1903-06. Both men also built additional business blocks, as well. Alexander and his associates were considered to control Main Street's 900 block, while Marcyes and his business associates controlled the 800 block. Both owned and developed Forsyth residential lots, as well, and Marcyes operated the town's brickyard. Forsyth's increasingly urban streetscape in the 1890's and 1900's was a direct result of the energies of these two significant men.

Forsyth began a rapid growth in the years following 1901, and the size and style of the business district adapted accordingly. The number of commercial enterprises increased, and the overall level of specialization of many businesses increased as well. Offices of "white collar" professions (legal, medical, clerical) appeared in conjunction with retail stores. This increasing diversity was allowed by Forsyth's larger population, as well as by its increasing role as an area trade center. A large number of newly-arrived homesteaders added to the region's population base; many of these families were less self-sufficient than their predecessors from the 1870's had been. Ground transportation routes were also somewhat more convenient, increasing the practicality of trips to town. In 1901 Forsyth was named the seat of newly-formed Rosebud County; this served as a concrete symbol of the town's regional economic dominance.

The town evolved into a local social and entertainment center as well. By the 1890's established church groups were in place and civic organizations (including the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Elks) were being chartered. A small wooden "Opera House" was built in 1890 to host special entertainment events, and by the early

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twentieth century such amenities as movie theatres and bowling alleys were available on Main Street.

This period of expansion continued unabated from 1901 to 1917. The following year, however, drought and depressed farm prices brought the region's growth to an immediate and long-term halt. The economic depression which followed effectively "froze" Forsyth's downtown streetscape in its 1917 form. The town's economic importance as a local trade center remained, however. That function largely survives today, although improved highway transportation has drawn some local trade to the larger metropolitan areas of Miles City and Billings.

#### Architectural Significance

The Forsyth Main Street Historic District retains much of the visual quality of a typical 1910's small-town commercial district. The Main Street and Ninth Avenue portions of the district contains a nearly unbroken series of two- and three-story brick business blocks erected between 1888 and 1917. Within that cohesive visual grouping, however, are a range of commercial building forms and styles.

The district's pre-1900 buildings (typified by the 1888 Marcyes Mercantile) are almost exclusively two-story business blocks constructed of load-bearing red brick, probably locally-produced. Detailing, almost exclusively limited to the primary facade, generally exhibits vernacular Italianate features. These buildings generally do not possess documented associations to professionally-trained architects.

Post-1901 buildings are generally larger and often have steel or concrete structural framing. The brick walls are often constructed of commercially-produced, imported brick. The level of facade detailing is more diverse in these buildings; both Classical and Renaissance Revival forms are evident, and the most recent projects featured Beaux-Arts medallions and detailing. The two district buildings erected after the end of Forsyth's boom years (the Roxy Theatre and its adjoining service station) displayed Spanish detailing, a local design anomaly.

Designs of a number of these later projects resulted from specific commissions to professional, out-of-town architects. Two of the more prominent buildings (the Commercial Hotel and the Bank of Commerce) were design products of the Link & Haire partnership, a significant Montana firm. Other projects, including the Wachholz Building (1917) were designed by Billings architect Curtis C. Oehme. Spokane architect Charles Wood designed the Spanish Eclectic Roxy Theatre.

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**Downtown Forsyth Historic District**

p: primary significance c: contributing n: non-contributing

<u>Address:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>Status:</u>	<u>Style:</u>
807-825 Main (Commercial Hotel)	1903-06	p	Renaissance Revival
837 Main (Crimmins Building)	c. 1904	c	vernacular brick commercial
845 Main (Charley Burns Building)	1895	c	vernacular brick commercial
855 Main (Marcyes Building)	1888	p	vernacular brick commercial
863-871 Main (Dowlin & Sweetser Building)	1907	p	vernacular brick commercial
879-897 Main (Wachholz Building)	1917	p	vernacular Beaux Arts
905-923 Main (Alexander Hotel)	1891/1912	p	vernacular brick commercial
927 Main	c. 1893	c	vernacular brick commercial (stuccoed)
933 Main	c. 1893	c	vernacular brick commercial (stuccoed)
951 Main	1902	n	remodeled
951 Main (garage)	c. 1970	n	utilitarian
955 Main	1894-95	n	remodeled
963 Main (Thornton & Choisser Saloon)	1901	c	vernacular Italianate
971 Main (Merchant's Bank)	1898	p	vernacular stone commercial
981 Main (Roxy Theatre)	1930	c	Spanish Eclectic
993 Main (Wolke & Faust Service Station)	1931	c	Spanish Eclectic
1001-1015 Main	c. 1904	n	remodeled
1025 Main (McCustion Building)	1913	c	vernacular brick commercial
1041-1049 Main (Masonic Temple)	1911	p	Renaissance Revival
1053 Main	1918	c	vernacular brick commercial
155 North Eighth (warehouse)	1895/1915	c	vernacular stuccoed commercial
189 North Eighth (Ivey Hotel)	c. 1904	p	hip-roofed vernacular
145 North Ninth (American Hotel Cafe)	c. 1905	c	vernacular brick commercial
158 North Ninth (Bank of Commerce)	1908/1917	p	Classical Revival
164-182 North Ninth (Kennedy-Fletcher Block)	1907	p	vernacular brick commercial
167 North Ninth (Choisser Block)	1908/1917	c	vernacular brick commercial
175 North Ninth	c. 1905	c	vernacular brick commercial
183 North Ninth	c. 1908	n	remodeled
188 North Ninth (Miles & Ulmer Co.)	1950	n	modern commercial
148 North Tenth (Forsyth Coin-Op Laundry)	c. 1948	n	modern commercial
152 North Tenth (Austin & Laughlin Livery)	1900	p	vernacular metal-clad commercial



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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs were taken by Mark A. Hufstetler in conjunction with an historic and architectural survey of the community of Forsyth, Montana. Original negatives are in the possession of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana. Roll #6 photographs were taken February 20, 1989; Roll #7 and #8 photographs were taken February 21, 1989.

<u>Photo:</u>	<u>Building:</u>	<u>Address:</u>	<u>View:</u>
6-34	Masonic Temple	1031-1047 Main	south elevation
6-35	McCuistion Building	1025 Main St.	south elevation
7-6	Austin & Laughlin Livery	152 North 10th	looking northwest
7-9	Roxy Theatre	981 Main St.	looking northwest
7-11	Thornton & Choisser Saloon	963 Main St.	south elevation
7-15	Merchant's Bank Block	927 Main St.	south elevation
7-16	Alexander Hotel	905-923 Main	south elevation
7-17	American Hotel Cafe	145 North 9th	west elevation
7-19	J.E. Choisser Block	167 North 9th	looking southeast
7-23	Kennedy-Fletcher Block	164-182 N. 9th	looking southwest
8-1	Bank of Commerce	158 North 9th	east elevation
8-2	Wachholz Building	879-897 Main	looking southwest

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PHOTOGRAPHS -- continued

<u>Photo:</u>	<u>Building:</u>	<u>Address:</u>	<u>View:</u>
8-5	Marcy's mercantile	855 Main St.	south elevation
8-8	Commercial Hotel	807-825 Main	looking northeast
8-9	Marcy's warehouse	145-153 N. 8th	looking northeast
8-10	Ivey Hotel	189 North 8th	looking southeast
8-28	streetscape	800 block Main	looking northeast
8-29	streetscape	900 block Main	looking northeast
8-30	streetscape	9th & Main St.	looking northwest
8-31	streetscape	1000 block Main	looking northeast

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Bibliographical references are noted in the Multiple Properties submission.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

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

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property Approximately four acres.

UTM References

A	<u>113</u>	<u>37106610</u>	<u>511247410</u>	B	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	D	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

See Continuation Sheet

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Mark A. Hufstetler

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 1, 1989

street & number 610 Dell Place, #10 telephone (406) 587-9518

city or town Bozeman state Montana zip code 59715

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

The district includes the following lots in the Original Townsite of Forsyth, Montana: Lots 12-18, Block 58; Lots 5-24, Block 59, and Lots 1-24, Block 60.

The boundary's point of beginning is at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Main Street. It proceeds northerly along Eighth Avenue to its intersection with Cedar Street; thence easterly along Cedar Street to the north-south alley between Ninth and Tenth Avenues; thence southerly along this alley to the northerly lot line of Lot 5, Block 59; thence easterly along this lot line to Tenth Avenue; thence southerly along Tenth Avenue to the east-west alley between Cedar and Main Streets; thence easterly along this alley to the easterly lot line of Lot 12, Block 58; thence southerly along this lot line to Main Street; thence westerly along Main Street to the point of beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The boundary includes the principal area of concentrated commercial building development in the community of Forsyth. It is drawn to include all principal historic structures in the business district, while excluding areas to the north, east, and west which primarily contain non-historic buildings or older buildings which have lost integrity.

The district includes only the western portion of an unbroken line of commercial blocks in Block 58. The included properties retain a high level of historic integrity; buildings immediately to the east, however, have been extensively modified. The single-story building immediately to the east of the district boundary has been covered by a huge two-story roof/carport area with a highly modern, asymmetrical gable roof.