

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 94000884

Date Listed: 08/25/94

Fisher House
Property Name

Flathead
County

MT
State

Kalispell MPS
Multiple Name

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


Signature of the Keeper

8/25/94
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Criteria Considerations

Criteria exception A applies to the property for its documented significance in the area of "Religion."

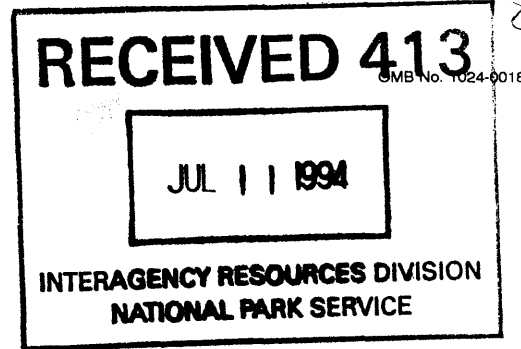
This information was confirmed with Patty McLaughlin, MTSHP, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Fisher House

other name/site number: Heller House 24FH

2. Location

street & number: 441 Second Street West

not for publication: n/a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

city/town: Kalispell

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 029 zip code: 59901

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 statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Marek Shief MT SHPO 6-28-94
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
Beth Savage

Date of Action
8/25/94

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: private public-local public-State public-Federal

Category of Property: building(s) district site structure object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> building(s)
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions:
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification:
Stick/Eastlake

Materials:
foundation: stone
roof: asbestos
walls: wood/weatherboard, shingles
other: n/a

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Fisher House is an excellent example of the Stick style of architecture with some Queen Anne details. Definitive Stick features include the cross-gabled roof, overhanging eaves, cornerboards, wood siding interrupted by bands of vertical boards, and decorative sunburst patterns in the siding. The original wrap-around porch (now gone) had curving porch support bracing that matched the curving vergeboards on the house. This style links the Gothic Revival with the subsequent Queen Anne style common in Kalispell. The Stick style was already fading in popularity by the time this house was constructed. Queen Anne details include the bay windows, metal roof cresting on the lower cross-gabled wing in the notch of the ell formed by the main wings of the house (no longer present), circular scrollwork under the lower cornice (no longer present), and the wrap-around porch (no longer present).

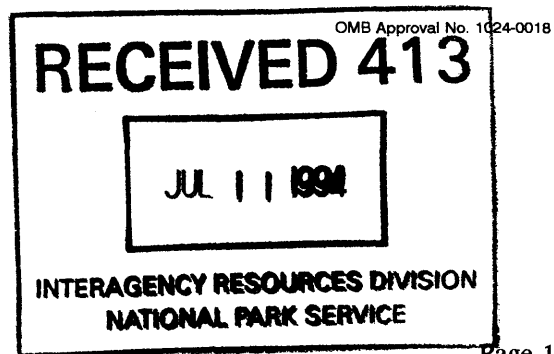
This two-story house has an irregular plan. A two-story, two-sided bay window projects on the south elevation and has stained glass in the upper lights of the double-hung 1/1-light windows. Some of the other windows are 9/1-light. The house has a central corbeled brick chimney. The roof is covered in composition shingles, the foundation is random native rock. There is a one-story gabled wing in the rear (the kitchen) which had a shed-roofed porch added on between 1910 and 1927. The original front porch was removed in 1959 and has been replaced by a small shed-roofed porch with squared porch supports and a metal handrail up the steps. The original front porch rail had an unusual diamond pattern.

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The interior woodwork is original and is intricately carved. For example, the wood trim in the living room has regularly spaced holes. The floors are hardwood. The stair bannister is original, and there is a closet under the stairs. The kitchen was remodeled in the 1930s, and there is a relatively new kitchen window. The den was also remodeled and a door was sealed off, creating a downstairs bathroom off the kitchen. The entry hall floor is painted, and there is a brick fireplace in the hall with a wood mantel. At the top of the stairs, on the second floor, is a free-standing closet with shelves. There are three bedrooms upstairs, with the original closets. The stairway to the unfinished attic is recent. A closet between two of the upstairs bedrooms became a bathroom in the 1950s. The upstairs bathroom door is a sliding pocket door. The upstairs floor is covered with linoleum. The home was originally heated with wood; there are holes for stovepipes in the living room, dining room, and upstairs landing.

In 1979 the City of Kalispell funded work on this house as part of the Housing Rehabilitation program. At that time, the kitchen and bathroom floors were covered in linoleum. Eight broken windows and one stained glass window were replaced. The attic was insulated with 4" insulation under the floorboards, and the walls of both floor were insulated. Weatherstripping and minor repairs were done. Carpets were laid in the living room and dining room, and a runner was laid on the stairway. The retaining wall into the cellar was reinforced. The rear porch was completely replaced, conforming to the original porch design. At that time, Mrs. Fisher's square grand piano, with intricate carvings along the arms and sides, was still located in the living room.

A trap door located in the rear porch leads to a small cellar beneath the kitchen. The cellar has a concrete floor, random rubble walls, and contains the furnace and some shelves. A mechanical spin-type doorbell is mounted on the inside of the front door, below a pane of glass. There is a transom over the front door.

Present landscaping includes rhubarb plants, wild roses, choke cherry, and apple and plum trees. A long row of lilac bushes has grown over a stone wall on the west side of the property.

The house was originally surrounded by a decorative fence (see attached historic photographs) that had turned and curving rails. According to an 1894 photograph, there was a gated entrance to the house from the south (2nd Street West), and the driveway for horses led past the west side of the house to the barn in the rear (north). There was a hand-operated water pump between the laundry house and the rear entrance of the house. A curving cinder path led past the east side of the house to the outbuildings.

The house also had two outbuildings associated with it, at one time extending several blocks to the north. The 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows a one-story rectangular building just to the northeast of the house, which was referred to in the 1970s as a "laundry house." This had an arched doorway on the south side and a gabled roof, with some stickwork evident in a historic photograph. North of this structure, and flush with the west edge of the property, was a two-story barn/carriage house. By 1903 this had been enlarged and had a one-story shed-roofed wing on the east and a large corral to the north. By 1910 the corral was gone, and by 1927 the barn itself was gone. This was a distinct loss to the property, as the barn had siding similar to the house, with diagonal stickwork breaking up the texture of the wall cladding. The structure just north of the house received a porch on the north by 1927, and it was still standing in 1963 but is now also no longer extant.

The current owner built a small shed to the northeast of the house.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: B, C

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Religion

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1892-1934

Significant Person(s): George McVey Fisher

Significant Dates: 1892

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder(s): unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fisher House, built in the summer of 1892, qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria B and C due to its architectural significance and to its association with Reverend George McVey Fisher, an early settler and a prominent Presbyterian minister and missionary who played an important role in the establishment of organized religion in the Flathead Valley from his arrival in 1887 until his death in 1934. During his lifetime, Fisher brought together six congregations in his territory, each of which added to the growing sense of community identity in the region. Fisher and his family financially supported the construction of the Presbyterian church in Kalispell. The Fisher Residence gains additional significance as Kalispell's finest example of Stick style architecture. The house retains a high degree of historic architectural integrity despite the removal of the wrap-around wooden porch.

Fisher proved up on his 160-acre homestead, including much of what is now Kalispell, in 1891. Fisher, who first came to the Flathead Valley in September of 1886, felt that, "For sheer beauty of scenery, Flathead County is not excelled anywhere, not even in Europe." He said, "I could shut my eyes and visualize a setting here for a most wonderful community." In May of 1891 Fisher purchased from the Kalispell Townsite Company the block on which this house is located for \$2,000.

Fisher was born in Ohio in 1849, the son of a Presbyterian minister, and grew up in Pennsylvania. He graduated from Washington and Jefferson College in 1875 and from Union Theological Seminary in 1882. When he first arrived in Montana in 1882, he was the only Presbyterian minister in all of northwestern Montana. He married Mary Swaney, daughter of a pioneering Missoula family and an accomplished pianist. In 1886, Fisher preached the first sermon in what is now Flathead County in the Ashley schoolhouse (on the southwest edge of what is now Kalispell). In 1887, he and his family moved to the area to do missionary work for the church, serving the 700-800 settlers who until that time had had no religious services. They lived in a log cabin near Ashley located on a 160-acre homestead on which Fisher filed a pre-emption claim. Much of this land (from 2nd Avenue East south of the railroad tracks to 7th or 8th Avenue West) he sold to the Kalispell Townsite Company for the new townsite of Kalispell, and in the summer of 1892 he built his house at 441 2nd Street West and helped finance the construction of the original Presbyterian church. The sale of the land, at a higher price than it was worth as a ranch, helped the Fishers greatly; the Presbytery had withheld financial aid because the church disapproved of their preachers farming (Fisher argued they had to farm to survive in the Flathead Valley). Later, Fisher sold another parcel of his land, which became the "Fisher Addition" on the south end of town. Rev. Fisher served as the Presbyterian pastor in Kalispell until 1900, when he retired to farm and do missionary work. Rev. Fisher passed away in 1934. During his lifetime, he had organized six churches in his territory, including those of Ashley, Kalispell and Libby.

Mary Elizabeth Swaney was born in 1862 in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. In 1882 she moved with her parents to Missoula and four years later married Rev. Fisher. In Pittsburgh she had studied piano and voice, and she used her musical talents to help her husband in his ministry, playing their portable organ in the churches where he preached. In the early winter of 1887, she and their first child Crystal moved with her husband to the Flathead Valley. She had the first piano brought into the valley, a square Chickering. This piano remained in the house until her daughter Mary Heller passed away in the 1980s.

The Fishers raised six children in this house, and some of them continued to live in the house with their parents while they were adults and working in Kalispell. Two of their daughters remember that everyone on the west side of town came to

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their house for the fireworks show every July 4th. The Fishers in the 1890s had a Chinese cook who fed everyone from the synod of the Presbyterian Church in Montana to guests at the many weddings that took place in the house to Indians. Rev. Fisher believed that they could not have made ends meet without the produce and livestock they raised. He was a farmer at heart, but he also spent part of every day in reading and study. Fisher summed up his life in his memoirs as follows:

I have had a rich and full life. It may not have been a life of material success; but, it has been a life of service...I am respected everywhere I go. I have a multitude of friends. I have given to church, to society, to my state and nation. I have built churches, not in the ordinary sense of the word, but through the sweat of my labors - physically as well as spiritually. I have been a tiller of the soil, a producer of food, clothing, and shelter. I have farmed, I have raised livestock. I have logged in the woods. And through all these fifty years of Sky Piloting, I have worked unceasingly to make life better and happier for men and women of all creeds, races, and nationalities - the melting pot of humanity we call America.

Fisher continued as pastor of the Presbyterian church until 1900. Then he farmed land he owned west of the fairgrounds and continued with missionary work for the church. In 1908, the Fishers paid off a mortgage to Samuel B. Fisher for the east half of the block and sold that half-block the same year to the Conrad National Bank for just over \$9,000. Fisher lived in this house until his death in 1934, his wife until her death in 1937. In 1941 their daughter Mary and her husband James Heller obtained title to the house from her sister Ruth Rubinow and moved there in 1941. Mary Heller lived here until her death in the 1980s and was well-known in the neighborhood for having a large number of cats living in the house. Much of her furniture is in storage or is in use in other Kalispell homes.

9. Major Bibliographic References

- Abstract of Title to lots 4-6, block 50, Kalispell, Montana (in personal collection of Chuck Vernon, current owner).
Elwood, Henry, *Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1980), pp. 100-101.
_____. *The Train Didn't Stay Long* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1982), p. 26.
Fisher, Rev. George McVey, "Fifty Years of Sky Piloting," (typed), available in the "Montana - Churches" file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana, pp. 18-19, 22, 34.
_____. "Pioneer Work in the Flathead Valley," in Edwards, Rev. George, *The Pioneer Work of the Presbyterian Church in Montana* (Helena, MT: Independent Publishing Co.), pp. 178-85.
Flathead County Junior High School, "Fisher Home," in a 1950s Flathead County Junior High School calendar, available in the vertical files at the Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, Montana.
"Quarter-Century Reunion, Class of 1875" (Washington, PA: Observer Book & Job Rooms, 1900, pp. 21-24.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government (City of Kalispell)
 University
 Other -- Specify Repository: Flathead County Library, Kalispell

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	11	699310	5341345

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 7, 8, and 9, Block 50, Kalispell Original Townsite, Section 18, Township 29 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian.

Boundary Justification

The legally recorded boundary of the property encompasses the significant resources.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kathy McKay, Historian	date: March 1993
street & number: 491 Eckelberry Dr.	telephone: (406) 892-1538
city or town: Columbia Falls	state: Montana zip code: 59912

Property Owner

name/title: Charles E. and Kathleen K. Vernon	telephone:
street & number: 2521 Mission Trail	
city or town: Kalispell	state: MT zip code: 59901

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Goulet, Laurel (current tenant), interview with Kathy McKay, May 13, 1992.

Kalispell Graphic: December 28, 1892.

Kalispell Times: "Mrs. Mary E. Fisher," January 21, 1937.

Kalispell Townsite Company, "Kalispell and the Famous Flathead Valley, Northwest Montana," (Kalispell: Mock & Conner, Printers, March 1, 1894), available in the "Montana - Flathead County - Description and Travel" file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana, p. 6.

Koch, Augustus, "Birds-eye View of the City of Kalispell, Flathead County, Montana" (1897);

Moyer, Susan (director of City Housing Rehabilitation program), interview with Kathy McKay, January 9, 1992.

Polk's Kalispell City Directories (1901-41).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Kalispell, Montana (1894, 1899, 1903, 1910, 1927, 1963).

Scherf, Miriam and Mary Heller Fisher, August 21, 1974 interview, transcript available in "Montana - Oral Histories" file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana.

Schnell, Jerry, ed., "George McVey Fisher: Pioneer Montana Presbyterian Minister," (1991), pp. 12, 17.

United States Population Census, Kalispell, Montana (1900, 1910 and 1920).

Vernon, Chuck (current owner), interview with Kathy McKay, April 6, 1992.

Walsh, Bernice, "Rev. Fisher Gave Earliest Sermon," in "Montana - Kalispell - Churches" file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana.