

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

MAY 09 1991

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. 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. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of Stevensville, Montana

B. Associated Historic Contexts

The Relationship between Agricultural Development and Commercial Enterprise in Stevensville: 1842-1930

The "Apple Boom" and Land Speculation in the Bitterroot Valley: 1905-1922
Architecture in Stevensville: 1866-1941

Building of Community in Stevensville: 1850-1930

C. Geographical Data

The incorporated city limits of Stevensville, Montana.

East half of section 27 and the west quarter of section 26 of township 9 north;
range 20 west.

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Marvella Steyer
Signature of certifying official
Montana SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

7-25-91
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Antoinette Lee
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

9/3/91
Date

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E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Introduction

Stevensville, Montana is a small community located adjacent to the site of the historic St. Mary's Mission near the center of the narrow, north-south tending Bitterroot River Valley. St. Mary's Mission was established in 1841 by Jesuit priest Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet and was the first permanent European-American settlement in Montana. Major John Owen, a former army sutler, founded an Indian trading fort near the mission, and purchased the mission buildings in 1850 when the "Black Robes" abandoned St. Mary's. The townsite of Stevensville came into existence as commercial interests gathered about this early settlement in order to supply goods and services for the earliest white settlers who began to establish farms and ranches in the valley by the 1860s.

The Bitterroot Valley has been a major travel corridor since prehistoric times, offering passage between Idaho and Montana over Lost Trail Pass and Nez Perce Pass to the south and Lolo Pass to the west. Skalkaho Pass provides access across the mountains to the east. At the north end of the valley, Hell's Gate also opens to the east and during prehistoric times served as an important route to the buffalo hunting grounds for the Blackfeet, Crow and Salish peoples. The west side of the Bitterroot Range rises to 10,015 feet and the Sapphire Range that bounds the valley to the east reaches the 7000-foot level.

The climate of the Bitterroot Valley is dominated by moist maritime air masses coming from the Pacific coast, making the area suited to its role as the cradle of agriculture in Montana. The seasons are characterized by relatively short summers, but the winters are milder than most other areas in Montana. Precipitation varies with elevation, and is generally more generous than the norm in Montana.

The Bitterroot Valley was named for a low growing, flowering plant (*Lewisia rediviva*) that was a major food source for the Native American inhabitants of the area. The first documented European-American incursion to the valley was the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805. At the mouth of Lolo Creek, Captain Clark wrote, "I was the first white man who ever wer[e] on the waters of this river." The maps of the expedition were first published in England, causing considerable concern among the companies trading among the North American Indians. In response to the threat of competition from American counterparts, the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Co. hired members of the Iroquois nation from eastern Canada to relocate to Montana with their families and to trap beaver for trade at the newly established Salish House on the Clark Fork River (1809) and Flathead Post (1813).

One of these Iroquois, Big Ignace LaMousse, arrived in the Bitterroot Valley sometime between 1812 and 1820. A practicing Roman Catholic, he began sharing his faith with the native residents of the valley and promoted the notion of traveling to St. Louis to request that the "Black Robes who talked to the Great Spirit" send an emissary to the Salish. After many years, a mission was established at Stevensville in 1841. Within just a few years, however, the Jesuits chose to close St. Mary's Mission due to the fact that many Indians had moved on in pursuit of the buffalo and the existence of the mission attracted a dissolute group of traders. In 1850, the Jesuits sold all of the material improvements at St. Mary's to Major John Owen for \$250.

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The exact location of the original St. Mary's Mission, which may have been destroyed by fire, is unknown today. John Owen made his small, palisaded trading post, located just north of what would be the townsite of Stevensville, a symbol of "civilization" in the midst of the wilderness. He cultivated virgin land, imported machinery, built grist and saw mills, introduced improved breeds of livestock, and generally encouraged the agricultural development of the valley by Indians and white settlers.

The Jesuits returned to reopen St. Mary's Mission in 1866 and built the log church that currently stands in Stevensville, as well as a blacksmith shop and hospital-pharmacy. Father Ravalli, the resident priest at the mission, gained fame as a physician and ministered to both whites and Indians until his death in 1884. In 1891, the last band of Salish Indians were removed from the Bitterroot Valley to the reservation at Jocko, accompanied by the priests. With no one to maintain the mission at Stevensville, the buildings quickly fell into disrepair. Used by white Catholic parishoners since 1908, the historic mission building has seen a number of restoration efforts. [St. Mary's Mission was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 6, 1970.]

A census of residents of the Bitterroot Valley taken in 1860 listed 53 households with 258 free (white) inhabitants. The census district was defined to include the thousands of square miles of the Missoula, Jocko and Mission Valleys as well as the Bitterroot River Valley itself. The site of Stevensville was an early population center in western Montana, with the Mission and Fort Owen providing the focus. Although the terms of the Treaty of 1855 between the U.S. Government and the Salish tribes reserved the Bitterroot Valley above Lolo Creek for the Indians, many European-American pioneers had settled in the valley during the 1850s, many marrying Indian wives. They were farmers, traders, blacksmiths, carpenters and cattlemen. When the Montana gold rush began with the strike at Gold Creek in 1858, the Bitterroot Valley became the breadbasket for the territory. By 1865, approximately 100 additional settlers made their way to the valley, most of them farmers.

The removal of all Indians from the Bitterroot Valley, which was the traditional heart of the Flathead Indian territory, began with the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. In exchange for a 2,000-square-mile reservation in the Jocko Valley to the north, the Flatheads and other tribes were convinced to give up 23,000 square miles of land in southwestern Montana. Some tribal leaders resisted the treaty and a clause was inserted allowing the Flatheads to remain in the Bitterroot Valley until the U.S. President determined that the Jocko Valley was a more desirable home for them. This occurred in 1871 when the Grant administration ordered the Flatheads to the Jocko reservation and sent James Garfield out to negotiate the settlement. Flathead Chiefs Arlee and Adolph agreed to go, while Chief Charlo, the leader of the largest band, refused to sign the 1872 Removal Act. Chief Charlo and the majority of Flatheads remained peacefully in the valley in increasingly abject conditions, as their hunting and gathering ranges diminished in direct proportion to the increasing white settlement. In 1891, yielding to tremendous pressure, Charlo lead his people to the Jocko reservation, vowing "never to look back, and never to return" to his homeland.

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CONTEXT 1: The Relationship between Agricultural Development and Commercial Enterprise in Stevensville: 1842-1930

Commercial development in Stevensville has always been inextricably linked to the settlement of the surrounding rich agricultural lands in the Bitterroot Valley. As the methods of raising and types of crops and livestock changed through the historic period, the business community in Stevensville was quick to respond to the needs of the farmers and ranchers. The kinds and personalities of businesses represented in the historic commercial district of Stevensville reflect this evolution of agricultural practices, changing patterns of land use, and the degree to which the community was tied into the national economy in terms of marketing local production and consumption of manufactured goods.

The development of the firm agricultural foundation for the historic economic prosperity in the Bitterroot Valley was contingent upon two primary considerations: construction of irrigation systems and access to markets. The first irrigation occurred at St. Mary's mission in 1842 when Rev. Mengarini, Rev. Point and Father DeSmet successfully diverted water from Burnt Fork Creek to water a crop of potatoes, oats and wheat. Commerce had its beginnings at the Indian trading post at Fort Owen, the first grouping of non-church-related buildings to be constructed in the valley. In addition to the adobe-walled, palisaded Fort itself, John Owen also built a water-powered grist mill and saw mill to the northwest along the Bitterroot River. The townsite of Stevensville began to form about one mile to the south of the Fort site, when John Houck and John Winslett founded the first general mercantile in 1863. Within a few years, these men were joined in commerce by store keepers Joseph Lomme, Louis R. Maillet, George Salsig and Jerry Fay, saloon-operator George Reeves, and hotelier James Kennedy. The Buck brothers, who became stalwarts of the Stevensville business community, came to town in 1876, and bought out the Winslett store.

By the 1870s, white settlers were joining forces to dig major irrigation canals to bring water to their fertile but arid fields. The richness of the valley soil, the milder than average climate and the opening of the mines in Virginia City and Bannack, which furnished a ready, albeit distant, market for Bitterroot Valley produce, encouraged the rapid development of agriculture in the valley and the growth of Stevensville, initially as a supply and service center for the earliest settlers. By the later 19th century, Stevensville also fulfilled the role of a processing and shipping point, connecting the farmers and ranchers of the valley with the national economy.

The Stevensville townsite was officially platted in 1879 to organize the commercial development that sprang up rather haphazardly to meet the needs of the newly settled farmers and their families. By the 1880s, Main Street was lined with several handsome, single-story, wood-framed, false-fronted commercial buildings. Although all of these settlement period buildings have been lost to the numerous fires that plagued Stevensville, a good number of the businesses that were established during these early years continued to prosper in some form well into the 20th century.

Two major mercantile families in Stevensville - the Bucks and the Mays - wielded tremendous influence upon the commercial affairs of the emerging community of Stevensville. The Buck brothers - Amos, Fred, Henry and George - were born in Ohio and raised in Michigan. The three younger brothers followed the eldest, Amos, in seeking their fortune in the West. The Buck brothers were first involved in early

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Montana freighting, and then took up ranching at Florence, Montana, before finally and most importantly, establishing their retail operations in Stevensville. Henry and his nephew Charles formed a partnership in the Henry Buck & Co. general mercantile, which began when they purchased the store stock of Joe Lomme, a French trader. In the 1880s, Amos and George Buck purchased a second store across the street and began their own company, known as the Amos Buck Mercantile, later reorganized as the Buck Commercial Company. From the mid-1870s through the mid-1880s, the Buck brothers made periodic runs between Salt Lake City or the rail head at Corrinne, Utah to resupply their stores in the Bitterroot Valley. The only buildings remaining in Stevensville directly associated with the Bucks' commercial enterprises are the warehouse and cast concrete block apple storage building located along the alley at the rear of the cluster of Buck family houses on the 200 block of Buck Ave.

The May brothers came to Montana from Ontario, Canada. George May, the eldest of the dynasty, left home in 1874 at age 16, apprenticed as a cabinet maker, and then headed West, arriving in Montana in 1881. In 1891, he moved to the Bitterroot Valley with his brother Albert and purchased a band of sheep from John Winslett. The brothers leased old Fort Owen for 14 years from which they operated their ranch. Three other May brothers arrived in Stevensville in 1895: Harry, Charles and Louis. That same year, George, in partnership with his four brothers, formed the Bitter Root Livestock Company and started amassing land. Their interests soon totaled some 3,000 acres on which they ran 20,000 head of sheep and 500 head of cattle. The brothers opened a large and very successful meat market on Main Street. Louis May, with a partner, bought out the meat market in 1909 and expanded the operation.¹ George purchased the George W. Dobbins farm just east of the original townsite for \$2,317 in 1899. He subdivided a portion of this land for the May Addition. Based upon this substantial fortune, George and his brother William Harry May bought out the local branch of the Missoula Mercantile in 1900, which they reorganized as the Stevensville Mercantile Co., a concern capitalized at \$50,000. The Stevensville Mercantile Co. grew to be one of the largest mercantile establishments in western Montana, handling "anything from a pin to a threshing machine or a sawmill."² In September of 1908, the Stevensville Mercantile relocated to the southwest corner of Third and Main Streets in a new building that dominated the downtown. They also constructed a small stone oil and gasoline storage building on the southeast corner of Mission and Third Streets. The mercantile was destroyed by fire and the only building that remains to mark the importance of the Stevensville Mercantile operation is the oil storage building.

In business and residence, the members of both the Buck and May families maintained very close ties. Amos Buck built his Second Empire style house at 207 Buck Ave. and set out a large apple orchard behind, which included most of the western portion of the townsite. Fred built his house at 217 Buck Ave. in 1886 and Charles located down the street at 405 Buck Ave. in 1906. Charles Amos Buck, the son of Amos and Rosa Buck, built his Craftsman style house between his father's and uncle Fred's houses in 1910. Similarly clustering, Harry and George May built houses for themselves at the east end of Third Street in the May Addition between 1907 and 1909; and Albert located around the corner at 218 Church St., Charles at 109 Church St. in 1909, and Louis at 100 Church St. in 1912.

¹Northwest Tribune, October 29, 1909.

²Stevensville Register, December 23, 1909.

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The commercial buildings that exist in Stevensville today almost all date to the 20th century due to a series of disastrous fires that wiped out the early wood-framed, false-fronted establishments. The "Post Office Fire" of August 22-23, 1905 destroyed eight buildings on the west side of Main Street one night, including Misers' Drug Store, Dr. Kellogg's office, the Star Saloon, Stevensville Drug, the Cannon and Bruce General Store and the Henry Buck Mercantile. The Bitterroot Creamery was destroyed by fire on June 20, 1911. A fire at Horticultural Hall on July 30, 1917 burned that building as well as Mendel's Garage and Campbell's Livery Barn. A devastating fire on October 7, 1919 broke out in the Stevensville Hotel, destroying the hotel, the May brothers store, Valley Meat Market, Yantz's clothing store, Schramm's cigar store, Russell and Moore's market, then jumped the street to consume the Amos Buck store, Fauld's Hall, Jack's Shoe Shop, the Montana Restaurant, Dr. Kohl's offices, Willey's Restaurant and the rebuilt Mendel's garage.³ Property losses were heavy, and many business owners did not carry insurance.

The City of Stevensville reacted to the devastation of the commercial establishments on Main Street by passing Ordinance #35 shortly after the 1905 fire. This ordinance required architects and builders to use non-flammable materials in the construction of all new buildings within the designated fire district. The rise in the popularity of cast concrete block in Stevensville may be directly traced to the passage of this ordinance.

By the late 19th century, a number of important businesses were established in Stevensville for the purpose of processing and marketing the produce of the area's farmers and ranchers. In 1895, a cheese factory and creamery, the first in Montana, opened for business three miles south of Stevensville, operated by Peter Russell, who later sold out to Francis W. Howard. These early creameries were relatively small operations, producing primarily for the local market. A creamery of larger size required a significant commitment from the community in terms of investment in dairy cattle, production facilities and promotion of a marketing system for the wider distribution of the products. In 1907, the Farmers' Cooperative organized the offering of stock to establish another creamery north of town.

The Bitter Root Cooperative Creamery was one of the first farmers' cooperatives to be established in Montana, and provided a ready cash market for the dairy products of area farmers. Under the management of John G. Howe, the Cooperative Creamery produced and sold butter, eggs and ice cream under the motto: "Quality." Probably more than any other single business, the Cooperative Creamery linked the farmers of the surrounding area to a regional marketing system and provided money for circulation within the community itself.

A cannery opened in Stevensville in 1914 to process peas, sour cherries and sweet cherries. In 1922, the building burned and the remains were converted into a potato warehouse. A new cannery was constructed in 1925 and continued to operate, employing about 60 people, until 1940 when the equipment was sold to the Red Lodge Cannery. Located near the Cooperative Creamery on the East Side Highway, the cannery also provided an important marketing opportunity for area farmers and added to the economic stability of Stevensville during the historic period.

³Montana Genesis, p. 136.

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The Stevensville Feed Mill is another architectural expression of the primary importance of agriculture to the economy of town. The Bitterroot Valley was settled on the basis of its agricultural potential, and, at the time the Feed Mill was built in 1918, cultivation and orchard production in the area was peaking. By the 1930s, agricultural implements were sold at the Feed Mill, and the size of the facility was doubled. The business took on the storage and delivery of coal to homes in town, and the name was changed to Stevensville Feed and Fuel. After the Second World War in 1946, a modern grain elevator was added to the enterprise, which allowed the Feed Mill to prosper through the present. Improvements continued through the 1950s with the addition of the pellet mill and steam rollers. During this time, the mill had an exclusive franchise on Purina products.

In addition to the numerous businesses that were established specifically to serve the interests and needs of farmers and ranchers, the intimate connection between Stevensville and the outlying agricultural districts also can be seen in the number of farmers and ranchers who maintained homes within the townsite, especially after retirement. Changes in the fortunes of the agricultural sector directly influenced the general prosperity, growth and development of Stevensville. With the end of the intense period of economic growth and land speculation associated with the "apple boom" in the Bitterroot Valley (1905-1922), a general commercial slow-down settled over the community of Stevensville. The impact of the agricultural depression was exacerbated by the crashing commodity prices in the aftermath of the First World War. By the early 1920s, the community of Stevensville could no longer support the full range of services and stores. While automobile dealerships and agricultural implement stores were just getting established, other enterprises such as the Gleason Furniture Store closed during this time.

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CONTEXT #2: "Apple Boom" and Land Speculation in the Bitterroot Valley: 1905-1922

The early years of the 20th century brought an explosive period of growth to the Stevensville area, fueled largely by speculation and false hopes for extraordinary profits in land development. Known as the "apple boom," this was a time characterized by massive subdivision of agricultural land, ambitious schemes to bring water to new areas of the valley, and aggressive marketing in urban areas to attract new settlers to the Bitterroot Valley to live on 10- to 20-acre orchard tracts. The new townsite of Bitterroot was platted just north of Stevensville, and the Bitterroot Inn, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, was built in 1910 and served as an informal headquarters for the Chicago-based land developers and investors.

The Bitterroot Valley supports a number of microenvironments that are particularly well suited to fruit production. Each of these areas usually escapes the late spring and the earliest autumn frosts and has deep well-drained soils. On average, there are about 120-150 frost free days in the valley. The first orchard in the Bitterroot Valley was planted at St. Mary's Mission. Amos Buck brought the first MacIntosh apple slips to the valley in 1867, and established his first orchard in the Florence area. He planted another orchard at Stevensville in the mid-1870s, and the oldest apple tree in the community is located in the side yard of the Amos Buck house at 207 Buck Ave. The first apple show in Stevensville occurred at the Horticultural Hall in 1894. Examples of highly successful Bitterroot Valley orchards were the Thousand-Acre Orchard east of Corvallis, which was started in 1907 and served as the show place for prospective investors, the orchards on the Sunset Bench above Stevensville, which were planted in 1908, the University Heights area west of Darby, the Ben Kress orchards at Hamilton, and Curlew Orchards north of Victor.

In 1905, a group of local investors and Chicago financiers undertook the construction of one of the largest irrigation projects of western Montana. They proposed to enhance the dam at Lake Como, raising the water level by some 50 feet, and to build a huge canal and flume system to carry water across the Bitterroot River to irrigate the side benches. Faltering financially, the corporation was reorganized as the Bitter Root Valley Irrigation Company in 1906 and capitalized at \$3,000,000. Financial difficulties continued to plague the project, and bankruptcy was declared in 1908, necessitating yet another reorganization.⁴ The irrigation system, known as the "Big Ditch," watered some 20,000 acres in an area 1 to 5 miles wide and 20 miles long.

Much of the land irrigated by the Big Ditch project was subdivided into five-, ten- and twenty-acre units to be sold as orchard tracts. Most of the acreage was put into apples, especially MacIntosh, although some cherries, pears and plums were set out. An intensive and elaborate national advertising campaign sought to attract investors.⁵ The Bitter Root Valley Irrigation Company featured a development plan whereby the company would plant and care for a young orchard for five years, after which the small operation would be self-supporting and the buyer would either settle on the tract or continue to have the company

⁴Stevensville Register, December 26, 1907.

⁵Bitter Root Valley Irrigation Company, "Scenes from the Bitter Root Valley, Montana," 1907.

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care for it while enjoying a profit. Under this type of contract, land purchased from local farmers at \$2.50 to \$15.00 per acre was resold at \$500 to \$640 per acre for interest and principal on a ten-year payment plan.⁶

Local businessmen also got into the land development business. Under the headline "Real Estate Changes Fast," the Stevensville Register reported in 1908 that, "The rate at which property is changing hands in this section would a few years ago have created a furor of excitement, but the changes are now becoming such a usual occurrence that they cause but little comment."⁷ Mercantilist and rancher George May joined the speculative fervor in 1908 when the newspaper announced:

George May is having some fine farm land on the southeastern edge of town surveyed and platted, and when this is done he will place it on the market in small tracts, somewhat after the style of the orchard homes near Missoula. The land will be sold in five and 10 acres, and possibly 20-acre tracts. Should purchasers desire it, Mr. May will probably be willing to plant their purchases in fruit trees. For many years there has been considerable demand for small garden and fruit farms near town and the land which is now being thrown on the market will probably be very thickly settled in a few years.⁸

By 1909, the optimism in the future of Stevensville was reaching its peak. The Missoula Herald reported, "Stevensville will be the headquarters to 10,000 to 12,000 people when the Bitter Root Valley Irrigation Company ditch is finished."⁹ Also that year, the May brothers sold their Bitter Root Livestock Company land holdings to the Company for subdivision.

The development of the agricultural lands surrounding Stevensville had a direct impact upon the growth of the community. Between 1907 and 1911, the townsite was enlarged by the platting of the May, Pleasantvale and Riverside Additions. A public water system was installed in Stevensville in 1910, and concrete sidewalks were laid throughout the commercial and residential districts. While the Bitterroot Inn was under construction in 1910, mining magnate William A. Clark extended electrical lines down from Missoula to the new planned townsite of Bitterroot. The residents of Stevensville had access to electricity from this system by the following year.

For a few years, it appeared that the dreams the Company marketed would be realized. The apple orchards flourished through 1916. The number of apple trees in the valley increased from 450,000 to one million between 1907 and 1920. But beginning in 1917, the yield per tree and size and quality of the

⁶Cappious, Samuel Lloyd, "A History of the Bitter Root Valley to 1914," master's thesis, University of Washington, 1939, p. 65.

⁷Stevensville Register, December 3, 1908.

⁸Stevensville Register, July 2, 1908.

⁹Missoula Herald, January 1, 1909.

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apples declined. The reasons were numerous: depletion of nitrogen in the soil, inadequate supplies of water from the "Big Ditch," disease, insects and frequent hailstorms and frosts. In addition, many of the sites were unsuited for apple production or were planted with varieties inappropriate for the region. By 1920, over 750,000 of the one million trees in the valley were abandoned. By the 1930s, the Corvallis Agricultural Experiment Station had produced and distributed a bulletin on "How to Remove Apple Orchards."¹⁰

The speculation that fueled the "apple boom" created highly inflated land values and skewed the agricultural settlement patterns of the valley. Much land was bought by urban people who either had very little agricultural experience or were never intending to settle on their holdings. The developments of Bitterroot, University Heights, and Como Orchards never got beyond the most initial construction. The famous Wright-designed, Prairie style Bitterroot Inn did not stand long as a poignant reminder of the high optimism of this period; it burned to the ground in 1924.

Although a number of new settlers were able to hold onto their land and diversify their operations, the "apple boom" was an economic disaster for the valley. The Bitter Root Valley Irrigation Company declared bankruptcy once again in 1918. Local investors undertook a reconstruction program in 1923-24 consisting of a \$600,000 bond issued to improve the Big Ditch. Redesigned to serve a larger area, the investors again tried to get sufficient settlers to occupy the land to carry the bond load and share the assessment. During the late 1920s, Ravalli County took tax title to about 5,000 acres of land within the Bitter Root Valley Irrigation District. The project was bailed out once again during the early 1930s when the federal government loaned the irrigation district \$750,000 on easy terms to pay off the reconstruction bonds and provide working capital.¹¹ The well established community of Stevensville weathered these changes quite well, and the appearance of the town today to a great extent reflects the degree of prosperity reached during the 1910s and never attained again.

¹⁰Westenberg, John, "Corvallis Agricultural Experiment Station," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, prepared in 1981, copy available at the State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana.

¹¹"An Inventory of Irrigation Projects," R.B. Tootell, Montana Extension Services, Montana State College, Bulletin #124, September, 1932.

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CONTEXT #3: Architecture in Stevensville: 1866-1941

Although a number of architects with varying levels of professional training worked in Stevensville during the historic period, the vast majority of residences and commercial buildings conform to traditional vernacular building formats and exhibit only modest reference to stylistic ornamentation. Examples of stylistically sophisticated residences are limited in number, and include the Colonial Revival style Bass Mansion at 100 College St. and the transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style George May House at 210 Park Ave. Both of these houses were designed by Missoula architect A.J. Gibson and were built in 1909. Both are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Gibson also designed the Stevensville Training School in 1902, which was a 2-1/2-story brick building with wonderful decorative parapets, which unfortunately has been severely compromised by modern alterations and roof reconstruction.

A number of architect-builders were in business in Stevensville during the historic period, and were responsible for many of the vernacular buildings as well as the more complex designs set in the stylistic modes of the times. D.L. Cannon operated one of the first concrete blockworks in Stevensville and contracted to build a number of concrete block residences on East Third St. and commercial blocks. Perry Foust was an active house-builder in Stevensville for over 25 years, and is associated with the construction of a number of pyramidal-roofed cottages on the east side of town. His own house at 410 Mission, built in 1902, is an excellent, well-preserved example of this cottage type constructed in an expanded form. J.M. Hightower, a builder from Missoula, MT designed the Odd Fellows Hall at 217-219 Main St. Built in 1912, the I.O.O.F. Hall exhibits a high level of sensitivity for balance and delicate brick detailing on the part of the designer. Lon Young was a carpenter whose name appears often in the historic record in association with D.L. Cannon, Perry Foust and W.R. Rodgers on many building projects.

The most prolific local architect-builder was Warren Roscoe Rodgers, who, in partnership with his brother J. Ephraim, was active in Stevensville from about 1905-1916. Little is known about Rodgers' professional training or his career after he left Stevensville. His name is associated with the construction of at least 20 buildings in town, both commercial and residential.

W.R. Rodgers played an important role in promoting the use of cast concrete block in Stevensville. He went into business with H. E. Gleason,¹² advertising in 1910 that they possessed the "complete outfit for the making of all kinds of concrete pillars, columns, cornice, steps, and any thing in the concrete line."¹³ Rodgers also bought out the remaining stock of block-maker D.L. Cannon.¹⁴ Rodgers prepared the blocks and oversaw the construction of the Gleason Hotel, the First State Bank, the John Dowling store

¹²Stevensville Register, January 20, 1910.

¹³Stevensville Register, May 26, 1910.

¹⁴Stevensville Register, January 13, 1910.

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and the Emhoff building.¹⁵ The three-part cast concrete block building composed of the First State Bank, Dowling and Emhoff buildings is one of the finest examples of vernacular commercial architecture in Stevensville. The canted corner entrance with its two level classical ornamentation composed of pairs of fluted columns upholding heavy entablatures lend naive reference to the Neo-classical architectural trends of the time but do not exhibit sophistication associated with academically trained design professionals.

In contrast with the architect-designed commercial buildings, the primary significance of Stevensville's residential architecture rests with their solid grounding in vernacular building traditions. The earliest residences still in existence in Stevensville exhibit the exterior ornamentation of the Gothic Revival movement, and one of the most unusual examples of this type is the Fred Buck House, which was built during the mid-1880s in two stages. The first portion of the Fred Buck house consists of a classic gable-front Gothic Revival cottage with a protruding bay window centered on the primary elevation and accessed by side entrance. This cottage was enlarged before 1900 by the construction of a very large Italianate style, two-story block, creating a rather incongruous composition.

The Young House at 523 Main is likely the most "pure" example of Carpenter Gothic styling in Stevensville, with its decoratively detailed front gable, centered porch and side projecting bay window. A particularly interesting feature of the Young House is the use of vertical plank wall construction methods, rather than the more common balloon or platform framing utilized in the construction of the majority of houses of this period in Stevensville. Research dates the construction of the Young House to 1900, which is a rather late date for this style and method of building in the community.

Another house employing the plank wall construction method is the John F. Sharp House at 306 College Street, which was built in 1883-84. This simple one-and-one-half-story cottage form with modest classical detail and symmetrical organization is one of the finest representations of this housing type in the valley due to the retention of a high level of key elements and the original floor plan. The plank wall framing system, which is characterized by exterior walls composed of rough sawn 1" boards laid in two vertical layers and supported by corner posts, is known to have been used in the construction of a number of houses in the Bitterroot Valley during the 1870s and 1880s, although extant examples are rare.

During the late 19th through the first decade of the 20th century, the four-square, pyramidal roofed cottage was constructed in large numbers due to the relatively low cost and ease of construction. The vast majority of the pyramidal cottage forms were of wood frame construction although a few cast concrete block examples exist, such as the Lancaster House at 407 Third, built in 1909. A carpenter who lived on the west side of Stevensville during the early part of the 20th century, Perry Foust, may have been responsible for the construction of many of these simple cottages. Foust's own house at 401 Mission is an expanded version of the typical vernacular form. The Philip and Ella Morr House at 502 Buck, built ca. 1900, is one of the best representative examples of this housing type in Stevensville. The design is basically symmetrical, although not rigidly so, and exhibits minimal ornamentation. The square, simple massing is capped by a steeply pitched pyramidal roof. The form itself provides most of the visual interest.

¹⁵Stevensville Register, May 12, 1910.

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Most of the cottages of this type have experienced considerable alteration, making the pristine examples such as the Philip and Ella Morr house special.

The gable-front-and-wing or gabled-ell house forms are the second most common type in Stevensville. Built between 1895 and 1915, these houses share a remarkable number of qualities and incorporate decorative elements typical of that transitional period at the turn of the century. The use of highly textural fish scale shingle work in the gable ends is associated with the Queen Anne style, then waning in general popularity, while the symmetrical placement of the window openings, narrow reveal clapboard siding and the outlining of the form by the use of a protruding water table, corner boards with suggestions of capitals, and wide frieze boards relate to the resurgence of interest in classical decorative treatments. Windows were 1-over-1 or 2-over-2. Window lintels were either simple molded entablatures or slightly pedimented. This classically inspired formula was almost universally applied by the builders in Stevensville for houses of wood frame construction during this time period between 1895-1915. An excellent example of the gabled-ell house form with transitional detailing is the Emhoff House at 401 Church St., built in 1902-04.

A variation of the gabled-ell form is the cross-gabled house, of which two examples exist in Stevensville: the McLaren house at 602 Park Ave., built in 1906-7, and the Fulton House at 377 Fifth, built in 1901. These two houses reflect the influence in Stevensville of carpenters and builders who likely brought their ideas for house construction from the southern part of the United States. The cross-gable design, with full wrap-around porches, was somewhat impractical for the Montana climate due to the large amount of wall exposure and the expansive open porches that shaded the southern exposure. The McLaren and Fulton houses also exhibit transitional Queen Anne-Classical Revival decorative detailing.

Two of the more "pure" examples of Queen Anne styling in Stevensville are the Albert May house, at 218 Church St., built in 1898, and the Charles and Eva Buck House at 405 Buck, built in 1906. Of these, the May House stands out in terms of the preservation of the exuberant wooden decorative detailing, the rounded wrap-around porch and the irregular massing and floor plan. The Buck House gains distinction as one of a limited number of brick homes in Stevensville, and its character is defined by its irregular floor plan with projecting bays and the full porches that span both the front and rear elevations.

The transitional period between the Queen Anne and Classical Revival movements is evidenced by the use of return gable ends, classical order columns on porches, and greater symmetry of the floor plan just shortly after the turn of the century. Likely the best example of this transformation in taste is the Calvin and Maggie Cook house at 501 Main, which was built by local "architect" W.R. Rodgers in 1911. This brick veneered, two-story building features a complex roof over a basically regular, rectangular block. The two outstanding character-defining features are the two-story pedimented portico with second story porch on the primary elevation that is balanced with a two-story projecting half-hexagonal bay window.

Fully developed examples of Colonial Revival styling are relatively rare in Stevensville. The ca. 1899 Landrum House at 113 College St. is a simple, 1½-story gambrel-roofed version of the simple gable-front vernacular form. The use of the gently sloped gambrel roof form and the projecting square bay on the south elevation places this house within the Colonial Revival genre. The shingled exterior wall surfaces

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are ornamented with water table, wide corner boards with entablatures and unusual wide frieze boards beneath the enclosed soffits.

The Caple House at 210 Church is the finest full-blown example of Dutch Colonial Revival design in Stevensville. The outstanding character-defining features of the house include the cross-gambrel roof plan with enclosed soffits, the engaged, full-width front porch with Tuscan support columns, decorative diamond-pattern window sash, and narrow reveal beveled siding. The Caple house also obtains importance due to its association with W.R. Rodgers, the prominent Stevensville architect-builder, who also designed and built the transitional Colonial Revival style Cook house at 501 Main St.

The Craftsman style enjoyed great popularity in Stevensville during the brief period of growth and prosperity during the early and mid-1910s. This practical and economical building style fit perfectly into the largely middle class development of the townsite of Stevensville during the second decade of the 20th century. An interesting grouping of Craftsman bungalows at the north edge of town were built as a part of a model home display for an early 1910s land development that never fully materialized. In January, 1903, the Stevensville Register reported that the McCormick and Catlin ranches at the north edge of town would be subdivided into five- and ten-acre parcels for resale for suburban house and garden development.¹⁶ The moving force behind this development was J.M. Higgins, a farmer from the Rosemont area south of town. Higgins did divide at least a portion of the ranch into lots, and the three Craftsman bungalows along the East Side Highway -- the Harrington, Cochran and Cook Houses - all date to this development.

A transitional house that employs elements of the Prairie and Craftsman styles is the Harry May House, built in 1907 at 526 Third St. The interplay of geometric forms is emphasized in the roof lines, heavy dormers, substantial porch piers and projecting bays. Delicacy is added by the fractured light of the leaded glasswork. Horizontality, the hallmark of the Prairie School, is accented by the overhanging hipped roof and the projecting front staircase.

The only example of Art Moderne architecture in Stevensville is the rather simple Gavin house, located at 219 College Street. Built in 1941 in accordance with mail order plans from Good Housekeeping magazine, this house is distinctive primarily in its solid block geometry and the use of banded casement windows that wrap the corners.

The primary building materials available in Stevensville were wood, brick and cast concrete block. Saw mills were in operation in the Stevensville area by the 1850s, and locally produced dimensioned lumber was ready for construction projects at a very early date. By the time that the Bitterroot Valley Railroad was in place in 1889, all manner of manufactured building materials were readily available. A number of different brick yards were in operation in Stevensville over the years, dating back to the 1880s. It appears that bricks were formed and fired for specific projects.

¹⁶Stevensville Register, January 21, 1903.

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Cast concrete block construction adds a distinctive feeling to the Stevensville community. Between 1906 and 1916, a large number of buildings were erected by three popular local builders using this inexpensive material. D.L. Cannon, along with W.R. Rodgers and Lon Young, purchased the relatively simple machinery needed to prepare "pressed stone" blocks in a variety of patterns. The machinery would often be set up at specific construction sites, and blocks would be produced as needed. After a disastrous fire in 1905, which consumed much of the commercial district, local officials passed Ordinance #35, requiring architects and contractors to build with non-flammable materials. Cast concrete block, due to its versatility, low cost and ready availability, gained tremendous popularity in the community for about one decade. The era of concrete block construction coincided with rapid community expansion in Stevensville, as agricultural development of the surrounding Bitterroot Valley caused the local population to swell. Dozens of residences and commercial buildings, most representing simple vernacular building forms, were constructed during this period using the decorative concrete blocks.

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CONTEXT #4: Building of Community in Stevensville: 1850-1930

The social and cultural life of Stevensville is recalled by a number of institutions that developed and erected buildings within which to carry out their activities. Stevensville served as a center where the welfare of the inhabitants of a relatively large area would be enhanced, by means of education, religious communion, health care, and social and fraternal gatherings.

The commitment to public education in Stevensville was strong and asserted early in the history of the community. Organized schooling began shortly after white settlement. From December 1858 until April 1859, John Owen hired a tutor for the Indian children residing at Fort Owen. Classes were held intermittently thereafter for a few months during the winters whenever a teacher was available. Classes were also held for the children of various settlers until such time as the first cabin schools were established. In Stevensville proper, school was held in the north end of the Henry Buck house at the southwest corner of Buck Ave. and Second St. Records show 26 pupils attending in 1872.

During the early years, school districts were only permitted to establish bonds for the cost of operating on an annual basis. It wasn't until 1883 that the Montana Territorial Assembly passed a special law to permit Missoula County to bond for the construction of Stevensville's first grade school. The two-story, wood frame, Italianate style building was erected in 1885 and had three rooms. In 1890, 152 pupils attended the seven-month term. By 1900, when the population of Stevensville was at about 500, the school enrollment totaled 198. By 1905, enrollment swelled to the point that it became necessary to enlarge the school by the addition of the north wing.

A private school for the upper grades of Stevensville students was organized in 1900 under the auspices of the Methodist Church, and was known as the Stevensville Training School, offering college preparatory classes as well as training in the manual arts. Classes met in the autumn of 1901 in rented quarters on Main St. under the supervision of Rev. D.B. Price, principal Prof. M.L. Roark, and director of music Mary U. Smith. The Stevensville Training School was incorporated on March 18, 1903 for the purpose of raising funds to erect a permanent building. George May donated the campus of ten acres at the southeastern edge of town. Funding for the \$15,000, two-story, brick school building was raised through contributions by Stevensville citizens. Designed by architect A.J. Gibson of Missoula, the Training School building could accommodate 200 students. The success of the enterprise, however, was short-lived. Abandoned in 1907 due to the lack of enthusiasm of the parents in paying tuition at a time when the option of sending their children to the public high school became available, the Stevensville Training School building was leased beginning in 1908 and sold in 1912 to the public school district for use as a high school. The grade school continued to be used for the lower grades until 1928 when it was sold to the Methodist Church and a new grade school building was erected adjacent to the Training School in 1928.

Professor John Freeman Sharp served for many years as the principal of the high school, and more than any other individual, set and maintained the high academic standards that the Stevensville schools still

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pride themselves on today.¹⁷ During the early years of his career, Sharp was a figure of some controversy in Stevensville due to his advocacy of a full academic year for public schooling. The transition from a 3-month winter school program to a 9-month program met with considerable resistance from local farming families who felt that much school time was excessive when the children were needed to complete chores. Sharp's philosophy and school program prevailed, and one of the finest educational systems in the State was established under his guidance.

The establishment of organized churches serves as another marker of the attainment of a viable community organization in Stevensville. The very founding of the town, of course, was closely linked with the establishment of the Jesuit mission of St. Mary's in the 1840s. The existing log Mission church was erected in 1866 when the Jesuits returned to Stevensville after a long hiatus.

Protestant efforts to organize religious services began with circuit-riding ministers such as T. C. Iliff, a Southern Methodist, who preached at Etna, a few miles south of Stevensville, in 1870. The first Stevensville Protestant congregation was organized in 1874 by Southern Methodist minister W. A. Hall, who also made the entire valley his circuit. Built in 1881-82, the original Methodist-Episcopal Church South stood on the southeast corner of Church and Second Streets. The church was abandoned in 1928 with the merging of the two Methodist congregations, and today it is used as a residence.

The Presbyterians organized in the autumn of 1877, and the first church was built at the southeast corner of College and Third in 1884. The Baptists, organized in 1882, opened the doors to their wonderful Stick style church at 402 Church St. by 1886 and offered baptismal services in the Bitterroot River. The Methodist-Episcopal congregation built in 1888 at the northeast corner of College and Fourth Streets, and added a parsonage to their holdings in 1905. The two Methodist congregations decided to merge in 1918 and removed to the remodelled grade school building at 216 College St. in 1928.¹⁸

Stevensville early gained the position in the Bitterroot Valley as a center for medical treatment. Father Ravalli, the doctor and pharmacist at St. Mary's Mission from 1866 until his death in 1884, was the first resident physician in Stevensville. During the 1880s, Dr. R. A. Wells practiced medicine in the community, and was followed during the late 19th century by Dr. S. P. Ives, Dr. J. Theodore Brice, Dr. R. Gwinn and Dr. Karl H. Kellogg. Dr. Ives and Dr. Kellogg practiced in Stevensville until 1912. In 1908, Doctors Elmer Fessler and W.T. Thornton took up residence in Stevensville and each established small hospitals for the care of their patients. Dr. Fessler's hospital was at the southeast corner of Third and Church on the present site of the Masonic Temple. The Thornton Hospital, located across the street on the southwest corner of Third and Church, is an impressive 2-1/2-story Classical Revival style building, replete with operating rooms, sun porch, drug store, examining rooms, x-ray department, and 17 rooms for patients. Built in 1910 as a surgical center, the Thornton Hospital symbolized the community's pride and hopes for future growth and development. The later history of the hospital and its final abandonment

¹⁷Montana Genesis, p. 214.

¹⁸Montana Genesis, pp 190-193.

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reflect the theme of community loss in rural America as medical and other specialized services became concentrated in urban centers during the later half of the 20th century.

Other doctors who practiced in Stevensville during the historic period include Dr. W. P. Reynolds, whose offices were located at 327 Main Street and Dr. Frank J. Prince. Dr. Prince remodeled the Albert May house at 218 Church in 1920 to accommodate his medical offices, which made the corner of Third and Church Streets the nucleus for medical services in Stevensville for the next three decades.

Fraternal organizations were an important component of the social life of Stevensville. The Grange had its start as early as 1876, and the Masonic Lodge was chartered in 1883. Another significant organization has been the Stevensville Woman's Club, which began in 1903 as the Stevensville Reading Room Society. The club began when four women -- Mrs. Bruce Wells, Mrs. Henry Buck, Mrs. Louis May, and Mrs. Clarence Calkins -- met to discuss the possibility of starting a free library. The library opened the following year, and continued to be supported by the club until the City of Stevensville assumed financial responsibility in 1911.

Fraternal groups also served an important function as an organized means of assuring social welfare services prior to the assumption of a share of this responsibility by government. Special attention was conferred upon widows, orphans and others in need. The International Order of Odd Fellows was an organization that was a major social and political force throughout western United States during the pioneer days.

An exuberent tradition that to this day expresses the community spirit of Stevensville is the annual Creamery Picnic. When the Bitter Root Cooperative Creamery burned on June 22, 1911, the loss had a widespread impact on the area. Purchases by the creamery provided a cash market for farmers each month and circulated more money in the community than any other single business. In this crisis, the creamery manager John Howe rallied the community to turn the disaster into an opportunity for enlarging the creamery facility, giving Stevensville a cause for celebration. Within a week of the fire, the creamery executive board approved plans to double the size of the old creamery. They set to work and the new, completely updated facility was constructed within seven weeks. John Howe and the Chamber of Commerce planned a "monster" celebration "on or about the 15th of August, between haying and the harvest rush season for the farmers."¹⁹ A grand picnic was held, attended by over 1000 people. The celebration included a dairy cattle show, carnival, competitions and rodeo event. A parade of floats has been added since.

¹⁹Stevensville Register, July 27, 1911.

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ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

I. Name of Property Type: Residential Buildings

II. Description: Historic residences within the townsite of Stevensville are generally modest in size, scale and architectural ornamentation. The single family, detached dwelling prevails. Vernacular four-square and gabled-ell forms are the most common housing types in the historic community. Some outstanding examples of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman bungalow styling are also found. An unusual Art Moderne house, built in 1941, marks the end of the historic period of residential construction.

Almost all of the houses are of wood frame construction, with the notable exception of those few buildings veneered with decorative cast concrete blocks or brick. For the most part, houses were erected by builders who either used traditional formats or pattern book plans. The designs of a few outstanding residences, such as the Bass Mansion, the Louis May house and the George May house, resulted from the employment of professional architects.

Houses respect common setbacks from the wide, tree-lined streets. Foundations for buildings constructed prior to 1900 are generally of rubble stone, while poured concrete gained favor after the turn of the century. For a brief period during the height of the residential construction boom from about 1906-1916, cast concrete block with an ashlar or smooth face enjoyed great popularity as a foundation material.

Windows used throughout the historic construction period - with the exception of the Moderne style Gavin house built in 1941 - were wood frame double-hung units. The 1-over-1 sash configuration was the most popular form during the 20th century, while 2-over-2 or 4-over-4 windows were employed in a number of 19th century buildings. Window size through the historic period became foreshortened and somewhat wider over time: the tall, narrow windows of the late Queen Anne buildings of the 19th century gave way to the smaller 1-over-1 windows of the Colonial Revival period, and this trend culminated in the horizontal emphasis of the multi-light upper sash of the cottage and double-hung windows used for the Craftsman style buildings. The banded multi-light casement windows of the Moderne style Gavin house may be considered a continuation and culmination of this same pattern of re-emphasizing the horizontal.

Full-width front porches are an important character-defining feature of the majority of historic houses in Stevensville. The commodious porch remained popular from the earliest settlement period through the 1920s. The detailing of the porches underwent change as the stylistic preferences of the owners changed. The porches of Queen Anne style houses are characterized by turned porch supports and spindle work. The most outstanding example of this porch type is the curved, wrap-around porch of the Albert May house at 218 Church St. Porches of the early 20th century generally feature Tuscan columns set at wide intervals and most often these porches are without balustrades. A number of pre-1900 houses experienced porch modification during the early 20th century when elaborate spindle work and turned support columns were replaced with the more simple classical columns. Concurrent with the construction of these classically detailed porches, the square-columned, solid-aproned porches were built onto a number of four-square houses that up until that time had only simple overdoors and stoops. The 1910s Craftsman style porch makes a highly distinctive architectural statement and generally features battered columns, rock or cobble stone piers, and low-pitched, heavily timbered roof structures. Roofs for the porches and the

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houses themselves were originally covered with wooden shingles, although most now are covered with asphalt.

The majority of late 19th and early 20th century residences were built in the vernacular gabled-ell form with transitional Queen Anne/Classical Revival detailing. Exterior sheathing on these houses is consistently clapboard, with wide wooden water table, frieze and cornerboards to demark the wall surfaces. The windows and doors are symmetrically placed and feature simple, flat board surrounds and lug sills. Gable ends are often finished with decorative imbricated shingles.

Before full-fledged Craftsman style houses came into favor in Stevensville after ca. 1909, a number of simple four-square workers' cottages were built for purchase or rental. These houses were fashioned either in simple wood frame with weatherboard siding or cast concrete block. The primary character-defining features of these vernacular houses are the pyramidal roofs, basically symmetrical organization and full-width front porches.

The Craftsman style gained popularity on the American scene by about 1908-10. The houses in Stevensville of this style resemble houses constructed during the same time period throughout the nation. It is likely that plans produced by national companies were utilized by local builders in the erection of these Craftsman style residences. The emphasis on horizontal lines in the design is seen in the wide window openings, low-pitched roofs with wide overhangs, wide front porches with battered supports and contrasting siding materials laid up in bands on the exterior walls.

The slowed economic growth in Stevensville during the late 1920s through the 1930s resulted in very few new housing starts in the community during this period. Only one example of Moderne styling exists in town, the Gavin House, which was built in 1941 at 219 College St. This house exhibits most of the primary characteristics of the style, such as the block geometric form, banded casement windows, flat roof, smooth stucco-covered exterior walls, and minimal ornamentation.

III. Significance: The residential architecture of Stevensville gains significance due to its ability to reflect the historic development of this fairly homogenous community in terms of social class and wealth. The streetscapes of Stevensville are characterized by modest single family houses spaced at regular intervals, all respecting similar setbacks. Almost all of the housing within the original townsite and early 20th century additions date to the historic period. Many of the residences within the community gain additional significance for their association with significant persons in local history. All of the residences included in this nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are well preserved examples of historic construction styles and techniques.

The vast majority of the residences in Stevensville were erected between 1900 and 1915, the period of the greatest growth and prosperity in the community, with the greatest concentration of construction coinciding with the "apple boom" of the 1906-1914 period. Through the early 20th century, there existed a housing shortage in the community, as noted by the local newspaper: "Just at the present there is a big demand for buildings to rent and many would be renters cannot be supplied even with an ordinary cottage.

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Stevensville people ought to remedy this shortage."¹ And so they did. "The music of the carpenters hammer is heard in all parts of the city. A sure indication that spring is here."²

The historic record shows the early residents of Stevensville moving from one residence to another with a high degree of frequency. Many of the moves were made by families between town and outlying ranches or farms, but a great deal of trading of houses and shifting around took place within the townsite also. The construction boom of the 1900-1915 period accounts for many relocations, as families occupied rental houses until construction of their own was completed or the families of builders moved from one property to another as the houses built on speculation were sold.

A fair number of builder-architects lived and worked in Stevensville during the boom period in the community's history, and the construction of a good number of residences was associated with the names of W.R. Rodgers, William Godfried, Lon Young, D.L. Cannon and Perry Foust. For the most part, these builders utilized traditional building formats, such as the gabled-ell, cross-gable, or pyramidal cottage forms. It also is likely that pattern book plans were consulted by these builders. Certainly, plans from national organizations were employed in the construction of the Craftsman style houses of the 1910s. Housing starts slowed to a virtual standstill during the later 1920s and 1930s, reflecting the slow down in the local economy in the aftermath of the First World War, and the carpenters and "architects" in the community for the most part moved on to other locales.

IV. Registration Requirements: The level of architectural preservation in Stevensville is relatively high and, in order to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a building must retain all primary historic architectural characteristics. Since the majority of houses in Stevensville were built within the historic period, only those houses that are able to accurately portray their historic associations and exhibit a relatively high level of architectural integrity are considered worthy of listing. Important character-defining features of Stevensville's historic residences include original siding, window treatments, porches, and overall massing. Additions to residences on the rear, non-primary elevations are not viewed as particularly detrimental to design integrity if the original core structure is still readily identifiable.

Properties that are associated with persons important in local history must retain a clear architectural identity from that period of occupancy by those significant individuals. The Sharp House, for example, was enlarged and received a new front porch during the time period that John H. Sharp owned and occupied the building. These changes are viewed as contributing to the significance of the residence today. The houses associated with Stevensville premiere mercantilist families, the May brothers and Buck brothers, are clustered in two areas on the east and west sides of town, respectively. The integrity of location, architectural design, materials, and craftsmanship must be retained. The Amos Buck House, located at 205 Buck Ave., for example, does not meet the registration requirements, although it is associated with the head of the Buck dynasty, because the house has undergone extensive architectural alterations.

¹Stevensville Register, September 12, 1908.

²Stevensville Register, March 10, 1910.

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I. Name of Property Type: Commercial Buildings

II. Description: One- and two-story vernacular, masonry commercial buildings line the Main Street of Stevensville today. Most of these buildings date to the early 20th century as fires in 1905 and 1911 destroyed almost all of the earlier wood frame buildings. The buildings that were built as replacements or that survived these historic blazes were constructed of brick, cast concrete block or cast-in-place concrete. Approximately 18 historic period masonry buildings survive in Stevensville today. The highly ornate, Italianate styling of the earlier wood frame buildings was not duplicated in the masonry replacements.

Historic photographs show the Main Street commercial buildings conforming to a simple, traditional design formula composed of an apron, large display windows with transom lights above spanning the width of the facade, and finished at the top by a decorative cornice. Two-story buildings feature symmetrically placed 1-over-1 double hung windows with simple flat lintels and sills at the second level. Entrances are recessed and generally located at the center of the building. Access to the second floors often is provided by interior stairways with entrance doorways set to one side of the primary facade.

Historically, building aprons most commonly were finished with recessed wooden panels, and occasionally cast concrete block or brick would be used. The apron rose about 26" above ground level. The large commercial display windows were held in place with wooden or, in some cases, bronze framing. Later replacement windows feature raw or anodized aluminum frames. Often I-beam spandrels were used to support the masonry work of the upper facade above the windows. Transoms were composed either of large sheets of clear glass set in wooden frames or leaded amethyst glass.

Masonry piers divide the bays of the commercial buildings. Decorative brick corbelling or bands of decorative cast concrete blocks featuring garlands or wreaths were used to enliven the wide masonry surfaces above the storefronts. While a few pressed metal cornices were used in Stevensville, the majority of the buildings feature decorative masonry corbelling to mark the termination of the facade.

The buildings were rectangular in shape and were designed to share masonry party walls with their neighbors. Roofs were generally gently sloped flat or bowed to shed moisture. All of the historic commercial buildings in Stevensville were constructed to lot lines, and all present sheer masonry facades to the street.

III. Significance: Stevensville's commercial buildings gain significance due to their historical associations with the growth and development of commerce and the provision of services in this small agricultural community. Many of the businesses housed in these commercial edifices remained in the hands of the original founding families throughout the historic period, which testifies not only to the stability of the community, but also to a degree of loyalty of customers in the trade area to the downtown merchants.

The commercial buildings of Stevensville are also important and worthy of preservation because they well represent utilitarian, early 20th century vernacular architecture. Most of the important commercial buildings are of masonry construction, reflecting the devastating effects of the major fires that swept almost all wood frame buildings from the downtown area in 1905 and 1911, and the impact of local

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ordinance #35 that prescribed the use of fire-proof buildings materials within the central business district.

The more outstanding examples of vernacular commercial architecture in Stevensville include the Bell and Holt Garage, composed of three brick buildings dating from 1888, 1907 and 1912 that were brought into common use as an automobile showroom and garage during the late 1920s. Although constructed over a 24-year period, these buildings bear close resemblance in overall form, massing, materials and design. The Gleason Hotel (1910), the First State Bank Building (1910) and the Bitter Root Cooperative Creamery (1911) were all constructed using cast concrete blocks. The 1912 I.O.O.F. Hall is outstanding as an extremely well-preserved example of two-story brick construction that features ornate corbelling, an unusual "turtle-back" roof trussing system, and an intact second floor meeting and office space. All of these buildings represent the commercial optimism of the short time span from about 1906 until the beginning of the First World War that was characterized by high prosperity and explosive growth in Stevensville.

One of the few remaining wood frame buildings that has managed to retain primary historic architectural integrity is the Stevensville Feed Mill at 407 Main Street. Built in 1918, this building features a stepped parapet false front that conceals a gable roof behind. The Stevensville Feed Mill, together with the Bitter Root Valley Cooperative Creamery, is significant also as a symbol of the vital economic link between town's business enterprises and the surrounding agricultural community.

IV. Registration Requirements: To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the commercial buildings of Stevensville must possess sufficient historic architectural integrity to accurately recall the functions that businesses occupying these buildings played in the economic history of the community. The design format of facade of these vernacular commercial buildings is simple. Buildings that retain the tri-part composition - including the apron, large commercial glazing with transom glass above, and raised parapet with terminating decorative cornice - generally possess a high level of architectural integrity. Although some original portions of the historic storefront may be concealed behind modern applied materials, if the original design intent remains clearly visible and the alterations are easily reversible, then the building will likely meet the registration requirements.

Generally, a building might sustain the loss of one aspect of its original storefront design and yet retain sufficient historical architectural integrity to meet the registration requirements. For example, the original apron materials are often not still in place due the excessive wear this portion of a facade tends to endure. The lowering of interior ceilings within the commercial space for energy efficiency and to accommodate overhead florescent light fixtures often is reflected by the covering over of historic transom light banding. In many cases, the original transom lights remain in place behind the applied sheathing. Examples of the loss of only one major aspect of the historic storefront design include the application of veneer stone over the historic apron of the Emhoff building; the enclosure of the transom of the Gleason Hotel, the modern infill of the original storefront glazing of the I.O.O.F. Hall, the replacement of the first floor windows of the First State Bank with smaller sized windows with anodized frames within the original openings, and the relocation of the entrance of the Stevensville Feed Mill from the corner to the center of the primary elevation. Each of these buildings has been judged to meet the registration requirements.

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The compilation of loss of more than one major aspect of the facade design scheme will so greatly undermine integrity of design and materials that a number of buildings in Stevensville with strong historical associations with the commercial development of the community do not meet the registration requirements. The latter is especially true in the case of simple one-story commercial buildings, of which a number exist in Stevensville. When the historic fabric remaining exposed on the facade of a masonry commercial building consists only of the side piers and raised parapet, which is the case for the buildings at 207, 211, 221, 215, 213, 307 and 314 Main Street, the level of integrity is judged to be too low to justify registration.

I. Name of Property Type: Cast Concrete Block Buildings

II. Description: The use of cast concrete blocks in construction adds a feeling of solidity to the typical vernacular or popular designs that are common in Stevensville's historic neighborhoods. The blocks measure about 8" x 8" x 16", and were cast in a variety of textures and decorative patterns. The most popular block form in Stevensville was the ashlar-faced block. An unusual broken ashlar-faced block was used in the construction of the Gleason building at 200-202 Main St. The First State Bank building at 300-308 Main St. utilizes cast concrete block as well as concrete columns, coping, sills and decorative cornice. What makes the concrete block buildings in Stevensville important is not their design or function, but simply the use of this distinctive material.

III. Significance: Cast concrete block buildings add an interesting architectural dimension to the built environment of Stevensville between the years 1906 and 1916. This highly distinctive building material was utilized for both commercial and residential construction. The blocks were used in the construction of entire buildings or, in some cases, only building foundations. Concrete block manufacturing was a new technology, and perfectly suited to the task of making locally produced, inexpensive, fire resistant, masonry materials readily available. The era of concrete block construction coincided with the period of greatest economic prosperity and population growth in Stevensville from 1906-1916.

Cast concrete block or "pressed stone," as it is sometimes called, could be manufactured on site at a relatively low cost. By using a system like the Sears-Roebuck Down-Loading Block Machine a variety of forms, from smooth to ashlar faced block, as well as decorative motifs such as garlands and wreaths were readily produced. Coved blocks were used for cornices. The rock-faced blocks were the most popular for both residential and commercial construction.

D.L. Cannon joined D.T. Bliss and Company in 1906 to manufacture decorative cast concrete block for construction purposes. In June of 1907, Bliss withdrew from the company, leaving Cannon to continue the business.³ At this point, Cannon began to take advantage of the growing Stevensville population as well as the requirements of the new building ordinance that restricted the use of flammable materials within the commercial district. The Stevensville Register explained the new popularity of cast concrete block construction in Stevensville:

³Stevensville Register, June 6, 1907.

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Fire proof building material is rapidly taking the favor of the people of Stevensville and displacing wood in the popular esteem. In August, 1905, a disastrous fire wiped out 13 wooden buildings, constituting a material portion of the business district of the town. Immediately the town council passed an ordinance creating fire limits in which wooden buildings cannot be erected. After the fire the town built up very rapidly, all of the buildings being of brick. Then, D.L. Cannon installed machinery for the manufacture of hollow cement building blocks and his services have continually been in great demand. He has built or furnished the material for a great number of buildings, many of them residences.⁴

In 1907, Cannon began making concrete blocks for his own residence to be located at the west end of Third Street, as well as for a number of other buildings including the Foust Jewelry Store on Main Street. The concrete blocks were manufactured on site. In addition to his own house on Third St., Cannon also built houses at 110 Pine, 309 Third, 501 Third, and the Lancaster house at 307 Third.⁵ Cannon appears to have built most of these residences on speculation, and resold the properties almost as soon as he had completed construction.

Local architect/builder W.R. Rodgers also got into the business of manufacturing cast concrete blocks for his commercial and residential commissions. The Gleason Building at 200-202 Main is a classic example of the use of this building material. The commercial block is a solid rectangular mass that uses only subtle variation in the pressed pattern of the blocks themselves for ornamentation. The First State Bank at 300-304 Main St., on the other hand, was also designed and built by Rodgers, and exhibits the greatest range of cast concrete forms, including columns, entablatures, garland motif blocks and decorative coved cornice blocks.

One of the finest examples of the use of cast concrete block in residential construction is the John Howe house at 215 Park Ave. The hollow, rock-faced cast concrete blocks add a strong sense of blockiness and weight to this basic Craftsman style house. The blocks are laid up as support piers of the engaged, full-width front porch, and are set at angles to project the standard dining room window bay. The concrete blocks create a neat and compact looking composition. The one remaining utilitarian building in Stevensville that was constructed of cast concrete block is the apple packing house associated with the Charles Amos Buck House at 211 Buck Ave.

IV. Registration Requirements: All of the cast concrete block buildings in Stevensville are relatively simple, vernacular constructions which derive primary historic architectural significance from innovative uses of materials or as representations of traditional vernacular designs. In this light, in order to meet the registration requirements, these buildings must possess a high level of architectural integrity and the primary building material must be the decorative cast concrete block. The block must remain exposed and in good condition. Fortunately, the cement and aggregate mixture used in the manufacture of the blocks

⁴Stevensville Register, December 23, 1909.

⁵Stevensville Register, December 23, 1909.

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historically resulted a very stable product. The high level of preservation of the cast concrete block buildings in the Stevensville community attests to the durability of the blocks.

I. Name of Property Type: Churches

II. Description: The churches of Stevensville blend well as part of the residential neighborhoods in which they are located. They are highly compatible with surrounding houses in terms of size, scale, set backs, use of materials and overall design. The simple gable-ended, rectangular, vernacular forms of the historic church buildings were easily executed in log or wood framing. However, the simple vernacular forms of these buildings were ornamented in accordance with the precepts of distinctive period styles, including the hand-crafted rusticism of St. Mary's Mission, Stick style decorative applications of the First Baptist Church, and orderly Classical detailing of the Methodist-Episcopal Church North. The later building is actually a variation on the common gable-ended format and features a side wing that originally housed the minister's quarters, and is now used for meeting space.

Windows for all of the historic churches are double-hung units highlighted with molded lintels, often in a pediment form. The windows lighting the meeting room portions of these buildings are often composed of stained glass set in wooden frames and exhibiting simple, rectilinear designs. Primary entrances are set at the gable ends, with the exception of the Methodist-Episcopal Church North where a side vestibule entrance was employed.

III. Significance: The religious architecture of Stevensville is closely associated with the early settlement of the community. The founding of the community of Stevensville is directly traceable to the establishment of St. Mary's Mission, the first European-American settlement in what was to become Montana. The four historic church buildings in Stevensville all date to the 19th century: St. Mary's Mission (1866), the Methodist-Episcopal Church North (1887), the First Baptist Church (1886), and the Methodist Church (1885, remodeled 1928). The modest growth of the community during the 20th century, and the coincident moderate growth of the church-going community, allowed for the continued use of each of these 19th century church buildings - with the exception of the Mission - to the present day with only minor additions to accommodate social meeting room space. The congregation of the Methodist-Episcopal Church North built a parsonage adjacent to the church in 1905, which allowed the congregation to use the rooms of the parson within the church building for meetings, meals and other gatherings of a more social nature. The continued growth of this sect over the next two decades resulted in the remodelling of the historic Stevensville Grade School for use as a place of worship in 1928. The Baptists added a wing to house the youth center, dining room and classrooms during the mid-1970s.

The significance of the churches in Stevensville rests with their architectural merit. St. Mary's Mission is a vernacular building constructed of hand hewn logs composing a typical gable-ended building form. The interior features an alter and choir rail that were hand carved by Father Ravalli. The front portion of the church and the steeple were added at a later date when white men began to attend services.

The First Baptist Church and the original Methodist-Episcopal Church North also are both vernacular variations of the gable-ended, simple rectangular format. Although conforming to a simple design format,

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the Baptist Church is distinctive as being one of the finest examples of Stick style ornamentation in the State, reflecting the influence of the building's designer, Missoula architect Thomas W. Longstaff. An elaborate combination of horizontal, vertical and diagonal siding and decoratively cut shingles enliven the exterior. The bell tower rises above the entrance on the gable end and is decorated with simple stick work. The Methodist-Episcopal Church exhibits more Classical Revival detailing in the use of corner boards, water table and frieze to define the exterior wall surfaces.

Two groups of Methodists in Stevensville merged in 1918 and joined forces a decade later to remodel the two-story, wood frame, Italianate style Grade School to serve as the place for the Methodist gatherings. A monumental portico topped by a large domed cupola was appended to the front of the building as part of the remodelling, and serves today as the primary character-defining feature of the building. The United Methodist Church is the finest example of Classical Revival architecture in Stevensville.

IV. Registration Requirements: The wood frame church buildings each qualify for listing in the National Register under criterion C and for that reason must possess a high degree of historic architectural integrity. Integrity of materials, design and workmanship is generally judged to be sufficient for registration if the original fenestration, exterior sheathing materials, and basic integrity of the primary building mass have been retained. Additions to the rear of the churches, often employing incompatible materials and design, are not considered to detract significantly from the integrity of the core building when the addition reads as almost a separate structure. Entrance doors have generally been replaced with modern solid core units and, when these modern doors conform to the original openings, they are not viewed as major detracting elements. The settings for the historic properties of Stevensville, by and large, are excellent. The church buildings are located within the residential neighborhoods along broad streets shaded by mature deciduous trees. The small town character of the community has been wonderfully preserved.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

see continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency

- Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository: _____

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Montana State Historic Preservation Office staff
organization Montana Historical Society date December, 1990
street & number 225 No. Roberts telephone 406-444-7715
city or town Helena state Montana zip code 59620

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SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

A reconnaissance survey of the historic buildings of Stevensville, Montana was conducted by the staff of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office in 1988. A strategy for a selective inventory of 150 buildings of a high level of historical and architectural significance was developed by the SHPO staff in consultation with the Stevensville Civic Club. Professional historian Frank Grant and architectural historian Kathleen Olsen were hired by the Civic Club to complete a comprehensive inventory of these 150 properties and to prepare nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for those properties that were judged to meet the Register criteria. Funding assistance for this project was provided by the National Park Service through a survey and planning grant administered by the SHPO. Members of the Stevensville Civic Club contributed many volunteer hours and assisted the consultants in completing the courthouse legal research, reading historical newspapers, photography and endless typing and proofing necessary for the inventory and nomination. For personal reasons, Dr. Grant and Ms. Olsen did not see the project to its completion. The Civic Club next hired historian William Yehle from Boise, Idaho to use the material generated during the first phase of the project to prepare a multiple properties nomination to the National Register. Mr. Yehle also resigned before finishing the project. The final nomination was prepared by staff of the Montana Historic Preservation Office.

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