

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

MAR 9 1993

NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Gebo Cemetery

other name/site number: 24CB693

2. Location

street & number: County road linking Gebo and Fromberg

not for publication: n/a
vicinity: X

city/town: Fromberg

state: Montana code: MT county: Carbon code: 009 zip code: 59029

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Maude [Signature] MT SHPO Date: 3-2-93

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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Debra Byers

entered in the National Register Date of Action

4/8/93

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property: Site	Contributing	Noncontributing
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0	<u>1</u>	___ building(s) ___ sites ___ structures ___ objects
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a	<u>1</u>	___ Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: FUNERARY/Cemetery	Current Functions: FUNERARY/Cemetery
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7. Description

Architectural Classification: n/a	Materials: foundation: n/a walls: n/a roof: n/a other: stone
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Narrative Description

The Gebo Cemetery is located in eastern Carbon County, Montana, and is about one mile north-northwest of Fromberg, a small rural community in the south-central portion of the state. The cemetery lies just east of the dirt county road linking Fromberg with the town of Joliet and is on a gentle slope overgrown with sagebrush, sparse grasses and thistle. This location affords a dramatic and panoramic view of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River Valley to the east and town of Fromberg to the southeast. Steep sandstone cliffs rise to the west. The square plot includes 3.25 acres of land and is encompassed by a wire and post fence; an ornate wire gate set between tall metal trusses is on the west. A 2.09 acre plot was added to the historic cemetery in 1963, but this area has yet to be used as a burial site.

The Gebo Cemetery was established in 1899 for the coal mining town of Gebo, which was located about one-half mile to the east. At this time, the town and the Gebo mine were amidst a period of rapid development and expansion. As many as 500 to 1000 people reportedly lived in the town by the early 1900s. Prosperity at Gebo, however, proved short-lived. In 1912, the owners of the Gebo mine abruptly ceased all operations and the town was soon virtually abandoned.

The Gebo Cemetery holds an estimated 200 graves. Many of them are the burial sites of individuals who lived and died in Gebo during its short-lived period of prosperity at the turn of the century; it is believed that nearly 60 of 129 marked burials were children under the age of two. Most others are the burial sites of pioneers who passed away after the town's decline in the early 1910s. Although the first burial was made in the cemetery in 1899, the earliest marked graves date to 1901. Several grave markers list deaths that occurred between then and about 1918, and there are numerous graves of individuals who died in the 1930s. Just a few burials have been made in the cemetery in recent years.

The overall appearance of the cemetery is somewhat haphazard. Grave markers are mostly clustered in the southwest sector of the plot where the terrain is fairly level. They generally are aligned north-to-south but rows are difficult to discern, largely because of overgrowth and the presence of several unmarked graves.

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Most grave markers are "professionally-cut" slabs or headstones of either pink or gray granite, or wooden crosses or arched slabs--several of which are modern replacements. A few notable examples of folk art exist. There are three iron crosses, grave markers largely associated with German-Russian Catholics who emigrated from the Black Sea region of Russia. The most distinguished of these is an iron cross with tracery and metal wording in German. It marks the grave of German immigrant Adam Heiser who died in 1916. Three other plots have concrete headstones embedded with bits of colored glass; at least two of these are also associated with German-Russian immigrants. And finally, there are two grave markers made of local sandstone and crudely incised with lettering and graphics. One of these stands at the grave of Billy Bartlett, a local pioneer who died in the 1930s.

The cemetery retains all essential aspects of integrity. A majority of its grave markers are historic; only a few modern markers have been introduced. The cemetery's overall plan as a square fenced plot remains intact as well as its setting on an isolated sagebrush-covered hillside overlooking the Clarks Fork Valley.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A	Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): D	Period(s) of Significance: 1899-1912
Significant Person(s): n/a	Significant Dates: 1899
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder: unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Gebo Cemetery is being individually nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and is significant under Criterion A for its important associations with the long-abandoned town of Gebo, one of the first settlements in the Clarks Fork Valley. The cemetery was created in 1899 for the newly established mining town. It served the community for more than a decade, during which several Gebo residents were buried there--especially infants and small children who had succumbed to childhood diseases or epidemics. Even after the decline of the town, area pioneers continued to be laid to rest here into the 1930s.

The cemetery meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration D for its relative great age in a local historical context, deriving its primary significance from its associations with the original settlement of the mining camp of Gebo. And, as the last physical remains of the once flourishing Gebo town and mine, the cemetery gains a transcendent importance. Gebo cemetery reflects the full span of the community's short-lived history--from the original period of settlement, through community expansion and finally, abandonment. Thus, the cemetery also meets Criteria Consideration D for its associations with broad patterns of local history.

Background to Gebo

Eastern Carbon County opened for Euro-American settlement after the Crow Indian Tribe ceded the region to the federal government in 1892. Homesteaders promptly claimed rich bottom lands along the Clarks Fork River; cattle and sheep were simultaneously moved into more arid regions in the surrounding hills. Entrepreneurs also began efforts to develop the area's extensive coal fields that blanketed the rugged terrain along the west side of the valley. By this time, coal mining had become a major industry in Montana; large amounts of coal were needed to fuel the coal-fired steam powered railroads and for the mining and smelting operations of the copper industry at Butte and Anaconda.

An early important coal mine in the Clarks Fork Valley was the Gebo Mine, located in a deep coulee about one mile west of the present town of Fromberg. In 1895, Sam Gebo explored the valley for coal deposits and found the fields at "Gebo" sufficient to warrant profitable commercial production. Over the next two years, Gebo secured several investors in the property, initiated some minor improvements at the mine, and helped lay out the Gebo townsite on the adjacent low rolling hills. Lack of rail service into the valley, however, hampered full-scale development and production. The nearest railheads to Gebo lay across rugged terrain to the northwest at Rockvale and to the west at Joliet, both located on the Northern Pacific Railroad's branch line to the coal fields at Red Lodge.

Activities at Gebo soon attracted the attention of J.A. Johnson and J.C. McCarthy, owners of the Chestnut coal mines near Bozeman. After several inspections of the Gebo property by both men, McCarthy in early 1898 met with Northern Pacific officials in St. Paul. At the meeting, McCarthy apparently received assurances that the railroad would soon construct a branch line into the Clarks Fork Valley. After McCarthy returned from St. Paul, he, Johnson, and others purchased the Gebo mine and incorporated the Clarks Fork Coal Company. A local newspaper account of the sale reported that the new company intended to mine Gebo coal for "public consumption," and had secured a contract with the major copper producer in Montana, the Anaconda Company "...to deliver a large amount of coal daily." The railroad completed construction of its Clark Fork Branch and spur to Gebo in late 1898 and by early 1899 the Gebo was nearly ready for full-scale production.

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Meanwhile the townsite of Gebo sprung to life almost overnight. Like many mining camps, many of its inhabitants lived in tents or hastily constructed cabins. However, more substantial housing was provided by the mining company and local builders. The town also quickly developed a diverse commercial sector, including a drugstore, cafe, rooming house, confectionery, laundry, barbershop, post office, newspaper, and five bars. By some accounts the population of the town may have neared 1000 by the turn of the century.

Prosperity at Gebo, however, proved short-lived. Although quite productive, operations at the Gebo mine were troubled by constant litigation over ownership and sporadic closures. To compound Gebo's instability, higher grade, more readily accessed coal seams were opened nearby at Bear Creek and Red Lodge. As Gebo's prospects declined, residents were drawn just a mile away to the young farm community of Fromberg which was just then entering an era of economic prosperity and growth due to an agricultural boom in the region. As early as 1906, some Gebo residents relocated their businesses and homes to Fromberg, which also enjoyed the advantages of being located on the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River and the Northern Pacific Railroad line. The mine was permanently closed in 1912 and the town of Gebo was subsequently abandoned, although a few remaining houses in the town continued to be occupied--especially during the 1930s depression.

In accordance with Criteria Consideration D, the Gebo Cemetery derives its primary significance from its relative great age in the context of local history, and, as the last remaining intact property in Gebo associated with the settlement and early history of the community, from its association with historic events. No buildings or structures exist at the townsite or mine site today; it is the Gebo cemetery which alone now commemorates the short reign of the Gebo mines and community. Historically, as the prosperity and stability of Fromberg eclipsed that of Gebo, most of the buildings were moved to the Fromberg townsite, dismantled for salvage or abandoned; the last remaining house in Gebo reportedly burned in the early 1970s. Most recently, remaining resources associated with Gebo's mining and community history were dismantled in 1987, through efforts of the Montana Department of State Lands to remove public hazards, and reclaim and stabilize the Gebo mines and townsite. Twenty-eight adits, a mine shaft, cisterns and piles of mining waste were collapsed, infilled and/or buried; the area was then recontoured to blend into the surrounding topography. At the townsite, a brick and steel boiler room was demolished, and rubble from this structure and other building debris scattered throughout the townsite was dumped into a clay pit and deep, historic building foundations. Finally, backfilled areas were graded and revegetated.

Located next to the site of old Gebo, the cemetery looks south toward the surrounding hills where the Gebo mines once flourished. Sage, yucca, cactus and bunch grasses festoon this dry setting, which commands a broad view of the valley unfolding below. A mile off in the distance, the town of Fromberg is visible. Unchanged since the early 20th century, the Gebo Cemetery marks the birth, life and passage of one of Montana's many boom and bust communities. It evokes strong feelings of an era almost a hundred years ago, when the Gebo coal mines were in full swing and the attendant town flourished. Residents of nearby Fromberg and Gebo family descendants frequent this lonely site, a place now--the only place--to remember and commemorate the history of this small community gone by.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Abandoned Mine Reclamation Bureau. Files on "Bridger - Fromberg Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project, MONT A/E 86-46-125." Montana Department of State Lands, Helena, Montana. 1987.

Billings Gazette. 19 May 1985, p. 2-B.

Billings Gazette, Illustrated Historical Edition. 1899, pp. 46-49.

Carbon County. Register of Deaths. Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, Montana.

Carbon County Sentinel (Gebo). 28 January, 1 April, & 21 October 1898; and 6 & 20 January, 1899.

Delta Engineering P.C. "Final Project Report: Bridger - Fromberg Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project, MONT A/E 86-46-125. Prepared for the Montana Department of State Lands. Great Falls: Delta Engineering, 1987.

Fromberg Service Club. Fromberg: The Fruit Basket of Carbon County. Billings: Empire Printing, 1976.

GCM Services, Inc. Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Selected Abandoned Coal Mine Sites Throughout Montana and Selected Hardrock Mine Sites in Butte. Report No. 92-3-86. Prepared for The Montana Department of State Lands. Butte: GCM Services, Inc., 1986.

Papp, Violet. Interview with Mary McCormick. April 1992.

Red Lodge Picket. 11 July 1896.

Reynolds, Margo. Rockvale and Gebo Cemeteries. Billings: Parmly Library, 1977.

Vrooman, Nicholas Curchin, and Patrice Avon Marvin, eds. Iron Spirits. Fargo: North Dakota Council of the Arts, 1982.

Zupan, Shirley, and Harry J. Owens. Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area. Billings: Frontier Press, Inc. 1979.

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other - Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 3.25 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	662550	5029650

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property correspond to those for the original Gebo Cemetery, and encompass a square area measuring 335 feet by 335 feet. Beginning at a point 1146.85 feet S180° 25'30"E of the corner between Sections 7, 8, 17, & 18, T5S R23E, proceed 335 feet N00° 02'28"E, then 335 feet S89° 36'17"W; then 335 feet S00° 08'52"E; and then 335 feet N87° 26'22"E to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire plot of land associated with the original Gebo Cemetery; it intentionally excludes the 1963 addition to the cemetery because this area is not known to contain any graves.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Revised by Mary McCormick (Erika Kuhlman of the Fromberg Historical Society did the initial research and wrote the first draft in 1989)

organization: Renewable Technologies, Inc. date: April 1990/August 1992

street & number: 511 Metals Bank Building telephone: (406)782-0494

city or town: Butte state: MT zip code: 59701

Property Owner

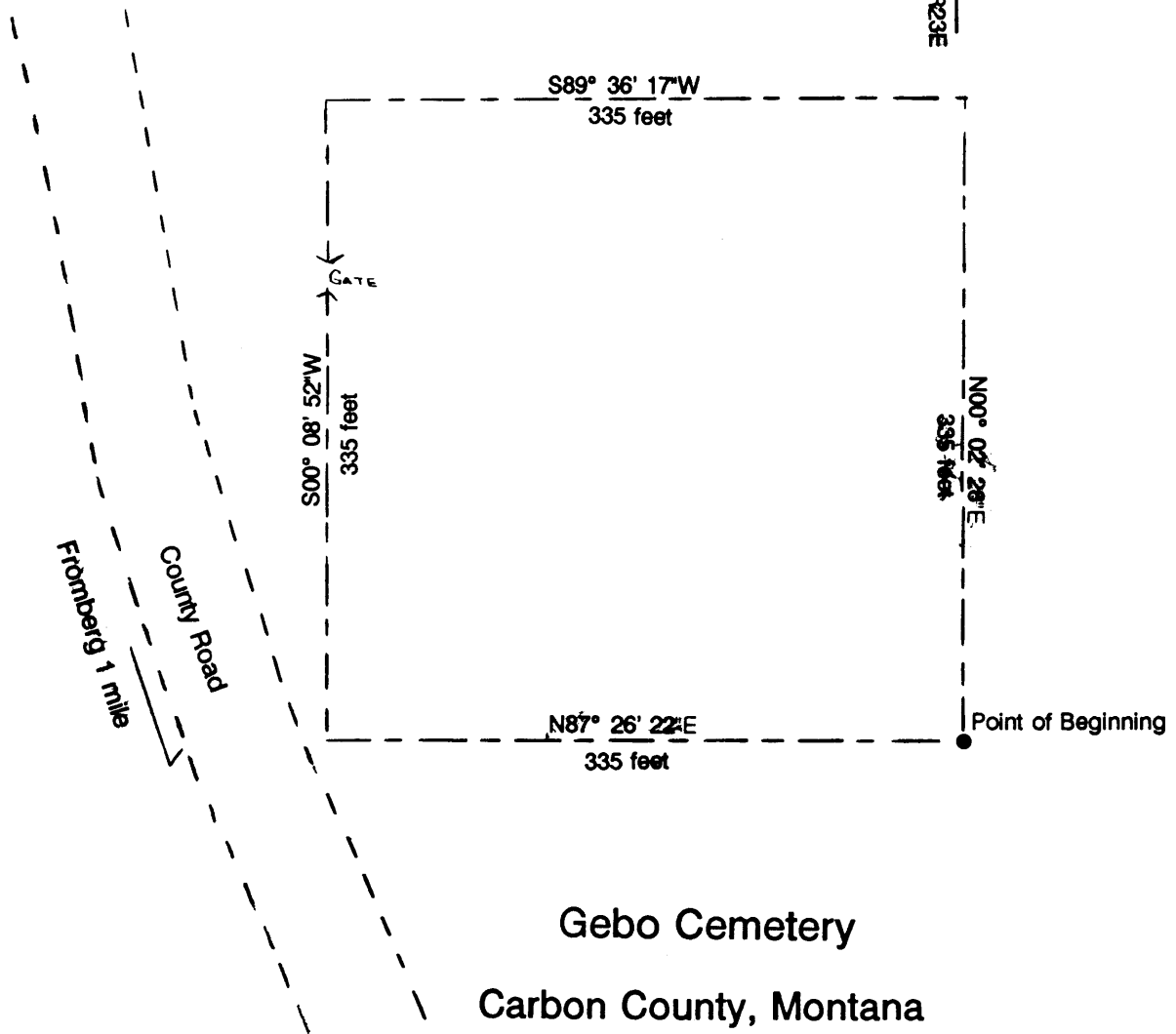
name/title: Rockvale Cemetery District #1, c/o Robert Williams

street & number: n/a telephone: n/a

city or town: Fromberg state: MT zip code: 59029



To Corner of
Sections 7-8-17-18, T5S R23E



Gebo Cemetery
Carbon County, Montana

NE1/4 Section 18, T5S R23E

Scale: 1 inch = 200 feet
August 1992