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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DEC 11 1993

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Gibson, John, House

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 219 W. River Street

not for publication: n/a

vicinity: n/a

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

Manell Shufy SHPO 12-11-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 see continuation sheet

determined eligible for the
National Register

 see continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the
National Register

 see continuation sheet
 removed from the National Register
 see continuation sheet

other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Patrick Andrews

Date of Action

1/23/93

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

Category of Property: Buildings

2

___ building(s)

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

___ sites

___ structures

___ objects

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Properties in Fromberg

2

0 Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Current Functions:

Dwelling: single family

Dwelling: single family

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Materials:

Craftsman

foundation: concrete

walls: stucco

roof: asphalt

other: concrete

Narrative Description

The John Gibson House is located in Fromberg, Montana, a small rural community in the southcentral portion of the state. The property is situated in a residential neighborhood west of the downtown and is comprised of a house and a garage. The house occupies a corner lot and faces south onto W. River Street. The garage stands behind the house and is adjacent to an alley.

The house was built in various stages over about a twenty-year period by John Gibson, a prominent local contractor and concrete manufacturer. Gibson built the original wing of the house in about 1909; it was a small, rectangular-shaped dwelling constructed of concrete block. After 1912, presumably in the 1920s, he added a rectangular wood-frame rear addition on the north. By the late 1920s, the house had also been fronted by a porch on the south, had a shed-roofed vestibule on the rear, and exhibited Craftsman detailing.¹

The house currently reflects its 1929 form and appearance. The one-story, L-shaped house rests on a concrete foundation and is topped by an intersecting gable roof. Exterior walls are uniformly finished with stucco having an exposed aggregate of small cobbles and bits of brightly colored glass. The asphalt-shingled roof has a front-facing gable on the south side of the original wing and a side-facing gable on the west side of the rear addition. Roof trimmings include wide eave overhangs, exposed rafter tails, fascia boards with an extended tail, and knee braces at the gables. A brick chimney with a concrete cap is positioned on the primary roof ridge towards the north. Windows are mostly one-over-one, double-hung wood sash with four-light storms. Those in the original front wing of the house are in recessed openings with concrete lug sills. Window openings in the rear addition are not recessed but also have concrete lug sills. On the west wall of the rear addition is a large fixed window flanked by one-over-one, double-hung windows.

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The enclosed front porch on the south is near full-width. The asphalt-shingled shed roof has wide eaves, exposed rafter tips, fascia boards with an extended tail, and features a central gabled peak. Both the exterior and interior walls are finished with stucco having an exposed aggregate of rocks and bits of glass; the end of the gabled peak also has stucco cladding. The entry to the porch is positioned under the gabled peak and holds a paneled door having four horizontal lights and protected by a wood-frame storm door. Windows are four-over-one, double-hung wood sash with concrete sills; they flank the entry and one each is located in each of the east and west side walls.

The shed-roofed rear vestibule is positioned on the north wall of the addition towards the east. The asphalt-shingled roof has wide eaves, exposed rafter tails, and fascia boards with an extended tail. Exterior walls are finished with stucco with aggregate as elsewhere. On the north wall is an eight-light paneled door and on the west wall is a fixed window with wood sash; the window opening has a concrete lug sill.

The house retains integrity in all aspects. It has sustained no apparent alterations since the late 1920s; it clearly exhibits form, scale, massing and stylistic detailing from its period of significance. The house remains in its historic setting, a quiet residential neighborhood. It easily conveys its important associations.

The rectangular gable-roofed garage has a low shed-roofed shed on the east. Both the garage and shed are of wood-frame construction and have drop siding; the foundation is not visible. The gable roof has eave overhangs; roof material is interlocking asphalt. On the west wall of the garage is a garage opening with an overhead door made of vertical boards. Along the alley side of the building on the north is a person door which has been boarded shut. A square window with four-light glazing is positioned on the south wall towards the east; a similar opening on the west wall has been covered with corrugated plastic. On the east wall of the shed is a vertical board door.

A precise year of construction for the garage has not been determined. It is not depicted on the 1927 or earlier Sanborn Maps for Fromberg but its design and construction materials are indicative of the historic period. The garage may have been built in the late 1920s at the same time that the front porch and rear vestibule were added to the house. The building has sustained little modification since construction and contributes to the property's important associations.

NOTES

1. The exact year of construction for the house and additions has not been confirmed. John Gibson purchased the property in January 1907; the house is not depicted on the 1907 Sanborn Map for Fromberg but appears on the 1912 edition, along with Gibson's concrete block factory--on the same property. It seems likely that Gibson built the concrete block house in about 1909--the year that R.L. Polk Company's Directory first lists the factory in Fromberg. The 1927 Sanborn Map shows the rear addition but not the front porch or shed vestibule. Violet Papp, life-long Fromberg resident, believes that they were built in the late 1920s; she knew Gibson and clearly remembers the house having the same appearance today as it did before his death in 1934.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: B, C	Areas of Significance: Architecture Industry
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a	Period(s) of Significance: 1909-1934
Significant Person(s): Gibson, John	Significant Dates: 1909, ca. 1929
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder: Gibson, John

Narrative Statement of Significance

The John Gibson House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Fromberg" multiple property listing. The significance of the house is established locally under the historic contexts of "Transportation and Commerce in Fromberg, 1899-1936" and "Residential Development in Fromberg, 1900-1929." It meets registration requirements developed for the associated property type, "Residential Buildings." The John Gibson House is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B for its important associations with John Gibson, a local contractor who achieved prominence for his design and manufacture of a concrete culvert widely used in Montana and neighboring states in the mid 1910s; and under Criterion C as an example of a vernacular house with Craftsman detailing and as a representation of Gibson's workmanship. The house has sustained no apparent modification since its period of significance and retains all aspects of integrity.

Biographical Background to John Gibson

Born in Norway in the late 1870s, John Gibson arrived in the Clarks Fork Valley at the turn of the century at the age of twenty. He soon established himself as one of the most active contractors in Fromberg, as the region entered its historic period of economic prosperity and rapid growth. Gibson opened brickyards in both Fromberg and the nearby town of Belfry, and in 1906 constructed the first brick building on Fromberg's main street--the I.O.O.F Hall and Fromberg Mercantile. In October 1907, he started laying brick for Fromberg's first school. Although unverified Gibson was likely responsible for other commercial buildings constructed in Fromberg and other area towns in the early 1910s.²

Gibson's most significant contribution, however, to Fromberg were his concrete manufacturing facilities. Gibson erected a small concrete plant on residential lots just west of the downtown in about 1909--around the time that his brick yard was supplanted by a much larger facility, the Billings [later Fromberg] Pressed Brick and Tile Company. At his concrete plant, Gibson produced concrete block for building construction as well as sidewalk blocks, drain tile, flue liners and fenceposts. Gibson's operation presumably supplied much of the concrete for Fromberg's commercial construction in the early 1910s as well as for the Fromberg Concrete Arch Bridge, erected in 1914. His premier product, however, was a reinforced concrete culvert of his design.

Gibson received a patent for the culvert design in 1911 and began mass production at his Fromberg plant. Gibson's culverts were comprised of pre-fabricated concrete sections which were stacked end-to-end at the construction site. The feasibility of the design lay in the durability of concrete over wood, the standard material for culvert construction at the time, and that the culvert could be installed without interrupting road traffic. Engineers at the Montana State Highway Department reportedly promoted Gibson's culvert as the best on the market; it quickly became adopted for use by several counties in Montana as well as in several neighboring states.³

The successes of his culvert spurred rapid expansion of production facilities. In 1914, Gibson and some wealthy associates opened a second plant in Belgrade with the capacity to produce five rail cars of culverts per day. A new plant was also

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constructed in Fromberg the following year, replacing Gibson's first factory. Meanwhile, other firms purchased rights to the design, and the culvert became manufactured by plants in Billings and Fargo, North Dakota. Gibson's concrete works remained active in Fromberg until the early 1920s. Gibson died in Fromberg in 1934 at the age of 55.⁴

Significance of the John Gibson House

The John Gibson House derives significance under Criterion B as the best representation of Gibson's long and outstanding career in Fromberg. Both his 1909 and 1915 concrete plants in Fromberg were demolished before the late 1920s. Of his buildings still extant in town, the John Gibson House has the most lengthy and intimate association with his life and career. Gibson originally built the house in about 1909, he enlarged and remodeled it to its current Craftsman appearance in the 1920s, and he lived there until his death in 1934.

The John Gibson House derives significance under Criterion C as an representative example of vernacular house with Craftsman detailing and as an illustration of Gibson's workmanship. Gibson built the original portion of the house utilizing concrete block manufactured by his newly established concrete works. Its construction seems to have been an experiment to demonstrate the viability of his concrete block for building purposes; Gibson conveniently located the house on the same lots as the factory. The house proved to be a novel exception to residential development in Fromberg; it apparently was the only house of concrete block construction ever to be built in town. Its subsequent enlargement and remodeling represents a tasteful application of Craftsman elements to a vernacular house form, a fairly common remodeling practice in the 1910s and 1920s. Craftsman style influences were provided by the exposed rafter tips, fascia boards with extended tails, knee braces under the gables, and the front porch with 4-over-1 windows. Along with these details, Gibson's fine craftsmanship is expressed by the presence of concrete lug sills and the stucco cladding with an uncommon aggregate mix of rocks and brightly colored glass.

NOTES

2. "John Gibson" card, History Files, Carbon County Historical Society, Redlodge, Montana; Carbon County Republican, 8 September 1906; Fromberg Herald, 24 October 1907; and RedLodge Picket-Journal, 12 July 1934.
3. Fromberg Herald, 23 March, 1 June 1911, and 16 December 1915.
4. Fromberg Herald, 16 December 1915; and Redlodge Picket-Journal, 12 July 1934.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Carbon County Republican. 8 September 1906.
Fromberg Herald. 24 October 1907; 23 March and 1 June 1911; 16 December 1915.
"John Gibson" card. History Files; Carbon County Historical Society, Red Lodge, Montana.
Papp, Violet. Interview with Mary McCormick. March 1992
Red Lodge Picket-Journal. 12 July 1934.
R.L. Polk Co's. Directory of Billings and Red Lodge; Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Big Horn Counties. 1907, 1909, 1916 and 1922.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Fromberg. 1907, 1912, 1927.

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: less than one acre

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	663610	5028410

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses Lots 16 & 17 of Block 3 in the Dudley First Addition to Fromberg (SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 17, T05S, R23E).

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all city lots historically associated with the John Gibson House property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: 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 1992

street & number: 511 Metals Bank Building

telephone: 406/444-7715

city or town: Butte

state: MT

zip code: 59701

Property Owner

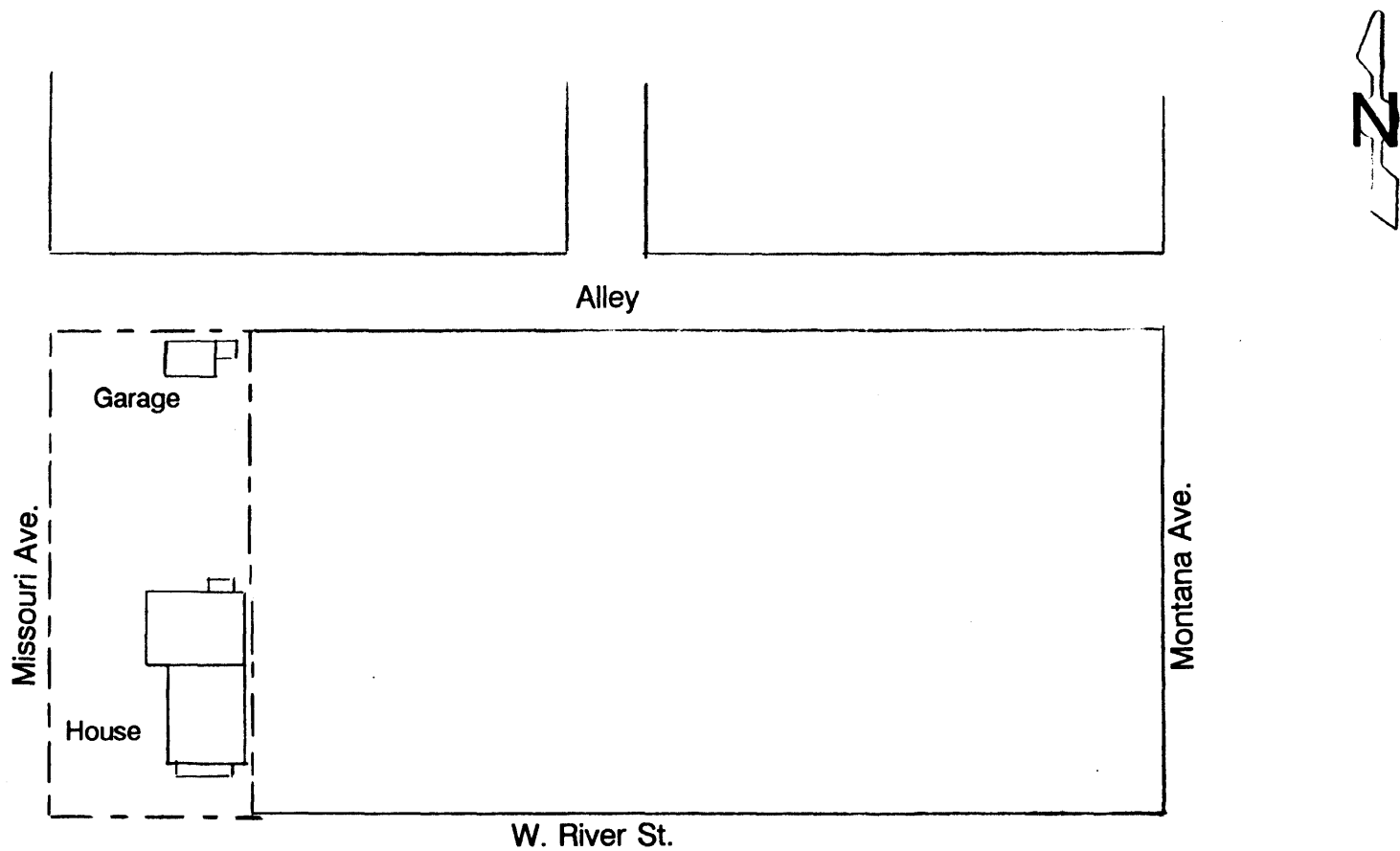
name/title: David Gilbertson

street & number: 219 W. River Street

city or town: Fromberg

state: MT

zip code: 59029



John Gibson House
Fromberg, Montana
 Lots 16 & 17, Block 3
 Dudley First Addition

National Register Boundary:



Scale: 1 inch = 50 feet
 August 1992