

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NOV 30 1989

2170

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wibaux Commercial Historic District other names/site number

2. Location

street & number n/a not for publication city, town Wibaux n/a vicinity state Montana code 030 county Wibaux code 109 zip code 59353

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private public-local public-State public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s) district site structure object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: SHPO Date: Nov 21, 1989 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

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.

- removed from the National Register. other, (explain):

Entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/trade: business, professional,
financial institution, department store,
specialty store, restaurant
Domestic: hotel; Government: office;
Recreation: theatre

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/trade: business, profession-
al, financial institution, specialty
store, restaurant; Domestic: hotel;
Government: office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Western Commercial
Queen Anne Commercial
Italianate Commercial
Renaissance Revival
Chicago

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete, sandstone
walls brick, weatherboard, plywood,
shake, stucco
roof asphalt, composition
other terra cotta, cast iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Wibaux Commercial Historic District is located in Wibaux, Montana, a small town of about 600 people that is located in eastern Montana, just off U. S. Highway 94, about 6 miles west of the North Dakota border. The town lies in the semiarid northern Great Plains in a region devoted to stock raising and grain growing. The town is situated in a dissected plateau with hills, buttes, some badlands, and flat upland surfaces. The area is drained by the Yellowstone River and Beaver Creek, a tributary of the little Missouri River, which flows through the town in a northerly direction. The drainage basin of Beaver Creek with its low, rolling fields and meadows occasionally broken by clinker- or sandstone-capped buttes contrasts sharply with rugged hills and badlands of the Yellowstone River, and the broad, smooth slopes of other area streams. The Beaver Valley is about 80 miles long and about 10 to 15 miles wide.

The commercial district of Wibaux is located on Highway 7 (Wibaux Street), which runs in a generally north/south direction between Wibaux and Beach. The old Northern Pacific Railroad tracks are located to the north of the commercial area, Beaver Creek to the east, the Beaver Creek bridge to the south, and a gently sloping coulee to the west. The town's residential areas are located directly to the west of the commercial area and north of the old Northern Pacific tracks. Grain elevators are located to the southeast of the commercial area. The commercial district is clearly defined by the concentration of historic commercial buildings in one section of town. It is set apart from other sections of town by either city streets or by some kind of open space. All of the buildings in the historic district are closely grouped.

The commercial district encompasses the town's two facing city blocks of commercial development and one building in a third block. Most of the buildings face Wibaux Street, which bisects the district; Orgain Avenue, the north boundary of the district; and First Avenue South, the south boundary of the district. The buildings are all one- or two-story commercial structures. Most of these are historic brick buildings, with a few historic frame

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buildings, and some brick or concrete buildings built since 1940. The buildings are set back from Wibaux Street, Orgain Avenue, and First Avenue South by the width of a concrete sidewalk. The building facades along these streets are flush with the lot lines. The development of the district along Wibaux Street, Orgain Avenue, and First Avenue is dense, but thins out quickly beyond the edges of the district. (See Photos 1-9)

The predominant character of the district is determined by the historic commercial brick buildings, all of which were constructed between 1906 and 1920. Until 1906, Wibaux was predominantly a town of frame, false-fronted buildings and board side walks. A fire of that year destroyed many of the town's buildings, and those constructed after that time were mostly brick one- and two-story brick commercial buildings. Shortly after that, concrete sidewalks replaced the boardwalks and the streets were macadamized and then paved. The only frame building remaining in proximity to the district that was built before 1906 is the Pierre Wibaux House, located just to the east of the district. The existing frame buildings in the district include the Gertensen Building (1906-1910) located at 116 South Wibaux Street, the Murn Building (WOT 11, L4) which faces Orgain Avenue (1910-1914), and the two-story Crescent Hardware (1911) at 201 South Wibaux Street. The Gertensen building is a one-story building that has lost its integrity of materials and design with the addition of new vertical wood panel grooved siding. The Murn Building also is a one-story building with a gable roof, false front, and stone wall foundation, which, despite the addition of some simulated brick asphalt siding, still possesses sufficient integrity to be a contributing element in the district. The Crescent Hardware building (Photo 10) occupies a highly visible corner location in the historic district and contributes significantly to its character with its two-story size, clipped corner, front and corner parapet, full metal dentilated cornice, and pressed metal siding.

However, the character of the historic district is determined primarily by its one- and two-story commercial brick buildings. The one-story buildings were built between 1905 and 1917 and include the Orgain Building (1905) at 101 South Wibaux Street, the Dawson County Bank Building (1905-07) at 105 South Wibaux Street, the Smith Saloon (1904-1906) at 112 South Wibaux Street, the Gem Theater (1910-1914) at 112 West Orgain, and the Milton

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Garage (1917) at the corner of West Orgain and "E" Street. The Orgain Building (Photo 11) and the Dawson County Bank Building were typical commercial brick buildings of the period with corbelled brick cornices, corbelled dentils, corner brick pilasters, and raised checkerboard masonry panels just below the cornices, but they have lost their integrity of materials and design because of exterior remodeling and are noncontributing buildings.

The Smith Saloon (now the City Hall and Library, Photo 12) is an excellent example of early twentieth century commercial architecture, with front parapet and battlements, corner pilasters, a tiered belt course with modillions, recessed doorway with flanking brick pilasters, plain architrave, and concrete hood with ornamental concrete support brackets. It is a primary element in the district. The Gem Theater (Photo 13) is actually a frame building with a brick facade featuring polychroming, stretcher bond relief belt courses, recessed rectangular panels, and concrete belt course dividing the upper and lower halves of the building. It is a contributing building. The Milton Garage (Photo 14) is a large, rectangular, three-bay polychrome masonry building with a domed roof and a facade consisting of a three-tiered parapet, each parapet with a two-tiered stretcher bond cornice, the lower one with corbelled dentils. The windows have stretcher lintels and header sills. The garage has good integrity with the exception of a rear concrete block addition and is a contributing element in the district.

The historic two-story brick buildings of the commercial district are key in defining the historic character of the district. They include the Rucker building (built in two stages between 1903 and 1909) at 100 South Wibaux Street, the Pickering Hotel (1906) at 113 West Orgain Avenue, the First National Bank Building or Kinney Block (1910) at 123 South Wibaux Street, Fong's Restaurant (1910) at 114 South Wibaux Street, the Chappell Block (1911) at 1907 South Wibaux Street, the Woodburn Building (1917) at 126 South Wibaux Street, and the Clark-Burgess Building (1916) at 115 South Wibaux Street. Almost all of these buildings exhibit transitional design elements between the classical and the more modern, less ornamental commercial design schools. The First National Bank block (1906) at 125 South Wibaux Street has been extensively remodeled and has lost its design and materials integrity. (Photo 15)

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The Rucker Building (Photos 1 and 2) was originally a one-story brick saloon to which a second floor was added in 1909 by Kalmen Construction Company. It occupies the southwest corner of Wibaux Street and Orgain Avenue. It is a typical early twentieth century commercial structure, with a corbelled brick cornice, brick belt courses, and segmental arches above wooden, double-hung windows. The building has lost some integrity of materials and design with the infill of the front corner entryway, the addition of new paneling and metal frame doors and windows and the addition of a small cinder block addition in the back. It is a contributing building in the district.

The Pickering Hotel (Photo 16) was built in three stages during the historical period between 1906 and 1912. A fourth section was added at the rear of the building in 1980. The hotel is a brick building with a flat roof, three front sections divided by brick pilasters, a vertical and horizontal stretcher cornice, and a stone-faced belt course forming arches over the second floor windows. The east two-thirds of the lower level of the building has been remodeled with the addition of stucco, a plate glass window, and the replacement of one of the arched downstairs windows with a doorway, causing some loss of design and material integrity. A modern addition has been constructed at the rear of the hotel. However, the building is still a contributing element in the historic district.

The Louie Fong Restaurant building, (Photo 17) built in 1910 by Kalmen Construction, is similar to the Milton Garage and the Smith Saloon with its corner battlements. It also features a cornice of corbelled brick over vertical, inset brick stretcher ornamentation and two upstairs wood frame windows with two-tiered header relief arches. The lower level has lost some integrity of design and materials with the addition of a shingle canopy and shingle siding. Stucco has been added to the side and rear walls. The building is a contributing element in the district.

The most architecturally significant of the Wibaux commercial buildings are the Chappell Block and the Woodburn Building, both of which are primary elements in the district. The Chappell Block (Photo 18) was built in 1911 at cost of \$30,000. This large building includes three commercial lots and displays elements of late Renaissance Revival style and the Chicago School. It is

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constructed of stretcher bond polychrome Hebron brick, stone, metal and glass and has a cast iron store front. The building employs three major bays and three vertical zones. The major bays are separated by upper and lower level minor bays; the lower level section features cartouche windows above the street-level entryways. The bays are also separated by corbelled, dogtooth vertical ribbing and the horizontal zones are enlivened by a combination of relief and polychrome brick detailing. The cornice is plain with crown molding and dentils and a parapet above it with recessed brick panels and continuation of the ribbing that separates the bays. The building was officially determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places on March 9, 1981.

The Woodburn Building (Photo 19) was constructed in 1917. It is a stretcher bond brick commercial building with five front bays and eight side bays, gently sloping gable parapets, terra cotta-framed door and window openings, and polychrome and relief belt courses with numerous terra cotta medallions which run above T-shaped terra cotta medallions on the front and side of the structure. The front door is recessed with a concrete hood supported by terra cotta brackets. The street level of the lower southeast corner has been remodeled, but otherwise the structure possesses generally good integrity.

More modern-appearing, less decorative buildings include the Kinney Block (Photo 20) and the Clark and Burgess Building (Photo 21). The former is a large, two-lot, commercial block built in 1910 by the Wibaux Improvement Company. It has five front and seven side bays, an elaborate corbelled cornice, and a corbelled brick belt course dividing the upper and lower floors. The upstairs windows are wood frame, double-hung 1/1 with flat stretcher arches and a continuous concrete sill that serves as a second belt course running on the front and side of this corner lot building. Lower-level, exterior remodeling is evident on the south side of the building toward the rear. The building shares a concrete canopy with the building located to the east of it with a resultant loss of some integrity, but is a contributing building in the district. The Clark and Burgess Building was constructed in 1916. It is a brick and stucco building with a stepped roof, three front bays, a centered doorway with chevron and diamond brick detailing between it and the window above it, a concrete belt course, and six three-tiered, decorative relief

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panels, with alternating rows of vertical and horizontal stretcher courses. The building possesses good integrity and is a contributing building in the district.

Noncontributing buildings, in addition to the historic buildings that have lost material and design integrity through remodeling, consist of buildings constructed since the second world war. These include the Stelter's meat market, a one-story concrete block building constructed in 1946 and located at 120 South Wibaux Street; Priess Clothing Store, a one-story, clay tile and brick-faced building constructed in 1946 and located at 118 South Wibaux Street; and the U. S. Post Office Building (Photo 22) constructed in 1946 and located at 115 East First Avenue South. Altogether, the ratio of noncontributing buildings to the total number of buildings in the district is 7 to 19. Four of the noncontributing buildings were built before 1920 and three after 1920.

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List of buildings within Wibaux Commercial Historic District

<u>Address</u>	<u>Historical Name & Date</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
111 West Orgain	Gem Theater, 1915	Western commercial	contributing
West Orgain	Murn Bldg, 1910-14	frame commercial	contributing
113 West Orgain	Pickering Hotel, 1906-12	Italianate	contributing
West Orgain	Milton Garage, 1917	Queen Anne commercial	contributing
100 South Wibaux	Rucker Bldg, 1903, 1909	Western commercial	contributing
110 South Wibaux	Clark Hardware Co., 1916	Western commercial	contributing
114 South Wibaux	Fong Restaurant, 1910	Queen Anne commercial	contributing
112 South Wibaux	Smith Saloon, 1904-06	Queen Anne commercial	primary
116 South Wibaux	Gertensen Bldg, 1906-10	remodeled	noncontributing
118 South Wibaux	Priess Store, 1946	remodeled	noncontributing
120 South Wibaux	Stetler's Market, 1946	concrete block	noncontributing
126 South Wibaux	Woodburn Bldg, 1917	Renaissance	primary
101 South Wibaux	Orgain Co., 1905	remodeled	noncontributing
105 South Wibaux	Dawson Bank, 1905-07	remodeled	noncontributing
107 South Wibaux	Chappell Block, 1911	Renaissance Revival	primary
121 South Wibaux	First National Bank, 1906	remodeled	noncontributing
125 South Wibaux	Kinney Block, 1910	Western commercial	contributing
115 1st South	U. S. Post Office, 1949	Western commercial	noncontributing
201 South Wibaux	Crescent Hardware, 1910	frame commercial	primary

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture
commerce
politics/government

Period of Significance

1903-1917

Significant Dates

1905
1910
1911

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

W.A. Orgain; H.W. Rucker; S.B. Chappell

Architect/Builder

Multiple, see below.

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

The Wibaux Commercial Historic District is the product of the evolution of a historic eastern Montana cattletown and shipping and supply center (originally known as Mingsville) to a historic farming community by the turn of the century. It is associated with Pierre Wibaux, a pioneering French cattleman who first developed the area as a ranching community and also influenced its transition to a turn-of-the-century farming community and commercial center. (The historic buildings most closely associated with Wibaux are the Pierre Wibaux House and St. Peter's Church, both located outside the boundaries of the commercial historic district.) The existing commercial district consists of buildings constructed between 1903 and 1917, the highpoint of Wibaux's growth and influence as a farming and trading center in eastern Montana. Most of these buildings are commercial one- and two-story brick buildings that display architectural features reflecting the transition between the revival movements and the the Chicago (Sullivan-esque) School. Located on the Northern Pacific Railroad line from the time it was founded, Wibaux is one of the oldest communities in eastern Montana and was important as a pre-1900 cattle town and shipping and supply center and as a farming community between 1903 and 1920, when the existing commercial buildings were constructed.

Historical Background

Wibaux was located historically in what early Euroamericans regarded as prime cattle-grazing country with its native grasses, gently sloping valleys, and numerous coulees and draws that afforded cattle protection during winter storms. However, the presence of the Sioux Indians, the buffalo, the lack of transportation, and proximity of Wibaux to the badlands inhibited early settlement. The defeat of the Sioux and the other area Indian tribes in the late 1870s opened the way for the

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completion of the first northern transcontinental rail route. The construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad to Wibaux in 1881 removed the last barriers to the opening of the Wibaux area to settlement by speeding the removal of the buffalo and by providing transportation to and markets for the area. Other early transportation routes near Wibaux include the Fort Keogh-to-Fort Abraham Lincoln stage route and the Wibaux-to-Ekalaka freight line. The former was established in 1881 and connected Miles City with Bismarck. It originally traversed the southern tip of Wibaux County, but was later diverted to a more southerly route to avoid the badlands. The Wibaux-to-Ekalaka freight line was established in 1882 and operated until the 1920s because a railroad was never built to Ekalaka.

The history of Wibaux dates from 1881, with the establishment of Keith about a mile east of the present location of Wibaux at Smith Crossing. The settlement consisted of only a few dugouts, a post office, and a railroad boxcar that served as a railroad construction headquarters. The railroad station was known as McClelland. At about the same time, another settlement sprang up in the vicinity of the present-day location of Wibaux. It consisted of a railroad boxcar that the Northern Pacific moved to the location to serve as a railroad station and was located on the Morris Nolan homestead, where Nolan had built a two-story house which became a gathering place for area settlers. Pierre Wibaux (who arrived in the area in 1883 and who was to develop one of the largest cattle ranches in the United States), along with other area ranchers, also convinced the Northern Pacific Railroad to build stockyards at the new location. This settlement originally was known as Mingusville.

Pierre Wibaux was not only responsible for the present location of the town, but was primarily responsible for the economic development of the area and, to great extent, for developing and civilizing the town that came to bear his name by 1894. Wibaux was from a distinguished French family which had operated a textile business in Roubaix since 1810. Wibaux traveled to England to learn more about the textile business and, while there, developed an interest in the cattle business. He traveled to Chicago to learn the marketing end of the business and traveled west in 1883 with the Marquis de Mores, at which time he selected land about 12 miles north of Keith for the location of a ranch. He originally went into partnership with Gus Grisy, another

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Frenchman from Roubaix, but by 1885 had dissolved the partnership and had gone into business for himself. The ranch was located in the valley of Beaver Creek starting ten miles north of the Northern Pacific tracks and extending to the mouth of the creek. Wibaux fared well during the infamous winter of 1886-1887 and, with capital borrowed from his brother, bought up remnants of the herds from discouraged ranchers and from the numerous eastern- and foreign-owned cattle companies attempting to recover as much as possible from their investments. By the mid-1890s, Wibaux was one of the largest cattle ranchers in the United States, owning about 65,000 head of cattle and about 300 horses. He sold between 3000 and 9000 head of cattle annually. By the late 1890s, however, as the open range began to be broken up and the area opened to farming, he began to decrease his operations.

The rapid influx of settlers to the Lower Yellowstone Valley and the Beaver Creek Valley eliminated the open range, increased the number of farms and the production of agricultural products, and the number of railroad lines and towns. These changes in the area's population and its economy, were caused by several developments--the popularity of the dryland farming movement, the effort of the Northern Pacific Railroad to encourage settlement in the area by farmers and to sell railroad lands to these farmers, and the unusually heavy rainfall of the first 15 years of the 1900s that resulted in a number of bumper crops. By 1906, real estate promoters were buying up the great ranches and selling them as farm properties. These lands included the Wibaux Ranch, the Freeman Tract (23,000 acres), the T D Ranch (11,000 acres), and other tracts belonging to names closely associated with the development of Wibaux--Frank Cannon, Andrew Smith, S. B. Chappell, and Harry Mullendore.

By 1910, the Wibaux Pioneer was declaring that agriculture was the area's "chief industry", although pointing out that the town still enjoyed a substantial ranch trade because it was still the center of trade for tributary areas. The stock industry was not displaced as it was in other parts of the state during this time, but assumed a different form. Farming had arrived as an area industry, and, despite the setbacks of the 1920s and the 1930s, had become a permanent, and for a time, the predominant part of the Wibaux-area economy.

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Wibaux derives its significance as a commercial district via its former position as a major center of open range cattle ranching (1883-1900) and farming (1900-1920) in eastern Montana. The number of cattle in Dawson increased dramatically from 341 in 1882 to 12,812 in 1883 and 32,495 in 1884. In 1885, 17,000 head (about 792 carloads) were shipped from Wibaux, making it, according to Pierre Wibaux, the top shipping point on the entire route of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Between 1891 and 1896, 3000 carloads of stock were shipped from Wibaux. Also, in 1895, the Berry-Boice Cattle Company and Towers and Crudgell drove between 15,000 and 20,000 cattle up from Texas and grazed them on the ranges south of town. By this date, Wibaux also had become a significant sheep ranching area.

As a result of this activity, the town of Wibaux had, by the mid-1890s, become an immediate supply point of an area extending 75 miles north and 75 miles south and 25 miles both east and west. The local merchants enjoyed an extensive business since the town was the shipping point for most of the cattle raised in the area. By the mid 1890s, the Orgain Company store had established extensive trade with Ekalaka (a town about 80 miles to the south) amounting to about \$33,000 to \$50,000 a year.

The town of Wibaux remained a small settlement as of the mid-1890s and struggled to achieve status beyond that of cattle town. The town consisted of only about a dozen houses in addition to the businesses, which consisted of two hotels, a livery barn, a blacksmith shop, two mercantile stores, and two saloons, one of which was located in one of the hotels. In 1892, the Northern Pacific built a new railroad station to replace the old boxcar, and Wibaux, with Henry Boice of the Berry-Boice Cattle Company, built a combination office/weekday residence and had the grounds landscaped by his French gardener, Jules Accart. The office building, which is located just outside the commercial district, still possesses good integrity, although it has been moved on the site and now faces west rather than south, as it did originally. Wibaux also convinced the Northern Pacific Railroad to build new and larger stockyards to replace the ones that had burned in 1894. In 1895, upon the urging of his father, Wibaux donated \$2,000 toward the construction of St. Peter's Catholic

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Church, still located to the west of the commercial district. In 1894, the town was platted.

The year 1900 marked the end of the predominance of the large rancher and the open range in the Wibaux area, and, as this occurred, Wibaux experienced a transition from the cattle town and shipping center it had been since the early 1890s to the center of a farm community that was well defined by 1910 and continued to grow until 1917, the first of five years of uninterrupted drought. The core of the existing business district began to take shape in 1906, when a fire destroyed a significant part of the old central business district. Between 1906 and 1917, when most of the existing commercial buildings were built, the railroad spurline section, including the grain elevators, was constructed (1909; 1911-1914), the town was incorporated (1911), new additions were platted, Wibaux County was established, the first of the north-end railroad viaducts was built, concrete sidewalks and water and sewer systems were constructed, a city park was established, and new churches and schools were built. The population of Wibaux, which was 328 in 1900, increased to 489 in 1910, and 611 in 1920. Dawson County, which had a population of 2,443 in 1900, saw an increase to 12,725 in 1910.

The most symbolic event in the town reflecting the changes during this period was the construction of the Northern Pacific spurline in 1909, which created a storage and a loading center for the region's agricultural products. Wibaux businessmen and farmers organized to build five grain elevators between 1906 and 1914 to provide the Wibaux community with a grain marketing outlet. None of these remain. The existing elevators were built after 1940. Construction of the Heaton Lumber Company and the Midland Coal Company lumber yards in 1908 and 1909, respectively, and the Slater brick plant in 1910 were indicative of the increased industrial, commercial, and residential construction of the period.

By 1910 the commercial aspect of the town had grown to include two banks, two hotels and two restaurants, four saloons, a post office, three churches, two barber shops, two lumber yards, one meat market, two livery stables, two auto liveries, two general stores, two hardware stores, four real estate offices, one saddle and harness shop, one physician, two town halls, one newspaper, one public school, two blacksmith shops, three elevators, one

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bakery, two attorneys, one jeweler, and one drug store. In December 1910, the Wibaux Pioneer estimated that \$171,000 worth of construction had occurred that year alone, including \$92,000 in commercial construction and \$71,000 in residential construction.

Wibaux incorporated in 1911 to deal with these rapid changes, especially the construction of utilities. The subway and viaduct for the railroad tracks were built in 1912. In 1915 the city approved \$40,000 in bonds to construct water and sewer systems and the Wibaux Heat, Light and Power Company constructed a power plant in town. Sidewalk construction and street paving began in earnest in 1917.

Several of the existing buildings in the commercial area are associated with individuals who influenced the commercial development of Wibaux during the time it was a ranching center and a farming community. They and the buildings in which they worked are discussed here to illustrate the kinds of businesses historically located within the commercial district and the backgrounds and relationships of those who owned and operated them. W. A. Orgain, who owned the Orgain Building at 101 S. Wibaux St., was one of the early Wibaux settlers with ties to the ranching period. Orgain was a native of Texas, who came to Wibaux from South Dakota in 1888 who worked for Pierre Wibaux from 1888 to 1890. He and Frank Cannon purchased the W. R. Fountain store in 1891 and Orgain purchased Cannon's interest in the store in 1896 and incorporated his business as the W. A. Orgain Company in 1904. The Orgain store conducted business over a wide area. Orgain owned a great deal of land in the Wibaux town site and in several sections outside of town. He organized the Dawson County Bank (located at 10 S. Wibaux St.) in 1902 and served as its president until 1906. He also was the first president of the Wibaux Chamber of Commerce, director of the Montana Life Insurance Company, and an extensive stockholder in three grain elevators.

Another building associated with Wibaux as a commercial center that possesses good integrity is the Crescent Hardware Building. It was constructed in 1911 when the property was owned by William Bautz. The business came to be operated by Henry B. and Edward Hansen, W. R. Fehling, and Edward Sherman. The Hansens and

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Sherman were from Lyle, Minnesota. Sherman and his son later bought the business and operated it for several years.

W. H. Rucker, who owned the Rucker Building at 100 S. Wibaux St., was a native of Missouri and accompanied Orgain from South Dakota to Wibaux in 1888. He too worked for Wibaux and, in 1890, opened his first saloon. He built the Rucker Building in 1903 and added the second in 1909. Rucker operated a saloon on the first floor. An opera house and public hall were located on the second floor. Rucker helped organize Wibaux County and was one of the directors of the Wibaux County Bank. S. B. Chappell, who constructed the Chappell Block in 1911, was another prominent citizen, whose career spanned the ranching days and the farming period. He was a native of Mississippi who helped his father operate a 500-acre plantation in Louisiana. He hunted buffalo in Texas in the 1870s and worked on ranches there in the 1880s. He worked as a cattle buyer and shipper in Kansas from 1884 to 1890 and moved to Dawson County near Wibaux, where he became one of the largest horse ranchers in the area. Chappell helped organize the First State Bank of Wibaux and was a stockholder in the Farmer's Elevator Company. He was elected to the state senate as a Democrat in 1912. J. C. Kinney, after whom the Kinney Block is named, was from Dixon, Illinois, and came to Wibaux in 1892. He was first in the meat and grocery business and, in 1906, helped organize the First National Bank and served as its first president. The bank is still operating in Wibaux today. Kinney was defeated in a bid as the Republican Party candidate for Lieutenant Governor in 1912, and he helped organize Wibaux County in 1914.

The basic core of the commercial district as it exists today is the product of the period extending from 1903 to 1917, the period of the greatest growth in Wibaux's history. It was a period of general prosperity and physical growth based on that prosperity and the hope that it would continue indefinitely. Wibaux was a significant farming and trading center in eastern Montana at that time, despite the existence of Glendive, about 30 miles to the northeast. However, what occurred in Wibaux was repeated throughout Montana. The commercial districts in many of Montana's small towns, especially those in the eastern part of the state, were the product of the first 20 years of the twentieth century and most of its historic commercial buildings date from that period. When other parts of the state began to suffer from the drought and depression of the 1920s and 1930s, Wibaux did too.

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Wibaux Commercial Historic District

Architecture

The Commercial Historic District, which was established in the early 1880s as a cattle town, is a step-shaped commercial pocket in a small farming community located just 6 miles from the North Dakota border. It is clearly distinguished by its historic commercial buildings, most of which are one- and two-story brick, and is clearly demarcated from the other sections of town, which are primarily residential. The district displays an architectural cohesiveness and a sense of time and place in that all of its existing historic commercial buildings were built between 1903 and 1917. Most are one- and two-story brick constructions and are basically similar in design and materials. The architectural styles of the commercial buildings are typical of early twentieth century small western towns, exhibiting elements of both the revival movements with parapets, battlements, dentilated cornices, and arched windows and the modern, commercial styles with flat, square surfaces and polychroming. The two distinctive commercial brick buildings of the district are the Chappell Building at 105-109 S. Wibaux St. and the Woodburn Building at 126 S. Wibaux. Both represent transitional designs spanning the Classical Revival and Chicago School traditions and display more detailing and better workmanship than the other historic commercial buildings in the district. The one historic commercial frame building that lends architectural distinction to the district is the Crescent Hardware Building at 201 S. Wibaux St., a two-story corner building with a clipped corner, large metal cornice, and pressed metal siding. These three buildings are primary structures. Workmanship is generally good, especially in the Chappell Block, the Woodburn Building, and the Smith Saloon.

The noncontributing buildings constitute only seven of 19 buildings, and only one of these is over one story. The basic character of the district remains intact, despite the existence of these noncontributing elements, only three of which were built after 1940. The most recent structure, the U.S. Post Office, was built in 1949, and is similar in style and materials to other two-story buildings in the district. Three of the noncontributing buildings are historic buildings that have lost their integrity of design, materials and workmanship due to remodeling. The most intrusive of these remodeled buildings is the Orgain Building, which was originally a brick building that has been stuccoed on its facade and side wall. Most of the changes that

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have occurred to the historic commercial buildings since the 1920s consist of street-level remodeling that only partly conceals the architectural styles characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Wibaux's commercial district is part of that tradition.

Contractors known to have worked in Wibaux include J. B. Morrison of Glendive and Wibaux, who constructed the Orgain building; Kalmen Construction Company of Miles City, which constructed the Louie Fong Restaurant, part of the Pickering Hotel, and the Rucker Building; and Charles Carmichael and Company of Miles City, which constructed the Kinney Block. Extensive research failed to disclose the names of any architects associated with buildings in the district.

Government

Wibaux has been a political center of some importance since its early history because of its close association with Pierre Wibaux and the influence he exercised during the town's early history. It was largely through the influence of Wibaux that the town was incorporated and named after him in 1894.

The town assumed more importance as a political center when it became the county seat of Wibaux County, the year the county was created in 1914. The effort to create Wibaux County got underway in 1911, through the efforts of those who also were the most prominent businessmen in the city--Charles White, editor of the Pioneer Gazette, W. A. Orgain, E. E. Jordan, E. F. Fisher, W. H. Rucker, Al Davis, and J. C. Kinney. Their efforts were rewarded in 1914 with the creation of the county from portions of Dawson and Custer County.

The original courthouse was located in the old Wibaux public school which, in 1912, became the Davis Opera House. The county purchased the building in 1914 and the courthouse was located there until 1919, when the building burned down. The courthouse was located in the Woodburn Building for two years, and in various other town buildings, until, in 1923, the county purchased the old Smith Saloon Building, which was by then the Wibaux County Bank. That building, located at 112 South Wibaux Street, served as the county courthouse and jail for a number of years. A new courthouse was built in 1952. No other building in Wibaux carries as close an association with the history of the town as a local political center.

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has back issues of the Wibaux newspapers and historical photographs. The Montana Historical Society has the Wibaux newspapers on microfilm available on interlibrary loan.

Local residents with information on early Wibaux history include Joe Burke, Miriam Breitenfelt, Mark Bordsen, Russell Welsh, Francis Efta, Banner Stair, LeRoy Priess, and Wayne Marcus.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

The most useful source for Wibaux area history is Irene James Jones' Trail Along Beaver Creek, which contains information on the City of Wibaux (and its predecessors), including historical buildings and biographies of Wibaux pioneers. It also contains information on early Wibaux County history, including pioneer ranchers, early towns, and numerous anecdotes. The best sources for information on Wibaux buildings are the early newspapers, including the Glendive Independent and the Wibaux Pioneer. Especially helpful is the special June 20, 1896 edition of the Glendive Independent and the special August 1939 edition of the Wibaux Pioneer Gazette.

Local repositories with information on Wibaux are the Wibaux Public Library and the Glendive Public Library. The Wibaux Pioneer Gazette

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 4.5

UTM References

A

1,3	5,6,17,0,0	5,3,0,3,8,7,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

1,3	5,6,18,4,0	5,3,0,3,6,6,5
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

1,3	5,6,18,5,6	5,3,0,3,8,3,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

1,3	5,6,17,3,0	5,3,0,3,7,3,0
Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1-11, 15-20, Block 11 and Lots 7-19, 26-27, Block 10, Original Wibaux Townsite; Lot 6, Block 13, Murn's First Addition.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The Wibaux Commercial Historic District is defined by its concentration of commercial buildings built from 1903 to 1917, which is clearly set off from the adjoining area by the change in character and building type of the buildings in these areas. In most cases, there is also open space separating the historic core of commercial buildings from the nearest buildings outside the district.

See continuation sheet

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