

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

JUN 15 1987

date entered

JUL 1 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Historic Resources of Bridger

and or common same

2. Location

street & number the incorporation limits of Bridger n/a not for publication

city, town Bridger n/a vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Carbon County code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
multiple resource	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Carbon County Courthouse

street & number North Broadway

city, town Red Lodge state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Bridger Historic Resource Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984-1987 federal state county local

depository for survey records Montana State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Helena state Montana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>ca. 1918</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Bridger Multiple Resource Area encompasses all properties located within the incorporated city limits of Bridger, Montana, as well as those buildings and structures located just east of town near the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. Bridger is a small community (population 730) located in south-central Montana and centrally situated in the Clarks Fork Valley. The Valley is bisected in a north-south direction by the Clarks Fork River, the Northern Pacific Railroad line, State Highway #310, and a major irrigation canal. The Pryor Mountains rise to the east and the western edge of the Valley is defined by a north-south trending bench, which held the commercially exploitable coal deposits that instigated the initial settlement of the area.

The eastern portion of Carbon County in which the town of Bridger is located was withdrawn from the Crow Indian Reservation in 1892, and opened to white settlement. Shortly thereafter, county surveyor T.P. McDonald located a coal seam along the west bench, from which he took samples to send to Butte for evaluation. The coal was tested at the smelter of copper mining magnate William A. Clark, who was so impressed with its qualities that he determined to purchase and develop the source for use at his copper smelter.

In 1898, W. A. Clark, his son Charles W. Clark, and partners A.H. Wethey of Butte, Walter Cooper of Bozeman, and C.E. McBroom of Spokane incorporated the Bridger Coal Mining Company and began to develop the mine, which was located about two miles to the west of the center of the present town of Bridger. In addition to facilities and equipment necessary for the mining and removal of the coal, the Company built a school, a general store, boarding houses for single men, and numerous residences for employees' families at the mine camp, which totaled around 50 buildings.

While Clark prepared his mine for production, he also arranged for transportation of the coal. The Northern Pacific Railway Company had built a branch line from Laurel to Red Lodge in 1889 to access the coal deposits on that side of the County. Clark secured a deal with the Railroad to use the formerly proposed Billings-Clarks Fork-Cooke City right-of-way for a branch line from Rockvale, about 11 miles south of Laurel on the Red Lodge line, to what was to become the town of Bridger.

Despite the rather self-contained coal camp the Bridger Coal Mining Company had constructed, a host of other entrepreneurs set themselves up nearby to take advantage of the payroll at the mine. Since much of the land in the Clarks Fork Valley had been filed on as homestead entries by the late 1890's, but not yet patented, the newcomers were unable to acquire property upon which to establish their businesses. The only land they dared encroach upon was the county road right-of-way. So narrow was the space available for building that the series of wood frame shacks, which sprang up to house saloons and small shops, were situated lengthwise along the road. One could enter a building, walk through to the rear door, exit, and enter the front door of another building. This chain of structures end-to-end proceeded for more than a mile and a half. According to the Red Lodge Picket, it was "unkept and uncouth and unsymmetrical" in appearance.

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While the primary objective of most of the businesses of "String Town" was to separate the miners from their paychecks, others were established to get their share from the entrepreneurs. Charles A. Heatherington and his wife Grace, for example, built a two-story, wood frame boarding house in 1899 and provided shelter and sustenance for the saloon keepers, restaurant owners, building contractors, and store clerks. Heatherington also ran the town's first livery and operated a stage line to Red Lodge, the county seat, and to the neighboring communities of Gebo, Fromberg, and Joliet. His transport business provided for commercial and social contact with the other settlements in the County, as well as mail and newspaper delivery.

Operating the mine to fuel his Butte smelter was W.A. Clark's primary concern, but the developing settlement offered another opportunity for profit. Clark incorporated the Bridger Coal and Improvement Company, and partner A.H. Wethey purchased rights to the unpatented land of two homesteaders upon which to lay out a townsite. In July, 1900, Malcolm Swan surveyed the townsite of Bridger between the tippie of the mine and the Northern Pacific depot. The lots, blocks, streets, and alleys were well defined, but property rights still were not. The land ceded from the Crow Reservation had to be legally described, and the homesteaders had to receive patent before any official transactions could occur. In the meantime, String Town residents proceeded to move their buildings onto the city lots under lease, until such time as the Company could sell them. Building ownership and transfers from the original String Town settlement through 1906 when title was cleared are difficult to follow. Many of the String Town buildings that were relocated were gradually replaced by more substantial, masonry structures, and the Heatherington Boarding House is one of a very limited number of buildings from the initial settlement that exists today.

The commercial core of Bridger lines Main Street, which is also north-south State Highway #310, and extends along the intersecting east-west Broadway toward the railroad depot. Most of the commercial structures are one- or two-story masonry buildings of stone or brick, built to lot lines, and suffering today from incompatible storefront alterations. The largest existing commercial block, and the only commercial building included in this nomination, is the Glidden Mercantile, built in 1905. Standing as a detached, two-story, brick block at the north end of Main Street, the Glidden Mercantile is the only intact, architect-designed building in the community. It is a classic of western commercial design, featuring a central, recessed, double-door entry, a fully glazed facade with a wide, small pane, leaded, amethyst glass transom above, regularly spaced one-over-one double hung windows on the upper level, and finished with a corbeled brick parapet. Designed by J.G. Link of the Billings firm of Link and Haire, the Glidden Mercantile retains complete historic integrity and is architecturally significant in a statewide context due to its excellent state of preservation.

The older residential portions of town are lined with mature deciduous and evergreen trees. There are four park areas in Bridger, the oldest being located

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on western half-half behind the commercial district. This park is shaded by trees planted in 1909 and watered by a major irrigation canal that runs along the eastern edge.

The Original Plat and the First Addition of Bridger were laid out with 30' x 35' lots oriented east-west. However, building location and construction within the young townsite took on a more haphazard appearance due to lot subdivision and an erratic pattern of building orientation. The Bridger Coal Mining Co. Employee's Residence, the Nutting Rental, and the Heatherington Boarding House are all situated on lots that were further subdivided north-south, rather than east-west. The Bridger Tracts, originally three acres each, were subdivided when Glidden and Corey prepared to construct their houses.

Early 20th century residential construction in Bridger followed the common pattern of small town development where locally available building materials and vernacular architectural designs were employed. Local builders such as Archibald McLean, Eric Forsman, J.A. Johnson, Maurice Levander, and A.L. Druckmiller were responsible for both the design and construction of most of the buildings in the community.

With one exception, housing in Bridger is of wood frame construction. The Bridger Mine Company Employee's Residence, which is the oldest documented building in town, built ca. 1898, is easily recognizable as a company-built house by its hip-roofed, four-square form. It has a full width front porch with turned support posts and one-over-one double hung windows. Also of simple, wood frame construction are the Heatherington Boarding House, built in 1899, and the one-story, L-shaped Nutting Rental built ca. 1905. The more architecturally sophisticated, Arts and Crafts style L.A. Corey House and the Samuel H. Glidden House, both built between 1906 and 1907, are trimmed in sandstone and river cobble, respectively. The Craftsman style Archibald McLean House, built in 1907, the transitional Queen Anne style Samuel Gebo House, built in 1909, the Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style Raymond Hough House, built in 1910, and the Craftsman Bungalow style Stephen Hughes House, built ca. 1918, and Dr. Marcus House, built in 1921, are all of frame construction, with the Marcus House exhibiting river cobble battered columns. The first story of the Eric Forsman House (1907) is of cut sandstone, and this is the only stone residence in the community. Quarrying in Bridger Canyon for the brown sandstone that was used in the construction of the L.A. Corey and the Eric Forsman houses, and the red sandstone used to trim the Glidden Mercantile, was of limited economic importance.

The Methodist-Episcopal Church, built in 1905-6, exhibits the characteristics common to Methodist church design in small, western communities. The plans and specifications for the building may have been supplied by the church diocese, although no documentation has been found to date to support this supposition. Local stone mason Eric Forsman prepared the foundation for this large, wood frame

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church, which was built using materials and labor donated by the congregation. The building is L-shaped and has bell tower and entry set in the intersection of the two ells. The overall plan, corner bell tower, and large, tripartite Gothic windows in the gable ends are all features which typify the vernacular expression of the denomination's church designs in Montana.

The Bridger Opera House, constructed in 1907 by a group of local boosters and volunteers, was the primary social gathering place in Bridger for over 30 years. This large, wood frame building with its gambrel roof and centrally placed double-door resembles a typical Clarks Fork Valley dairy barn, although the interior was left open (without a hay loft floor) and the long side walls are punctuated by regularly spaced, large, two-over-two double hung windows. The entire floor of the Opera House, which was used during the early years primarily as a dance hall, is of tongue and groove maple.

While coal development was the impetus for development of the town of Bridger, the local economy was inextricably tied to the agricultural productivity of the Clarks Fork Valley. As a shipping point along the railroad, Bridger served the needs of local farmers and ranchers with its grain elevators, seed cleaning plants, fertilizer elevator, wool warehouse, and beet dump as well as its mercantile enterprises, farm implement dealers, schools, churches, and community hall. Bridger also was the depot for processing the honey from the bee keepers throughout the area, and the creamery made marketable products from the output of the dairy industry. While no stockyards remain along the railroad right-of-way today, cattle, hogs, sheep, and horses were also shipped out of Bridger. Abandonment of the rail line in 1981 has resulted in the dismantling or major remodeling of many industrial buildings located along the right-of-way during recent years. The Northern Pacific Railroad passenger depot, for example, experienced extensive remodeling when it was renovated to become a senior citizens' center in 1984. Today, the board and batten wool warehouse, built in 1900, is the only historic structure that remains to indicate Bridger's importance as a shipping point in the Clarks Fork Valley.

Renewed exploitation of the oil and gas fields in the Clarks Fork Valley following the Second World War occasioned another expansion in the building stock of Bridger. This construction boom resulted not only in many new housing starts and the renovation of most of the commercial buildings lining Main Street, but also encouraged the relocation to Bridger of at over forty small, wood frame residences from the neighboring coal mining communities of Bearcreek and Washoe, which were in decline. The vast majority of these relocated buildings have been altered by window changes, enclosed porches, residing, and additions.

Edrie Vinson, historian, and Carbon County Historic Preservation Officer, conducted the historic building inventory in Bridger in 1985-86. Extensive historical research was conducted by Phyllis Sundberg, Carol Temple, Leota Carlson, and Leona Kirley, all of Bridger. The Campbell Addition to the south,

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the Third Addition to the west, and the Teesdale Addition to the north were excluded from the survey, as no historic properties were present in these newly developed subdivisions. All properties within the survey boundary were inventoried, researched, photographed. Assessments of integrity and evaluations of historic and architectural significance for each building were completed by Edrie Vinson.

The buildings and structures included in this nomination are associated with the initial settlement and development of the community and the lives of original community builders, promoters, speculators, and long term business people. Of the 279 buildings inventoried, 44 are commercial, 8 are industrial or transportation oriented, and the remaining 227 are residential. The 16 historic resources listed below include one commercial building, a warehouse, a church and parsonage, a public hall, a boarding house, and a ten dwellings.

Property Name	Date	Description	Photo #
'Bridger Coal Co. Residence	ca.1898	1-story, hipped roof cottage	1
, Heatherington Boarding House	ca.1899	2-story, gable front, vernacular	2
. N.P.R.R. Wool Warehouse	1900	1-story, board and batten	3,4
. Glidden Mercantile	1905	2-story, brick, commercial	5,6,7
' Lillian Nutting Rental	ca.1905	1-story, ell-shaped, vernacular	9
/ Methodist-Episcopal Church	1905-6	frame ecclesiastical	9,10,11
. Methodist-Episcopal Parsonage	1912-13	1-1/2 story, gable front, vernacular	12
. Bridger Opera House	1907	1-story, gambrel roof, public hall	13
' L.A. Corey House	1906-7	1-1/2 story, Arts and Crafts style	14
. Samuel Glidden House	1906-7	1-1/2 story, Arts and Crafts style	15
. Eric Forsman House	1907	1-1/2 story, gambrel roof, vernacular	16,17
Archie McLean House	1907	1-story, Craftsman style	18
. Henry Gebo House	1909	2-story, late Queen Anne style	19
' Raymond Hough House	1910	2-story, Queen Anne/Colonial Revival	20
Stephen Hughes House	ca.1918	1-1/2 story Craftsman Bungalow	22
, Dr. Marcus House	1921	1-story, Craftsman Bungalow	21

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1898-1922 **Builder/Architect** multiple

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The historic resources of Bridger, Montana reflect social and economic life on the frontier of settlement during the early 20th century. The prosperity of the community of Bridger during the historic period, which spans from the late 1890's through the early 1920's, was subject to the economic vagaries of natural resource speculation and development. The kind and quality of construction found within the community relate to two concurrent turn-of-the-century developments: that of a planned, company-built mining camp and an adjacent commercial shantytown of haphazardly placed wooden, false-fronted buildings. During the first decade of most intensive coal development, Bridger gained additional significance as an agricultural supply and shipping point for the newly settled Clarks Fork River Valley. Substantial masonry buildings replaced the earlier squatter's shops and saloons, the mine camp buildings were relocated into town, and a number of more stylistically sophisticated residences were constructed by the town's leading citizens. Although some rather wild speculative investments in natural resource development led to a mid-1910's local economic crash, Bridger continued to thrive as a trading center for the area's farms and ranches throughout the historic period. Intensive exploitation in the Carbon County gas and oil fields during the 1940's and 1950's resulted in another construction boom in Bridger which affected the historic quality of the town's earlier architecture. This multiple resource area nomination includes sixteen independent resources that best represent that historic residential, commercial, and social development of this small, south-central Montana community.

Coal mining began on the west bench of the Clarks Fork Valley as early as 1896. By 1898, William A. Clark, the Butte mining magnate, and other investors had constructed a small company town, replete with workers' housing, two boarding houses, a school, and a company store. In 1900, Clark formed the Bridger Coal and Improvement Company and purchased rights to the unpatented homestead claims between the mine camp and the Clarks Fork River where a long line of wood frame, squatters' shacks called "String Town" had sprung up. Midway between the Bridger Coal Company mine tipple and the Northern Pacific Railroad depot, he had the townsite of Bridger platted. However, before Clark and his partners in the townsite company perfected title and began to actually sell lots in Bridger, he tired of the venture and sold his holdings to Samuel H. Glidden, a man who represented the interests of some "Minneapolis Capitalists," most notably Alfred F. Pillsbury of flour milling fortune.

"The Young Napoleon of the Clarks Fork" is what Bridger Tribune editor called Samuel H. Glidden in 1904 when he purchased the Carbon County interests of W.A. Clark, which included the coal mine and camp, the townsite, the water works, and the electric power plant. The title was well deserved, as Glidden took the Valley as if by conquest. In 1903, the year he moved west from Minneapolis, he bought out the Hiram Haskins store and moved it to a lot on Main Street, where he opened a mercantile. He next purchased the entire stock of the Bridger

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 200 acres

Quadrangle name Bridger, Mont.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 2	6 6 4 8 2 0	5 0 1 8 0 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 2	6 6 4 4 4 0	5 0 1 7 3 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 2	6 6 3 1 0 0	5 0 1 7 3 2 0
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D	1 2	6 6 3 0 8 0	5 0 1 7 9 0 0
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
---	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

The MRA includes the land area defined by the city limits of Bridger and includes a small parcel of land to the east of the city limits described as NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 22, Township 6 South; Range 23 East.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edrie Vinson, Carbon County Historic Preservation Officer

organization Carbon County Historic Pres. Office

date February, 1987

street & number Courthouse Annex, North Broadway

telephone 406-446-3157

city or town Red Lodge

state Montana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Marella Sheffy

title

SHPO

date

6-11-87

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

See Continuation Sheet for listing date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Improvement Company Store at the mine camp, added it to his inventory, and then announced that he would construct a large, new brick, business block. In 1905, the two story masonry 60' x 100' Glidden Mercantile store building was completed. Plans were drawn by J.G. Link, architect of Billings, and the buff-colored, pressed brick was laid by local mason Olin Weesh. The Glidden "Emporium" or Mercantile was the most successful of any of Glidden's schemes or investments.

Glidden settled on a homestead on Dry Creek (Golden) a few miles south of Bridger, and had a 14-room "mansion" constructed. He took an option on some "stucco fields" 7 miles southeast of Bridger, and planned to construct a narrow gauge railroad to the site to haul the stucco to town, where he would erect a modern mill to process it into plaster of Paris. In his spare time he incorporated and directed the first Carbon County Agricultural Fair. In 1904, he cultivated 100 acres on his homestead; engaged an Oregon nursery to plant a "model orchard" on his land; acquired and developed a "gold mine" just below the mouth of the Clarks Fork Canyon; invested heavily in oil prospecting in the Bridger Canyon; acquired and planned to develop a gypsum mine; and purchased the Samlan and Johnson coal mine near town. That year he also purchased the Free Press, Bridger's only newspaper, ran successfully as state senator on the Democratic party ticket, and served as Chairman of the "Clarks Fork Water Users Association."

Shortly after the sale of the Bridger Coal Company mine to Samuel Glidden, the mine manager, George Hough, announced plans to open a new vein of coal that would necessitate moving of the mine camp from the bench to the flat below, immediately west of the Bridger townsite. By this time, the townsite of Bridger was preferred as a residential site over the mine camp. The removal of the mine company houses to Bridger was started by Hough himself, when he had his "Mine Superintendent's" residence hauled to a lot on Second Street. By 1916, only eight of the company residences at the mine camp were in use, and at least ten, and perhaps as many as 18, had been moved into Bridger. By the late 1940's, no dwellings remained at the camp. Twenty-four mine company houses were identified in Bridger during the historic building survey in 1986. Most have been altered or personalized over the years, but one still retains a high level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, and serves as a pristine example of the kind and quality of housing provided for mine employees in 1898.

Speculative ventures in the Clarks Fork Valley ran rampant during the first decade of Bridger's history. Speculation in gold mines attracted some attention, although no such mines proved to be profitable. Water development schemes were numerous, and some proved very successful, such as the Sand Creek Canal, which was supplying irrigation water to farmers in the Clarks Fork Valley before the town of Bridger was platted. Numerous other, more ambitious plans for building irrigation systems, one of which would bring water from as far away as the East Rosebud River, were doomed to failure after initial construction problems were encountered. Samuel Glidden announced plans in 1909 to construct a large water

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power project on the Clarks Fork River, however these plans were never carried out.

Oil and gas speculation was the most prominent and the most devastating investment game in town. Shortly after the turn-of-the-century most of Carbon County was believed to be oil bearing and virtually every available section was under lease. Although there was a frenzy of drilling activity, only small portions of this vast area were ever tested. A great number of local residents were involved in oil speculation as well as investors from around the State, Minneapolis, and New York. L.A. Corey, who was Samuel Glidden's brother-in-law, was the prospecting supervisor for the Bridger Canyon Oil Co. George Hough, the mine manager, became vice president of the Shoshone Oil Company in 1909. Not until 1915 did Carbon County's first oil well come in. The strike was anti-climatic in that the Elk Basin dome was first discovered across the state line in Wyoming by the Ohio Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil.

While no great fortunes were made by the speculators in Bridger, those who worked on the prospecting crews and the merchants who supplied them fared well. On the other hand, a large number of local citizens lost their fortunes. Samuel Glidden and L.A. Corey lost so heavily they both left town in bankruptcy in 1915. Alfred F. Pillsbury ended up owning all of Glidden's investments, except for the ranch and the house in town. Glidden and Corey are perhaps the most extreme examples of over-speculation in the Clarks Fork Valley and the young town of Bridger, but they were not only ones to experience financial despair. George Hough and his brothers Raymond, Clint, William, and Guy, were all financially affected. George was the first to announce bankruptcy in January, 1914, followed in financial ruin within two years by the others. It is interesting to note that property in Bridger was often recorded in women's names. In the event that the men had to file bankruptcy, their wives could secure the family home from the creditors.

The Bridger entrepreneurs and speculators were not typical "get rich and get out" carpetbaggers. For the most part they were solid citizens, active in political and social affairs, and as eager to develop churches, schools, and social facilities as they were their businesses and the area's natural resource potential.

The Methodist-Episcopal church, organized in 1899 by Mrs. Thomas H. Barlow, owner of the Barlow Hotel, predated the founding of the town. When the townsite was platted, a site was dedicated for the church, and land was set aside for a school. Construction of the school started late in 1900. That building no longer stands, but the Methodist-Episcopal church and parsonage remain as important examples of the earliest development of religious institutions in the Valley. The church was constructed with volunteer labor, and the list of officers read like a directory of the businessmen of Main Street. The merchants contributed all the funds for items that were not received as donations.

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The Bridger Opera House was also a community effort. The annual fair association dances, hosted by Samuel Glidden in a warehouse owned by the Northern Pacific Railroad, were threatened in August, 1907 when the railroad asked that the warehouse building be vacated. A new dance hall had to be located immediately and, because there existed no other large meeting space in the town, a scramble to raise money to build a public hall was initiated. Ground was broken August 22, and the grand opening for the Bridger Opera House occurred only thirty days later.

The Opera House is an excellent example of the dedication to community that existed among early Bridger residents. The gambrel-roofed, barn-like building was used for dancing, celebrations and special parties, roller skating, basketball games, boxing matches, and performances of the Bitner Opera Company, the Billings Orchestra, Moore's Concert Company, the Joliet Symphony Orchestra, the Bridger Male Choir, and the Bogard Brothers Orchestra. In 1912, it was used as Bridger's first movie house.

The fifteen-block Bridger townsite developed rapidly as the String Town merchants prospered in their new Main Street locations and the mine camp houses were brought down from the bench to platted lots. By 1911 the first and second additions were filed, providing ten more residential blocks, and an area of equal size to the south and east was being developed as large "tracts" of building sites for the more affluent citizens.

Glidden and Corey purchased tracts east of the depot and began the erection of large and comfortable residences in 1906. The two Arts and Crafts style homes, both still standing side by side in the affluent "Bon-Ton" district of town, were completed during the spring of 1907. Although it is not known if an architect was involved in the planning of these two houses, the buildings share a number of design features, which indicate that they are the work of the same designer/builder.

Also located in the Bridger Tracts is the sandstone house of Eric Forsman. Forsman was a Swedish stone mason and had a Swedish carpenter for a boarder named Maurice Levander. The two men undoubtedly built this house, the only stone cottage in Bridger. Two other carpenters, Henry Gebo and his son-in-law, Archie McLean, built houses just east of the city limits of the tracts. The Gebo House is a two-story, wood frame, transitional Queen Anne style residence and the McLean House is a one-story, wood frame Craftsman bungalow with Prairie style leaded glass windows. Raymond Hough, one of the five entrepreneurial Hough brothers, built a large Queen Anne/Colonial Revival house on the west side of town in 1909. This building is an extraordinarily well preserved example of the style, and the most refined residence in the community.

Of particular interest are the Craftsman style houses of Stephen Hughes and Dr. Carl Marcus, built about 1918 and 1921, respectively. Unlike Glidden, Corey, and

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the Hough brothers who financially overextended themselves, these two men were very prudent with their financial resources, and rented homes for many years before undertaking construction. Stephen Hughes, a druggist, with his partner built a two-story masonry building in 1907 on Main Street. The drug store was in business for over thirty years. Dr. Carl Marcus, a dentist, operated in Bridger from 1914 to the early 1950's also in an office on Main Street. The business blocks of both of these men have been drastically altered, but their houses remain Bridger's finest examples of Craftsman style design.

The Bridger Coal Company mine operated intermittently for many years, but by the 1920's it was not the economic force in the community that it had been at the turn-of-the-century. The town weathered the financial hardship of the mid-1910's speculation bust and continued to function as a social and economic center for the Clarks Fork Valley farms and ranches. This rather sleepy settlement experienced a major reinvigoration following the Second World War when renewed interest in the oil and gas fields sparked another cycle of resource exploitation. The ensuing rapid growth and adaptation had a profound impact on the historic character of the built environment of Bridger.

The post-war development of Bridger must be viewed in the context of Carbon County at-large, for the demise of other communities in the county directly contributed to the expansion of Bridger. The rise and fall of economic fortunes dictated where the population in the county would be drawn, and hence where housing was most needed. While for the most part written documentation does not exist to indicate precisely where structures were moved from, oral accounts assert that Bridger residences came from the earlier oil boom towns of Warren, Dry Creek, and Elk Basin as well as the sister coal camps of Bearcreek, which experienced sharp drops in production by the late 1920's, and Washoe, which closed in 1943. As the mine workers moved on to new jobs, they took whatever valuables, including buildings, that they could. The scarcity of locally available building materials no doubt inspired conservation and re-use. The removal of houses from Bearcreek was so common by 1935 that the local newspaper reported: "Such a thing as passing a house on the road is not unusual to anyone around here. At the rate the houses are being moved we may need a traffic cop to let the houses go by."

Although county records do not document the sale or removal of buildings, Council minutes of the City of Bridger indicated permission was granted to move 44 structures into the townsite between the years of 1941 to 1959. During these two decades, approximately 40% of the new housing in Bridger was moved in from other communities in the County. Thus, there exist a large number of historic buildings in Bridger today, most of which were moved into the community after the historic period. The one moved building included in this nomination, the Bridger Coal Mining Company Employee's Residence, was originally located in the company-built mining camp on the west bench, approximately one-half mile from its present location, and moved during the late 1910's. This residence is independently

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eligible for listing in the National Register because it retains the highest degree of integrity of materials, style, and workmanship of the more than two dozen Bridger Coal Mine Company properties that were moved to town from 1903 to 1946. This small, four-square house represents the historic beginnings of the coal camp settlement of Bridger and reflects the pattern of building relocation and reuse that prevailed for over forty years.

While many of the Bridger's pre-1912 buildings could easily qualify for listing in the National Register as contributing buildings within a historic district, the infill of trailers, new construction, moved, and altered buildings defies the establishment of historic districts. The most common alterations to the residential buildings in town include residing, enclosed porches, and altered window patterns. Many of the older houses were originally very small dwellings and have had numerous additions appended. In the commercial sector the alterations consist primarily of storefront and facade changes. Two buildings, the Amaretto and Barclay Bank and the Clark's Fork Hotel, had second floors added. Business expansion and the attendant desire to make several storefronts read as one have also taken a toll on Main Street, as in the case of the Shupak & Kuchinski Block, which was once a striking commercial building. And finally, the tacking on of cedar shake, mansard roofs on masonry commercial buildings during 1980's masks much of the historic design characteristics of the business district. Many of the alterations are reversible and when recently applied facade coverings have been removed, the eligibility of the commercial district should be re-evaluated.

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Bridger MRA
State Carbon County, MONTANA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Cover | | for Keeper <u>William B. Bushong</u>
7/21/87 |
| 1. Bridger Coal Company House | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 9/15/87
Attest _____ |
| 2. Bridger Opera House | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 9/15/87
Attest _____ |
| 3. Corey House |
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 7/21/87
Attest _____ |
| 4. Gebo, Henry, House | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 7/21/87
Attest _____ |
| 5. Forsman House |
National Register | for Keeper <u>William B. Bushong</u>
7/21/87
Attest _____ |
| 6. Glidden House | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 7/21/87
Attest _____ |
| 7. Glidden Mercantile | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 9/15/87
Attest _____ |
| 8. Heatherington Boarding House | Entered in the
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 9/15/87
Attest _____ |
| 9. Hough, Raymond, House |
National Register | for Keeper <u>Melores Byers</u> 9/15/87
Attest _____ |
| 10. Marcus, Dr. Carl, House | | for Keeper <u>William B. Bushong</u>
9/15/87
Attest _____ |

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Bridger MRA
State Carbon County, MONTANA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Methodist Episcopal Church
and Parsonage

*Entered in the
National Register*

for Keeper Alvord Byers 9/15/87

Attest _____

12. Nutting Rental

*Entered in the
National Register*

for Keeper Alvord Byers 9/15/87

Attest _____

13. Wool Warehouse

*Entered in the
National Register*

for Keeper Alvord Byers 7/21/87

Attest _____

14. Hughes, Stephen and Anna, House

DOE/OWNER OBJECTION

for Keeper William B. Bushong 9/15/87

Attest _____

15. McLean, Archie, Bungalow

DOE/OWNER OBJECTION

Determined Eligible

for Keeper William B. Bushong 7/21/87

Attest _____

16.

Keeper _____

Attest _____

17.

Keeper _____

Attest _____

18.

Keeper _____

Attest _____

19.

Keeper _____

Attest _____

20.

Keeper _____

Attest _____