

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JAN 02 1990

# National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

## A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Resources of Forsyth, Montana

## B. Associated Historic Contexts

- Railway-related development in Forsyth, 1882-1923
- Local trade and commerce in Forsyth, 1882-1924
- Local government in Forsyth, 1901-1940
- Residential architecture in Forsyth, 1882-1940
- Commercial architecture in Forsyth, 1882-1940
- Industrial/public works architecture in Forsyth, 1882-1940
- Civic architecture in Forsyth, 1890-1923
- Religious architecture in Forsyth, 1890-1939

## C. Geographical Data

Corporate limits of Forsyth, Rosebud County, Montana

See continuation sheet

## D. Certification

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

Manilla Duff  
Signature of certifying official

12-21-89  
Date

MT SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

2/12/90  
Date

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## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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### INTRODUCTION

Forsyth, Montana is a small community with a 1980 population of 2,553 and an estimated 1989 population of 2,100. The town is on the south bank of the free-flowing Yellowstone River, in a shallow, fertile valley perhaps one mile wide. Cottonwood trees line the river for much of its length; the remaining bottomland is heavily used for ranching and farming. Both edges of the valley are defined by a series of rough, striking bluffs. Much of the rolling land beyond these bluffs is arid ranch country.

Forsyth is the seat of Rosebud County, in southeastern Montana. The county includes some thirty miles of the river valley, as well as over 5,000 square miles of sparsely populated terrain to the north and south. Land north of the river is lightly used and unusually arid; the somewhat more productive hills to the south are home to large ranching operations and a portion of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. Extensive coal fields also blanket this area, and intensive energy development has been underway here since 1968.

The Yellowstone River valley is a major historic and contemporary travel corridor, and Forsyth lies on these transport routes. Steamboats traveled the river in the 1800's, and the Northern Pacific Railroad was built up the river in 1882. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (operating from 1908 to 1980) also used much of the route. Former U.S. Highway 10 ("The Yellowstone Trail") and Interstate Highway 94 follow the river, as well.

The Northern Pacific Railroad founded and platted Forsyth in 1882 to serve as a secondary base for railroad operations. This function has continued throughout the town's history; however, much of Forsyth's economic base comes from its role as a trade and administrative center for the county's agricultural, ranching, and mining interests. These activities, initially very limited in scope, expanded rapidly during the first eighteen years of the twentieth century, resulting in substantial growth within Forsyth itself. Today, most of Forsyth's historic buildings reflect this "boom" period.

### CONTEXT 1: RAILWAY-RELATED DEVELOPMENT IN FORSYTH, 1882-1923

The establishment of Forsyth is a direct consequence of the construction of the transcontinental line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. As the railroad built westward through North Dakota and Montana in the 1870's and early 1880's, it established and platted townsites, as needed, at approximately 100-mile intervals along its route. These communities were to serve as bases for railroad crews and sites for railroad maintenance and shop facilities. The railroad established Forsyth in August, 1882 to fulfill this needed role locally.

The plat of Forsyth, as prepared by the railroad, reflected design elements typical of small western railroad towns, as well as the constraints imposed by local geography. The Northern Pacific right-of-way bifurcated the town, and a single-sided Main Street was located at the north edge of the right-of-way. Residential blocks filled the space between Main Street and the Yellowstone River, and a second residential area was established between the south right-of-way line

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   E   Page   1  

and the bluffs marking the end of the valley. The town's "railroad orientation" was further strengthened by platting all streets either parallel or perpendicular to the tracks.

Initial private development at the new townsite was very limited, and most large early construction projects were railroad-sponsored. The 2 1/2 story Occidental Hotel (erected ca. 1882, destroyed by fire 1901) was built as a "section house" for railroad workers. A turntable and eight-stall roundhouse appeared in 1884; an additional eight stalls were added in 1907. Coaling and watering facilities and a large frame depot (ca. 1890) completed the facility. All of these structures were located in the railroad's 900-foot right-of-way through town, strongly marking the visual character of the early community.

Forsyth was among the smallest of the Northern Pacific's Montana bases; local rail employment peaked at approximately 200 in the 1910's, although the number was generally substantially lower. Employment fluctuated with changing traffic levels, and with the intermittent closure of the roundhouse and shops. Little housing was constructed or provided by the railroad; after the demise of the Occidental Hotel, railroad housing was limited to a few shacks (converted from old freight cars) placed near the roundhouse. Private entrepreneurs filled this void by supplying rooming houses and railroaders' hotels near the central business district; these facilities included the Forsyth Hotel (ca. 1885), the Ivey Hotel (ca. 1904) and the Blue Front Rooming House (1912). Married railroaders built or rented single-family homes in residential neighborhoods north and south of the yards.

The character of Forsyth's Main Street was also influenced by the Northern Pacific's presence. Early commercial development was centered near the railroad depot at Ninth Avenue and Main. The community's large hotels (the American, [1891] and the Commercial [1903-06]) owe their existence in part to the railroad, and several saloons and all-night cafés catered to railroaders. Included in the latter category was a railroad-owned "beanery" built just west of the depot.

Two significant, though unrelated, changes occurred in Forsyth's railroad scene in 1923. That year, the roundhouse and shops were permanently closed as the result of a prolonged strike; the structures were razed over the following decade. Simultaneously, though, the Northern Pacific began development of its massive coal reserves at Colstrip, some thirty miles south of town. This development increased Forsyth employment only slightly, although a large coal loading dock was erected in the local yards.

The Northern Pacific's Forsyth infrastructure remained largely unchanged in the decades following 1923. In 1958, the aging depot was replaced with a modern concrete block building, and most other railroad-owned buildings and structures were razed. A small yard remains in use in 1989, sustained by a resurgence in local traffic, and Forsyth continues as a crew-change point for freight trains. The historic turntable remains in place, and the original depot now rests in a local residential neighborhood.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   2  

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CONTEXT 2: LOCAL TRADE AND COMMERCE IN FORSYTH, 1882-1924

Although Forsyth was established largely as a base for railroad operations, it was also anticipated to serve as a trade center and shipping point for the surrounding farming and ranching lands. Much of the nearby river bottomland had been homesteaded in 1876 and 1877, and extensive open-range ranches were simultaneously established in more arid areas. In 1882, as the only platted townsite for some forty miles, Forsyth was well-suited to assume the role of a trading center.

Nineteenth-century commercial development was limited, however. The local rural population was small and largely self-sufficient, and transportation facilities outside the Northern Pacific corridor were minimal at best. Few agricultural products were shipped from the area. Much of Forsyth's early commercial development, therefore, occurred in response to the needs of the town's railroad workers; traditional retail establishments were supplemented by hotels, cafés and saloons geared primarily to the railroad trade. These activities were clustered in a series of wooden buildings in the 800 and 900 blocks of Main Street, near the railroad depot.

Business services were established both by newly-arrived tradespeople and entrepreneurial homesteaders. Two men--Hiram Marcyes and Thomas Alexander--dominated local nineteenth-century commercial activity; Marcyes arrived with the railroad in 1882 while Alexander had homesteaded the future townsite area in 1877. These men, philosophical and economic rivals, each established mercantile and hotel operations and controlled rental storefront property. Marcyes' activities were concentrated on Main Street's 800 block, while the 900 block was Alexander's domain.

Forsyth's importance as a trading center expanded dramatically after 1901, as railroad promotional activities began luring increasing numbers of homesteaders to the region. The 1907 arrival of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad ("the Milwaukee Road") brought still more immigration to the area. Forsyth's central role in this growth was assured in 1901 when the community was named the seat of newly-formed Rosebud County. The ensuing seventeen years saw both the number and range of Forsyth businesses expand dramatically, and the town's population grew rapidly. Forsyth was incorporated in 1904; a census taken at the time revealed 726 residents. By 1910, 1,398 people called Forsyth home. The spirit of optimism generated by this growth brought a near-complete replacement of the nineteenth-century Main Street with two- and three-story brick business blocks.

Increased farm and ranch output during this period resulted in the construction of small-scale facilities to process and ship agricultural products. In Forsyth, grain elevators and a small creamery were erected during the 1910's. Other non-retail business activity was present, although limited: two brickyards and a concrete block plant operated intermittently near the turn of the century, and a soda bottling works existed in the 1910's and 1920's.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   3  

The region's agricultural boom ended abruptly in 1918, as wheat prices tumbled and a severe, prolonged drought began. The county's population base began a long, slow decline, and Forsyth's business activity was correspondingly injured. The difficulties culminated in 1923 and 1924 with the closure of all three of the town's financial institutions. Commercial activity in Forsyth remained stagnant throughout the 1920's and 1930's, and the town's business district largely retained its 1917 physical appearance for decades. Today, Forsyth continues its historic role as a local trade center for Rosebud and Treasure Counties, although improved highway transportation has reduced the town's relative commercial importance. The grain elevators and other non-retail enterprises have disappeared.

**CONTEXT 3: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN FORSYTH, 1901-1940**

Until 1901, the Forsyth area was a portion of Custer County, Montana, a sprawling administrative unit encompassing virtually all of southeastern Montana. The county seat was at Miles City, over forty miles east of Forsyth. The only local administrative body was an elementary school district, which had erected a small schoolhouse in 1890. The remoteness of Miles City from Forsyth was a cause of local concern by the early 1890's; Forsythians complained both of the inconvenience in transacting business and of needed public works projects going undone. Following earlier, fruitless attempts at county splitting, local residents successfully convinced Montana's 1901 legislature to create Rosebud County from the western half of Custer County. Forsyth was awarded the county seat without contest.

Most of Rosebud County's early improvement projects were transportation-related. The most pressing need was for a Yellowstone River bridge; this need was filled in 1905 with the completion of a county-sponsored three-span Pennsylvania truss bridge spanning the river at Forsyth. A second major project involved the erection of a permanent courthouse facility to replace the makeshift offices in the 1890 schoolhouse. In 1913, county contractors erected a large Neoclassical courthouse, locally monumental in scale. The new edifice was a great source of pride for the Forsyth community, and is still considered a symbol of the town.

The county began sponsorship of an annual fair in 1906, and in 1917 a permanent fairgrounds was established just east of town. The 1917 fairgrounds included a track, grandstand, and exhibition buildings; these facilities were improved and expanded frequently during the historic period.

By 1904, Forsyth's population was large enough to warrant incorporation; this act resulted in a rapid series of long-awaited municipal improvements. Within months of incorporation, a \$50,000 bond issue to finance water and sewer projects was passed. A rudimentary water system was constructed the following year, and several sewer projects were undertaken through the 1920's. The 1905 water system was supplanted by a modern filtration plant in 1931. Other early municipal efforts included a city jail (1915) and numerous sidewalk construction projects.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number  E  Page  4

During the early twentieth century, Forsyth's school district responded to increasing enrollments by constructing three small, two-story brick schoolhouses: Alexander School (1900), Marcyes School (1906) and Hammond School (1912). Its building program culminated in 1923 with the completion of a large three-story high school building. All four of these buildings have since been razed.

**CONTEXT 4: RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE IN FORSYTH, 1882-1940**

Local residential construction activity was limited during much of the nineteenth century. Forsyth's earliest (pre-1890) homes copied one of two patterns: a few townspeople imitated the homestead pattern of erecting small homes from saddle-notched cottonwood logs. Most of these had a sod roof and only a single room, although two or three larger examples once existed. No log homes remained in the survey area in 1989. Most period homes, however, were small rectangular wood-framed buildings with steeply-pitched end gable roofs. These "gable-front" homes generally displayed little architectural detail, although simple Gothic drip-molds or window pediments were occasionally seen. These homes were often stuccoed, and most surviving examples display this feature.

As the 1890's progressed, residential building forms became more sophisticated. After about 1895, the standard blue-collar dwelling in Forsyth displayed a vernacular square hip-roofed plan. This basic building form was followed locally again and again, although the form gradually evolved and increased in sophistication. Full-length front porches became common, and some homes sported octagonal bay windows. Others included small gabled dormers. Homes began to rest on foundations; these were initially of local stone, although concrete foundations predominated after 1900. Clapboard siding was prevalent, although veneers of local brick were applied occasionally (primarily ca. 1895-1905). Many of the brick homes (and some wooden houses) were later stuccoed.

A few larger homes appeared locally during the 1890's, as well. Most of Forsyth's early large residences displayed some Queen Anne-style detailing; these 1 1/2 to 2-story clapboard buildings appeared almost exclusively in Forsyth's northwest quadrant as homes for the town's emerging class of businessmen and professional people. Prominent octagonal bays, limited bracketing, and cross-gabled extensions were common, although very few of these homes displayed a high level of architectural detail.

As Forsyth entered the twentieth century, residential building forms continued to evolve. Use of the hipped-roof foursquare plan became less common after ca. 1905, as did Queen Anne building forms. Colonial Revival styles began to appear in their stead; often, new homes reflected "transitional" lines, including detailing from both Queen Anne and Colonial Revival forms. More variety in style, massing, and detail became apparent; this is attributable both to the community's increasing stability and wealth and the ready availability of alternate building designs from local lumberyards and mail-order plan books.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   5  

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An increase in residential construction in the 1910's ushered in the Craftsman building form, and it quickly gained near-universal acceptance in the town. Smaller end-gable bungalows appeared in substantial numbers, superseding the vernacular foursquare plan of the decade before. A number of larger, highly-detailed Craftsman homes, generally utilizing one- or two-story foursquare plans, appeared on northeast Forsyth lots. The Harry and Frances Cornwell residence (1915) and the Dick and May Dedman residence (ca. 1920) are among the latter group displaying thought-out Craftsman detailing.

The 1918 end of Forsyth's "boom" era, and the economic difficulties of the 1920's and 1930's, virtually ended residential construction in Forsyth. When limited building began again approximately 1940, nationally-popular Cape Cod styles were generally employed; by the 1950's ranch-style homes predominated.

**CONTEXT 5: COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE IN FORSYTH, 1882-1940**

Commercial development in Nineteenth-century Forsyth was slow and limited. The earliest enterprises were housed in tents, but wood-framed construction appeared fairly rapidly. Most 1880's commercial buildings were single-level structures with rough lumber siding (occasionally weatherboard or shiplap) and end-gable roofs. The false front was a ubiquitous feature of the street facade. Nearly all of these buildings were gone by the middle of the twentieth century; many burned, while the others were replaced by more substantial brick construction.

A major turning point in local commercial architecture occurred in 1888; that year Hiram Marcyes erected the town's first non-railroad brick structure, a two story business block at 855 Main Street. After 1888, nearly all new commercial construction was of brick or displayed a brick veneer; Marcyes operated a local brickyard providing a ready source of material. Marcyes' building was largely utilitarian in form, with limited period detailing in the facade brickwork. Other brick business blocks followed the Marcyes building: Thomas Alexander's American Hotel (1891), the Charley Burns saloon (1895), Dr. A. C. Wilson's pharmacy and medical office (1895), and a second Thomas Alexander block (ca. 1893). These five buildings, all similar in design, formed the initial core of the more permanent, substantial Forsyth business district to come. All survive today, with varying levels of integrity.

The rapid growth of early twentieth-century Forsyth was quickly reflected in the town's business district. A number of larger brick business blocks appeared during the 1900-1917 period, and by 1917 nearly all of the three-block downtown "core," from Eighth to Eleventh Avenue, was filled with two or three-story brick construction. Many of these new buildings, such as the Thornton & Choisser Saloon (1901) displayed the Italianate facade detailing common in earlier construction.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   6  

Some, however, exhibited more intricate detailing utilizing the designs of professionally-trained architects. Two of the best such local efforts grew from drawings prepared by the noted Montana architectural firm of Link and Haire: the Commercial Hotel (1903-06) and the Bank of Commerce (1908). The Commercial, a downtown landmark, was a tasteful two-part vertical block of Renaissance Revival design, while the Bank of Commerce featured a traditional sandstone facade with prominent Classical detailing. In some later designs, the earlier Classical and Renaissance themes were supplemented by the prominent medallions and cornices typifying Beaux-Arts design. Projects such as the Masonic Temple (1911) and the Wachholz Building (1917) skillfully display such detail. The erection of relatively sophisticated buildings such as these served as a visible reflection of Forsyth's increasing population and prosperity.

Construction techniques evolved during the period, as well. As in many Montana communities, an early (1905) town ordinance outlawed wood-framed construction in Forsyth's business district; simultaneously, locally-produced brick became less common. These two circumstances combined to encourage the erection of steel-framed buildings with concrete walls. Commercial buildings increased in size, as well; most new business blocks after 1907 covered two or more lots. Builders of these projects, such as the McCuiston Building (1913), maintained a tie with tradition by veneering the street facades with commercial brick from Hebron, North Dakota or other towns on the railroad. Generally, though, these facades exhibited only minimal architectural detail.

Construction in the Forsyth business district ground to a virtual halt after 1918, as the county's economy began its decline. The only major downtown buildings erected between 1918 and 1940 were the Roxy Theatre (1930) and a neighboring gas station (1931), both reflecting Spanish Eclectic design. The buildings replaced an early wooden mercantile destroyed by fire.

A small resurgence in commercial building began in 1940 with the construction of the Booth Mortuary and the KoKoMo Club. Both buildings displayed stepped, stuccoed facades with relatively clean lines; the form reflects a transition from the historic brickwork to the simple, concrete-block construction which became near-universal after World War II.

**CONTEXT 6: INDUSTRIAL/PUBLIC WORKS ARCHITECTURE IN FORSYTH, 1882-1940**

Although the Northern Pacific yards featured large industrial-style buildings by the mid-1880's, few such buildings appeared elsewhere in Forsyth until after 1900. The community's 1904 incorporation spurred construction of two significant industrial projects, including the Forsyth Electric Light and Power Plant (1904-05) and a municipal water system (1905). The buildings erected in conjunction with these ventures were of local red brick with an unadorned, flat-roofed design. The light plant, constructed under franchise by "Major" J. E. Edwards, was the largest brick industrial structure erected in Forsyth; it remains a Main Street landmark.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   7  

A creamery and several small warehouse buildings also appeared between 1901 and 1917. Most were of rudimentary frame construction, although the primary surviving example (H. R. Marcy's warehouse, 1895/1915) has stuccoed walls of concrete and local brick. A series of three grain elevators were also constructed during the 1910's era; the last such elevator burned in the 1970's. The elevators, as well as the light plant and most warehouse buildings, were located on leased land in the Northern Pacific right-of-way, adding to the "industrial" visual character of the railway yards. This practice is continued by modern industrial structures, including bulk oil plants and a grain transloading terminal.

**CONTEXT 7: CIVIC ARCHITECTURE IN FORSYTH, 1890-1923**

With the exception of a primitive, one-room log schoolhouse (ca. 1882) the first Forsyth buildings erected primarily for public purposes appeared in 1890. That year, a new elementary school and Thomas Alexander's "Opera House" were constructed. Both were small shiplap buildings with end-gable roofs. The Opera House was a major community gathering place well into the twentieth century, hosting traveling shows, movies, "smokers," dances and other special events. The school served only ten years before replacement, but later housed Rosebud County's first courthouse and the county library. Neither building exists today.

Most of Forsyth's major civic building projects occurred during the 1910's. A new Rosebud County Courthouse was erected in 1913; it was immediately recognized as the town's architectural masterpiece. Designed by Link & Haire, a noted Montana architectural firm, the three-story Neoclassical landmark was modeled after Missoula County's courthouse; the design was later copied by the Richland County Courthouse in Sidney. The following year, Billing architect Curtis C. Oehme prepared designs for a city hall/jail facility (constructed 1915, now razed). The two-story red brick building was designed to blend with the nearby commercial business blocks. This period of building activity was climaxed in 1920-21 with the construction of the two-story, \$90,000 Rosebud County Deaconess Hospital, designed by the Billings/Great Falls firm of McIver, Cohagen, and Marshall.

**CONTEXT 8: RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN FORSYTH, 1890-1939**

Organized religious groups began developing in Forsyth during the 1880's; initially, itinerant clergymen held intermittent services in private homes. In 1890, Forsyth's Methodist Episcopal group erected the town's first church, a white weatherboard building with a steep gable roof. During the following decade it was enlarged to its present cross-gable form, and a bell tower was added. It remained Forsyth's only church building until 1906, when local Presbyterians erected an ornately detailed wooden edifice. Two small vernacular gabled churches were added during the 1910's, for local Catholic (1913-14) and Episcopalian (c. 1915, now razed) congregations.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   E   Page   8  

---

The original Presbyterian church burned in 1919. The following year, it was replaced by a large yellow-brick building skillfully blending Prairie School form with traditional Gothic detailing. The new church was partially the work of Chicago architect Howard Van Doren Shaw; it was based on Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church (1912), which Shaw had designed in conjunction with the noted ecclesiastical architect Ralph A. Cram. Today, Forsyth's Presbyterian Church remains a landmark among local church buildings.

These four church buildings continued to serve Forsyth throughout the historic period. The Catholic Church was stuccoed and slightly enlarged in 1939 to achieve its present Neo-Gothic Revival form.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   F   Page   1  

---

**Associated Property Types:**

**I. Name of Property Type:** COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

**II. Description:** Nearly all surviving commercial buildings from Forsyth's historic period are of brick construction; many post-1910 buildings are concrete with street veneers of commercial brick. Most brick business blocks are two stories high; two three-story buildings survive. Earlier buildings filled the width of a 25-foot downtown lot and were as much as 100 feet long; after 1907, most new buildings covered two or three such lots. Approximately thirty historic brick commercial buildings survive in Forsyth.

The street facades of most commercial buildings were not highly detailed, and rear wall surfaces were totally utilitarian. Ground floor facades were marked by large areas of commercial display windows, and often included central, inset entries. Some buildings also featured smaller, second entries accessing stairwells to the second level. Windows were over wooden bulkheads, and were topped with transom areas. These window bays and their associated doorways were subject to frequent remodelings as building ownership and usage changed; although the basic configuration often survived, materials and detailing evolved over the years. In general, window areas grew smaller and smaller, and large areas of brick or wood infill became common. Before 1910, wooden awnings often extended over the sidewalk, sheltering the windowed areas. These disappeared during the following decade, to be replaced with roll-up canvas awnings.

In contrast to the largely windowed storefront areas, second floor facades were visually defined by their brickwork. It was here that most design detail was generally found, although the level of this detail was seldom high. Simple one-over-one windows were generally present; brick or concrete sills gave added definition to the fenestration pattern. The greatest opportunity for individual design expression existed above this fenestration area; patterned brick detailing was common, and some buildings featured prominent cornice areas. Early cornices were wooden, often covered with metal and featuring prominent bracketing; centered pediments with inscribed dates or names topped many of these buildings. By the 1910's, this treatment was replaced with simpler brick patterns suggestive of the earlier cornices, and any requisite lettering was affixed to the wall itself. Terra cotta cornices and medallions were occasionally applied to these later buildings.

Although most downtown Forsyth buildings reflect these fairly homogenous design traits, examples of more exuberant designs do exist. These structures are primarily from the district's later building period and reflect, in part, an increasing use of professionally-trained architects. These projects added striking detail to both the upper and lower facade, helping reduce the design dichotomy between first and second floors. Classically-inspired design features

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   F   Page   2  

---

were more obvious in these buildings, as in the pillared sandstone facade of the Bank of Commerce (1908) or the Renaissance Revival belt courses and rusticated quoins of the Commercial Hotel (1903-06).

After Forsyth's boom period ended in 1918, major commercial building construction ceased. Business construction that resumed after 1940 was on a far smaller scale, and the amount of detail was far lower. These buildings, one story high, are characterized by stucco or concrete block construction and simple, unadorned fenestration.

**III. Significance:** The commercial properties of downtown Forsyth are significant as reflections of the emergence and growth of the local community. The evolution of individual building forms, and of the district as a whole, mirrors Forsyth's increasing population and prosperity during the early historic period. The central downtown core, largely unchanged from 1918, suggests the local importance of the town and the optimism of the day.

Forsyth's earliest business structures, quickly and simply erected with little attention to detail, are typical of a beginning northern plains frontier town. The railroad's presence assured Forsyth's longevity, however, and these early buildings were replaced with brick commercial blocks. These structures, too, are representative of a small northern plains community; their local brick construction and limited detailing reflect the town's hopefulness, but its initially limited prosperity.

The 1901-1918 boom period added a touch of urbanity to the streetscape of Main Street. The erection of professionally-designed buildings with greater stylistic sophistication show an increasing local awareness of design principles. The end of this boom halted commercial building construction, largely preserving the main street in a slowly-fading form of its 1918 glory.

**IV. Registration Requirements:** Forsyth's commercial buildings may be both historically significant and architecturally significant. In evaluating individual structures, the following aspects of integrity should be considered:

**Setting and location:** The setting of much of Forsyth's commercial district remains virtually intact. The existence of non-historic features which are incompatible in design, materials or scale, will negatively effect the historic qualities of a streetscape. Similarly, the relocation of an otherwise eligible historic structure will negatively impact its eligibility; however, a relocated building of major local importance may be considered for eligibility. Such a building must possess a pivotal role in an important aspect of the town's past.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number     F     Page     3    

---

**Design, workmanship and materials:** Eligible buildings must retain their historic form, massing, and exterior materials. A substantial addition to a building, the removal of its upper level or the addition of a completely modern facade with non-historic materials would disqualify the building from listing. In Forsyth, nearly all street-level facades received frequent remodelings; as a result, historic design details are primarily concentrated in the upper facades. To be eligible, these upper facades must remain substantially intact, displaying historic fenestration patterns, original brick detailing, and historic cornices and pediments.

**Feeling and association:** These qualities will generally be present if the more tangible characteristics outlined above are retained. Conversely, the loss of historic design, workmanship and materials will generally destroy historic feeling and association.

**Associated Property Types:**

**I. Name of Property Type:** DWELLINGS

**II. Description:** During Forsyth's period of initial settlement, local residences exhibited design patterns common to area frontier towns of the day, as rural log designs gave way to simple rectangular structures of rough lumber. Later building styles, though, were generally local interpretations of nationally-popular forms. With few exceptions, Forsyth's homes exhibit straight forward plans, and relatively few large houses exist.

The most popular local residential style was a folk foursquare design constructed in great numbers between 1895 and 1915 for working-class townspeople. These small, single-level homes utilized a nearly square plan beneath a hip roof. Weatherboard exterior siding predominated, although a few homes were stuccoed or veneered with brick. Large open front porches and octagonal bay windows were commonly present. Folk Gothic forms and other elaborations on the early pioneer designs appeared somewhat less frequently in these early years. Several dozen foursquare homes, in varying configurations survive in Forsyth today.

Larger historic homes, far fewer in number, initially displayed features of vernacular Queen Anne architecture, displaying prominent bay windows, multiple gable faces, bracketing and other design complexities. Still, these houses generally possessed lesser detailing than many Queen Anne buildings elsewhere. Nearly all these houses were 1 1/2 or 2 stories high and faced with weatherboard; front-facing octagonal bays, shingled gable ends and decorative leaded glass windows were common. After 1901 the form and massing of these larger homes became more straight forward, as elements of Colonial Revival styling began to supersede

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   F   Page   4  

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the Queen Anne form. Approximately forty Queen Anne/Colonial Revival homes remain in Forsyth today.

During the 1910's Forsyth wholeheartedly embraced the Craftsman-style residence. Most such homes were small, end-gable structures, similar in appearance; they possessed the deep eaves, exposed rafter tips, and narrow clapboard siding characteristic of the genre. A small number of these homes exhibit a relatively high level of Craftsman detailing, and approximately ten larger examples of the form exist, as well. The larger homes were generally 1 1/2 stories tall, with side-gable or hip roofs. They often display prominent hipped dormers and large, inset front porches.

Occasional vernacular examples of other building forms exist, as well; at least two gambrel-roof homes were erected locally, and Prairie design influences may be discerned in occasional homes.

Outbuildings exist, in varying forms, on most dwelling lots. The earliest such buildings (prior to ca. 1910) were stables; a number of these were fairly large, often reflecting design features of the adjoining residence. Detached garages became common after ca. 1915. Most early garages were simple, gabled structures of shiplap or clapboard while others (especially near Craftsman homes) display an attempted compatibility with the nearby house.

**III. Significance:** Collectively, in size and form, Forsyth's historic homes reflect the tastes and prosperity of their owners viewed through the styles of the age. As such, the houses erected here are fairly indicative of a typical northern plains community of Forsyth's size. The initial "railroad-town" characteristic of Forsyth, however, helped produce a greater number of smaller, vernacular homes, as well as, perhaps, a somewhat greater uniformity.

As Forsyth matured and its economic base expanded, however, larger homes displaying more varied styles appeared, reflecting the town's increased optimism. These later residences integrated with earlier building forms to produce neighborhood streetscapes with a wide variety of buildings. This situation, somewhat unusual, produced a residential area whose cohesiveness has been achieved only through maturity, but the result in 1989 is an intriguing kaleidoscope of the 1890 to 1920 period.

Individually, Forsyth's homes serve as reminders of the locally significant citizens who may have built and occupied them, and the architects and builders who assisted in their construction. Each building represents a sample of period construction methods and design philosophy. Some homes also reflect the efforts of early local entrepreneurs and landlords.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   F   Page   5  

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**IV. Registration Requirements:** Forsyth's residential structures may be both historically significant and architecturally significant. In evaluating individual structures, the following aspects of integrity should be considered:

**Setting and location:** The setting of most of Forsyth's residential neighborhoods is far more ephemeral than that of the business district, and most local streetscapes contain a mixture of historic and modern structures. The existence of non-historic features on such a streetscape will hinder eligibility of other features, but closely adjoining or abutting modern features will negatively impact a historic home. Similarly, the relocation of an otherwise eligible historic structure will negatively impact its eligibility; however, a relocated building of major local importance or one that is relocated through necessity may be considered for eligibility. Such a building must possess a pivotal role in an important aspect of the town's past.

At least two historic Forsyth residences have been relocated to their current sites. In order to be considered eligible for listing under criteria exception "b" such buildings must retain a high level of design integrity and must represent historic building forms which only survive in relocated residences. Such buildings must also positively contribute to the streetscapes on which they now rest.

**Design, workmanship and materials:** Eligible buildings must retain their historic form, massing, and overall streetside appearance. A substantial addition to a building, or the removal of a major historic building component would disqualify the building from listing. Less drastic negative impacts include the loss of historic fenestration or the addition of modern fenestration, reroofing or residing with modern materials, or the enclosure or removal of a historic porch area. In Forsyth, most pre-1915 homes have been impacted by one or more of these projects, while a number of later Craftsman-style residences survive virtually intact. Buildings which are independently eligible for listing must be largely free from these changes, although appropriate modern roofing and some modern sashes in historic openings would not in themselves cause disqualification. Lesser contributing structures should retain an appropriate historic fenestration pattern and a visually-appropriate exterior wall surface.

**Feeling and association:** These qualities will generally be present if the more tangible characteristics outlined above are retained. Conversely, the loss of historic design, workmanship and materials will generally destroy historic feeling and association.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number     F     Page     6    

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**Associated Property Types:**

**I. Name of Property Type:** INDUSTRIAL/PUBLIC WORKS BUILDINGS

**II. Description:** Relatively few industrial or public works buildings were constructed in Forsyth. Of the approximately fifteen such buildings which were erected locally, most were warehouses built by local lumberyards, wool shippers, or department stores. Most local warehouses were built of rough lumber, often lacking foundations. No such structures survive today. One department store warehouse building constructed of brick and concrete survives at 155 North Eighth Avenue; although it retains a utilitarian blockhouse-like appearance, its street facade has been altered through subsequent later use as a retail building. Similarly, the only manufacturing facility known to have existed in Forsyth (the Rosebud Bottling Works building at 1447 Cedar) has lost integrity through later use as a church.

Two substantial brick industrial buildings were erected in historic Forsyth, and both survive today: the City Water Pumping Station on Third Avenue and the Forsyth Electric Light and Power Plant building at 1110 Main Street. Although differing in size, both share common design elements: a nearly flat roof, load-bearing walls of local red brick, and simple, block massing.

Two large wooden grain elevators, of standard gabled design, once existed in the 1400 block of Main Street. Both, however, had burned by the mid-1970's.

**III. Significance:** This limited class of buildings served necessary but unglamorous functions. In Forsyth, their relative rarity indicates the lack of production-based employment in the community. Both the water works and electric plant, however, are important representations of the increasing size and stability of the the Forsyth community in the early 1900's. Both facilities are products of substantial investment, and are direct results of the town's incorporation. They indicate a faith in the permanence of the community as well as contemporary advances in technology.

**IV. Registration Requirements:**

To be eligible for listing, an industrial or public works building must survive at its original location and must retain its historic massing. The building's historic fenestration pattern must remain, although window sashes and other wood members may be absent. The survival of original mechanical equipment is not required; no such situations are known to exist in Forsyth.



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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State historic preservation office | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency                            | <input type="checkbox"/> University       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Agency                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other            |

Specify repository \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Mark A. Hufstetler  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 1, 1989  
street & number 610 Dell Place, #10 telephone (406) 587-9518  
city or town Bozeman state Montana zip code 59715

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   G   Page   1  

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**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods:**

A reconnaissance survey of the townsite of Forsyth was conducted by Patricia Bick of the Montana State Historic Preservation office on January 8, 1988. As a result of this survey, two potential historic districts and a number of additional potentially eligible properties were identified for future research.

Approximately 200 historic properties in Forsyth were inventoried by Mark Hufstetler in 1988-89 under contract to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. Most inventoried properties were located within a contiguous survey area which included the town's primary commercial district and that portion of the residential area with the largest concentration of historic homes. Additional sites possessing unusual significance or integrity were also inventoried.

Several types of data were researched and recorded for each inventoried building, including current architectural descriptions, historical outlines of the building and its occupants, and evaluations of integrity. At the conclusion of the survey, a brief Historical and Architectural Overview was prepared, outlining and exploring the primary historic themes which impacted the town during the historic period.

At the completion of the field survey, Mark Hufstetler prepared this multiple resource nomination covering the Forsyth townsite. He also prepared nominations for a "Forsyth Residential Historic District, listing 107 contributing and 41 non-contributing buildings, and a "Forsyth Main Street Historic District," listing 24 contributing and 7 non-contributing buildings. Nine other Forsyth buildings and one structure (an abandoned bridge) were nominated independently.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   H   Page   1  

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   H   Page   2  

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number   H   Page   3  

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