

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Properties in Fromberg, Montana

B. Associated Historic Contexts

- Context 1: Transportation and Commerce in Fromberg, 1899-1936
- Context 2: Residential Development in Fromberg, 1900-1929
- Context 3: Religious, Education, Civic, and Social Activities in Fromberg, 1906-1925, & 1939

C. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Mary E. McCormick, Public Historian
 Organization: Renewable Technologies, Inc. Date: August 1992
 Street & Number: 511 Metals Bank Building Telephone: 406-782-0494
 City or Town: Butte State: Montana Zip: 59701

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 Archaeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Maevell Sheff SHPO 12-11-92
 Signature of certifying official Date

MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
 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 Anderson 1/28/93
 Signature of the Keeper of the National Register Date

E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Introduction

Fromberg is a small community of 370 residents located in eastern Carbon County in south central Montana. The town is situated on the west side of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River, in a flat fertile valley ranging from four to ten miles wide. The Pryor Mountains rise along the east side of the Clarks Fork Valley; the west valley edge is sharply defined by rugged cliffs at the foothills of the Beartooth Mountains. Fromberg lies along U.S. Highway 310 and the Burlington Northern Railroad line; both travel corridors extend south into northern Wyoming. About 20 miles southwest of Fromberg is Red Lodge, the seat of Carbon County. Billings, the largest city in Montana, is about 37 miles to the north.

The town of Fromberg was platted in 1899 at the site of a depot on the newly established Clarks Fork Branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Development at the townsite was initially limited, largely because of its proximity to the then thriving coal mining town of Gebo. The population of Fromberg, however, quickly grew during the early twentieth century as the surrounding region experienced an agricultural boom and coal mining activities at Gebo went into decline. By the early 1910s, Fromberg was a small but prosperous community of about 500, serving as the commercial center and shipping point for nearby farms and ranches.

Today the town of Fromberg is largely comprised of buildings constructed during its historic period of development, 1899-1939. Many of the buildings, unfortunately, have sustained modern alterations to such a degree that they no longer convey their historic appearance. However, there remains a handful of scattered commercial businesses, houses, and other buildings that retain sufficient integrity to demonstrate their historic and architectural significance.

Background to the Establishment of Fromberg

Eastern Carbon County opened for Euro-American settlement after the Crow Indian Tribe ceded the region to the federal government in 1892. Homesteaders promptly claimed rich bottom lands along the Clarks Fork River; cattle and sheep were simultaneously moved into more arid regions in the surrounding hills. Entrepreneurs also began efforts to develop the area's extensive coal fields that blanketed the rugged terrain along the west side of the valley. By this time, coal mining had become a major industry in Montana; large amounts of coal were needed to fuel the coal-fired steam powered railroads and for the mining and smelting operations of the copper industry at Butte and Anaconda.¹

An early important coal mine in the Clarks Fork Valley was the Gebo Mine, located in a deep coulee about one mile west of the present town of Fromberg. In 1895, Sam Gebo explored the valley for coal deposits and found the fields at "Gebo" sufficient to warrant profitable commercial production. Over the next two years, Gebo secured several investors in the property, initiated some minor improvements at the mine, and helped lay out the Gebo townsite on the adjacent low rolling hills. Lack of rail service into the valley, however, hampered full-scale development and production. The nearest railheads to Gebo lay across rugged terrain to the northwest at Rockvale and to the west at Joliet, both located on the Northern Pacific Railroad's branch line to the coal fields at Red Lodge.²

Activities at Gebo soon attracted the attention of J.A. Johnson and J.C. McCarthy, owners of the Chestnut coal mines near Bozeman. After several inspections of the Gebo property by both men, McCarthy in early 1898 met with Northern Pacific officials in St. Paul. At the meeting, McCarthy apparently received assurances that the railroad would soon construct a branch line into the Clarks Fork Valley. After McCarthy returned from St. Paul, he, Johnson, and others purchased the Gebo mine and incorporated the Clarks Fork Coal Company.³ A local newspaper account of the sale reported that the new company intended to mine Gebo coal for "public consumption," and had secured a contract with the major copper producer in Montana, the Anaconda Company, "...to deliver a large amount of coal daily."⁴

By early 1899, the Gebo mine was nearly ready for full-scale production. In addition to many improvements at the mine, the company had platted the Gebo townsite and constructed numerous houses for miners and their families. The population of Gebo soon reached nearly 400 and many new businesses located there.⁵

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While the Clarks Fork Coal Company prepared the mine for production, the Northern Pacific completed construction of its Clark Fork Branch. From Rockvale the line extended south approximately 17 miles to the town of Bridger -- situated in the valley about six miles south of Gebo. The railroad routed the line along the west side of the river so that it hugged the flat valley floor, avoiding steep gradients that could dramatically increase construction costs. The branch line thus bypassed Gebo by nearly mile. The railroad completed construction of the Clark Fork Branch line including a spur line to Gebo in December 1898.⁶

CONTEXT 1: TRANSPORTATION AND COMMERCE IN FROMBERG, 1899-1936

The establishment of Fromberg occurred as a direct consequence of the construction of the Northern Pacific's Clarks Fork branch line. By early 1899, the railroad had completed construction of a depot where the Gebo spur left the line. The small wood-frame building followed plans for the Northern Pacific's standardized "fourth-class combination" station. The facility housed both passenger and freight rooms as well as office space and living quarters for the station agent. The railroad named the depot "Fromberg" in honor of Conrad Fromberg, a major stockholder in the Northern Pacific.⁷ The Fromberg depot immediately provided farmers and ranchers with a link to distant markets. A flour mill was soon constructed nearby and settlers on the opposite or east side of the Clarks Fork River successfully petitioned for relocation of the "Gebo" bridge a mile downstream to a site at Fromberg.⁸

Local rancher, William Swallow quickly realized that his homestead holdings near the Fromberg depot offered the potential for townsite development. Although Swallow was one of only two landowners that refused to sell right-of-way for the Clarks Fork Branch (Swallow's land for the right-of-way was condemned), he did not hesitate to take advantage of the financial opportunities offered by establishing a townsite on his property. In May 1899, Charles A. Dewar, a civil engineer, laid out the "Original Townsite" plat of Fromberg on Swallow's property. The location, on the north side of the wye where the Gebo spur left the main line, imposed a semi-circular shape on the plat and bounded it by rail tracks on the east, south, and west sides. The north end of the plat abruptly ended at Swallow's property line--to the north lay an unpatented homestead.⁹

Fromberg's Original Townsite plat clearly represented only part of the intended townsite. It contained only six blocks. The commercial lots, measuring 25 x 140 feet, were laid out on the north side of two blocks fronting River Street, the main thoroughfare. The plat showed River Street at only half-width. Adjacent land to the north was clearly meant to include the other half of the business district and additional residential lots. It was likely surveyed at the same time as the Original Townsite but not officially filed until 1907. Known as the Dudley First Addition to Fromberg, its grid closely mirrored the Original Townsite.¹⁰

Fromberg's Original Townsite and Dudley First Addition reflected a townsite plat common to many small railroad-related towns on the northern plains. Their orientation conformed to the widely used "T-town" pattern in which the plat was aligned on one-side of the main line track and commercial development was concentrated along a street perpendicular to the tracks. At Fromberg the town lay along the west side of the Clarks Fork Valley branch line; commercial lots lined two full blocks on either side of River Street, which was oriented nearly perpendicular to the mainline tracks; and the commercial core was surrounded by blocks divided into larger 30' or 50' x 140' lots intended for residential construction. One full block at the northwest end of town was reserved for school purposes.¹¹

Commercial development in Fromberg was initially slow and limited. The rural population was still small and businesses at nearby Gebo and at Bridger fulfilled the area's commercial needs. Despite these circumstances, homesteading entrepreneur, Samuel Greenblatt, began to actively promote the new townsite. In 1900, he opened one of the town's first businesses, a dry goods store located on the south side of River Street. Greenblatt, meanwhile, also made several appeals

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to the federal government to establish a post office at Fromberg. His request for a postal facility was finally granted in 1903. By that time, Greenblatt's store had been joined by a few other businesses that largely catered to the needs of railroad workers -- a rooming house, two saloons, a newsstand, and confectionery. These businesses were housed in wood false-front buildings located on the east end of River Street near the rail- road tracks.¹²

Fromberg's population and commercial development expanded rapidly beginning about 1906. As with most other communities in Montana, growth and prosperity was largely spurred by an agricultural boom -- stimulated by the advent of dryland farming techniques and aggressive promotional campaigns by the railroads designed to lure new settlers to the region. Because of these activities, thousands of homesteaders came to Montana and established dryland wheat farms.¹³ Those settling in the Clarks Fork Valley found the rich fertile bottom lands suitable for the production of not only small grains but sugar beets and fruit as well. Successful harvests of large apple crops near Fromberg resulted in the appellation of the "fruit basket of Carbon County" to the town.¹⁴ Fromberg grew in importance as the shipping point for agriculturalists in the immediate vicinity. The town's position as a local trade and shipping center was further bolstered in 1911 when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad built a new route to Cody, Wyoming, utilizing the Northern Pacific's Clark Fork Branch through Fromberg. By the time Fromberg was incorporated in 1912, it had a diverse array of business establishments and supported a population of nearly 500.¹⁵

Unstable economic conditions at Gebo also contributed to the expansion of Fromberg's business sector. Although the Gebo mine proved quite productive, its operation was sporadic due to legal problems over ownership and strikes by the miners. Business owners and residents in Gebo began to relocate to Fromberg as early as 1906.¹⁶ The final blow to Gebo came in the early spring of 1912, when the owners abruptly closed the mine in favor of properties in Wyoming. The mine never fully reopened, although some small-scale mining on the property occurred during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷ [No traces of the Gebo mining complex remain today and the last building at the townsite burned in the 1970s.]

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Fromberg show that by 1912, Fromberg's commercial district occupied all but a few lots on the first block and half on the east end of River Street. New construction infilled available lots and also replaced some earlier wooden buildings. Businesses offered goods and services characteristic of an agriculturally-based town. Enterprises present were two general stores, a grocery store, drugstore, hardware store, barbershop, bakery, meat market, restaurant, four saloons, two billiard halls, a telephone office, lumber company and implement dealership, rooming house, hotel, and bank.

By the late teens, a few new buildings stood on River Street. A fire in January 1915 prompted most of the new construction. The fire broke out in a wood livery stable on the south side of River Street and quickly ignited at least four other buildings on the block. Most of the impacted business owners rebuilt the following spring.¹⁸

Commercial buildings constructed in Fromberg from 1906 to 1918 were of an unpretentious vernacular design, typical of a small western town. Most were one-story blocks, built to the sidewalk and sharing party walls. Brick construction predominated although a couple of new wood false-front buildings appeared before about 1909, and a few concrete buildings afterwards.¹⁹ The typical store front featured full glazing and a central recessed entry. Brick buildings expressed limited detailing, usually in the form of a corbeled cornice.

The simplicity of Fromberg's commercial buildings, in part, suggests that most represented the work of area carpenters and contractors. Documented builders include carpenter John Gibson who built the town's first brick building, the I.O.O.F. Hall and Fromberg Co-operative Mercantile (1906),²⁰ Archibald McLean of Bridger who constructed the Fromberg Bank (1906),²¹ and Jacob Lowe from Joliet. Lowe served as the primary contractor for most of the new buildings to appear on River Street between 1910 and 1914. Among his building projects were the Mendelssohn Barber Shop (1910), the Jacob Lowe Building (1910), and John Blewett's Switzer's Drug Store (1911) and the new Switzer's Drug Store (1914). Lowe also

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helped to rebuild after the 1915 fire. He constructed a new building for the Palace Meat Market (1915) and the Wagner Garage (1915). The later brick building stood in place of Lowe's own 1910 building.²²

During its period of economic prosperity and growth, Fromberg also received improvements to its road-related transportation facilities. The most significant of these was replacement of the bridge crossing the Clarks Fork River which had served as an important link between farmers and ranchers on the east side of the river and Fromberg since 1899. A wood Howe truss replaced the earlier bridge in 1909. Just a few years later, County Commissioners again ordered a new bridge at the site, specifying that it be of concrete. In 1914, the Livingston-based Beley Construction Company received the contract for a three-span concrete arch bridge.²³ The bridge still survives and is the oldest multi-span concrete arch bridge in Montana.

Construction in Fromberg benefitted from the availability of a variety of materials. By 1907, the town had a small brick factory, operated by John Gibson, and two lumber yards. By 1909, Gibson's brick works had been supplanted by a much larger facility, the Billings [later Fromberg] Pressed Brick and Tile Company. The factory operated four kilns with a capacity to produce 20,000 bricks a day. In 1911, the factory secured a contract to provide four million bricks for construction of the Great Northern sugar beet plant in Billings. It also furnished brick used for commercial and residential construction in the area until it ceased operation in the mid-1930s.²⁴

Concrete began to be extensively used for construction purposes in Fromberg in the early 1910s. John Gibson opened a small concrete plant in Fromberg about 1909 and started manufacturing concrete blocks for building construction. By 1911, the plant also produced sidewalk blocks, drain tile, flue liners and fence posts. Gibson constructed a much larger facility near the depot in 1915. The new plant specialized in the production of a concrete culvert designed and patented by Gibson in 1911. Gibson's operations supplied concrete for the Fromberg concrete arch bridge in 1914. Although unverified, Gibson was probably also responsible for some concrete work in the commercial district.²⁵ Jacob Lowe, however, completed the most impressive concrete construction in the district, the facade of Mendelssohn's Barber Shop (1910). The concrete elevation featured ornamental concrete block and an elegant egg-and-dart molded cornice.

New construction in the Fromberg commercial district appears to have halted after 1918. In part, this was caused by the abrupt end of the region's agricultural boom, as wheat prices tumbled and economic depression gripped the entire state. Another perhaps equally important factor stemming growth in Fromberg in the following decades was the dramatic increase of private motor transportation. Farmers who owned automobiles or trucks were no longer limited to shopping in the nearest town, but could drive farther to larger places, such as Billings, with bigger and more diverse retail establishments. This trend was intensified in the early 1950s, when the State Highway Commission constructed Montana Highway 310 through the Clarks Fork Valley from Rockvale to the Wyoming border. Construction of the new highway also direly affected the built environment of Fromberg's commercial district as several of the town's oldest buildings near the rail tracks were demolished for the highway right-of-way.²⁶

The only major improvement to Fromberg's commercial district before the early 1940s was conversion of the original Baldwin Lumber Company Building into a gasoline station and garage in 1936. The remodeling project followed design principles considered appropriate for gasoline station architecture at the time. The southeast corner of the building was cut away to provide a drive through area and the lumber company building and its 1911 addition were incorporated under a common false-front.

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CONTEXT 2: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN FROMBERG, 1900-1929

Little residential construction activity occurred in Fromberg near the turn of the century. Some early Fromberg residents resided at their place of business, such as Samuel Greenblatt who occupied living quarters in his store for several years. The few houses built in the early 1900s appeared on residential lots in the Original Townsite and Dudley First Addition and were small wood-frame buildings, sided with clapboard, topped by a simple gable or hipped roof, and either near-square, rectangular, or L-shape in plan.²⁷

As economic conditions brightened and Fromberg's population expanded, the town experienced a boom in residential development. Between 1907 and 1912, speculators platted four additions to the townsite in hopes of selling residential lots to newcomers. The new additions surrounded the original two plats, greatly expanded the layout of the town, and extended the corporate limits east from the railroad tracks to the river.²⁸ Fromberg's new residential construction varied. It included substantial new houses built for the town's emerging class of affluent businessmen and professionals. These houses demonstrated the relative degree of economic prosperity and stability achieved by a few town residents. Smaller houses for Fromberg's working class members also were built and several modest houses were moved in from Gebo.

The new additions to Fromberg signified the high expectations of some leading town promoters. John Blewett and his Blewett Addition, perhaps, best expressed the optimism. Blewett arrived in the Clarks Fork Valley in the early 1900s and soon established himself as one of the area's most wealthy and successful farmers. In 1907, Blewett purchased acreage east of the railroad tracks and laid out the area in nearly acre-size tracts, intended for sites of substantial homes. Blewett had a large, two-story brick house built in the addition for his family in 1912.²⁹ Few others, however, followed. The John Blewett House endures today as one of just a few historic houses in this area of town and by far the addition's most refined residential building.

Most residential construction in Fromberg's boom period, instead, occurred in blocks just west of the commercial core. By the mid-1910s, about a half dozen locally prominent business and professional families occupied new houses in Fromberg.

Large houses built in Fromberg were typical of building forms that appeared elsewhere on the northern plains. Several exhibited design attributes distinctive of the then popular Colonial Revival style; the others expressed more vernacular forms. Brick became used for house construction, although wood-framing with clapboard siding continued to be prevalent. Ornamental details included wood-shingle texturing on dormers or at gable ends; a variety of specialized windows such as the Palladian motif, leaded glass, and round windows with trefoil tracery; and open front porches with simple Tuscan columns and in some instances supporting a balustraded balcony. Brick houses received additional accents supplied by sandstone or concrete sills and lintels at window and door openings.

W. C. Parker worked on construction of several of the town's most exclusive homes. Born in 1856, Parker learned carpentry from his father. He arrived in Fromberg in 1906 and soon began building houses. At times, Parker collaborated with other local builders. Early in his career he worked with Jerry Holden and from 1910 to 1912 Parker built houses in partnership with Clinton Dewitt. Among the Fromberg houses known to have been built by Parker and his associates prior to the mid-1910s are the Tracy McCall House (1908), the Warner House (1909), the W.C. Parker House (1909), and the Samuel Greenblatt House (1911).³⁰

The Frank Brooder House, perhaps, was the finest, most architecturally sophisticated house to grace Fromberg during the town's boom period. The house was constructed in 1909 west of the commercial district on an unplatted tract along the north edge of town. Archibald McLean from Bridger prepared the plans for the house using design elements of the Colonial Revival style. W.C. Parker completed the carpentry work. The two-story, square, brick house featured a hipped roof with gabled dormers; a gable roofed, three-sided pavilion centered on the facade; a palladian window in the broken

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cornice of the pavilion's gable; and a full width front porch with round column supports. Frank Brooder, a cashier at Fromberg's Clark's Fork Valley Bank first owned and occupied the house but in 1911, he sold the property to Dr. David A. Williams. In the early 1920s, Dr. Williams also used the nine-bedroom house as a small hospital.³¹

Smaller houses built during Fromberg's boom period corresponded to the design and appearance of the town's earliest homes. A novel exception, however, was a concrete block house built by John Gibson, Fromberg's renowned "concrete man." Gibson may well have built the small square house as an experiment to demonstrate the viability of concrete block manufactured by the concrete factory he established ca. 1909. Gibson conveniently located the house on the same lot as his factory, situated in a residential neighborhood just west of the commercial district.³²

Houses relocated to Fromberg from Gebo were small company-built dwellings constructed in the late 1890s. These houses shared a standardized plan distinctive of working-class housing of the era. They were single-story, square-shaped buildings sided with clapboard, topped by a hipped roof, and fronted by an open porch. Six company houses from Gebo remain in 1992 but all have suffered remodeling to the degree they no longer convey their important historic and architectural associations.

Fromberg's growth in the early twentieth century encouraged construction of residential buildings other than traditional single-family dwellings. At least two boarding houses were built by 1912. These facilities played an important role in the community by offering a room and meals to single members of the work force. Individuals who lived at the boarding houses reflected the town's diverse population base. For example, in 1910 occupants at a boarding house included a teacher, sales clerk, carpenter, fireman, and miners. Unlike hotels or rooming houses located in the commercial district, the boarding houses were built in residential areas and took on the outward appearance of a large, single family dwelling -- thus providing the inhabitants with a homelike atmosphere.³³ The Hester E. Suydam Board House (1907) survives today and serves as an excellent example of a residential building of the type. This two-story, hipped-roof, clapboard building easily blends in with other historic houses in Fromberg's westside residential neighborhood.

Despite the decline of the local economy after 1918, a few new houses were built in Fromberg in the 1920s. The O'Conner House (1920) and the Francis Rahrer House (1921) were probably the town's two most notable houses from the post-boom era. Both houses reflected design qualities of the Craftsman style, the most popular architectural style for domestic construction throughout the nation in the 1910s and 1920s. They each can be characterized as bungalows with Craftsman detailing expressed in the form of deep eaves, exposed rafter tips, brackets at the gables, and a gable-roofed front porches. W.C. Parker constructed the clapboard-sided Rahrer House and worked with Jerry Holden on construction of the brick O'Conner House.³⁴ The Rahrer House exists today as a fine example of Fromberg's Craftsman architecture; the O'Conner House has been comprised by modern windows and incompatible alterations of the front porch.

Another significant residential project to occur during the town's post-boom era occurred when John Gibson remodeled his concrete block house. In the late 1920s Gibson updated the house, which by then had been enlarged with a rear addition, to a Craftsman look through the addition of decorative rafter tips and roof brackets and construction of a front porch featuring Craftsman windows (four-over-two, double-hung). Gibson completed the contemporary restylizing of the house by refinishing the exterior walls with stucco having an exposed aggregate of small cobbles and bits of brightly colored glass.³⁵

CONTEXT 3: RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, CIVIC, AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN FROMBERG, 1906-1925; 1939

Development of a viable economic base and population growth in Fromberg in the early twentieth century was accompanied by the establishment of cultural and social organizations, and educational facilities. These institutions and

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establishments served as a major unifying force among the settlers while also providing the forces necessary to create a community fabric. The buildings housing these activities in Fromberg followed patterns typical of most townsite development on the northern plains.

Organized religious groups began functioning in the Clarks Fork Valley simultaneously with the first settlement of the region in the 1890s. Initially, itinerant clergymen and priests held services wherever space was available. Reverend John G. Clark of Red Lodge, for example, preached to the valley's Protestant population in Gebo inside a tent in the late 1890s. In 1906, local Catholics built the area's first church midway between Fromberg and Gebo. Fromberg's Methodist Episcopal group soon followed suit; in 1908 a force of volunteer laborers completed construction of a modest, clapboard church. It remained the only church within the city limits until 1915, when a new brick Catholic Church was built for St. Joseph's parish.³⁶

Both the Methodist Episcopal Church and St. Joseph Catholic Church typified small town vernacular church designs of the era. The rectangular buildings featured a steep gable roof, a projecting tower and steeple on the front, and Gothic windows. In 1921, the Methodist Episcopal Church was enlarged by construction of a rear addition, housing an office, study, and social room. Also in the 1920s, St. Joseph's congregation constructed a parish hall on the church property. Both the addition to the Methodist Church and the Catholic parish hall exhibited craftsman detailing.³⁷ Except for some minor alterations, the two churches both remain in their historic condition; St. Joseph parish hall, however, has lost its historic appearance due to modern alterations.

The International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F) was the first fraternal organization in Fromberg and remained active there for nearly 20 years. Founded in Great Britain, the I.O.O.F was secret society that fostered love of country and family, benevolence toward the needy and distressed, and brother love for affiliated members. Little is known about the organizational activities of the I.O.O.F in Fromberg but in 1906 the society financed construction of the town's first brick building, the I.O.O.F Hall and Fromberg Co-operative Mercantile.³⁸ Common with other fraternal organizations of the era, the Fromberg I.O.O.F located the two-story building on Main Street, rented the lower level for commercial purposes, and reserved the upper level for use as their meeting hall. The building conformed to the appearance of other commercial buildings on Main Street and was one of the most substantial ever constructed in Fromberg's downtown.

Town promoters constructed the Fromberg Opera House in 1908 to host plays by professional troupes that traveled from town to town by train. The facility also became a public hall where town and rural residents could socialize at dances and celebrations. In 1915, it offered locals their first glimpse at motion pictures. The rectangular, wood-frame, gable-roofed building featured ornate detailing at the roof eaves and on the gable ends. Although the clapboard walls of the building were stuccoed over, presumably in 1940 when it was converted into a hall for the American Legion, the building retains much of its historic appearance.³⁹

The public educational needs of Fromberg's children were initially fulfilled by an elementary school in Gebo. After the Gebo school burned in 1904, local school officials decided to rebuild in Fromberg because of increased population there. A new elementary school was built on Fromberg's school lot in 1908. In compliance with a 1913 state law mandating compulsory education for children ages eight to fourteen, school officials added four years of high school to Fromberg's curriculum, and in 1916 constructed a separate high school building. The new, two-story brick building was also located on the school block; it was situated just to the south of the elementary facility. In combination, the two school buildings adequately served the community for the next decade; in 1926 a gymnasium was added to the rear of the high school.⁴⁰ During the Great Depression of the 1930s, federal relief funds became available for the construction of a new high school in Fromberg. Noted Billings architect, Chandler C. Cohagen, prepared plans for the building. Specifications called for the 1916 high school to be razed, and the new building constructed on the front of the 1926 gymnasium. When project construction was completed in 1939, the Fromberg High School stood as the largest and most substantial building in

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town.⁴¹ Detail was added to the two-story brick building by a projecting pavilion displaying Art Deco influences, and several concrete belt courses at the water table and parapet. The 1908 elementary school, meanwhile, continued to function in its historic role. However, in 1950 the front of the historic building was also demolished and the remaining portion fronted by an addition.⁴²

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NOTES

1. Shirley Zupan and Harry J. Owens, Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area (Billings: Frontier Press, Inc., 1979) : 129-130, and 248.
2. Red Lodge Picket, 11 July 1896; and Fromberg Service Club, Fromberg: The Fruit Basket of Carbon County (Billings: Empire Printing, 1976) : 2.
3. Carbon County (Gebo) Sentinel, 28 January and 1 April 1898.
4. Carbon County Sentinel, 1 April 1898.
5. Carbon County Sentinel, 21 October 1898 and 6 January 1899; and "Gebo and Its Coal Mine," Billings Gazette Illustrated Historical Edition, 1899.
6. Carbon County Sentinel, 16 December 1898.
7. Carbon County Sentinel, 13 January 1899; Northern Pacific Railroad, Plan of Special Fourth Class Combination Depot, 1902, revised 1925; and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Fromberg, 1907.
8. Charles A. Dewar, surveyor, Plat of the Townsite of Fromberg, surveyed 13 May 1899, filed 5 June 1899, map on file at the Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, Montana; and Carbon County Sentinel, 14 July 1899 and 13 April 1900.
9. Carbon County Sentinel, 16 September 1898 and 21 April 1899; and Dewar, Plat of the Town of Fromberg.
10. Dewar, Plat of the Town of Fromberg; and Malcom Swan, surveyor, Plat of the Dudley First Addition to Fromberg, filed 20 March 1907, map on file at the Office of the Clerk and Recorder, Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, Montana.
11. Ibid.; and John C. Hudson, Plains Country Towns (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985): 89-90.
12. Red Lodge Picket, 18 May 1900, and 10 April 1901; and Fromberg: The Fruit Basket of Carbon County, 95.
13. Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976) : 181-185.
14. "Carbon County Montana: Its Resources and Its Future," Republican Picket (Red Lodge) Holiday Supplement, 1909; a description of Carbon County provided in: R.L. Polk & Co's, Directory of Billings and Red Lodge; Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Big Horn Counties (Helena and Butte: R.L. Polk & Co., of Montana, 1909) : 565-569; and Fromberg: The Fruit Basket of Carbon County, 10-13.

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30. Doris Collins interview with Erika Kuhlman, 4 September 1988; Doris is a former daughter-in-law to W.C. Parker; Carbon County Journal (Red Lodge), 29 December 1911; Fromberg Herald, 27 July 1911; Sanborn Maps for Fromberg, 1907 and 1912; and R.L. Polk Co's, Directory for Carbon County, 1907, 1909, and 1911.
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42. Fromberg: The Fruit Basket of Carbon County, 47.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

I. Name of Property Type: Commercial Buildings

II. Description:

Nearly all surviving commercial buildings from the historic period of growth and development in Fromberg are located along one block of the town's main street. Business blocks are one or two stories in height. The oldest buildings are wood-frame false-fronts. Masonry construction became common after 1906, and a majority of the buildings on the main street are brick. A few concrete examples also exist.

Fromberg's historic commercial buildings were constructed in simple vernacular designs, common to small town development in the early twentieth century. Store fronts exhibited the typical tri-partite design of the period: large commercial windows supported on wooden bulkheads and topped by transoms. Most also had a central recessed entry. Decorative detailing on brick buildings was generally limited to corbeling at the cornice. The concrete buildings appeared to have lacked any elaboration except for Mendelssohn's Drug Store which featured egg-and-dart molding on the cornice. Rear walls were built with brick of a lesser grade than what appeared on facades and typically had a door and one or two double-hung windows. Some of the buildings were stuccoed on the facade in the 1930s or early 1940s.

III. Significance

Criterion A

A commercial building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion A for its association with the emergence and growth of the local economy in the early twentieth century (1900-1918). Commercial buildings constructed during this period are a reflection of the town's development as an important trade center and shipping point for the surrounding region. Commercial development at the townsite was initially limited, largely because of its proximity to the then thriving coal mining town of Gebo. The town of Fromberg, however, quickly grew during the early twentieth century as the surrounding region experienced an agricultural boom and coal mining activities at Gebo went into decline. By the early 1910s, Fromberg hosted a small but prosperous business district, catering to the needs of local farmers and ranchers. The end of the boom in the late 1910s, however, curtailed business growth and commercial construction in the town.

A commercial building in Fromberg may also derive significance under Criterion A if it reflects the evolution of transportation in the town during its boom period until 1936.

Criterion B

A commercial building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion B if it illustrates the important contributions of a significant person. Such persons must have played a prominent role in establishing and/or maintaining Fromberg as a viable trade center, either through their business or civic activities. If a building is to be considered eligible under Criterion B it must be the best representation available of that person's contributions.

Criterion C

A commercial building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion C if it embodies identifiable architectural characteristics of vernacular designs and construction methods associated with urban development on the northern plains. Like most fledgling communities, Fromberg's earliest commercial buildings were of wood-frame construction. The appearance of more durable brick and concrete buildings after 1906 reflects the optimism of the day, but their relatively small size and general lack of detail indicates the limited prosperity ultimately experienced by the town. Remodeling of the Baldwin Building in 1936 employed design elements and stylistic detailing considered appropriate at the time for gasoline station architecture.

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A commercial building in Fromberg can also have significance under Criterion C if it reflects the technical achievements or craftsmanship of a local builder. Most, if not all, of the town's commercial buildings were constructed by contractors who resided in Fromberg or nearby towns. These individuals relied on construction technologies and simple building forms common to the period.

IV. Registration Requirements:

The historic appearance and character of many of the commercial buildings in Fromberg have been marred by modern alterations. Several buildings have been stuccoed or veneered with non-historic siding. Storefronts universally have lost their original materials, although a few still display their historic configuration. Fake mansard roofs on some buildings and construction of a covered boardwalk along the east end of the block have further impacted the commercial district's north side. In combination, alterations to Fromberg's commercial district precludes consideration as a historic district.

A commercial building in Fromberg must be evaluated for individual listing in the National Register. The evaluation must consider the historical and architectural significance of the building as well as its integrity. The integrity of each building is assessed through examination of design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling, and association.

Design, materials, and workmanship: Commercial buildings may be eligible for individual listing in the National Register if they retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. To retain integrity, a building must clearly exhibit its original form, scale, massing, materials, and stylistic detailing. Buildings with only minor changes, including a rear addition and/or replacement of store front windows and doors with units of the same size and configuration, retains integrity. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of a commercial building is also retained although diminished if original construction materials on the front of the building have been covered by stucco or modern siding but some key stylistic details remain evident (such as brick patterning at the cornice, and trimming at windows and door openings); and if the tri-partite configuration of the store front remains intact.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of commercial building is lost if all evidence of original construction materials and ornamental detailing have been obscured by stucco or modern siding and/or the presence of modern mansard roofs and covered board walks; and if the historic configuration of the store front has been completely altered.

Setting and location: Integrity of setting of a commercial building is retained if the surrounding lots have not changed from their historic use (usually commercial), but may be diminished if non-historic buildings or structures have been introduced. The loss of setting alone will not disqualify a commercial building from listing in the National Register.

To be considered eligible for listing in the National Register, a commercial building must stand in its original location. Exceptions for relocated buildings may be made if a building played a pivotal role in the historic growth and development of the town and/or serves as an outstanding example of a type, period, or method of construction. A relocated building must retain integrity in all other aspects, including setting.

Feeling and association: Integrity of feeling and association is retained if a building can be readily identified as an historic commercial building. If modern alterations overwhelm the historic appearance or character of a building, integrity of feeling and association is lost.

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Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Residential Buildings

II. Description:

This property type includes both single family houses and boarding houses. Small houses in Fromberg were built in vernacular forms indicative of small northern plains communities. In general, they were one-story, wood-frame buildings sided with clapboard and topped by a simple gabled or hipped roof. Floor plans varied from near-square, to rectangular or L-shaped in form. Full length porches were common, and ornamental detailing appears to have been minimal. Company houses moved from Gebo to Fromberg were single-story, square shaped buildings sided with clapboard, topped by a hipped roof, and fronted by an open porch.

Larger houses built in Fromberg during the town's boom period (ca. 1906-1918) were one and one-half or two stories in height, near square or rectangular in plan, and typically had an open front porch. Several exhibited one or more design attributes distinctive of the then popular Colonial Revival style such as a gambrel roof, Palladian window, projecting front pavilion, and/or simple porch columns. Other large houses expressed more vernacular forms. Exterior wall finishes included brick masonry and clapboard siding. Other notable elements in some instances were dormers, wood-shingle texturing on dormers or at gable ends, lead glass windows, round windows with trefoil tracery, and a balustraded balcony atop a porch. Brick houses received additional accents supplied by sandstone or concrete sills and lintels at window and door openings.

Craftsman architecture appeared in Fromberg in the 1920s. By this time, the style was the most popular throughout the nation for domestic construction. At least two Craftsman style houses were constructed in Fromberg in the early 1920s and by the end of the decade at least one early house had been restyled to a Craftsman appearance. All three of these houses were one or 1½ story, gable-roofed bungalows with Craftsman detailing expressed in the form of deep eaves, exposed rafter tips, and brackets at the gables.

Many of Fromberg's houses were accompanied by outbuildings. The earliest such buildings (prior to about 1910) were stables and small sheds. Detached garages became common after about 1915; some stables were also converted into garages about this same time. All outbuildings were of wood-frame construction with either drop or clapboard siding and a gable or shed roof.

II. Significance:

Criterion A

A house in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion A for its association with the emergence and growth of the town in the early twentieth century as local trade center and shipping point. Several new houses were built or relocated in town to accommodate its expanded and diverse population base that included wealthy businessmen, professionals, and members of the working class. Houses from this period reflect this important pattern of townsite development.

Criterion B

A house in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion B if it illustrates a significant person's important contributions to the community. Such persons must have played a prominent role in business, civic, or social activities in

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town. If a house is to be considered eligible under Criterion B it must be the best representation available of that person's historic contributions.

Criterion C

A house in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion C if it embodies identifiable architectural characteristics of designs and construction methods associated with urban development on the northern plains. Individual houses can serve as representative examples of vernacular forms, or the Colonial Revival or the Craftsman styles that were common to the era in which they were built.

A house in Fromberg may also derive significance under Criterion C if reflects the important technical expertise or craftsmanship of a local builder.

IV. Registration Requirements

Many of Fromberg's historic houses have been extensively altered throughout the years. The most common alterations have been enclosure of the front porch, and rear additions. Most small houses have also received modern replacement windows, and non-historic siding. All of the Gebo company houses that survive in Fromberg as of 1992 have been extensively altered. Some residential areas in town have also been impacted by the presence of modern trailers. No neighborhoods in town retain a sufficient number of historic, relatively unaltered houses to warrant designation as a historic district.

A house in Fromberg must be evaluated for individual listing in the National Register. The evaluation must consider the architectural and historical significance of the house as well as its integrity. The integrity of each house is assessed through examination of design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling, and association.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship: Houses may be eligible for individual listing in the National Register if they retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. To retain integrity, a building must clearly exhibit its original form, scale, massing, materials, and stylistic detailing. The integrity of a house is retained although diminished if it has modern replacement siding that mimics the original exposure; historic porches have been enclosed or removed; modern additions have been made to the sides or rear that do not more than double the original size of the building; and/or there are a few modern replacement windows that differ in size and configuration from the originals.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of a house is lost if modern addition are on the primary facade or have more than doubled the building size; if all stylistic detailing has been lost to modern renovations; and/or a majority of windows, especially on the primary facade, have been replaced with units significantly different in size and configuration from the original units. Houses thus altered are not eligible for listing in the National Register.

Setting and location: Integrity of setting of a house is retained if the surrounding lots have not changed from their historic use (usually residential). A house may also have diminished integrity of setting if prominent landscape features or other buildings present historically have been removed. Integrity of setting of a house is lost if a modern building has been constructed in the front yard. The loss of setting alone will not disqualify a house for listing in the National Register.

To be considered National Register eligible, a house must stand in its original location. Exceptions for relocated house may be made if a house serves as an outstanding example of a method of construction and/or architectural style and retains integrity in all other aspects, including setting.

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Feeling and association: Integrity of feeling and association is retained if a house can be readily identified as an historic building. If modern alterations overwhelm the historic appearance or character of the house, integrity of feeling and association is lost.

Outbuildings associated with a house must be evaluated as either contributing or non-contributing to an individual property. To be contributing, an outbuilding must possess the same degree of integrity described above for houses. Likewise, an outbuilding is non-contributing if it has lost integrity according to the integrity requirements provided for this property type.

I. Name of Property Type: Religious, Educational, Civic, and Social Buildings

II. Description:

Buildings associated with this property type that exist in Fromberg include the Methodist Episcopal and St. Joseph churches, the Fromberg Opera House, and the Fromberg High School. (Because it conforms in design and appearance to other buildings in the downtown, the I.O.O.F Hall and Fromberg Co-operative Mercantile is considered a commercial building). Except for the two churches, these buildings vary in size, design, and detailing but generally they all conform to small town architecture typical to the period in which they were built. The common thread among these diverse buildings is that they all housed activities that served to enrich the social fabric of the community.

III. Significance

Criterion Consideration A: Religious properties

National Register guidelines stipulate that the significance of a religious property under Criterion A, B, or C must be evaluated solely in secular terms. A religious property's associations with a religious doctrine cannot establish significance for listing in the National Register.

Criterion A

A religious, educational, civic, or social building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion A for its association with the emergence and growth of Fromberg in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These buildings reflect attempts by area settlers to create social unity as well as to provide the town with the elements necessary for community development.

The Fromberg High School may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its associations with New Deal programs of the 1930s that provided relief during a time of nationwide economic hardship.

Criterion B

A religious, educational, civic, or social building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion B if it illustrates a significant person's important contribution to the community. Such persons must have played a prominent role in the social, economic, or civic development of Fromberg. If a building is to be considered under Criterion B it must be the best representation of that person's contribution.

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Criterion C

A religious, educational, civic, or social building in Fromberg may derive significance under Criterion C if it embodies identifiable architectural characteristics of designs and construction methods associated with urban development of the northern plains. The churches and two social halls can serve as a representative examples of vernacular designs that once prevailed in small town architecture. The school can serve as a representative example of institutional architecture typical of the depression era.

Buildings associated with this property type may also derive significance under Criterion C if they reflect the technical merits or craftsmanship of a local builder.

IV. Registration Requirements

A religious, educational, civic, or social building in Fromberg must be evaluated for individual listing in the National Register. The evaluation must consider the historical and architectural significance of the building as well as its integrity. The integrity of each building is assessed through the examination of design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

Design, materials, and workmanship: A religious, educational, civic, or social building may be eligible for individual listing in the National Register if it retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. To retain integrity, a building must clearly exhibit its original form, scale, massing, materials, and stylistic detailing. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of a building is retained although diminished if original construction materials have been covered by stucco or modern siding but some key stylistic details remain evident (such as trim at the roof, and window and door openings); if windows have been replaced with modern units of the same size and configuration as the originals; and/or if the building has an unobtrusive addition built during its period of significance or a small modern addition at the rear or sides.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of a religious, educational, civic, or social building is lost if all evidence of original construction materials and ornamental detailing have been obscured by modern materials; if a majority of original windows have been replaced with units significantly different in size and configuration; and/or if a modern addition is on the primary facade or more than doubles the original building size.

Setting and location: Integrity of setting of a religious, educational, civic, or social building is retained if the surrounding lots have not changed from their historic use (usually residential or commercial), but may be diminished if non-historic buildings or structures have been introduced. The loss of setting alone will not disqualify a commercial building from listing in the National Register.

To be considered eligible for listing in the National Register, a religious, educational, civic, or social building must stand in its original location. Exceptions for relocated buildings may be made if a building played a pivotal role in the historic growth and development of the town and/or serves as an outstanding example of a type, period, or method of construction. A relocated building must retain integrity in all other aspects, including setting.

Feeling and association: As with commercial buildings and residential buildings, integrity of feeling and association of a religious, educational, civic, or social building is retained if it can be readily identified as an historic building. If modern alterations overwhelm the historic appearance or character of the building, integrity of feeling and association is lost.

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I. Name of Property Type: Railroad-related Buildings

see the nomination for "Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Fromberg"

II. Description

see the nomination for "Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Fromberg"

III. Significance

see the nomination for "Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Fromberg"

IV. Registration Requirements

see the nomination for "Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Fromberg"

I. Name of Property Type: Bridges

see the nomination for "Fromberg Concrete Arch Bridge"

II. Description

see the nomination for "Fromberg Concrete Arch Bridge"

III. Significance

see the nomination for "Fromberg Concrete Arch Bridge"

IV. Registration Requirements

see the nomination for "Fromberg Concrete Arch Bridge"

G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Corporate limits of Fromberg, Carbon County, Montana

H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The historical and architectural inventory of resources in Fromberg was funded with Federal funds from the National Park Service, an agency of the United States Department of the Interior. The funds were received through a Historic Sites Field Survey and Planning Grant administered by the Montana State Preservation Office (SHPO). The Fromberg Historical Society provided matching funds in the form of in-kind contributions.

The initial survey of the town of Fromberg and rural properties in the vicinity was conducted by Erika Kuhlman in 1988-89. Ms. Kuhlman received volunteer assistance from members of the Fromberg Historical Society, coordinated by Violet Papp. The team recorded 42 historic properties at the reconnaissance level. The properties included several farmsteads, a cemetery associated with the long-abandoned mining town of Gebo, and over 35 buildings in Fromberg -- including houses, commercial buildings, and civic/social buildings. In consultation with Pat Bik of the Montana SHPO, Kuhlman determined 18 of the properties worthy of intensive level inventory. The intensive level inventory (1989) included an architectural evaluation of each property and historic research to determine date of construction, builder and/or architect, and original and subsequent occupants. Additional historic research was also conducted to determine and develop the historic themes which impacted the towns of Fromberg and Gebo, and agricultural development of the Clarks Fork Valley during the historic period. At the completion of the field survey, Ms. Kuhlman prepared a draft multiple property listing for "Historic and Architectural Properties in Fromberg, Montana," and draft Registration forms for the 18 properties recorded at the intensive level.

In June 1991, the Montana SHPO contracted with Renewable Technologies, Inc. (RTI) of Butte, Montana to prepare 1) a revised Multiple Properties Documentation form for the townsite of Fromberg; 2) revised Registration forms for those properties in Fromberg inventoried at the intensive level by the 1989 survey; and 3) completed Registration forms for properties in Fromberg that meet criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places but were overlooked during the 1989 survey.

Compilation of this Multiple Properties Documentation was completed by Mary McCormick of RTI with volunteer assistance from Violet Papp. Work required field inspection of those properties in Fromberg recorded by the 1988-89 inventory to determine the accuracy of information provided by that inventory as well as if any alterations to the properties had occurred since that time. A windshield survey of Fromberg was then conducted to identify additional properties with potential for listing in the National Register. This effort identified three additional resources worthy of National Register listing, and each was recorded at the intensive level. McCormick and Papp also completed historical research to gather additional information needed to complete this Multiple Properties Documentation and Registration forms for all eligible properties in Fromberg.

The historic contexts statements and the typology of significant property types in general was consistent with Multiple Property Documentation prepared for other communities on the northern plains. The historic contexts are organized by the themes of transportation and commercial developments; residential developments; and religious, educational, civic and social developments in Fromberg during the town's historic period. The property types presented were selected for their association with the context statements and for their illustration of related building and structure types remaining in Fromberg. Requirements of integrity for the listing of related properties take into consideration modifications that most commonly have occurred to historic resources in Montana.

A total of fifteen Registration forms were completed in association with the Multiple Property Documentation. The forms all record individually eligible properties located in Fromberg. The properties include eight houses, two commercial buildings, an entertainment hall, a church, a school, a railroad depot, and a bridge.

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