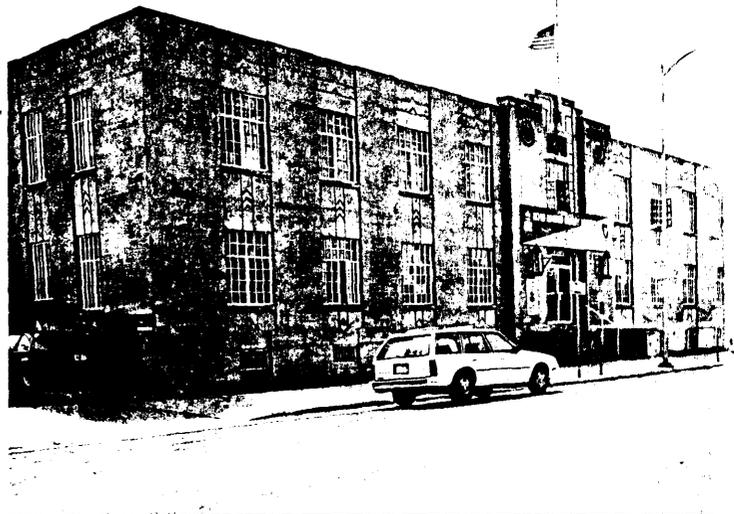


HISTORIC NAME: Bozeman Armory
ADDRESS: 24 W. Mendenhall, Bozeman
LEGAL BOUNDARY: Tracy's Blk A, Lots 17-21
OWNER'S NAME: State of Montana Armory Board
Adjutant General
Armory Building
OWNER ADDRESS: 24 W. Mendenhall, Bozeman
SPECIFIC DATE: 1940-1941
ARCHITECT: Fred F. Willson
BUILDER: Unknown
ORIGINAL OWNER: State of Montana
Armory Board
ORIGINAL USE: Armory
PRESENT USE: Armory
UTM REFERENCE: 12/497100/5058300
ACREAGE: less than one
U.S.G.S. QUAD: Bozeman, 1953



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Applicable Criteria: A and C
Areas of Significance: government, architecture
Number of Contributing Properties: 1

The Bozeman Armory is of exceptional significance as one of only a few examples of the Art Deco style in Bozeman, and one of only three buildings directly associated with World War II. Like virtually all major, architect-designed buildings in the city, this one was designed by Fred F. Willson - Bozeman's prolific local architect whose career spanned from 1910-1956.

The armory was built as part of a nationwide response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The Bozeman Daily Chronicle commented in 1942, just before the building was dedicated: "At least this spacious, \$137,661 reinforced, monolithic, concrete structure of modern and functional design represents this community's resolve that never again shall our nation be caught off-guard and ill-prepared to meet the enemies of democracy."

The building was constructed as a WPA project, sponsored by the Montana Armory Board, as the home for the Bozeman National Guard units of Montana's 163rd Infantry, which was in combat at the time of construction. It was one of six built in Montana, the construction of which were announced by the state legislature in 1940.

Built to the specifications of the War Department, the 128'x 108' armory, which was to provide "up-to-the-minute" protection, contained several novel features. Among the National Guard facilities were a maple block drill floor running the full width of the building, capable of accommodating military trucks as well. The blocks were laid in contrasting patterns, with no nails or glue. In the basement was a rifle range. A sound proof music room was built for the 163rd Infantry Regimental Band, and general facilities such as offices, lounges, and an officers' club were also included. Public facilities such as a Chamber of Commerce Room, meeting rooms and lounges were also included. The design originated with the Armory Board's Architects, Hugenin & Associates, whose resident architect was Fred Willson, and WPA Engineers.

The war years posed certain problems to completion of the building. Materials were difficult to obtain, and construction personnel, mostly WPA workers who gained skills on the job, were constantly being absorbed by private industry. Travertine and terrazzo work originally specified by Willson had to be abandoned due to the difficulty of obtaining skilled workmen and necessary materials.

The building remains well preserved today, and in use as an armory. The other three buildings in the city associated with World War II are the American Legion Building (1948), 225 E. Main, and the west wing of the Bozeman Deaconess Hospital, built in 1944 as a nurse training facility.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This detached two story commercial building is a reinforced, cast concrete structure that exhibits elements of the Art Deco style of architecture, such as the linear and hard edges of the building and the vertical emphasis of the windows and entrance. The metal sash casement windows were popular in the period as were the chevrons and decorative elements of the facade.

The central entrance oriented toward West Mendenhall Street is flanked by massive concrete piers. The original doors have been replaced with modern aluminum frame glass doors, and this remains the only major alteration to the building. A pair of original cylindrical light fixtures are set to each side of the doorway. The overall facade organization is symmetrical, with vertical 9-light, metal sash windows set at the daylight basement level, and sets of 12-light, double metal casements with 12-light transoms on the first and second level. The north section of the building has a flat roof while the roof of the south half is a barrel vault, which covers the drill room/gymnasium.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Fred Willson Job List: 1939, Job # 3928, Job # 3949; 1940, Job # 4059.
Bozeman Daily Chronicle, April 14, 1942, Vol. XXXI, No. 113, Sec. 2, pp. 9-16

FORM PREPARED BY: James R. McDonald, P.C. (1983-84); Matthew Cohen (1985-86 revision); Patricia Bick (1987 revision), State Historic Preservation Office, 225 No. Roberts, Helena, Montana 59620 (406) 444-7715

