Montana State Legislature

Exhibit Number: 9

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EXHIBIT 9
DATE 29.03
HB 9

The Way We Were

By Amorette F. Allison

A collection of columns from the Miles City Star on items of historic interest in Miles City and the surrounding area.

Revised, Corrected, Expanded and Illustrated.

Miles City Preservation
Commission
Drawer 910
Miles City, MT 59301

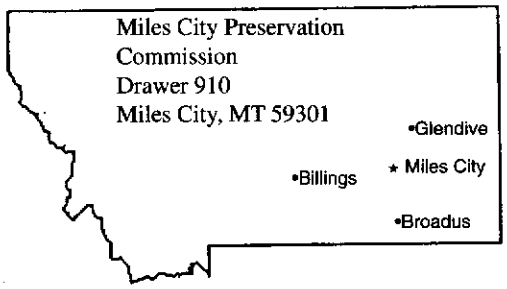
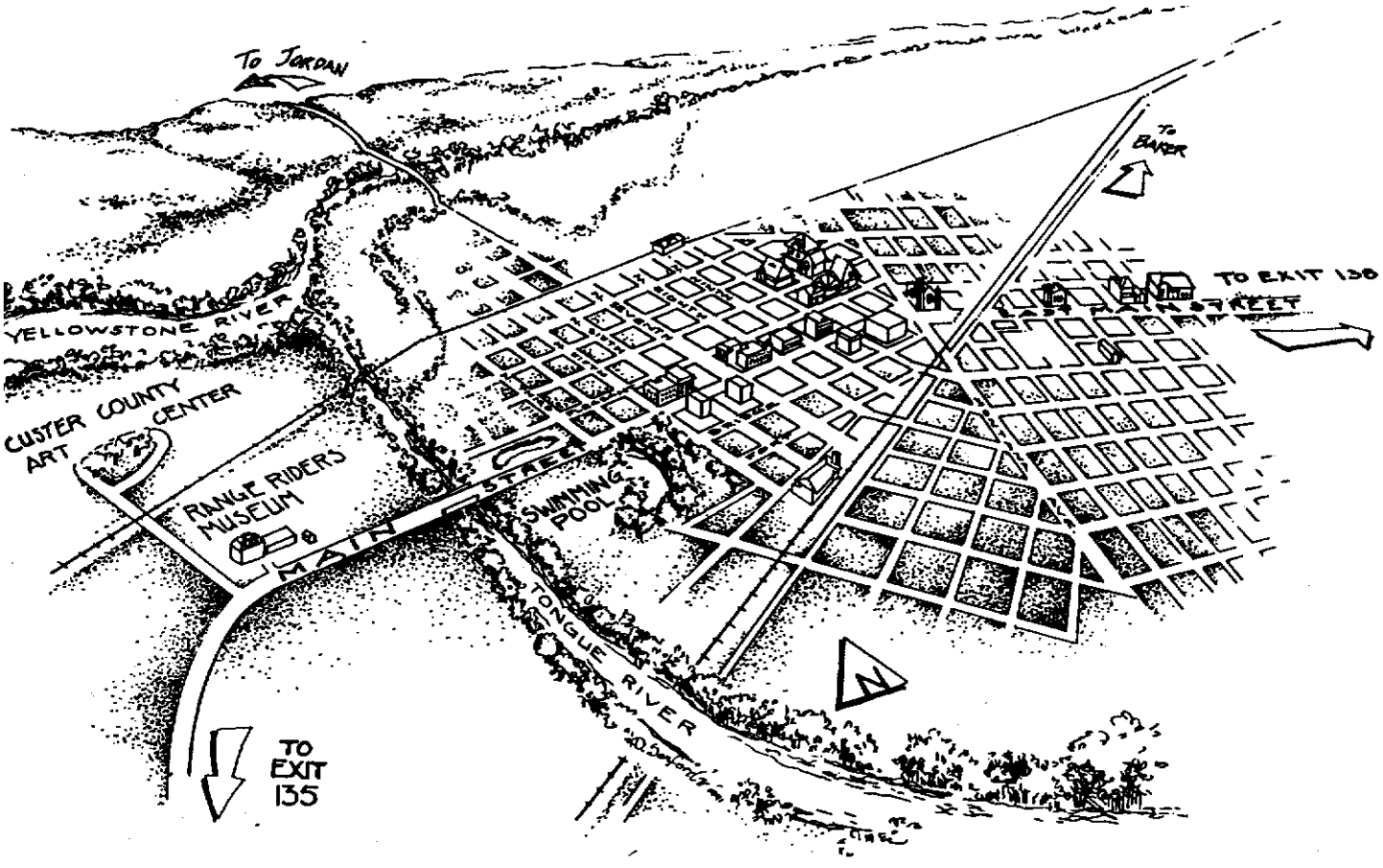


EXHIBIT 9
DATE 2/9/05
HB 9

MILES CITY, MONTANA

WALKING TOUR



Originated by Miles City Preservation Commission and printed with the help of a grant from the Montana Preservation Office.

tile floor, antique back bar and pressed tin ceiling. Bar stools have been added. Originally, patrons "stood up and drank like a man."

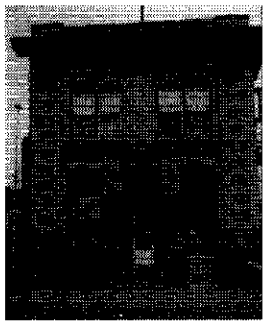
14 N. 7th Street, was built in 1908 as the Miles City Post Office. Link and Haire were the architects and they maintained offices upstairs from 1908-1910. When the new Federal Building one block north was completed in 1915, the Post Office moved into a permanent home there. The former Post Office became the Palace Hotel, and in 1927, a new manager opened the Palace Palm Garden on the first floor. Decorated in a profusion of green palms, it was heralded as "the latest acquisition to business and social life in Miles City...the Palm Garden will be one of the most attractive places of its kind in eastern Montana." This building is full Renaissance Revival style. It served as a design precedent for many of local architect Brynjulf Rivenes' later commercial and civic landmarks, including the Masonic Temple.

717-719 Main, a design attributed to Miles City's first architect, Byron Vreeland, was built of soft local brick in 1886. It's the best surviving example of Vreeland's work. The second floor detailing and rooftop parapets were typical of Vreeland's style. Other 1880s bricks designed by Vreeland are in the 500 block of Main, but their intricate towers and parapets were removed during a frenzy for "modernization" during the early 1900s. Vreeland was a master of decorative brick work. Notice how the "slots" on the upper story create dramatic patterns with the changes of light and shadow. Originally known as the Gilman-Huffman block, the building was commissioned by Lt. Gilman of Fort Keogh, who stayed in Miles City after leaving the military, and L.A. Huffman, well - known frontier photographer.

811-813 Main, a design attributed to architect Brynjulf Rivenes, was built in 1912. It was the first building in Miles City to make use of Baroque detailing and enameled white brick from Hebron, North Dakota. Originally several store fronts, the second story retains the Renaissance Revival style with Italianate detailing. There are six apartments on the second floor and the entrance to that level was in once the center of the first floor. The door surround for that entrance, decorated with rosettes, scrolled brackets and wreath design, is now on the west end of the building.

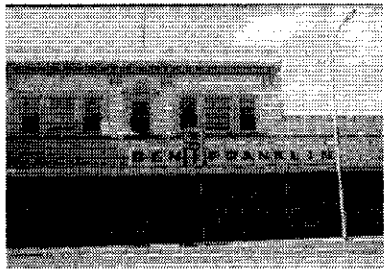
907-911 Main, is the Revival style Masonic Temple. It was designed by architect Brynjulf Rivenes and erected in 1912. The Masonic Order, one of the earliest organizations in Miles City, held its first meeting in 1880. Many leading businessmen were members, and the building reflects the prosperity of its times. Described in 1912 as "one of the finest Masonic Temples in the state," this building is considered to be one of the finest designed by Rivenes. The building has changed little since its creation. The main floor is used for commercial purposes and the Masons meet upstairs. H.C. Plimpton originally operated his funeral parlor in the basement, while his wife ran a millinery shop and picture framing business on the first floor.

5 *612 Main*



6 *14 N. 7th*

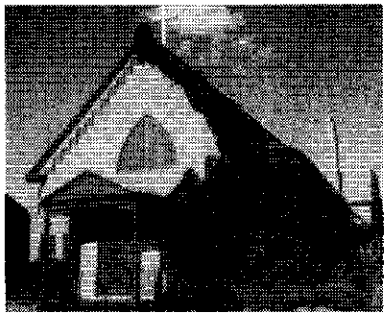
7 *719 Main*



8 *811 - 813 Main*

9 *907 - 911 Main*

14 *1117 Pleasant*



15 *204 N. 11th*

16 *1005 Palmer*

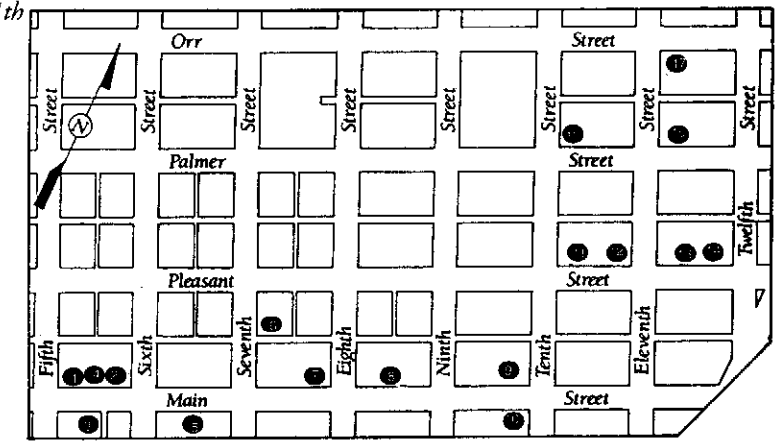
17 *220 N. 11th*

Revival features of roof form, symmetrical window placement and porch detailing with neoclassical details in the soffit treatment and window shapes.

204 N. 11th, the Episcopal Church, built in 1886, is the oldest church building in Miles City still being used as a church. The Byron Vreeland design combines Gothic, Romanesque and Queen Anne style. Built of local soft red brick, the only noticeable change in the exterior is the removal of a bell-shaped bell tower. The interior is unaltered and features a vaulted ceiling structure trimmed with California Redwood. The altar is rumored to have been crafted from wood salvaged from a steamboat wrecked in the Yellowstone River.

1005 Palmer, an elegant brick residence, is attributed to architect Byron Vreeland because of the Gothic, Queen Anne and Romanesque elements found in Vreeland's other designs. It was built in 1886 for Miles City's first mayor, E.L. ("Skew") Johnson. The second owner, William Harmon, bought the house in 1891 and built the carriage house that year. State Senator Kenneth McLean was the third owner. He added the eight -foot wide porch to the front of the house in 1907. Changes since then have been minimal. The house was divided into apartments for a time, but the home and the carriage house are currently single-family residences.

220 N. 11th, a 2 -1/2 story Prairie or Foursquare style residence, was built in 1908 for Mary Selby. It is presumed to be a Brynjulf Rivenes design. Little is known about the original owner, but the residence is more closely associated with Lee Sherman Badgett, who came west from Kentucky in 1867. In 1896 he joined a ranch partnership in the Miles City area and married Carrie Lower. They had six children and used the house at 220 N. 11th as a residence during the school year. Records also show that Mrs. James Calvin operated a lodging house at the residence as early as 1910.



Watercolor of Miles City, circa 1878, by Hermann Stieffel, a private in the 5th Infantry at Fort Keogh,1877-1882. Photo reproduction with permission from Forbush Memorial Library, Westminster, Massachusetts.

MILES CITY HISTORY

The area where the Tongue and Yellowstone rivers meet was well known to Indian tribes, fur trappers and explorers. Captain William Clark camped near the mouth of the Tongue on July 29, 1806. Clark wrote in his journal "late in the evening I arrived at the enterance of a River which I take to be (called by Indians) the [Lazeka or Tongue River] it discharges itself on the Star. Side and is 150 yards wide of water the banks are much wider. I intended to encamp on an eligable spot imediately below this river, but finding that it's water [is] so Muddy and worm as to render it very disagreeable to drink, I crossed the rochejhone and encamped on an island close to the Lar Shore. The water of this river is nearly milk worm very muddy and of a lightish brown colour. the current rapid and the chanel contains great numbers of snags. near its entrance there is great quantities of wood such as is common in the low bottoms of the Rochejhone and Missouri."

The Indians referred to the Yellowstone as the Elk River and camped on the sites that are now Spotted Eagle Recreation Area and the Miles City golf course. Steamboats could navigate up the Yellowstone River on the June rise. In early June 1876, Generals Custer and Terry conferred aboard the steamer Far West near what was to become Miles City. Custer and his men then set out overland for the long march that was to end in disaster at the Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876.

As a direct result of this battle, Fort Keogh and Miles City were founded. The Tongue River Cantonment, under command of Colonel Nelson Miles, was built in the fall and winter of 1876. The first civilians arrived at the same time, reportedly with a keg of whiskey, and Col. Miles advised them to set up shop several miles downstream from the soldiers. When the permanent Fort Keogh was built in 1877, several miles upstream from the Cantonment, "Miles Town" moved to its present location.

The wide-open town centered around Riverside Park. The population of soldiers, buffalo hunters, bullwackers, mule skinners, cowboys and Indians was serviced by saloons, dance halls, bordellos, boarding houses and general stores. These early log and frame structures were almost all destroyed by fires or replaced by more substantial buildings.

The Northern Pacific Railroad arrived in town in 1881 and the community took on a new importance and permanence. Miles City was the terminus for long trail drives up from Texas and many big ranches headquartered here. Sheep and cattle grazed the "free grass." In 1884 the Custer County Woolhouse handled more than 2,000,000 pounds of wool. The town incorporated in 1887, even though ranchers had lost more than half their herds in the harsh winter of 1886-87.

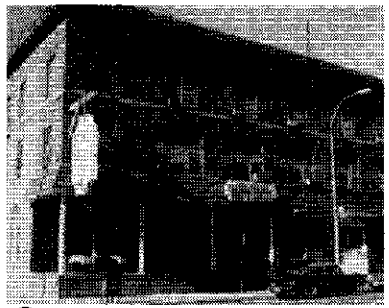
The Main Street buildings reflect the growth spurts of the town. The early 1880s produced ostentatious brick buildings for the booming businesses. There was a virtual halt to major building projects following the bad winter until 1898, when the Olive Hotel was constructed. The ranching business improved, the Milwaukee Railroad came to town in 1907, and homesteaders swelled the population. "Modern" buildings were constructed for Main Street businesses, and some older buildings put on new faces.

Fort Keogh served as a remount station during World War I, and Miles City became the largest horse market in the world. Wealthy residents first built substantial homes close to downtown (Carriage House District). Later, between 1905 and 1928, the elegant homes on East Main were built. Miles City has three historic districts listed on the National Register — Main Street, Carriage House and East Main. This walking tour takes you through the first two.

Still known as the "Cow Capital," Miles City has a population of 8,461 and is the county seat of Custer County (population 11,697). It is the medical, business, and cultural center for a large region. Miles Community College serves the educational needs of the area. The main industries are still ranching and farming. Recreational opportunities echo the activities of the early explorers who found hunting and fishing excellent. The Yellowstone is the largest undammed river in the U.S. and provides a challenge for boaters and rafters. Campers may find themselves camped on a site that once hosted Captain Clark or a Cheyenne hunting party. The only physical remains of the Lewis and Clark expedition, Pompey's Pillar with Capt. William Clark's name carved on it, is located a little less than 100 miles west of Miles City along Interstate 94.

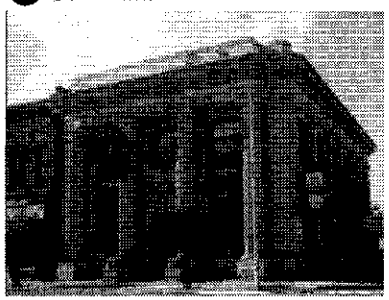
Further information about local history is available in the Montana Room of the Miles City Public Library on the corner of 10th and Main Street, the local Historic Preservation Office in downtown Miles City, the Miles City Genealogical Library located in the Ursuline Convent at 1411 Leighton Blvd. (another building on the National Register of Historic Places) and the Range Riders Museum west of town just over the Tongue River bridge on Main Street. Items of historical interest also can be found at the Custer County Art Center west of Miles City on Waterplant Road and The Wool House Gallery at 419 N. Seventh St.

501 Main is the Olive Hotel. It opened as the Hotel Leighton in 1898. When Maud and Albert Kennie bought the Hotel in 1908 they renamed it the Olive for their daughter. Alterations at that time added a new front that nearly doubled the size of the structure (the differences in brick are visible today). The exterior of the building remains in a remarkable state of preservation, with most of the details intact from 1898 and 1908. The Main Street entry door with its beautiful leaded glass and the stained glass in the arched transoms of the lobby windows are a reminder of the Olive's elegant past.



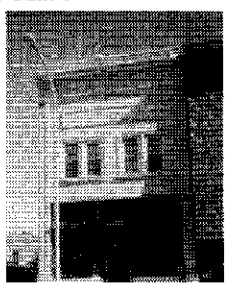
1 *501 Main*

519 Main, a two-story Beaux Arts reinforced concrete building sheathed in Indiana buff limestone, was built for the First National Bank in 1910. The oldest bank in Montana east of Butte, it is credited with establishing Miles City as one of the three major financial areas in the state - behind Butte and Helena. C.S. Haire designed the new bank and the limestone facade was cut and fitted at the Indiana quarries, then wrapped and boxed separately for shipment. The building retains a very high degree of integrity. Some detail in the limestone front has been lost due to sandblasting. The major external alteration is the fire escape and the window infill on the first floor. The structure still conveys associations with a booming Miles City in the early 20th Century.



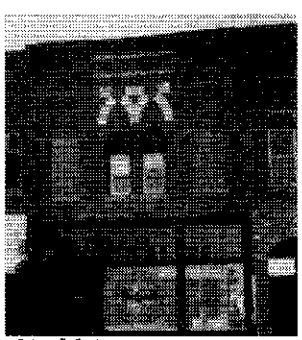
2 *519 Main*

510 Main, designed by pioneer Miles City Architect, Byron Vreeland, was built in 1883 for Dr. Robert G. Redd's drug store. It received an elegant new marble and terra-cotta front in 1915. If you look at the side of the building facing the parking lot you can see the original brick construction. The second economic boom in Miles City after the turn of the century prompted merchants to redesign their buildings with a more "progressive" appearance and this building was used by Mayor H.C. Smith to advertise the city's cosmopolitan quality in the early 20th Century. Recent restorarion by the owners of Security Abstract return the building to its former glory.



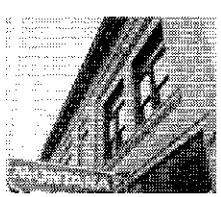
3 *510 Main*

511 Main, was the location of F. Orschel & Brothers, the only exclusive clothing store in Miles City in 1878. The old frame building, built by German-born Ferdinand Orschel, burned down in 1885. The current 2-story brick building replaced it on the same site, and was completed in the fall of 1885. Above the second story windows are bold, polychrome tiles, in a red-white-blue color scheme. Four cast iron pillars along the front of the building were uncovered in the building's most recent remodeling. The commercial block, which includes 509, 511, 513 and 515 Main Street, is architectually significant because its' combined Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival and Queen Anne detailing carry the architectural signature of pioneer Montana architect, Byron Vreeland.



4 *511 Main*

612 Main, the Montana Bar, has a Montana map for a sign. A check marks the location of Miles City. The Montana Bar was the place for early day stockman to gather. Originally built as a one - story brick in 1893, the building was enlarged over the years and received a new facade about 1914. The interior and exterior have changed little, and the Montana Bar is known as one of the most authentic western bars in the state. The interior



10 *908 Main*

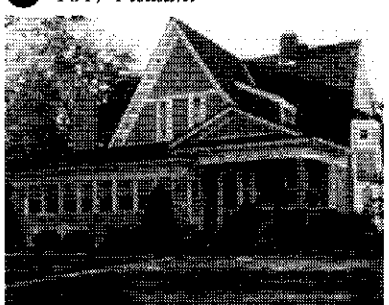
908 Main built in 1914, is known as the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Building. Designed by an unnamed architect working for Mountain States Telephone and constructed by C.E. Walker Co. of Denver, this major commercial landmark survives in near pristine condition as one of the most "high style" buildings on Main Street. The canopy above the entry features a small bell motif that is also repeated above the canopy in a buff-colored bas relief terra cotta panel. Although the words "Telephone Exchange" have been removed from the facade, the original function of the building is readily recalled by the decorative detailing.

11 *1003 Pleasant*

1003 Pleasant is the only example of Neo-Classical style in this neighborhood. Designed in 1902 by C.S. Haire, it was the home of Miles City pioneer George Ulmer and his family. The elegant home had a ballroom on the third floor and an impressive carriage house in the alley. Ulmer became a partner in Miles and Strevell Hardware in 1886. The firm began in 1876, receiving its first shipments of goods by steamboat.

12 *1017 Pleasant*

1017 Pleasant, a transitional Colonial Revival/Shingle style house, was the home of S. Fred Cale. Cale came to Miles City by steamboat in 1880 and lived in this house from about 1900 until his death in 1927. He exemplifies the type of businessman who "made good" in early Miles City and chose to join this neighborhood of prosperous pioneers. Queen Anne detailing on the house – fishscale shingles mixed with coursed shingle cladding – add visual interest. The home has received almost no alterations over the years.



13 *1113 Pleasant*

1113 Pleasant is an excellent and late example of wooden "stick style" architecture popular in the 1880's. This is an extremely rare style for eastern Montana and this 1903 home is thought to be the only house of its type surviving in Miles City. Although built for Theodore H. Bowden, the residence is most associated with Ben Levalley, who purchased the house in 1904 and lived there until 1913. Ben owned the Levalley Livery Stables and also worked as a building contrator and Custer County sheriff.

1117 Pleasant, built in 1908 for Jules Arnold, is most commonly associated with the Charles J. Wagenbreth family, who purchased the house in 1911. Wagenbreth was the proprietor of the Montana Meat Market and the home remained in the family until 1945. The two-story carriage house was also built in 1911 and in the 1950s served as a theater for the Barn Players, a community theater group. The carefully restored house is a