



124 N Broadway Ave, PO Box 1522, Red Lodge, MT 59068
406-860-5910 www.boypt.org

January 10, 2023

Chairman and members of the committee, for the record, my name is David Whitcomb. I am a director for the Buses of Yellowstone Preservation Trust located in Red Lodge, Montana, and the grandson of the man who built the garage we are in the process of restoring. I am testifying on behalf of our Montana Historic Preservation Grant application requesting funding for the AD Whitcomb Garage Interior Restoration Project.

The history of the garage dates back to 1905 when a one-story blacksmith and wheelwright shop was built on the lot. In 1917, as automobiles began to replace horse-drawn transport, the shop became a service station. In 1925, my grandfather, AD Whitcomb, and his brother purchased the building and continued operating it as a service station, tire, and blacksmith shop. In 1928, my grandfather became the sole owner of the building, demolishing it in 1936 and building a more modern style service station and auto dealership. He remained in business until 1976 when the business was sold. In 2018, the Buses of Yellowstone Preservation Trust purchased the building.

Today, it is recognized as the site of one of the longest continuously operating service stations in Montana and a contributing property to the Red Lodge Historic Commercial District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. How fitting too that the building, with its long tradition of transportation-related businesses, would be the home of the Buses of Yellowstone Preservation Trust and their original operating motorized vehicles used in Yellowstone Park prior to WWII. What a remarkable meld of the past.

I spent many summers working at the garage watching my grandfather, along with my father and uncle, interacting with their customers, doing whatever needed to be done. A strong work ethic and a dedicated commitment to serving the community guided their way, a legacy that carries on to this day and one we continue to follow.

I know their hearts would warm as they viewed our efforts to restore and preserve their building, beginning with the exterior stucco in 2021 made possible through grants received from the Montana Department of Tourism and Montana History Foundation. They would readily recognize the need for similar efforts in the building's interior, specifically those that would address code compliance requirements and energy efficiency needs.



124 N Broadway Ave, PO Box 1522, Red Lodge, MT 59068
406-860-5910 www.boypt.org

How pleased they would be the building's restoration is being guided by an Architectural Assessment performed by a Preservation Architect in early 2020. They believed as we do that a well-planned approach is essential in getting a job done and getting it done right.

The use of local suppliers and contractors to do work was one of their fundamental values as they strongly believed in community and in employing locally. We too will use local suppliers and contractors with historic preservation experience to perform the interior restoration work; the same approach used when restoring the building's exterior stucco.

They would be astounded to know that in 2022, over 1,000 visitors from 41 states and 13 countries abroad toured their building with the historic vehicles showcased therein. How wonderful too that Montana Historical Society's 49th Annual History Conference held an open house in the building, enabling over 275 people from across the United States to experience the sights, smells and sounds of a 1936-built garage.

To know the history of the garage and its vehicles was being shared through media, exhibits, presentations, and more to reach a world-wide audience of tens of thousands would have been beyond their belief. To hear that over 10,000 people are following the Buses of Yellowstone Preservation Trust on social media with a reach far exceeding 200,000 people world-wide would have been more than they could comprehend. Yet they would understand the significance of the numbers as they show a great interest in our mission of preservation.

How proud they would be to see their legacy live on through a building they built now used to showcase historic vehicles used in Yellowstone during the same era the garage was built. How proud I am to be before you today to share their story and thank you for your consideration in providing grant funding for the AD Whitcomb Garage Interior Restoration Project.



124 N Broadway Ave, PO Box 1522, Red Lodge, MT 59068
406-860-5910 www.boypt.org



AD Whitcomb Garage in the late 1930s



AD Whitcomb Garage after 2021 exterior stucco restoration