

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **400 Atlantic Avenue**
Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Miles City**

Site Number: **24CR1340**
(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Custer**

Historic Name: **Dan Hurt Residence**

Original Owner(s): **Unknown**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Jerry and Beverly Williams**

Owner Address: **P.O. Box 275
Miles City, 59301**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **8N** Range: **47E**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SE** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **33**

Lot(s): **01-03**

Block(s): **100**

Addition: **Miles City Original Townsite** Year of
Addition:

USGS Quad Name: Year:

Historic Use: **Domestic**

Current Use: **Domestic**

Construction Date: **1905** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **13** Easting: **434717** Northing: **5138962**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **8/1/2015**

Form Prepared by: **Anthony Wood**

Address: **1410 8th Avenue, Helena MT 59620-1202**

Daytime Phone: **406-444-7715**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: yes no

Criteria: A B C D

Date:

Evaluator:

Comments: Property record form written as part of the
"Identifying Montana's African American Heritage Places
Project."

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merge pages with this form

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: Yes No Individually Contributing to Historic District Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: A B C D

Area of Significance: **African American History** Period of Significance: **1905-1962**

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Property Name: The Dan Hurt House

Smithsonian Number: 24CR1340

Architectural Style: **Four-Square** If Other, specify:
Property Type: **Domestic** Specific Property Type: **Single Family Residence**

Architect: Architectural Firm/City/State:
Builder/Contractor: Company/City/State:
Source of Information:

Architectural Description:

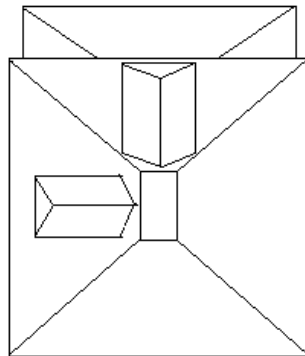
Setting & Location

The Dan Hurt residence located at 400 Atlantic Ave, sits on lots 1-3, on the northwest corner of block 100, in the Miles City original townsite addition. The block is bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the northwest, South 4th Street to the southwest, Yellowstone Avenue to the southeast, and South 5th Street to the northeast. The immediate neighborhood on the southwest side of Miles City is generally bounded by the Great Northern Railroad running to the northwest, the Tongue River to the west, the Miles City Town and Country Club to the south, and South Montana Ave to the east. Atlantic Ave runs parallel to the railroad on the northwest edge of the neighborhood. Block 100 is situated near the southwest corner of the neighborhood.

The property features large front and side lawns. The northern front lawn runs from the house to Atlantic Ave, with a small dirt path functioning as a sidewalk. The corner of Atlantic Ave and South 4th St features a large cottonwood tree. The eastern side and rear lawns are bounded by a metal chain fence that runs from the northeast corner of the house to the western edge of the neighbor's fence to the east. Two large cottonwood trees grow in the west side yard, adjacent to South 4th Street. From the rear western corner of the house, a thick bush-hedge runs the length of the property, thus obscuring the view of the rear of the house and the back yard.

Introduction

The Dan Hurt residence at 400 Atlantic Avenue is a one-story, single family residence, with a hipped roof, generally built in the American four-square style. A cast concrete block wall foundation supports the block walls of the same material. The exterior walls extend to the broad eaves of the hipped roof, which is covered in asphalt shingles. The north and west slopes of the roof feature hipped dormers extending from the peak of the main roof, each containing a window fixture in the dormer end. A brick chimney rises from the center of the hipped roof peak. The north façade of the building features a covered hipped roof porch. The north slope of the hipped porch roof is continuous with the north slope of the main roof. Originally open, the porch now features window bays that enclose the space, running from the half porch wall to the fascia beneath broad eaves.



North Façade

The enclosed front porch covers nearly the entire exterior of the North façade. Ribbons of three windows flank each side of the front entry door which stands atop three concrete steps. Each of the six windows featured on the north façade of the porch are four-light, fixed pane windows, rectangular in shape and vertical in orientation. The windows extend between wood support beams on either side of the entry door, to the wood beams supporting the porch roof at either corner of the façade. The windows sit atop the original half porch wall, which appears to be wood frame, possibly with a stucco or plaster siding. The four support beams and all wood window and door surrounds appear to be original to the enclosing of the porch, possibly by the 1930s, and are painted a pale yellow, which is now very worn and chipped in places. The windows terminate at the wide fascia board beneath broad eaves. On either side of the

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front porch, narrow parts of the main house's exterior walls are visible, but contain no distinguishing features. These wall sections, like the porch walls, terminate at a wide, yellow, fascia board beneath the very broad eaves of the hipped roof.

Centered above the porch, the northern window dormer extends outward from just above the level where the hipped porch roof intersects with the main northern slope. The dormer end features two, side by side window fixtures. Both windows are one over one, double hung, with white, wood surrounds. The exterior of the dormer appears to be the unshingled wood board siding. Above the windows, the broad yellow fascia boards runs beneath the dormer's broad eaves. The hipped roof of the dormer appears to flair out slightly from the peak.

West Elevation

The west elevation contains three windows set in the exterior walls, a hipped window dormer protruding from the west slope of the main roof, the west elevation of the front dormer, and the west elevation of the enclosed front porch. The center of the walls of the west elevation features a rectangular, one-over-one, double-hung window, directly below the western dormer. Either side of the center window features a slightly larger, but similar, one-over-one double-hung window located about five feet from the corners of the elevation. Set within the walls, all three windows feature wood window surrounds, painted a pale yellow. Extending north from the west elevation, the front porch contains a ribbon of three window fixtures extending from the half wall to a wide fascia board running beneath the porch's broad eaves. The northern most of the three porch windows is a four-light fixed pane window. The center window, while identical in size, is only a one-over-one, two-light, fixed pane window. The southern most of the porch windows is identical to the northern window.

The western roof slope features a hipped window dormer protruding from the center of the elevation. The dormer end contains two, side by side, one-over-one double-hungs. The white window surrounds contrast with the yellow walls of the dormer end. Above the dormer window, a wide yellow fascia runs beneath the broad eaves. The western slope and elevation of the northern hipped roof dormer is visible from the west elevation. The brick chimney rises from the main roof peak, at the center of the elevation, and is also visible from the side elevations.

East Elevation

The East elevation of the house contains only two windows, with the eastern elevations of the northern window dormer and porch also visible. Set within the exterior walls, a one-over-one double-hung window is located about five feet from the northeast and southeast corners, respectively. The walls terminate at the wide yellow fascia board which runs beneath the eaves. Like the west elevation, the sides of the northern window dormer and porch are also visible. The ribbon of three window fixtures presumably feature two four-light windows on either side of a one-over-one two-light window at the center, however, a large bush obstructs the view. Above the porch, the eastern elevation of the northern dormer protrudes from the peak of the main roof. The exterior wall of the dormer contains no distinguishable features, and is sided by unpainted horizontal wood boards.

Rear Elevation

Thick shrubbery and hedges prevent the rear of the house from being viewed. However, satellite imagery show there to be no outstanding additions to the rear elevation of the house.



History of the Property

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Daniel and Belle Hurt

Born in Helena, Arkansas on March 17, 1873, Dan Hurt came to Miles City in 1905 at the age of 32, where he became a well-known chef in the eastern Montana town for nearly thirty years.¹ It would seem that Dan and Belle came to eastern Montana about the time of the birth of their daughter, Margret. The two were not married, however, until years later in 1909.² Belle, often going by Bell, was born in Monroe, Kentucky around 1876. Not much is documented about either Dan or Belle's early lives, before traveling west from St. Paul in 1905.³ Upon arrival, the Hurts became members of Miles City's small black community, numbering only 60 in 1910, and half of that in 1930. As Miles City was a tight-knit community dominated by family owned farms and ranches, nearly all of the African Americans living there came as part of the Great Northern Railroad, or possibly as "Buffalo Soldiers" stationed at the nearby Fort Keogh. Most blacks at the time found work for the railroad, as ranch hands, porters, or other laborers.

Dan Hurt did not fall into the generalized occupational expectations of African Americans at the time. Though many black Montanans worked as cooks during the early 1900s, most of these were individuals looking for any work they could find. This does not seem to be the case with Dan Hurt. Very few black men or women remained in a single profession for their entire lives, as Hurt did. This suggests that he was not, in fact, a simple laborer, but instead he could very well have been professionally trained as a chef prior to coming to the state. Upon his arrival in 1905, Hurt started as a private cook for a Mrs. Mamie Schermier. Sometime in the next few years, Dan either built or bought a cast concrete block, Four-square home at 400 Atlantic Avenue. Evidently his ability in the culinary arts spread quickly throughout the city, and Dan began working for restaurants and families across Miles City by 1910.⁴ From as early as 1909, Hurt was the chef for W.C. Ingram's Metropolitan Café located downtown. The Metropolitan continued to be Dan's main employer for the next six years or so, though it is also likely that he worked as a chef for prominent families during this time as well.⁵ In 1910, as per census data, the county auditor, A.H. Swerdfgine, employed Hurt as his private cook.⁶

His professional success had allowed Dan to purchase (or possibly build) a family home, which was valued at \$3000 in 1920, located on the corner of Atlantic and Fourth St in the southwest part of town sometime prior to 1910.⁷ In addition to his new, more permanent place of residence, Dan Hurt also became a mainstay in the community of Miles City when he opened Dan Hurt's Café sometime around 1915.⁸ Hurt's restaurant could very well have been the only black owned business in Miles City at the time. His café experienced great success for several years until a fire in 1927 destroyed the building at 10 North 8th Street near downtown.⁹ Not out of work for long, Nick Lucas hired Dan as head chef of his Superior Café, where Dan would work until a heart attack in the fall of 1932 forced him to retire. Hurt would not recover from the illness, and passed away on December 9, 1932, at the age of 59. His obituary in the Miles City Daily Star the day after reveals the level of respect that was had for man, calling him a renowned chef, and the "most prominent of his race", even going so far as to praise his chicken dinners as the best one could hope to find in Montana.¹⁰

After his death, Dan's wife and daughter continued to live in the house at 400 Atlantic Avenue.¹¹ The Hurt's daughter returned from Minneapolis in 1932 to help her mother. Interestingly, Margret is nearly never listed by the same name in any documentation of her. In the 1910 census she appears as Clare Belle Hurt, in the 1920 census as Margret Hurt, the 1940 Census as Marguerite Ottenweller (Ottenmuller), and her father's obituary as Cassa Newell. Most likely, by 1940, she had been married twice, first to a man named Newell, then the second to a man named Ottenweller. It is unclear why her first name varies so much. Belle Hurt began working as a maid for a private family after the death of her husband of 21 years. The two women made ends meet both through their own labor, and by renting a small building in the rear of the property to a sheepherder named Allen Russel for five dollars a month.¹² Bell's

¹ Dan Hurt Obituary, "Heart Attack Ends Life of Colored Man," *Miles City Daily Star*, Dec. 10, 1932, page 8.

² "Marriage Certificate for Daniel Hurt and Belle Palmer," Jan. 18, 1909. Accessed online at ancestry.com

³ Dan Hurt Obituary, "Heart Attack Ends Life of Colored Man," *Miles City Daily Star*, Dec. 10, 1932, page 8.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's 1909 Miles City (Custer County, Mont.) City Directory*, 87.

⁶ U.S. Census, 1910, (*Miles City, Custer, Montana; Roll: T624_829; Page: 7B; Enumeration District: 0079; FHL microfilm: 1374842.*) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁷ Ibid: U.S. Census, 1920, (*Miles City, Custer, Montana; Roll: T625_969; Page: 2B; Enumeration District: 39; image: 426.*) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁸ R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's 1916 Miles City (Custer County, Mont.) City Directory*, 53; Dan Hurt Obituary, "Heart Attack Ends Life of Colored Man," *Miles City Daily Star*, Dec. 10, 1932, page 8.

⁹ Dan Hurt Obituary, "Heart Attack Ends Life of Colored Man," *Miles City Daily Star*, Dec. 10, 1932, page 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ U.S. Census, 1940, (*Miles City, Custer, Montana; Roll: T627_2216; Page: 7A; Enumeration District: 9-4.*) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

¹² Ibid.

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obituary in the Miles City Daily Star stated that she, a pioneer of Miles City, continued to live at 400 Atlantic Ave until her death on October 17, 1962, at the age 82.¹³

¹³ "Mrs. Belle Hurt Obituary," *Miles City Daily Star*, Oct. 23, 1962, page 6.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for Dan Hurt and Belle Hurt. Results included: U.S. Find-A-Grave-Index; Marriage Certificate for Dan Hurt and Belle Palmer, 1-18-1909; U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940; WWI Registration Card for Dan Hurt. Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Miles City (Custer County, Mont.) City Directories, 1909, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1923, 1927, and 1930.*

"Heart Attack Ends Life of Colored Man," *Miles City Daily Star*, Dec. 10, 1932.

"Mrs. Belle Hurt Obituary," *Miles City Daily Star*, Oct. 23, 1962.

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Statement of Significance

The Dan Hurt House at 400 Atlantic Avenue exhibits great significance as one of Miles City's very few remaining physical ties to the history of African Americans living there during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Purchased or built by Dan Hurt sometime between 1905 and 1910, a member of the Hurt family occupied the home for over 50 years, until at least 1962. It gains further historical significance for its association with Dan Hurt. As a well-known and very successful chef living and working in Miles City for nearly thirty years, Dan Hurt was not only a pioneer and leading member of the town's small black community, but also a mainstay in Miles City's business community as well. The Dan Hurt House is one of only seven remaining buildings in Miles City with strong associations to African Americans during the early 1900s.

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Integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association)

The structure at 400 Atlantic Ave exhibits very sound architectural and historical integrity. The only addition to the original home appears to be the enclosing of the front porch. However, this almost certainly occurred during the period of historical significance. The location and setting have remained the same since construction. The neighborhood today is not dissimilar to that of the early 1900s, as the railroad takes up most of the adjacent areas, and many houses are of the same general age. The materials and workmanship have not been changed, owed in large part to the masonry structure of the house itself. Though, the house no longer retains strong ties to Miles City's current black community, but does remain as one of only seven of its remaining structures retaining historical significance to African Americans in the early 1900s. The house could be considered individually eligible under criteria A, however, the very small amount of sources on the Hurts makes a full and rich history of the property difficult, at this time, and new sources would be needed.

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Photographs



Dan Hurt House
North Façade, facing south
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

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Dan Hurt House
West elevation, facing east
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

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Site Map/Aerial Photo



Dan Hurt House
400 Atlantic Ave,
Miles City, MT
T08 N R47 E S33
Google Earth Satellite Image 2015



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Topographic Map

