

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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

Property Address: 307 Pleasant St  
Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: Miles City

Site Number: 24CR1353  
(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: Custer

Historic Name: Elizabeth Nickens Residence

Original Owner(s):

Current Ownership  Private  Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): Peter Collins  
Owner Address: 305 Pleasant St  
Miles City, MT, 59301-2905

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: MT Township: 8N Range: 47E

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

Lot(s): 004  
Block(s): 015

Addition: Miles City Original Town-site  
Year of Addition:

USGS Quad Name: Miles City Year: 1992

Historic Use: domestic

Current Use: domestic

Construction Date: 1910  Estimated  Actual

Original Location  Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference [www.nris.mt.gov](http://www.nris.mt.gov)

NAD 27 or  NAD 83(**preferred**)

Zone: 13 Easting: 434330.17 Northing: 5139545.92

Geocode: **14-1740-33-2-06-03-0000**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:  
NRHP Eligible:  Yes  No

Date of this document: **6/5/2016**

Form Prepared by: Diana Nettleton

Address: MTSHPO, 1301 E. Locky, Helena, MT 59620-1202

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

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP:  yes  no

Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Date: 8/10/2016

Evaluator: Kate Hampton

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:

Period of Significance:

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Architectural Style: Other    If Other, specify: **National Folk**  
Property Type: Domestic    Specific Property Type: Single Family

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

## Architectural Description:

### *Setting & Location:*

307 Pleasant Street in Miles City Montana resides in lot 004 of historic block 015 and is part of the original Miles City Town-site. The streets bounding this historic block are Pleasant on the Southeast, 3<sup>rd</sup> on the Southwest, Palmer street along the Northwest, and lastly 4<sup>th</sup> on the Northeast side. An alley dissects the block along its East-West axis, which lies behind the house. The house enjoys a view of Riverside Park to the Southwest. This front-gable, one-story National Folk style residence sits on the south edge of the lot just west of center of the block's south half. It features an original hipped front porch, now enclosed by plywood panels, across its south (front) elevation. The original gabled kitchen extension encompasses the north side of the building, and has a slightly lower ridgeline. Modern metal covers the main and kitchen roofs, as well as the single interior chimney stack centered along the main ridgeline. Asphalt shingles cover the porch roof. Wide horizontal clapboard siding, of historic age but not original to the house, clads the exterior walls and gable ends. The siding hides the foundation materials. An emerald green patch of grass lines the East side of the house, while the west side leaves approximately 5 feet of space next to the neighboring building. The neighboring property's concrete sidewalk bounds the lawn to the southwest. Raised garden beds hemmed by concrete blocks appear at the north and south ends of the lawn. The south garden plot contains low sitting plants while the north plot displays taller plants and a white garden trellis with a diamond pattern.

### *South Front Façade*

The front façade consists of a front gabled roof line with a metal chimney visible on the apex of the roof. This leads down into the cream colored clapboard siding of the gable-end before reaching the hipped porch. Narrow coped wood trim covers the very shallow eave above the plywood-infilled openings below. The posts are not visible. The porch door is slightly to the east of the center, creating an asymmetric façade. The white-colored, wood, five-panel door rests to the west of the lone window that is visible on this side of the building. The window consists of only 2 panes set horizontally stacked, and lies directly next to the door. The bottom two feet of the covered porch consists of the same cream colored clapboard siding as the gable end before reaching ground-level. A concrete sidewalk connects the front of the house to Pleasant Street on its South side.

### *West Elevation*

The west side of the building employs a continuation of the asphalt roof for the porch, as well as continued forest green plywood panel for the exterior of the covered porch. Again the bottom 2 feet of the porch returns to the cream colored clapboard siding that makes up the majority of the house. The exterior of the porch extends approximately 3 feet from the main section of the building, at which point the cream colored clapboard is the dominant exterior material. A tall, one-over-one window appears at the northern end of the main structure, creating yet another asymmetrical view for the house. The kitchen extension's west elevation contains a smaller, centered, one-over-one window unit.

### *Remaining Elevations*

The remaining elevations are not visible from the supplied source images, but it is clear that the materials for the roof and exterior continue along the North and East elevations.



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### *History of the Property*

Henry Nickens was born in Virginia, and Elizabeth Stone was born in Texas around 1851.<sup>1</sup> Henry Nickens served in the Civil War with the 38<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry Regiment, which comprised men from Virginia and Maryland.<sup>2</sup> Upon the completion of the Civil War, the regiment was reassigned to Texas where it served until 1867. In 1869, the 38<sup>th</sup> and the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments were reorganized into the 24<sup>th</sup> (among others) in which Henry Nickens also served. He was part of the Buffalo Soldiers that served in the Indian Wars all along the Western Frontier. While serving in the Southwestern United States, Henry married Elizabeth Stone in 1876 in Starr County Texas.<sup>3</sup> Henry found himself wounded to the point of being labeled a disabled veteran while in Arizona in 1890.<sup>4</sup> It was around this point in time that he and his wife Elizabeth moved to Miles City Montana. There is little to document Henry's time in Montana except for his death, which occurred December 28, 1898.<sup>5</sup> He was granted a Civil War Veteran's grave to rest in Mount Moriah cemetery in Butte<sup>6,7</sup>, and the *Anaconda Standard* listed that he was a "well known war veteran" and that his "funeral was largely attended"<sup>8</sup>, and that he was the only African American veteran interred at Mount Moriah at the time.<sup>9</sup>

Elizabeth Nickens was alone in Miles City Montana for a long while. At her residence on Pacific Avenue, she did have her daughter and granddaughter living with her the year after Henry died, but they did not stay longer than that year. In addition to serving as a laundress, and she also enjoyed the income of letting out a room to a boarder by the name of George Williams.<sup>10,11</sup> This agreement lasted about 10 years, at which point a very unfortunate incident occurred. The *Anaconda Standard* reported that on Monday May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1910, "colored George Williams" was put in jail for "battering up a colored female friend, Mrs. Nickens".<sup>12</sup> It was after this incident that Elizabeth found she could not live in her house without the income of a boarder and moved to 307 Pleasant Street. Of the three homes in which she is documented to have lived, this is the only one that remains standing.

The house rose on the site approximately 1910, as it is visible on Sanborn maps only after that date, and it resides on lands that were once owned by Fort Keogh and the Northern Pacific Railroad Company after that. Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Nickens lived in the house until about 1928<sup>13</sup>, after which she moved into the very last house in which she ever lived, 415 Fourth Street.<sup>14</sup> She died April 3, 1934 and is buried in Miles City.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Census, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> Civil War Pension File, Henry Nickens.

<sup>3</sup> Texas Marriage Index.

<sup>4</sup> Civil War Pension File, Henry Nickens.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Veteran Headstone File.

<sup>7</sup> .Sgt. Henry Nickens Headstone.

<sup>8</sup> "Funeral Service Announcement for Henry Nickens", 1/2/1899, p8.

<sup>9</sup> "Honor the Dead Heroes", 5/29/1901, p10.

<sup>10</sup> Federal Census, 1900.

<sup>11</sup> Polk & Co. 1909.

<sup>12</sup> "Fractious Colored Man", 5/11/1910, p14.

<sup>13</sup> Polk & Co. 1912, 1916, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Census, 1930.

<sup>15</sup> "Mary Elizabeth Headstone".

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### Information Sources/Bibliography

Federal Census Year: 1910; Census Place: Miles Ward 2, Custer, Montana; Roll: T624\_829; Page: 12A; Enumeration District: 0080; FHL microfilm: 1374842 – Accessed at Ancestry.com June, 2016.

Federal Census Year: 1900; Census Place: Miles City, Custer, Montana; Roll: 910; Page: 13A; Enumeration District: 0202; FHL microfilm: 1240910 – Accessed at Ancestry.com June, 2016.

“Fractious Colored Man”, *The Anaconda Standard*, May 11, 1910, Morning edition, p14.

“Funeral Services Announcements”, *The Anaconda Standard*, January 2, 1899,p8.

“Henry Nickens Civil War Headstone File”, Ancestry.com. *Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, 1879-1903* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007. – accessed June, 2016.

“Henry Nickens Civil War Pension”, National Archives and Records Administration. *U.S., Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000. – accessed June, 2016.

“Henry Nickens, Sgt, Headstone photo”, Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. – accessed June, 2016.

“Honor the Dead Heroes”, *The Anaconda Standard*, May 29, 1901, Morning edition, p10.

“Mary E. Nickens Headstone”, Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. – accessed June, 2016.

R.L. Polk and Co.’s Miles City and Glendive City Directory; 1912; Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. – Accessed June, 2016.

R.L. Polk and Co.’s Miles City and Glendive City Directory; 1916; Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. – Accessed June, 2016.

R.L. Polk and Co.’s Miles City and Glendive City Directory; 1927; Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. – Accessed June, 2016.

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### Statement of Significance

Mrs. Nickens residence at 307 Pleasant Street exhibits significance in its association with African American Military History through the life of a military widow of a Buffalo Soldier. It also finds significance in being one of the very few African American homes to remain standing in the Miles City area. While it may not be eligible as an individual building at this point in time, it does contribute to the eligibility of the neighborhood as an historic district.

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

The 307 Pleasant Street, or Mrs. Nickens Residence, retains integrity in the overall location, feeling, and association of the building. The materials used for the exterior of the building are not historic, though the original windows may remain. The original hipped porch remains standing, though the non-original siding and plywood infill obscure the original design from view. Still in use as a residence, the building stands on a historic block in the Original Townsite, flanked by a house that dates to at least 1883 on the east, and a house of similar vintage to the Nickens residence to the west. Indeed the half-block and that on the south side of Pleasant Street contain many small-scale historic homes. More commercial development is encroaching on the block, however, isolating it from other residential zones in the city.

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## Photographs



Photo supplied by Google Maps – accessed June, 2016.



Photo supplied by Google Maps – accessed June, 2016.



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Property Name: Elizabeth Nickens Residence

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## Site Map/Aerial Photo

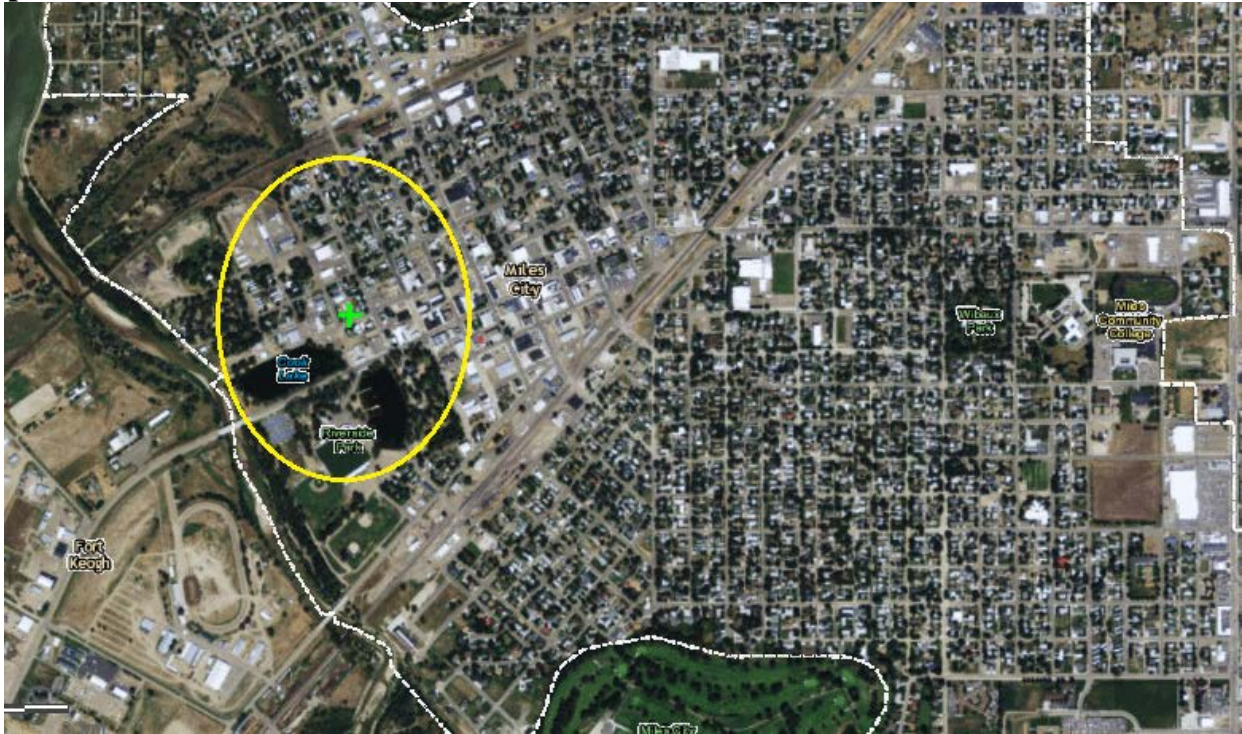


Photo Supplied by mt.gov – accessed June, 2016.



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Elizabeth Nickens Residence  
307 Pleasant St., Miles City, MT  
Geocode: 14-1740-33-2-06-03-0000  
UTM Zone 13: Easting: 434330.17 Northing: 5139545.92  
Lat: 46.406299 / Long: -105.854362

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## Topographic Map

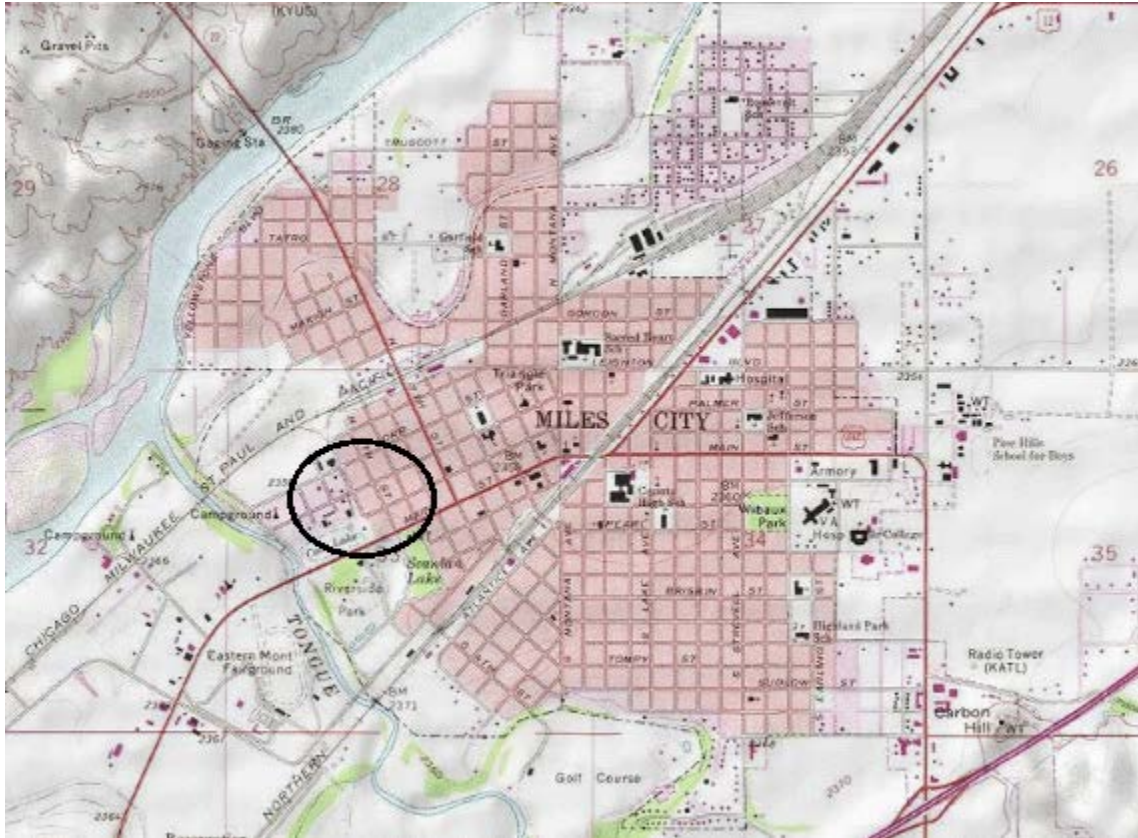


Photo Supplied by mt.gov – accessed June, 2016.

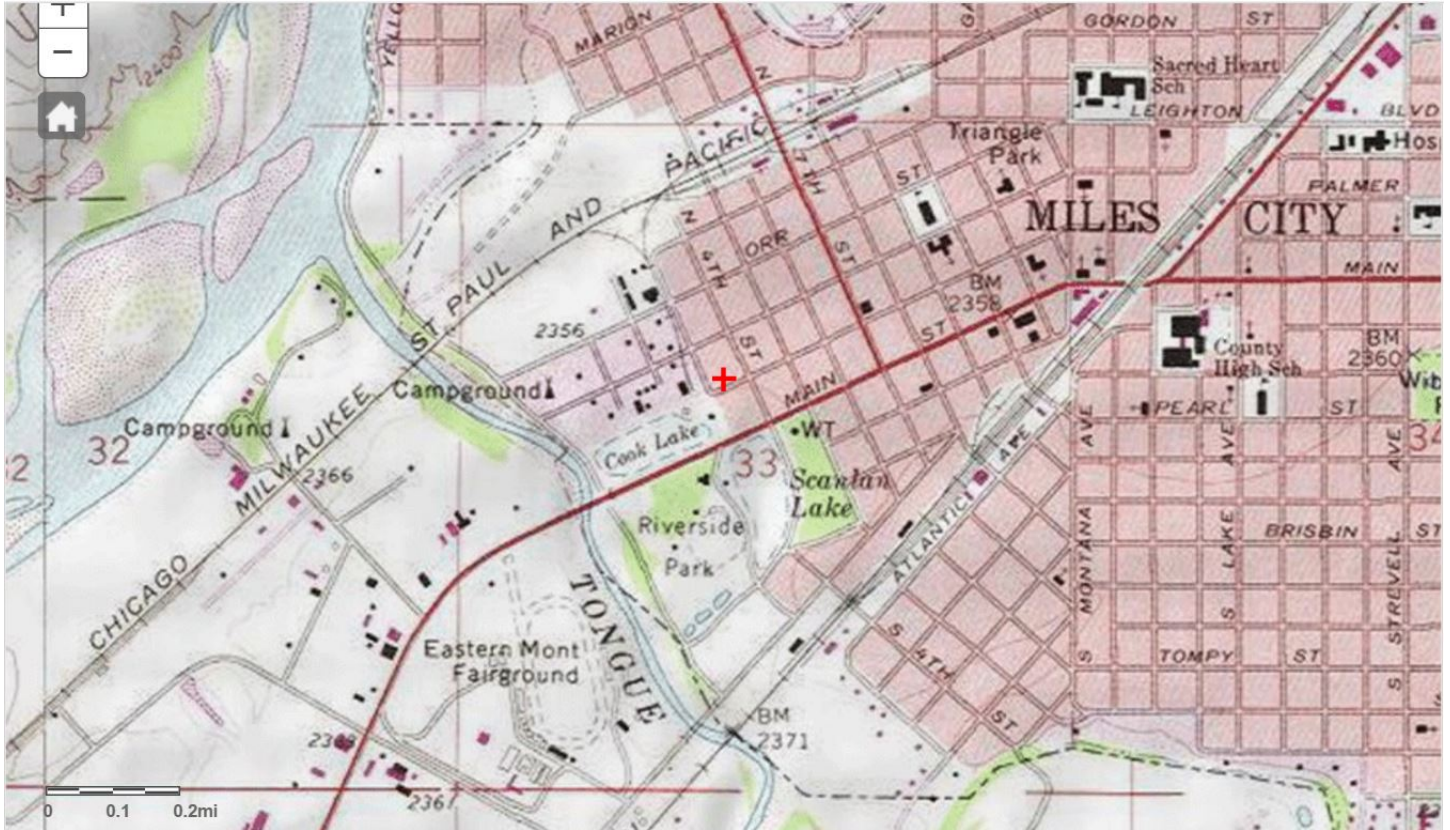


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