

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1301 E. Lockey
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **514 Hollins Ave.**

Historic Address (if applicable): **514 Hollins Ave.**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24LC2436**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis and Clark**

Historic Name: **Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House**

Original Owner(s): **John B. Sanford and Christmas Evans**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Skoog, Jay K**

Owner Address: **1508 E. Lyndale Ave., Helena, MT 59601**

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **10 N** Range: **04 W**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SE** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **24**

Lot(s): **23 & 24**

Block(s): **33**

Addition: **Broadwater** Year of Addition: **1887**

USGS Quad Name: **Helena** Year: **1992**

Historic Use: DOMESTIC/single family

Current Use: **DOMESTIC/single family**

Construction Date: **c. 1889** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12 T** Easting: **420134** Northing: **5161450**

Geocode: **05-1887-24-4-15-22-0000**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **7/20/2016**

Form Prepared by: **Delia Hagen**

Address: **660 River Court, Missoula, MT 59801**

Daytime Phone: **(406) 360-0120**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: yes no

Criteria: A B C D

Date: **8/30/2016**

Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**

Comments: Identifying Montana's African American Heritage Places Project.

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Architectural Description

Property Name: Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House

Site Number: 24LC2436

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Style: **Other:** If Other, specify:

Property Type: **Residential** Specific Property Type: **Single-family dwelling**

Architect: **unknown** Architectural Firm/City/State:

Builder/Contractor: **unknown** Company/City/State:

Source of Information:

The property commonly known as 514 Hollins Avenue occupies a rectangular parcel on the north side of Hollins Ave and is centrally located within the block. The block is bordered by Hollins Avenue to the south, Peosta Avenue to the north, Harrison Avenue to the west and Madison Avenue to the east. A gravel alley runs along the north end of the parcel. Hollins Avenue runs northwest to southeast. The only building on the parcel, the building faces south to Hollins Ave. The building occupies the southern portion of the parcel with an unfenced yard, planted to grass on its north, east, and south sides. A city sidewalk runs along the south edge of the parcel and is bisected by a concrete band which elevates the front yard with a single concrete step. Mature foliage guards the entrance façade, providing a privacy barrier between the porch and the front lawn. The backyard (north) contains an open lawn with mature coniferous trees and deciduous foliage scattered around the rear boundaries.

The simple, small wood-frame one-story gable and wing building was built in the National style and has a north-south oriented L-shaped footprint and a steeply-pitched cross-gable roof. Roof features include overhanging eaves and two interior brick chimneys, one located on each of the ridges. Three-tab asphalt composition shingles cover the roof and horizontal drop-lap wood siding clads the exterior walls. The building sits atop a rough stone foundation. The façade (south wall) features an open wood porch with an overhanging dropped shed roof, and accessed by three wood steps. All windows in the building are original wood-frame double-hungs unless otherwise noted.

Fenestration on the side-gabled façade (south wall) is limited to a centrally located entry and two windows - one on either side. The entry contains a historic wood storm door sheltering a wood front door. The façade entrance features fluted trim, reminiscent of classical columns. Single one-over-one double-hung windows flank entry, and feature flat trimwork. The north (rear) elevation is dominated by two bays: a projecting gable-front bay to the west, and a side-gabled bay to the east. The west bay contains a single one-over-one double-hung window to the west. A concrete stairwell leads down to a basement entry which is filled with a wooden vertical-board door. Nestled in the ell of the L shaped roof plan, a small shed-roof enclosed porch addition which faces east. It is clad in board and batten, and features a large three-over-three fixed-sash window centered on its east elevation. The east elevation's south bay features an original, centered, one-over-one, double hung window. The west elevation nearly abuts 520 Hollins Ave, with about one foot of distance between the two buildings.

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History of Property

Property Name: Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House

Site Number: 24LC2436

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

This property was first platted in 1887 as Lots 23 and 24 of Block 33 of the Broadwater Addition, along the northeast side of Hollins Avenue, northwest of its intersection with Madison Avenue. By 1892, when the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company first mapped the area, the lot contained the current house, identified as 514 Hollins. At the time, it was owned by John B. Sanford and Christmas Evans, partners in the (real estate?) firm of Sanford and Evans. Sanford and Evans had purchased Lots 23 and 24 from C.A. Broadwater himself in 1888, and likely built the house shortly thereafter. In the 1890s, 514 Hollins stood in the midst of a rapidly developing neighborhood: many bare lots occupied surrounding blocks, but the northeast side of Hollins was lined with houses.

Sanford and/or Evans (and their heirs) would own the property for almost 40 years (conveying it in 1926 to John Gebauer), apparently holding it as an investment rental property. The house at 514 Hollins was frequently occupied by tenants. City Directories from 1898 identify its occupant as one Louis Rohrig, a tailor, and by 1908 Henry Coles, a sergeant in Co. A of the 24th (Colored) Infantry at Fort Harrison, lived in the house. Two years later, 514 Hollins was occupied by other members of Helena's African-American community, ie. the Harry C. and Ella Simmons family. Mr and Mrs. Simmons, who had previously lived on N. Benton, lived in the house with their 18-year-old daughter, a "compositor" at the *Montana Plaindealer*, Helena's African-American newspaper. Harry, 50, worked as a waiter at a hotel while Ella, was a seamstress who worked for a family in town.

The Simmons family occupied 514 Hollins for only about 3 years: in 1913, Harry C. Simmons was listed as living on E. State Street. At the time, he still worked as a waiter, perhaps at the Montana Club, as in 1911. After the Simmons family moved, the house at 514 Hollins continued to serve as a rental. In 1915-1916 it was occupied by a woman named Anna Brown, and in 1918 Robert E. Ruffin, a cellarman at C.A. Whitman, lived there. By 1922 City Directories listed its occupant as Caledonia Bramwell, African-American widow of Samuel, who had earlier lived nearby at 502 Peosta (1912) and 520 Hollins (1906-1908, 1917). By 1926, Mrs. Callie Bramwell had moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

That year, John Gebauer acquired the property, buying the property next door at 520 Hollins around the same time. He owned both parcels until they were conveyed, by his "guardian," to Johanna Mola, a single woman, in 1946. At the same time, Mola purchased from Gebauer other neighboring properties that he'd acquired during his tenure, including the duplex at 508/510 Hollins and the house at 512 Hollins. By then, the 514 Hollins property had undergone several modifications, including the addition of front and rear porches on the house and the replacement (or enlargement and conversion) of the original shed by a garage, which were completed by 1930. Members of the Mola family, including Johanna and Jim P. (presumably Johanna's brother) owned 514 Hollins and the neighboring properties for about the next 30 years, conveying them in 1975 to W.L. Piehl. Piehl died shortly after acquiring 514 Hollins, and in 1977 his estate deeded the property and neighboring parcels to Joanne Temple Purdy and Charles Temple, Jr. Ten years later, Elizabeth Temple conveyed 514 Hollins and 520 Hollins to John J. Lombardo, who in turn sold both properties to the current owner, Joy Skoog, in 1993. Skoog continues to use 514 Hollins as a rental. Sometime between 1930 and 1951, the garage was either replaced or had a section torn off. Other than that, Sanborn Maps indicate no modifications to the building footprints since before 1930.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Property Name: Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House

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INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Helena, City of, Town Plats

1887 Broadwater Addition

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Statement of Significance

Property Name: Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House

Site Number: 24LC2436

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: **Ethnic Heritage & Social History** Period of Significance: **1908, 1910-1912, 1922**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The dwelling at 514 Hollins is significant under NRHP Criterion A (local level) as a residential property associated with the history of African-American people in Helena, MT. During the heyday of the black community in Helena the home was occupied by members of the local black community, including Henry Coles, a sergeant in Co. A of the 24th (Colored) Infantry at Fort Harrison, and Harry C. Simmons, a prominent Helena resident who worked at the Montana Club (an important community employer) for a period and who was president of the Manhattan Club, Helena's private black social club. The house at 514 Hollins is thus associated with two significant historic contexts: first occupied by members of Helena's black community around 1908 during that community's heyday, it would continue to be rented by African-American residents during the subsequent period of community decline and endurance, ca. 1910-1940. The property's period of significance includes the time of its initial occupation by African-American tenants in 1908 as well as subsequent periods of known black tenant occupancy, ie. 1910-1912 and 1922.

The house at 514 Hollins represents these significant historic themes in a number of specific ways. Located near the black Baptist Church (on the corner of Wilder and Harrison), it was one of multiple homes in the surrounding west-end/Broadwater Addition neighborhood that housed a cluster of African-American families, many of them containing veterans of the "colored" army units stationed at nearby Fort Harrison. Like many black families in Helena, the home's tenants took in boarders to help make ends meet and provide lodging to the African-American community. And like women in many of Helena's black families, Ella Simmons worked to help support the family. Ella's sewing position for a private family was one of several domestic roles black women often served in the homes of white families. Her husband Harry's work, too, was typical: the Montana Club, along with other hospitality businesses like hotels, was the largest employer of black Helena residents.

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Integrity

Property Name: Henry Coles/ Harry C. and Ella Simmons House

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

Changes to the house since its construction include historic-era porches and enclosures, and modern wood siding. The footprint and overall design and materials, however remain unchanged since at least 1930. The modern siding is compatible and likely mimics the original material. The house retains integrity of setting, location, and workmanship. Its continued use as a single-family residence contributes to its integrity of feeling and association. The retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance in association with Helena's early twentieth century African American community.

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: NE

Description: South elevation

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: N

Description: South and east elevations

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Feature #
Facing: SW

Description: North and east elevations

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: S-SW

Description: North elevation

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Site Map

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Topographic Map

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PROPERTY:

514 Hollins Ave
Lewis and Clark County
Helena, Montana

GeoCode:

05-1887-24-4-15-22-0000

LAT 46.601882

LON -112.042792