

# 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: **520 Hollins Ave.**

Historic Address (if applicable): **520 Hollins Ave.**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24LC2437**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis and Clark**

Historic Name: **Nathan and Louise Walker House**

Original Owner(s): **Robert L. Miller**

Current Ownership  Private  Public

Current Property Name:

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

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

Phone:

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): **25**

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](http://www.nris.mt.gov)

NAD 27 or  NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **420127** Northing: **5161453**

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

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: Nathan and Louise Walker House

Site Number: 24LC2437

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### 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 known as 520 Hollins Avenue occupies a rectangular parcel on the north side of Hollins Ave. 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. The only building on the property – a Folk Victorian gable front and wing style house – faces south to Hollins Ave, which runs northwest to southeast. The building occupies the southern portion of the parcel. A city sidewalk runs along the south edge of the parcel. A concrete slab sidewalk extends from the façade entrance (south wall) to the city sidewalk, and is bisected by a concrete band which elevates the front yard with a single concrete step. The band is approximately one foot high and extends across the southern boundary of the property. The extended concrete slab walkway runs perpendicular to the street sidewalk, and connects to street parking. The curbside walkway is stamped “WALKER.” A large backyard, planted to grass, extends to a north alley which lines the northern boundary. A mature coniferous tree is located near the north wall, and deciduous shrubbery is scattered around the property. The adjacent houses are situated within extreme proximity and there is no visual delineation between the property lines of 520 Hollins Ave and 514 Hollins Ave.

The simple, wood-frame one-story building has a north-south oriented irregular shaped footprint and features a cross-gable roof and sits atop a rough stone foundation. The roof is covered with three-tab asphalt composition shingles and is crowned with a metal ridgecap with globe ends. Exterior walls are clad in brick. A cornice band bisects the gable ends and the brick, creating four closed gable pediments, one on the façade and each of the three other elevations. All four gables are filled with imbricated wood shingles, and the gable on the façade has an additional decorative diamond-shaped wood motif in the center. A decorative wood cornice, featuring an ogee moulding above stepped flat trims, encircles the building. The brick cladding is painted a maroon-red with brown wood trim. All openings have unique segmental arched lintels with decorative wood paneled tympana, and all windows have wood-frames unless otherwise noted.

Fenestration on the façade (south wall) of the building is limited to a large square fixed window centered in the elevation's east, front-gabled bay, as well as a tall rectangular fixed window located within what was originally an entry centered on the west, side gabled bay. Both windows sport decorative wood window shutters with bird shaped cutouts. A small wood entrance deck, accessed by three wood stairs, occupies the space within the ell forms between the west and east bays. The west elevation features three openings: an original one-over-one double hung window centered beneath the gable end; a smaller casement window, located within an original opening in the north bay; and the front entry centered on the recessed, south bay. The entry features an eight-light-over-one-panel wood storm door masking a modern entrance door. A front-gabled bay dominates the western three-quarters of the building's north (rear) elevation. . A single pedestrian door, identical to the front entry, appears at the bay's west side, accessed via a deck that spans the elevation. Four wood steps lead from a concrete pad and step to the deck from its north side. According to the 1892 Sanborn map, single one-over-one, original, double-hung window punctuates the east elevation's north bay.

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History of Property

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## HISTORY OF PROPERTY

This property was first platted in 1887 as Lot 25 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 520 Hollins. At the time, it was owned by James T. Fitzgerald, who'd purchased Lots 25 and 26 in 1889 from Robert L. Miller. Fitzgerald owned the property until 1898, and during that time 520 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.

In 1898, Fitzgerald sold Lots 25 and 26 to the Home Building and Loan Association, which in turn sold Lot 25, containing 520 Hollins, to Nathan S. Walker, born in Georgia to a Brazilian father, in February 1905. That same year Walker, a divorced African-American man who lived at Fort Harrison, married the recently-widowed Michigan-born Louise Hamner (nee Lucas). A veteran of Fort Harrison's "colored" Co. C, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Walker moved into his new home—which he likely had built, judging from the sidewalk stamped with his surname—with his new bride and her two Montana-born sons, 7-year-old Louis and 11 year-old Raymond. By 1910 the family included a daughter, 3-year-old Lolita, and a young son, 1-year-old Robert, who'd been born in the Phillipines. That year found Nathan, 42, working as a janitor in the federal building to support the growing family, with Louis and Raymond working as a church janitor and club messenger, respectively, to help out.

The family likely supplemented the household income by renting rooms: over the years people listed as living at 520 Hollins included not only identifiable family members but also Caledonia and Samuel Bramwell, who lived there from at least 1906-1908. In 1911, Samuel died while in Spokane, and after he was buried in Helena his widow Caledonia moved into 502 Peosta, where she lived in 1912. By 1917 Caledonia Bramwell was back at 520 Hollins. In 1922 she was living in the house next door, at 514 Hollins.

By then, Nathan Walker had died, and his widow Louise continued living in the house she owned at 520 Hollins. She conveyed it that year to her daughter Lolita, who owned it for only two years before selling it to S.V. and Stella Stuart in late 1924. The Stuarts quickly sold it to Schroeder Bros. Co., who sold it in 1926 to John J. Gebauer.

That year, Gebauer also acquired the property next door at 514 Hollins. 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 520 Hollins property had undergone several modifications, including a front porch alteration, the construction of a rear addition and rear porch, the removal of a small original outbuilding, and the construction of a garage and larger outbuilding, all of 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 520 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 520 Hollins as a rental. Sanborn Maps indicate no modifications to the building footprints since before 1930.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

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## INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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1887 Broadwater Addition

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Statement of Significance

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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: **Ethnic Heritage & Social History** Period of Significance: **1905-1924**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1905 by Nathan Walker, a black veteran of a “colored” Army unit stationed at nearby Fort Harrison, and his new wife Louise, the Walker house is significant under NRHP Criterion A (local level) as a residential property associated with the history of African-American people in Helena, MT. Originally constructed by the Walkers during the heyday of the black community in Helena, the house remained Walker-owned and occupied until 1924, when the local black community was in the midst of rapid decline. The Walker house is thus associated with two significant historic contexts: it black owner-occupants lived there during the heyday of Helena’s, and Montana’s, African-American community, ca. 1875-1910, and they sold their home and left it in the midst of the community decline and endurance that followed, ca. 1910-1940. The property’s period of significance is the period during which it was owned and occupied by African-American people, ie. 1905 through 1924.

The Walker house 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 owners took in boarders to help make ends meet and provide lodging to the African-American community. Walker and his stepson Louis both worked as janitors—a prototypical occupation for black men, who in this period were oft-confined by structural racism to low-status, low-waged work.

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Integrity

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

The Nathan and Louise Walker House retains a high degree of integrity. While the modern deck likely replaced the original wood-framed entry porch, the footprint of the building remains the same. Its design dates to the historic period, and it retains its original materials and workmanship. It stands in its original location, and its setting in a historic neighborhood remains intact. The house remains a single family home, which contributes to its integrity of feeling and association.

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Photographs

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Feature #  
Facing: NE

Description:

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Photographs

Property Name: Nathan and Louise Walker House

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Feature #

Description:

Facing: NE



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Photographs

Property Name: Nathan and Louise Walker House

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Feature #  
Facing: N

Description:

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Photographs

Property Name: Nathan and Louise Walker House

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Feature #  
Facing: S-SW

Description:

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Photographs

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Feature #  
Facing:

Description: Sidewalk stamp detail, "Walker 520"

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Site Map

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Topographic Map

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**PROPERTY:**

520 Hollins Ave  
Lewis and Clark County  
Helena, Montana

GeoCode:

05-1887-24-4-25-23-SB23

LAT 46.601882

LON -112.042873