

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: **712 8th Ave.**

Historic Address (if applicable): **712 8th Ave.**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24LC2442**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis and Clark**

Historic Name: **Miles York Residence**

Original Owner(s):

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Burke, Patricia Anne**

Owner Address: **712 8th Ave., Helena MT 59601**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **10 N** Range: **03 W**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SE** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **30**

Lot(s): **11**

Block(s): **606**

Addition: **Hoback and Cannon** Year of Addition: **1881**

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

Historic Use: **DOMESTIC/single family residence**

Current Use: **DOMESTIC/single family residence**

Construction Date: **1885** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12 T** Easting: **421161** Northing: **5159884**

Geocode: **05-1888-30-4-08-05-0000**

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: **9/6/2016**

Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**

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

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Architectural Description

Property Name: Miles York Residence

Site Number: 24LC2442

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:

Miles York Residence, commonly known as 712 8th Avenue, occupies a rectangular parcel on the north side of 8th Avenue and is located on the east side of the block. The block is bordered by 8th Avenue to the south, 9th Avenue to the north, N. Beattie Street to the west and N. Hoback Street to the east. A gravel alley runs along the north end of the parcel. 8th Avenue runs west - east. The only building on the parcel, the building occupies the southern portion of the property with a partially fenced yard, planted to grass on its north and south sides. A city sidewalk runs along the south edge of the lots along 8th Avenue. The property boasts a large backyard and rear deck. Mature shrubbery exists in the backyard with both coniferous and deciduous trees. The façade of the house features alders on the right side, with shrubbery lining the base of the house. A wood privacy fence bisects the west yard, and a white picket fence crosses the east yard.

The wood-frame, one and one-half story Folk Victorian building has a north-south oriented rectangular footprint and a steeply pitched gable-front roof with overhanging eaves. Three-tab asphalt composition shingles cover the roof, which displays single circular metal vents on both the east and west slopes, and one cast concrete chimney that straddles the ridgeline. A small gabled dormer appears centered on the west elevation's half-story, breaking the roofline. A one-story entry projects from the south side of the west elevation, and a shallow one-story shed extension crosses the north elevation. Both are original to the house. Cream-colored stucco covers all exterior walls, and the wood eaves and trims are painted maroon. The stucco covers the foundation wall from view. All windows in the building are wood-frame unless otherwise noted.

South (front) elevation:

The Miles York Residence faces south onto 8th Avenue, and presents two bays to the street view: the dominant, one and one-half story front gable bay, and a small hipped one-story entry to the west. Within the gable-front bay, below a louvered vent, a tripartite window appears in the gable end, with a large, centered, one-over-one double hung window flanked by slightly smaller single windows of the same style. Aluminum storms protect each opening. Below, at the first story level, a three-sided bay window projects at center. All three windows are one-over-one double-hungs sheltered by wood-frame storms. The centered window has a four-light over two-light storm, while the others display a two-over-two design. A single, centered, fixed diamond-shaped window illuminates the entry bay from its south wall.

West (side) elevation:

The west wall features three components; a rear (north) shed addition, the hipped entry on the south side, and the main house with a central dormer. A two-step concrete stoop leads to the centered entry within the hipped extension. A pressed metal storm protects the house's original, multi-light, multi-paneled wood door. Thick vegetation obscures the north side of the main house from view. Above, at the half-story, the centered dormer contains a pair of one-over-one double-hungs protected by aluminum storms. The west elevation of the original one-story rear extension contains a single entry door.

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Architectural Description

Property Name: Miles York Residence

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East (side) elevation:

The east wall is comprised of two primary components; the central body of the house and the rear (north) extension. Two fixed one-light windows appear on the east elevation: one off center to the north in the half story and one far to the north side of the first story. A single one-over-one double-hung with an aluminum storm fills the shed extension's east wall.

North (rear) elevation:

The north elevation wall is comprised of three primary components; the gable front body, the original rear shed roof extension, and the raised wood deck. Beneath a louvered vent, a centered pair of one-over-one double-hung windows occupies the gable end. At the first story, the shed extension features a pair of doors with fixed glass lights. The doors open to the large wood-framed deck which is raised off the ground approximately ten feet. Because the house is banked into the sloping lots, the basement level appears as a full story on the north elevation, and contains an entry off-center to the east, and a one-over-one double-hung to the west.

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History of Property

Property Name: Miles York Residence

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

This property was first platted in 1881 as Lot 11 of Block 606 of the Hoback and Cannon Addition, along the north side of 8th Avenue, east of its intersection with N. Beattie Street. Tax records indicate the current house was built in 1885, and by 1888, when the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company first mapped the neighborhood, the property contained the current house, identified as 712 8th, a 1.5-story dwelling with front and rear secondary components and a west-side porch, situated near the south end of the lot. A small outbuilding stood at the northeast corner, along the alley. Two years later, an alley house (712 ½ 8th) had been added to the northeast corner of the property.

Its early history is unclear, but by 1901 the property was owned by a woman named Mary Doolittle.¹ That year, Doolittle sold 712 8th to Miles York. Georgia-born York, of African-American descent, already lived in the neighborhood (his earlier addresses included 908 8th, 543 E. 6th and 549 5th) and would own and occupy his new house with his growing family until 1909. When the Yorks bought the property in 1901, the family included Miles, 27, and his Montana-born, 32-year-old wife Alice May (nee Johnson), whom he'd married in Helena in 1891, as well as the couple's children, Tressa, Olga, Antonio, and Alice. Mrs. York bore three more children while the family lived at 712 8th, including Bendario (ca. 1902), Dorothy (ca. 1906), and Jeannette (ca. 1909).

To support the large family, Miles York worked steadily at the types of jobs typically available to African-American men in Helena at the time. The year 1902 found York working at FM Mothes, where he'd been a porter since at least 1894. York was still working as a porter in 1908, but the following year brought changes for the family, as the Yorks sold their 8th Ave. home and Miles went to work as a barber. Shortly thereafter, in 1911, the Yorks were living at 515 Idaho and Miles was running the "Shoe Shining Parlor" at 11 Edwards Street. The year 1918 found the family in Great Falls, but by 1920 they were back at 515 Idaho, where they remained, and Miles was again employed as a porter, this time at the Placer Hotel. Miles died in Helena in 1925: his pallbearers included a host of Helena's black personages, ie Arthur Palmer, George M. Lee, Nathaniel Ford, M.A. Lowery, Julius Anderson, Charles Harrell, B.F. Hooper, W.C. Irvine, Randall Reed, M.O.J. Arnett, George Christian, and Patrick Keys. His widow Alice lived for another 23 years, dying in 1948 in Seattle.

After the Yorks sold 712 8th in 1909, the property passed through a series of owners, some brief, some longer term. Elizabeth McCormick and/or Nell Irelan owned it until 1916, and after Nell Irelan died McCormick deeded it to Henry Fisher in 1916. Seven months later Fisher and his wife Selina conveyed it to Neil Irelan, presumably Nell's relative. In 1922, Elizabeth Connolley acquired the property, and Connolley family members owned 712 8th until at least 1935. By then, the original buildings on the property had been modified. Changes included the expansion of the main house into a two-story dwelling featuring an added full-length rear porch and a new, smaller front component, reconfigured as a tripart protruding bay, as well as the removal of the alley house and the construction of a new 1.5 story garage on the northwest corner of the lot. All of these changes were completed by 1930.

In 1935 Elizabeth and Marie Connolley deeded 712 8th to Minnie Evans. Less than a year later, title was transferred to husband and wife Benjamin and Minnie O'Connell (who may have previously been Minnie Evans). Benjamin and Minnie owned 712 8th for eleven years. In 1947 they deeded it to Harvey and Dorothy Rosencrans. Eight years later, in 1955, Mr. and Mrs. Rosencrans conveyed the property to Julius and Philena Stoner. The Stoners would own it for the next 20 years, selling it in 1975. It subsequently underwent a series of short-term owners before being purchased by the current owner and occupant, Patricia Anne Burke, in 1985. According to Sanborn Maps, the footprints of the buildings at 712 8th Avenue have not been modified since before 1930.

¹ A search of grantee indexes back to original platting yielded no records for the property prior to Doolittle's 1901 conveyance to York, and no occupant information was found in early city directories.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

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INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancestry.com, various military and death records

Bureau of the Census. "9th Census of the United States, 1870: Population Schedules: Montana, Lewis and Clark County." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1870.

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1881 Hoback and Cannon Addition

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R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Helena City Directory, 1898- 1920*. Helena, Mont.: R.L. Polk & Co.

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Statement of Significance

Property Name: Miles York Residence

Site Number: 24LC2442

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: **1901-1909**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Purchased in 1901 by Miles and Alice York and owned and occupied by their family until 1909, the York house is significant under NRHP Criterion A (local level) as a residential property associated with the history of African-American people in Helena, MT. The large York family was prominent in the local black community. During the heyday of that community (ca. 1910) they ran one of Helena's most visible black businesses, variously described as the "Miles York Express line & barbershop" and "dry-cleaning and tailoring shop" and shoeshine parlor, and Miles simultaneously served in other leadership capacities, as in 1911 when he was appointed by Governor Edwin Norris as a MT delegate to "the National [Negro] Educational convention" in Denver. When Miles died in 1925, a host of local black luminaries served as pallbearers and the daily Helena newspaper covered his funeral. The York house is thus associated with the heyday of Helena's, and Montana's, African-American community, ca. 1875-1910. The property's period of significance is the period during which it was owned and occupied by African-American people, ie. 1901-1909.

The York house represents these significant historic themes in a number of specific ways. Located not far from the black St. James AME Church (Site LC2430), it was one of multiple homes in the surrounding east-side neighborhood that housed a cluster of African-American people. Like other black men in the region, Miles York made a living as a porter and shoe shiner, prototypical positions for black men, who in this period were oft-confined by structural racism to low-status, low-waged work. York's stint as a barber was likewise representative, for that field was primary among African-American male occupations in Montana. Barbering offered relative independence, and York capitalized on that by operating several of his own businesses in that and other capacities. His, and his family's, efforts in this regard are a good example of the numerous black business enterprises that existed in Helena during the heyday of the town's African-American community.

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Integrity

Property Name: Miles York Residence

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

Despite being clad with stucco early in the twentieth century, the Miles York house retains a high degree of integrity of design, retaining its original footprint from its construction c. 1885. Only the rear extension features modern entries, otherwise the fenestration pattern is original. The workmanship, feeling and association are clear. The house stands in its original location, and the historic neighborhood setting is much as it was during the historic period.

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Photographs

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Feature #

Description: South elevation

Facing: N-NW

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Photographs

Property Name: Miles York Residence

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Feature #
Facing: NE

Description: South and west elevations

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Property Name: Miles York Residence

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Feature #
Facing: NW

Description: South and east elevations

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Property Name: Miles York Residence

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Feature #
Facing: SE

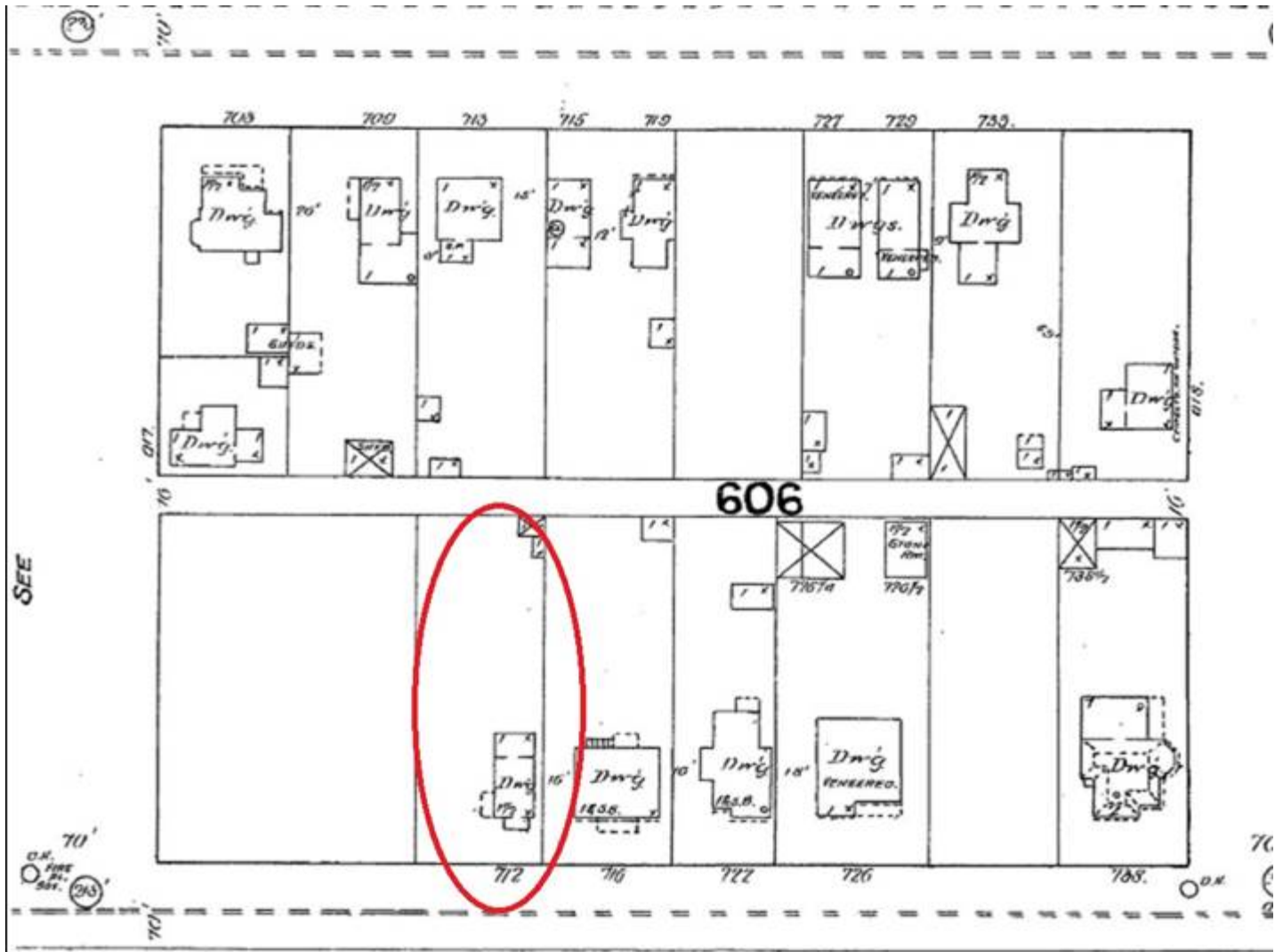
Description: North elevation

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Sanborn Maps

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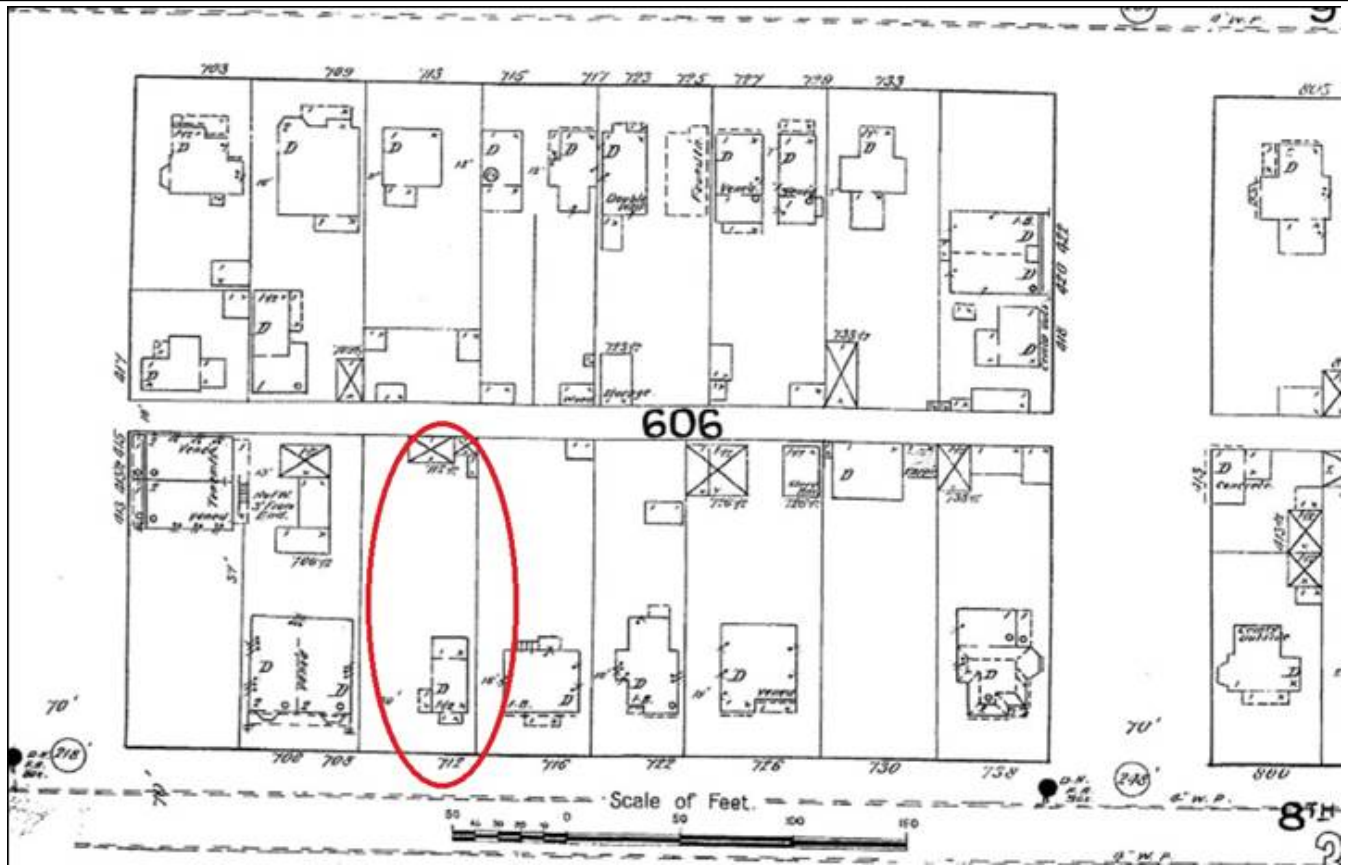
1888 Sanborn Map, Sheet 18, highlighting 712 Eighth Avenue, Helena.

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Sanborn Maps

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1892 Sanborn Map, Sheet 39, highlighting 712 Eighth Avenue, Helena.

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Site Map

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Topographic Map

Property Name: Miles York Residence

Site Number: 24LC2442



PROPERTY:

712 Eighth Ave
Lewis and Clark County
Helena, Montana

GeoCode:

05-1888-30-4-08-05-0000

LAT 46.587891

LON -112.029113