

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: **817 Dearborn**

Historic Address (if applicable): **807 Dearborn Ave.**

City/Town: **Helena**

Site Number: **24LC2443**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis and Clark**

Historic Name: **Catherine Robinson House**

Original Owner(s): **Catherine Robinson**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Barrs, Casey**

Owner Address: **817 Dearborn Ave., Helena, MT 59602**

Phone:

Legal Location

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

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **NW** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **25**

Lot(s): **9**

Block(s): **2**

Addition: **Hauser** Year of Addition: **1880**

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

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

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

Construction Date: **c. 1906** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **420149.77** Northing: **5160806.17**

Geocode: **05-1887-25-1-17-09-0000**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **June 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: **8/24/2016**

Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**

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

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Architectural Description

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

Site Number: 24LC2443

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 historically known as 807 Dearborn Ave, now 817 Dearborn, occupies a rectangular parcel on the east side of Dearborn Ave. The block is bordered by Stuart Street to the south, Hauser Boulevard to the north, Dearborn Avenue to the west and N. Benton Ave to the east. A gravel alley runs north-south along the property's east side. Dearborn Avenue runs north to south. The main building on the parcel, the residence sits on the property's west side, and faces west to Dearborn Ave. A city sidewalk runs along the western edge of the parcel. The south and west boundaries are historic metal fencing, with hairpin and picket detailing, and an original hairpin and picket entrance gate located on the west facade delineates the west half of the parcel, while a tall wood privacy fence surrounds the backyard. Deciduous shrubbery and trees dot the grounds, and are especially thick on the west façade and northern corner of the property, providing privacy from Dearborn Avenue.

The simple, medium sized, one and one-half story wood-frame building has an east – west oriented basically rectangular shaped footprint and a moderately-pitched front-gable roof. Intersecting gable bays appear at the east ends of north and south elevations, and a historic one-story hipped extension with a shed porch occupies the east (rear) elevation. An original brick chimney is centrally located on the peak of the main roof. The roof is clad in a modern mixture of 3-tab and architectural asphalt shingles. The building is clad in stucco, and sits atop a concrete wall foundation. The façade of the house features a gable- front entrance with a front porch which spans the width of the building.

West (front) elevation:

A hipped open porch with a wood deck accessed by two wooden steps spans the façade's first story. Indicative of its Folk Victorian style, the porch displays turned posts, scrolled bracketing, simple square narrow balusters. and an open, spindled frieze hanging from the porch ceiling between the posts. Openings on the façade (west wall) include a front entrance protected by a modern pressed metal storm door to the north side and a large fixed two-light modern window to the south. The window unit contains one large square light over a smaller rectangular light. The gable end displays a pair of two-light windows, each featuring a tall fixed light above a smaller awning.

North and South (side) elevations:

The north elevation contains original fenestration: a single one-over-one double-hung centered in the side gable (west) bay's first story, and single windows of the same style centered in both the first and upper stories of the projecting front-gabled bay (east). Vegetation blocks the view of the hip and shed extension's north elevation. A water table with trim separates the concrete foundation from the stucco siding and is located approximately three feet up the wall. The south elevation mirrors the north, except a pair of windows appears at the front-gabled bay's first story. The hipped extension's south elevation features two fixed windows: a one-over-one square and a single fixed square window. To the right of the rear component, is a slightly setback shed roof overhang, and a further setback rear entrance.

East (rear) elevation:

The east elevation displays the east gable end of the main house rising above its abutment with the previously described intersecting gable bays. The north bay stands approximately two-to-three feet higher than the south bay. A roughly square hipped addition extends from the north and south bays' shared east wall, and contains a modern one-by-one slider at its

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east elevation's south side. An additional shed-roofed, rectangular enclosed porch/room is attached to the hipped addition. The porch is open to the south side, and enclosed at the north side. Clad in vertical hardy board, it too has a square, one-by-one vinyl-frame sliding window centered on its east elevation.

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History of Property

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

This property was first platted in 1880 as Lot 9 of Block 2 of the Hauser Addition, along the east side of Dearborn Avenue, south of its intersection with Hauser Boulevard. Although tax records indicate the current house was built in 1890, its actual construction occurred sometime after 1892, for Sanborn Maps from that year show Lot 9 as vacant. At the time, the undeveloped lot was still owned by Samuel Hauser. Hauser conveyed it in 1901 to the First National Bank, which transferred it to the Conrad Stanford Co. the following year. In July 1906 Albert Tibbetts acquired the property, and three days later he conveyed it to long-time Helena resident Catherine Robinson. Robinson, an African-American woman who in the 1880s had lived at 622 Dearborn, would own it until her death in 1919: it was next transferred by her estate in early 1921.

It is unclear when the extant house was built, but it existed by 1910, when census takers enumerated Missouri-born Catherine Robinson, a 63-year-old widow, and her 40-year-old son James, born in Montana, living at 807 Dearborn. Like many in Helena's African-American community, the Robinsons maintained their home and family by working a variety of jobs and supplementing their household income by taking in boarders. In 1910, the census recorded Catherine as a seamstress working for a private family, with James working as a laborer doing odd jobs. That year, a man named Charles Oliver, whom census takers categorized as "mulatto," lived with them.

James Robinson still lived at 807 Dearborn in 1920, but likely left shortly thereafter: in 1921, Catherine Robinson's estate transferred the property to U.G. Shelton. Shelton soon sold it to George W. Peabody. The Peabody family would own the property for over 40 years, from 1923 to 1966. During that time, the address was changed from 807 to 817 Dearborn, but the building footprint appears to have been unmodified.

In 1966 George W. Peabody, Jr. and his wife Theresa Padbury conveyed the property to Billy Spann, of Oregon, and Alice Spann, of Helena. Alice married Robert Omang, and she and her husband owned 817 Dearborn until 2002, when they sold it to Howard Moore. The property by then also included a wood-frame shed, built in 1975. Moore deeded the property to Amy Frieze and Casey Barrs in 2005. Casey Barrs continues to own and occupy it.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

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INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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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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Hagen, Delia. "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: African- American Heritage Places in Helena, MT," 2016.

Helena, City of, Town Plats

1880 Hauser Addition

Lewis and Clark, County of. Clerk and Recorder's Office, property title records.

Lewis and Clark County, Clerk of Court Office, marriage records.

Montana, State of, Department of Revenue, Lewis and Clark County. Property record files.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Helena City Directory, 1889- 1920*. Helena, Mont.: R.L. Polk & Co.

Sanborn Map Company. "Fire Insurance Maps of Montana: Helena, Lewis and Clark County- 1884." Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1884.

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Statement of Significance

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

Site Number: 24LC2443

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: **1906-1921**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Purchased in 1906 by longtime Helena resident Catherine Robinson, a widowed black woman from Missouri, the Robinson 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 owned and occupied by the Robinson and her adult son James during the heyday of the black community in Helena, the house remained the family's home until 1921, when Catherine died and the property was sold. At that time the local black community was in the midst of rapid decline. The Robinson 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 the 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. 1906 through 1921.

The Robinson house represents these significant historic themes in a number of specific ways. Although black households clustered in several neighborhoods, Helena, like other western cities, did not suffer the strict residential segregation that was common in other regions, and black households could be found in areas across the city, like Dearborn Avenue on the edge of Helena's mansion district. Like other black people in the region, Catherine Robinson migrated to Helena in the late 19th century from a border state, ie. Missouri. And in Helena, like many African-American families, she took in boarders to help make ends meet and provide lodging to other local black people. Other Robinson family economic activities were likewise typical. James worked as a laborer, a common position for black men, who in this period were oft-confined by structural racism to low-status, low-waged work. Women in the African-American community frequently worked for wages as well: Catherine's sewing position for a private family was one of several domestic roles black women often served in the homes of white families.

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Integrity

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

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

Originally sided with clapboard, the Catherine Robinson House likely received its stucco overcoat during the historic period. Alterations to the design are limited to two small additions to the east (rear) elevation. Still a single family residence in a historic residential neighborhood, it retains its integrity of setting, feeling, and association. These strong ties to the historic period compensate for the diminishment of integrity of materials and workmanship.

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: E-NE

Description: West (front) and south elevations

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Photographs

Property Name: Catherine Robinson House

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Feature #
Facing: NE

Description: South elevation

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Photographs

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Feature #
Facing: SE

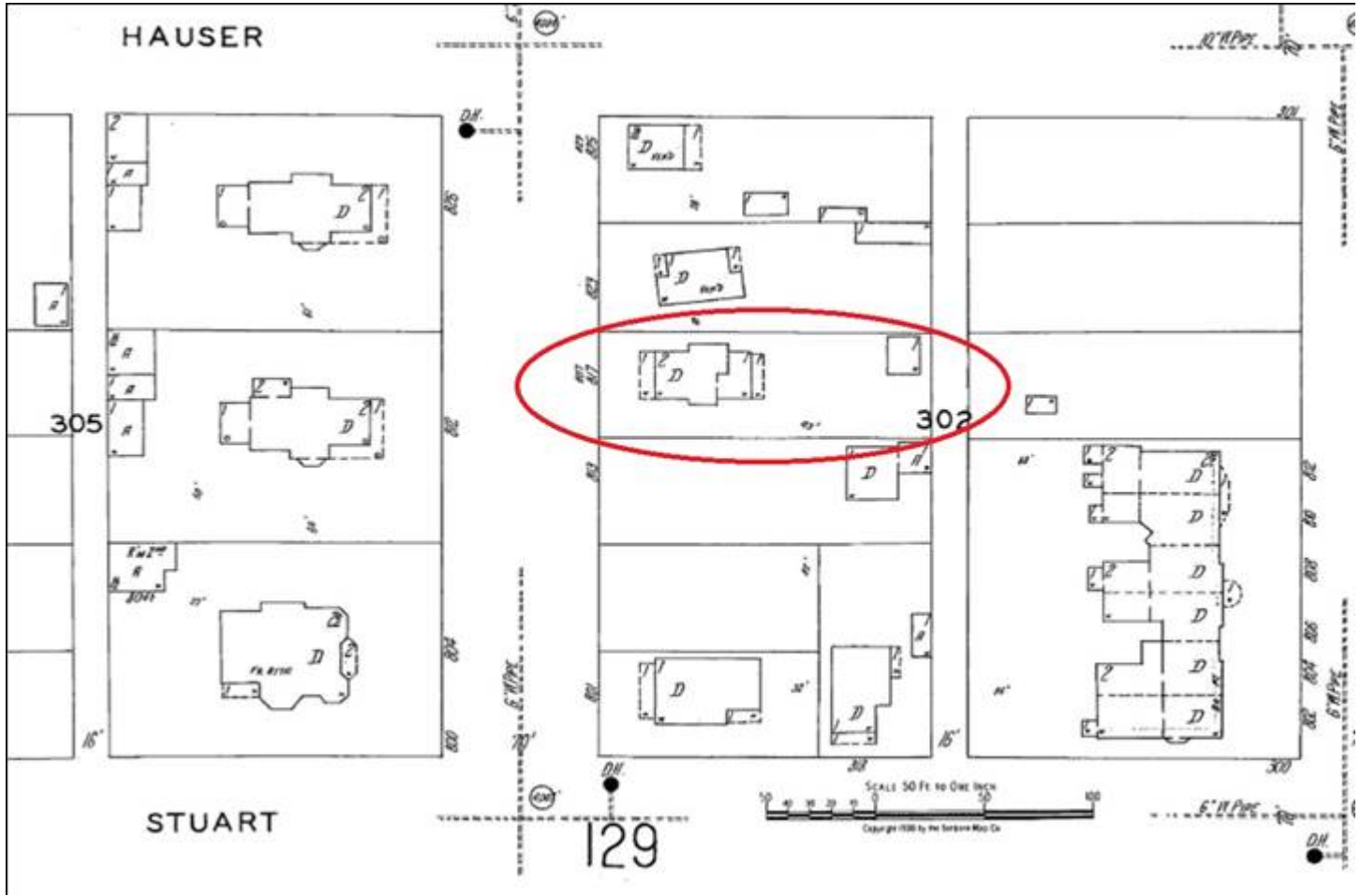
Description: West (front) and north elevations

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Sanborn Maps

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1930 Sanborn Map, Helena, Sheet 134. Detail of 817 Dearborn Avenue. Note that the original 807 house number also appears.

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Site Map

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Topographic Map

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PROPERTY:

817 Dearborn Ave
(fka 807 Dearborn Ave)
Lewis and Clark County
Helena, Montana

GeoCode:

05-1887-25-1-27-09-0000

LAT 46.596073

LON -112.042475