

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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

Property Address: **604 West Park Street**

Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Butte**

Site Number: 24SB1053

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Silver Bow**

Historic Name: **Armstrong Apartments**

Original Owner(s):

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Bradley and Marian Hall**
Owner Address: **604 West Park Street**
Butte, MT
59701

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **03 N** Range: **08 W**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **NW** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **13**

Lot(s): **2**

Block(s): **4**

Addition: **Davis & Barnard** Year of Addition: **1889**

USGS Quad Name: **Butte North** Year: **1989**

Historic Use: **Apartments**

Current Use:

Construction Date: **1894** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **380403** Northing: **5096561**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date: **3/21/2006**

Historic District: **Butte-Anaconda Historic Landmark District**

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **8/3/2016**

Form Prepared by: **Anthony Wood**

Address: **1957 University Street**
Helena, MT, 59601

Daytime Phone:

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: yes no

Criteria: A B C D

Date:

Evaluator:

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: **African American History** Period of Significance: **1929-1933**

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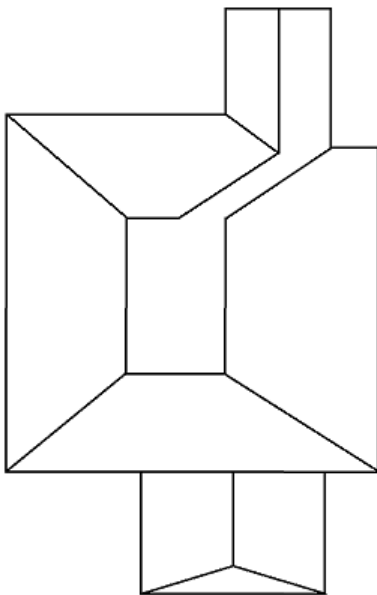
Architectural Style: **Folk Victorian** If Other, specify: **Queen Anne Influence**
Property Type: **Domestic** Specific Property Type: **Single Family**

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

Architectural Description:

Setting and Location

The historic Armstrong Apartment Building located on lot 2 of block 4 of section 13 in the Davis and Barnard Addition of Butte, Montana, consists of a two story folk Victorian with a wood frame, a deck hipped roof, and brick veneer siding. The deck section of the roof is relatively small allowing for a normal slope. This folk Victorian mimics those that are found in Butte's Folk Victorian neighborhood which exists further west along Park Street. The western bay on the north façade first floor projects beyond that of the eastern bay, while the eastern bay on the north façade second floor projects beyond that of the western bay. The roof of the second floor's projecting bay consists of a gambrel roof with a normal slope. The easternmost bay of the south elevation first floor also projects beyond that of the western bay and consists of a normal slope, simple hipped roof. The four streets that enclose the block consist of W. Park on the north, S. Crystal on the east, W. Galena on the south, and S. Clark on the west. An alley dissects the block along an east-west axis, running along the southern side of the property from S. Crystal toward S. Clark. The northern face of the building sits right along the sidewalk resulting in a lack of a front lawn; however, the property owners also possess the lot to the east of the house which consists of a fenced yard for the property owners. The fenced yard sits on a hill at the same approximate level as the porch of the house. Concrete forms the siding of the hill on the east while a stone siding adorns the northern end. Steps lead from east to west up the north side of the stone siding of the yard covered hill. The southern side of the property allows for parking through the alley and a tree sits on the eastern side of the southern elevation of the house, before reaching the western side of the fenced yard. This tree blocks the view of one or two of the windows on the southern elevation. A small red shed resides on the western corner of the southern side of the property. The neighbor along the west side of the property sits approximately five feet away from the property line and various types of foliage separates the two buildings. The Historic Armstrong Apartment Building lies within and contributes to Butte's historic Westside Neighborhood.



North Façade

Six red concrete steps located on the eastern side of the north façade lead, from north to south, up to the porch level and extend into a paved pathway to the side yard. To the west of the steps lies the visible concrete foundation of the residence which also supports the porch. The raised porch consists of white wood base, red wood flooring, and a white wooden railing encloses the porch complete with decorative spindles. The railing allows foot traffic through the eastern end of the porch next to the house. Five Doric Tuscan unfluted columns support the roof of the porch, and each of these consists of red wood for the main body and white for the base. Two white wooden pilasters aid in the support of the porch roof, one sitting on the southeastern corner and one on the southwestern corner of the porch roof. These pilasters are the same Doric Tuscan unfluted style as the supporting columns, except they are entirely white and a portion of them has been cut off to blend into the façade of the house structure. The ceiling of the porch roof continues in the same white coloring as the column and pilaster bases and leads into the red wood eaves that contain a series of tall rectangular cutouts in the frieze. A rain gutter painted to maintain the red coloring of the house hangs from the top of the porch roof, running the entire outer perimeter of the roof until reaching the west side at which point it begins its descent, which is visible on the western elevation. Asphalt shingling protects the porch roof structure, and the porch roof extends beyond the house structure itself by approximately one foot on each of the west and east side, it does

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not wrap around the structure at all. The porch roof covers only the first floor of the north façade. The first floor north façade contains four windows and a door. A small half size one-over-one double hung window sits on the east bay, approximately two feet from the eastern pilaster, and to the immediate west of this window resides the main entrance of the building, a six-paneled blue wood door with a single transom light and white wood framework. The western bay on the first floor projects beyond that of the eastern bay, leading into the set of windows on the consisting of two one-over-one double hung windows approximately four feet tall, both of which frame, to the west and east side, a large single light. All three of these windows share the same white wood lintel and sill and are separated by white wood mullions. The second floor consists of two large windows and a gabled eastern bay projection. The window residing in the eastern bay consists of two one-over-one double hung windows at approximately four feet tall, that sit side-by-side and are divided by a white wood mullion, both sharing the same white wood lintel and sill. The window that sits in the western bay consists of the same construction. The gable front of the eastern projecting bay consists of red shingle cladding, matching the color of the brick veneer of the rest of the house, in a fish-scale pattern. The roof of the gambled projection as well as the main body of the house consists of asphalt shingle in the plain pattern. The gambled bay boasts a lightly decorated white bargeboard, while the remaining eaves of the roof maintain the plain white wood coloring and no decorative embellishments.

West Elevation

The western elevation consists of one window and doesn't appear to contain any other windows or doors from the photographs available. The northernmost bay of the west elevation resides on the projecting second floor bay on the north façade. The one visible one-over-one, double hung, four foot tall window complete with white wood lintel, sill, and framework resides on this bay. The raised porch sits on top of a section of concrete along its northern facing, but the concrete ends after approximately one foot and turns into a white wooden lattice facing that covers the materials being used to support the raised porch. This lattice covering continues, presumably, to the beginning of the house structure, but it is not visible beyond the foliage that lines the western side of the house. The covered porch resides in the northern end of this elevation, maintaining its red Doric Tuscan unfluted columns and the white Doric Tuscan unfluted pilaster attaching the porch to the northwestern corner of the house. The porch railing continues along the western end of the porch as well, and does not have a pedestrian opening on this side. The covered porch roof maintains the red colored eaves with tall rectangular cutouts along the frieze as well as the asphalt shingled roofing material. The red colored rain gutter continues along this western end of the porch roof, when it meets the house it turns from horizontal to vertical and disappears into the foliage that fills the space between the residence and the neighbor building. Once the covered porch ends, the building itself begins. The same red brick veneer is present on the west elevation; however, the neighbor house and the foliage between the two buildings block any view of windows or doors. An exterior brick chimney sits approximately five feet to the south of the northern end of the western elevation. The chimney appears to begin at the bottom of the building but it is not within view, and continues to the top and the smoke stack resides on the western slope of the roof. When the chimney meets the eaves of the roof, the white wood extends slightly to clad the chimney, maintaining the line of white along the roof on the western elevation. The roof also maintains the plain patterned asphalt shingling. Presumably, the brick veneer continues along the entire western elevation, but as stated previous, a building and foliage block the view.

South Elevation

The south elevation contains seven, or more, windows and one door. A one-over-one, double hung, four foot tall window, with white wood lintel, sill, and framework, sits approximately five feet from the western corner of the south elevation on the second floor, half of a foot underneath the white eaves of the roof. Trees and other buildings block the view of any other features that reside below this window on the western bay second floor. At about the middle of the south elevation sits another exterior brick chimney, except this one has a black pipe smoke stack rather than a continuation of brick. Like the chimney on the west elevation, this one employs the white wood eaves to enclose a section of the chimney to maintain a continuation of the coloring. The roofing material and pattern used on the north and west elevations continue onto the south elevation. To the east of the exterior chimney lies a three foot tall, one-over-one double hung window complete with the white wood lintel, sill, and framework. Two feet to the east of this window sits another one-over-one, double hung window at approximately four feet in height with the same white wood lintel, sill, and framework. The apex of the southern elevation's projecting bay's roof lies immediately to the east of the exterior chimney that cuts the center of the elevation. The roof of this projecting bay consists of the same asphalt shingles in the plain pattern, and the same white wood unadorned eaves that exist through the rest of the house. A silver metal smoke stack protrudes from the western slope of the roof and a satellite dish resides on the easternmost slope. The southern slope of the projecting bay's roof holds a silver metal protrusion that maintains the wiring to connect the house to the city-wide infrastructure. The westernmost end of the southern face of the projecting bay contains a one-over-one, double hung, four foot tall window with the same white wood lintel, sill, and framework. On the eastern side of the projecting bay sits a back entrance blue unglazed flush door that includes a single transom light. They both share a white wood lintel and framework. Immediately to the east of the door resides the electrical box for the house, and a silver metal pipe-wire leads up to the metal protrusion that sits on the southern slope of the projecting bay's roof. A continuation of the metal pipe-wire down toward the ground is presumed but cannot be verified with the photographs provided. The projecting bay's exterior consists of the same red brick veneer until the bottom few feet, at which point the exterior switches to a grey concrete. The

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concrete on the western end of the projecting bay sits approximately three feet from the ground; however, to the east of the door the concrete rises to sit a foot higher than that on the west. The easternmost end of the south elevation first floor contains a set of two one-over-one, double hung, four foot tall windows sitting side-by-side and sharing a white wood lintel, sill, mullion and framework. The concrete exterior that began on the projecting bay continues onto this easternmost bay and rises another two feet higher, creating a series of steps up in the height of the concrete, rising from west to east, aligning with the rise of the slope of the ground in general. Other than the concrete, the exterior siding of the house maintains the red brick veneer, white eaves, and black asphalt shingles.

East Elevation

The eastern elevation consists of only two windows. The first sits on the northern end of the projecting bay located on the south elevation, and the second sits in the center of the projecting bay located on the north façade. Both maintain the one-over-one, double hung, and four foot tall windows complete with white wood lintel, sill, and framework. The concrete exterior that began on the projecting bay of the south elevation continues onto the east elevation at the final height previously described. The satellite dish resides on the east slope of the southern projecting bay's asphalt roof. There are no windows or doors on the red brick veneer east face of the main building, but the concrete siding continues with no change in height. The northern bay of the east elevation cannot be seen in the photographs provided but it can be estimated that the concrete continues until the fenced area meets the house.

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History of the Property

The structure at 604 West Park Street in the West Side neighborhood of Butte was constructed in 1894. Early residents of the property were characteristic of Butte's early business working class. Max Siegel, a member of the prominent tailoring family of the same name, lived at 604 West Park as early as 1898, according to city directories. Later, in the 1910s, a physician{***} and his family resided in the large brick home.¹ For the purposes of this survey, the house became historically significant in the early 1930s, under the ownership of George Armstrong. Between 1930 and 1933, Armstrong opened and operated his own apartment and tenement properties in the building. Likely only two or three flats in all, this small residential business is unique in the African American history of Butte.

George Amos Armstrong

Born in Ohio around 1884, George Amos Armstrong came to Butte in 1910, while in his mid-twenties.² Like many of Butte's black residents, Armstrong found that the work in the mines which attracted so many to the "richest hill on earth" was not as inclusive for African Americans. Instead, they found work in the many different service sector professions that abounded in Butte. George worked as a janitor when he first arrived, and lived in a boarding house at 216 South Idaho Street with several other black men who worked as waiters, barbers, porters, and janitors throughout the city.³ The location of Armstrong's first home would prove to be quite the foreshadowing of his life in Butte for the next five decades. The 200 hundred block of south Idaho sits only four blocks north of Shaffer's Chapel AME church at 602 South Idaho. The small white building was one of two black churches operating in Butte in the early 20th century. The other, Bethel Baptist, sat only a block to the south, also on Idaho.⁴ Armstrong, a deeply religious man, would continue to work and serve the black church in Butte until his death.

In addition to his close proximity to black churches, South Idaho Street also gave Armstrong some exposure to Butte's booming tenement-style, residential economy. In 1915, Armstrong moved to an apartment building at 537 West Broadway in the city's West Side neighborhood.⁵ The residents of this section of Butte were typically middle class members of the business community. As such, most houses on West Park and West Broadway streets were large, two or three story homes that were ideal for renting to multiple tenants. George Armstrong worked several different jobs while living at 537 West Broadway, including being a janitor for the Phoenix Building, and a porter at the Leggat Hotel.⁶ From 1915 until the late 1920s, George Armstrong lived meagerly, and saved his money so that he could pursue a business venture of his own.

In late 1929 or early 1930, George Armstrong purchased the large two-story brick Victorian home at 604 West Park Avenue. It is possible that the structure had already been converted to flats before Armstrong bought the building. In the city directory of 1930, George first advertised *Armstrong's Apartment Building*.⁷ Armstrong's business model remains unique in the history of African Americans in business during the era. Several men, and more predominantly, women, owned and operated boarding houses, such as the one where Armstrong lived when he first came to Butte. Those boarding houses were far more common, as they carried less financial risk. If a tenant could not afford his or her room any longer, it proved to be much easier to replace them with one of the countless miners or labors seeking a cheap roof over their head. Flat rentals in a residential neighborhood brought a different, more affluent clientele, but far more risk. If one of the flats remained empty for too long, the landlord often could not afford to keep the building. It is unclear if this was the reason Armstrong Apartments operated for only three years, until 1933.⁸ Regardless, George Armstrong's ambition in 1930 made him one of the only black men in real-estate in Butte, and across Montana.

Even after selling 604 West Park Avenue, George Armstrong continued to be an active leader in Butte's black community. As such, the significance of his first business venture is only enhanced by his life during the next thirty years. Those decades are marked by his participation and leadership in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1940, he is listed as the Superintendent of Shaffer's Chapel AME, and his role would grow and encompass many different duties in the 40s, 50s, and until his death in 1962.⁹ In 1955 he served for a time as the pastor of Shaffer's Chapel, before stepping down in 1959 to be the head deacon, superintendent, and even the

¹ Kestel, West Side Historic District Survey, *Butte Historical Society*, 1984.

² U.S. Census 1910, (*Butte, Ward 6, Silver Bow, Montana*; Roll: T624_836; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0108; FHL microfilm: 1374849). Accessed online at ancestry.com.

³ Ibid.

⁴ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1911 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 53.

⁵ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1915 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 96.

⁶ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1918 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 77.

⁷ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1930 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 62.

⁸ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1933 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 53.

⁹ *Montana Standard*, Sunday, March 3, 1940, page 6. Accessed online at ancestry.com.

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janitor to the ever shrinking congregation. During these years Armstrong lived at 602 South Idaho in the church, and continued to occupy the building until his death in 1962, at the age 78.¹⁰

¹⁰ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1960 *Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory*, 14; "George Armstrong," *Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for George A. Armstrong. Results included: U.S. Find-A-Grave-Index; U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940. Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov. Access to Historic Newspapers included: *The Butte New Age* (1902-1903); *The Butte Daily Bulletin* (1918-1921); *The Montana Plaindealer* (1906-1911). Accessed online at www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

Jeff Kestel, West Side Historic District Survey, *Butte Historical Society*, 1984, on record at the Montana State Historic Preservation office.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory*, Salt Lake City, UT: R.L. Polk & Co., 1911, 1912, 1913, 1923, 1925, 1930-33, 1940, 1955, and 1960.

Newspapers:

Montana Standard, Sunday, March 3, 1940, page 6.

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Statement of Significance

The Armstrong Apartment Building at 604 West Park is listed in the National Register as a primary contributor within the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark District. It gains additional significance for its association with the history of the African American community in Butte and Montana, as well as its association with George Amos Armstrong, a leading member of Butte's African American business and religious community in the early and mid-20th century. As a business venture, the large brick house stands as a testament to the ambition of black community members who sought to make inroads in a booming real-estate market.

In addition to its contribution to the Butte Historic Landmark District, the structure formerly known as Armstrong Apartments stands eligible for individual listing under Criterion A for its association with the African American community in the city. It is as one of a number of extant buildings across Butte that have been identified as retaining historical significance in regards to the history of African Americans during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

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

The Armstrong Apartment Building at 604 West Park Street retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance. Its original location, setting and overall form are still very much intact, as are much of its original design, materials and workmanship. Located within the Butte-Anaconda Historic Landmark District, it and the houses in the vicinity are of the same general age, and their feeling and association remain intact. The house does not appear to have undergone any major rehabilitation or construction projects. All decorative spindles and bracings, as well as Victorian elements throughout the house remain. Windows and window surrounds are in kind, if not original. This building exhibits a very high level of physical integrity.

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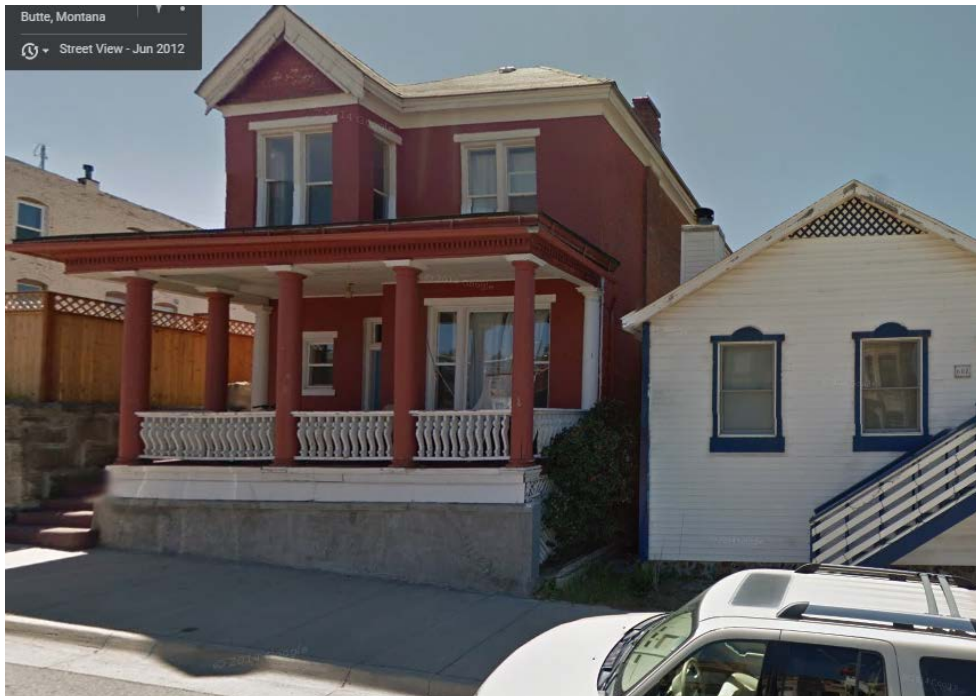
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Photographs



North Façade – Photo Credit Google Maps



North-West Elevations – Photo Credit Google Maps

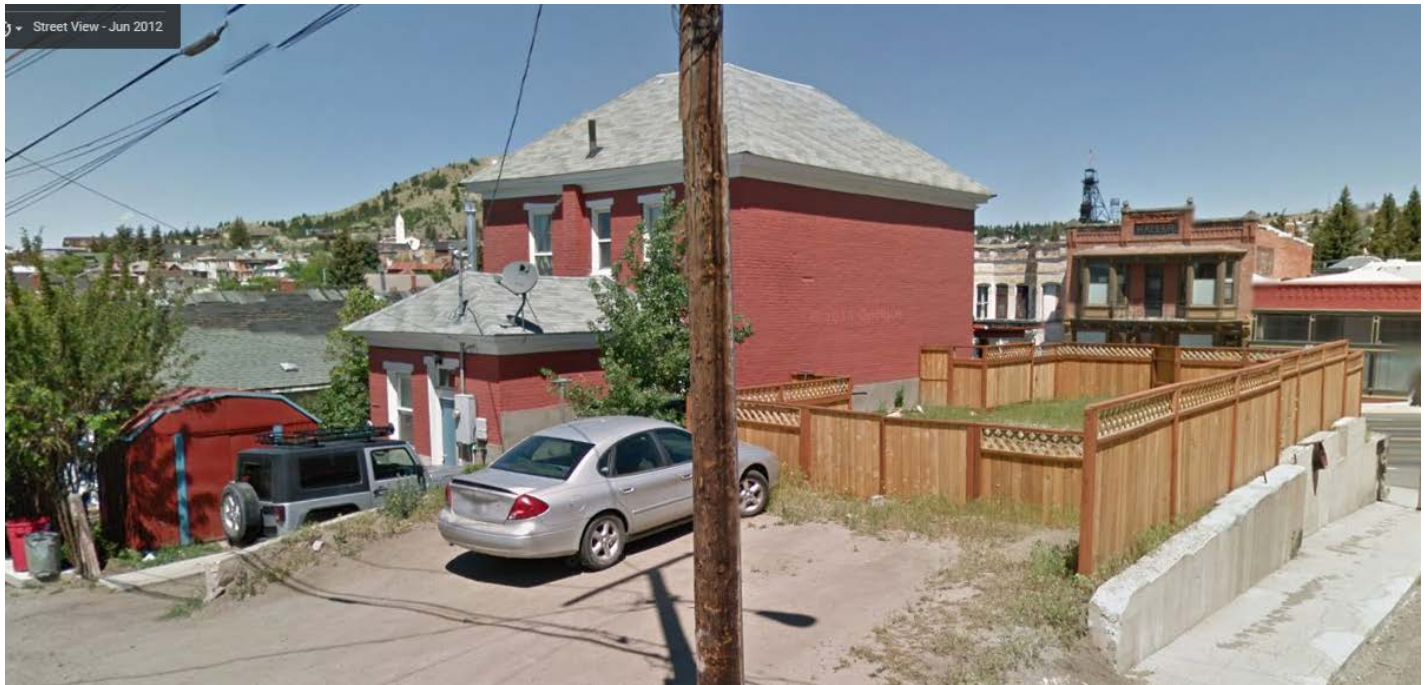
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South Elevation – Photo Credit Google Maps



South-East Elevations – Photo Credit Google Maps

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East-South Elevations – Photo Credit Google Maps



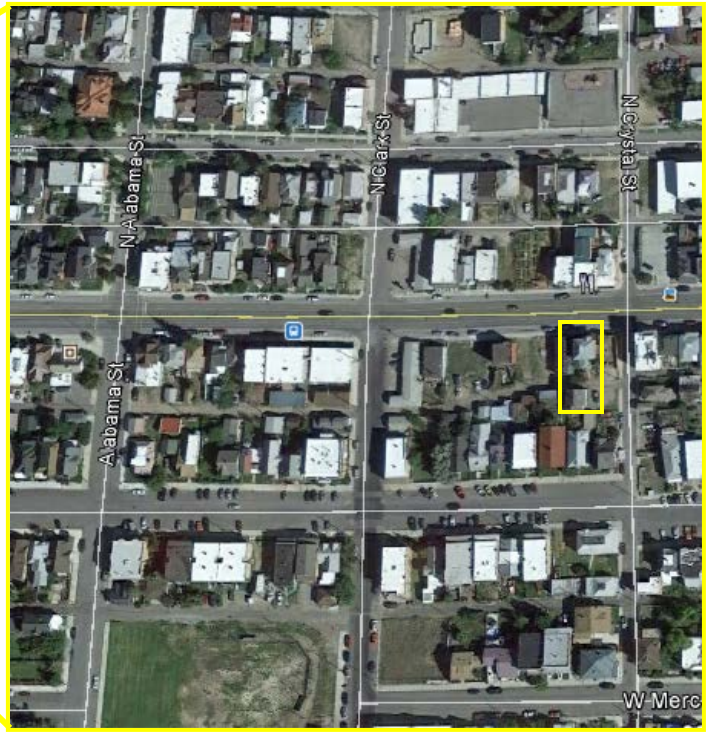
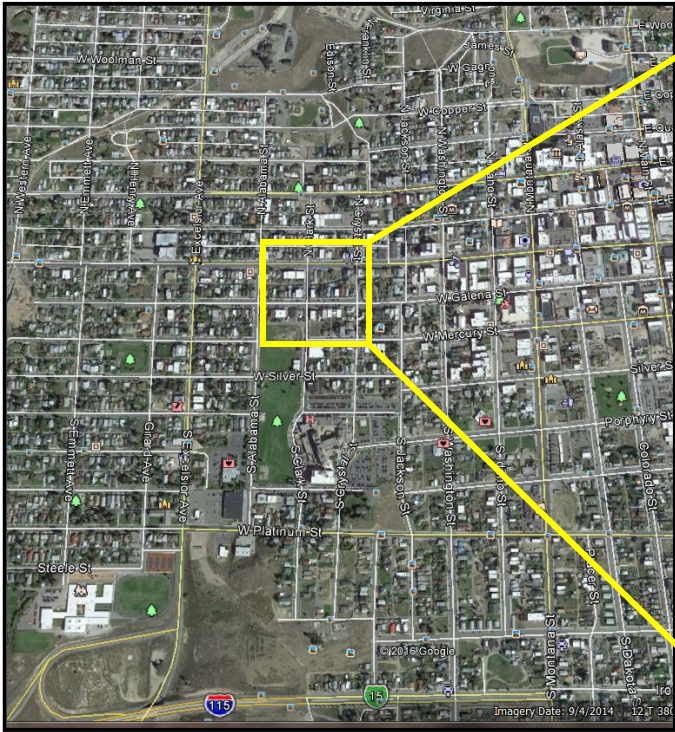
East-North Elevations – Photo Credit Google Maps

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Site Map/Aerial Photo



Armstrong Apartment Building
604 W Park
Butte, Mt
T03 N R08 W S13
Google Earth Satellite Image
2015



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Topographic Map

Armstrong Apartment Building
604 W Park,
Butte, Mt
T03 N R08 W S13
USGS Topographic Map 1:24K

