

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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

Property Address: **402 South 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
(2508 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South)**

Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Billings**

Site Number: **24YL2047**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Yellowstone**

Historic Name: **Wayman Chapel**

Original Owner(s): **African Methodist Episcopal Church**

Current Ownership  Private  Public

Current Property Name: **African Methodist Episcopal Church**

Owner(s): **African Methodist Episcopal Church**

Owner Address: **2508 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **1 S** Range: **26 E**

$\frac{1}{4}$   $\frac{1}{4}$  **NE**  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section: **03**

Lot(s): **11-12**

Block(s): **181**

Addition: **Billings Original Townsite** Year of Addition:

USGS Quad Name: Year:

Historic Use: **Religious**

Current Use: **Religious**

Construction Date: **1896**  Estimated  Actual

Original Location  Moved Date Moved: **appx. 1916**

UTM Reference [www.nris.mt.gov](http://www.nris.mt.gov)

NAD 27 or  NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **694574 E** Northing: **5072497 N**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes  No

Date of this document: **8/17/15**

Form Prepared by: **Anthony Wood**

Address: **1410 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Helena MT 59620-1202**

Daytime Phone: **406-444-7715**

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: **1896-1965**

# Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name:

Smithsonian Number: 24YL2047

Architectural Style: Other    If Other, specify:  
Property Type: **Religious**    Specific Property Type: **Church**

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

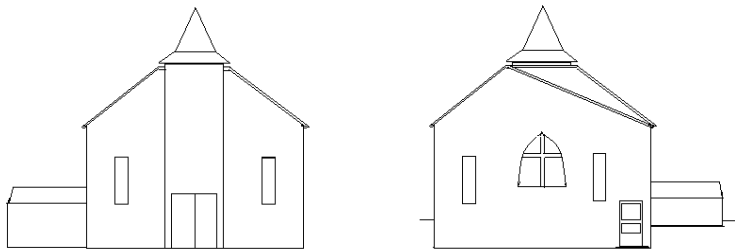
## Architectural Description:

### *Setting & Location*

The Wayman Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church located at 402 South 25<sup>th</sup> Street, sits on lots 11 and 12 of block 181 in the southside section of Billings. The block is bounded by S 25<sup>th</sup> St to the northeast, 4<sup>th</sup> Ave S to the northwest, S 26<sup>th</sup> St to the southwest, and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S to the southeast. The building sits at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> St and 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, facing northeast (generally east). The detached parsonage building sits on the same lot to the rear of the church, facing north, towards 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South. The church sits only two blocks west of the Phillips 66 refinery. The building is located on the far northeastern end of Billings' southside neighborhood. The neighborhood is roughly bounded by 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S to the northwest, State Ave to the south, and the Phillips 66 refinery complex to the east. The Great Northern Railway line runs along 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S, and is the major boundary between the southside and downtown Billings, directly to the north.

### *Introduction*

The Wayman Chapel building at 402 S 25<sup>th</sup> St is a single-story, rectangular, gabled structure with a salt-box roof and a steeple tower with a flared pyramid roof protruding from the center of the façade. The building was moved from its original location on the north side of Billings in the early 1900s, and likely sits upon a concrete wall, or slab, foundation. Horizontal board siding covers all exterior walls, and terminates beneath the roof's shallow eaves. The salt-box roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The north slope of the roof features a steeper pitch than the south slope. The peak of the roof runs, roughly, from the northwestern edge of the steeple tower, to the rear of the church. The false gable front extends from the southern edge of the steeple tower, and matches the pitch of the northern slope, giving the appearance of symmetry on either side of the steeple tower. The false gable front is roughly two feet in depth, east to west, and meets the buildings northern roof slope at the level of the eaves. The triangular rear wall of the false front is sided in the same horizontal siding as the rest of the exterior.



### *East Façade*

The façade features the protruding steeple tower at the center, with the north and south false gable fronts on either side. The steeple roof, which extends above the rest of the structure, exhibits a two-pitch, flared pyramidal roof, covered in asphalt shingles. The main white, wooden, double doors of the building open at the center of the tower at ground level. The black wood door surrounds of the front door match the color and material of the two windows surrounds on the east façade. Each of the two window openings sit at the center of the bays on either side of the steeple tower. These windows, though very dark, appear to feature stain-glass ornamentation, as might be expected in a church building. A single story, gable-front shed extends from the south edge of the east façade, protruding from the south elevation. The elevation of the extension shed only contains the east slope of the gable roof, and the eastern exterior wall, covered in the same horizontal board siding as the rest of the structure.

### *North Elevation*

The north elevation of the structure features four window fixtures in the main section of the building, the north elevation of the steeple tower, and the northern slope of the salt-box roof. The window fixtures all exhibit tall, narrow fixed pane windows, which appear to have stain-glass ornamentation. Three of the four windows are set equidistant from the others on the eastern half of the elevation. The fourth window sits much farther from the other three, near the western edge of the elevation. The horizontal siding extends from the level of the city sidewalk to the eaves of the salt-box roof. A brick and metal chimney rises from the asphalt shingles near the western edge of the elevation, nearly directly above the fourth and western-most window fixture. The steeple tower stands at the east end of the elevation. Its northern elevation is covered with the horizontal board siding, and contains no windows or other features.

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### *South Elevation*

A small, single-story gabled shed extension is prominent on the eastern side of the south elevation. It protrudes from the main building very near the eastern edge, and contains only a single, wood door centered beneath the gable end. To the west of the shed extension, the western half of the south elevation features two window fixtures. A single tall and narrow stain-glass window sits near the western edge of the elevation, to the east, near the center, appears to be a side by side slider window, though vegetation obscures the view. The slopes of the roof visible from the south elevation feature the main salt-box slope, the narrow roof of the false gable front, and the flared pyramid roof of the steeple tower.

### *Rear Elevation*

A large, arched stain-glass window dominated the rear elevation. It sits at the center of the elevation, just north of the salt-box gable peak. The stain-glass artwork exhibits standard Christian imagery of the cross and open bible. On either side of the main rear window, two tall, narrow stain-glass windows sit between it and the northern and southern edges. The southern edge of the elevation contains a metal screen rear door that gives access to the building. Above the shallower pitch of the salt-box roof's southern slope, the rear wall of the false gable front is visible. The false front wall is sided with the same off-white horizontal board siding that is featured throughout the exterior. To the south of the main structure, the western elevation of the extension shed is visible, but contains no windows or other features.



WAYMAN CHAPEL 402 S. 25<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
BILLINGS, MT

### *Detached Parsonage*

The parsonage, a detached, one and a half story structure, stands to the rear of Wayman's Chapel at 2508 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South. Though the residence built for the pastor of the church was constructed much later than the church itself, it was still built within the period of significance, and is there for a contributing building. The north façade of the home features a front door, just west of center, flanked by window fixtures to the east, and west. The eastern fixture is a narrow, rectangular, one-over-one double-hung window with white, wooden window surrounds. The western fixture features a larger, picture window with fixed transom above, also with white wood window surrounds. Above the front door, a small, gabled stoop extension roof protrudes about two feet from the façade. It features asphalt shingles, a pediment, and white trim board. The roof extension is supported by metal fixtures on either side, running from the bottom edges of the stoop roof, to the façade of the main building. In the top half story, a one-over-one double-hung window fixture sits directly beneath the gable peak. Above the top edge of the window, a horizontal brace board runs between the slopes of the roof. Within the brace board and the gable peak, the gable end appears to protrude several inches farther than the rest of the façade. This section of the gable end contains a small metal vent at the center.

The rear of the parsonage features a large kitchen extension with a gabled roof, presumably with a rear entrance on the west side of the elevation, though it is not visible. This extension is visible off the southern edge of the east and west elevations. The west elevation contains two window fixtures. The northern most window features the one-over-one double-hung design, while the southernmost windows feature the side-by-side style. The east elevation contains only one window, a single one-over-one double-hung fixture, near the southern corner of the elevation. Two windows are also visible on the eastern elevation of the rear kitchen extension. The parsonage is covered in the same off-white, horizontal board siding as the main church building, also with similar roof materials.

## History of the Property

### *Construction and Move to Billings' Southside*

A hard date for the initial construction of the Wayman Chapel in Billings is difficult to ascertain. Local members functioning as church historians put the date of construction somewhere around 1895 or 1896.<sup>1</sup> The Billings Polk city directory of 1901 lists the church as being organized in 1900, at the location on N 24<sup>th</sup> St.<sup>2</sup> Sources available on the construction of the building suggest that the original Salt-box design could very well have been built for the church in 1896. This building did not have the steeple tower or false gable front that exists on the current church. This building shape is confirmed by the 1903 Sanborn fire insurance maps.<sup>3</sup> In 1909, newspaper sources and architectural firms have documented the A.M.E. church's desire to build a new building, even going so far as to hire a firm to design the structure. The Billings Gazette published an article in July of 1909 stating that the Bishop of the A.M.E. churches was scheduled to arrive in Billings to dedicate the new church.<sup>4</sup> However, the 1912 Sanborn maps suggest that the "new building" consisted only of a new steeple tower added to the center of the façade, and a parsonage attached to the rear of the church as a residence for the pastor.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that the main salt-box section of the church, which today serves as the sanctuary, was refurbished as part of the new building project. Then in 1916 the members of Wayman Chapel purchased the building outright, and proceeded to move the entire building to Billings' Southside. The neighborhood was already the center of the African American community in Billings thanks to the early black pioneer Walker Browning settling on the southside of the tracks in the 1880s. The church now stood only blocks from the Browning's home, at the time belonging to his daughter and her husband the esteemed Calvary Captain Horace Bivins, as well as Mrs. Browning's Furnished rooms, at 121 S 26<sup>th</sup> St. The McCabes, Emmons, and other founding members also lived within a few blocks of the new location.

### *Birth of the AME Church in Billings*

By the late 1890s, dozens of African Americans lived in Billings, just to the south of the Railroad. This small community formed natural leaders in their constant struggle to scrape together a good life out west. First among them was Walker Browning. When he arrived in the bustling rail town in 1882, he stayed in the tent city which had formed on the southside of the tracks, near downtown Billings. In 1883, he moved his children and siblings out to Montana to live with him in a new house he built near the spot where he first stayed.<sup>6</sup> In the years that followed, dozens more blacks made their way to Billings via the railroad, many choosing to stay for better, less migrant work in town. Along with Walker Browning, several other young black families pushed for the formation of an A.M.E. church in Billings.<sup>7</sup>

Walker Browning reportedly attended the local Methodist church of Billings quite happily, but when his young daughters and their new families started the Wayman Chapel, Walker decided to help open the new church. This was very much a family affair for Browning. His daughter (or possibly step daughter) Lulu, married William McCabe, a retired Calvary soldier.<sup>8</sup> His other daughter, Claudia, married McCabe's regiment commander, Captain Horace Bivins.<sup>9</sup> Both McCabe and Bivins led the push for the organization of the church along with the Emmons, a local barber, Walter Chase, and a woman, Edna Brown.<sup>10</sup> Robert Emmons and his large family lived on the southside, only a block away from where the church would eventually come to stand in 1916. Robert worked as an engineer in 1930, and owned his home.<sup>11</sup> The Emmons remained part of the congregation for well over thirty years. Less is known about Mrs. Edna Brown, who does not appear in either the 1910 or 1930 censuses. Membership at Wayman Chapel remained at eight to twelve individuals for a number of years.<sup>12</sup> It is presumed that they included, Walker and Ruth Browning, Horace and Claudia Bivins, William and Lulu McCabe, and Robert and Candis Emmons, Walter and Angeline Chase, and Ms. Edna Brown. In time, the membership of the small chapel would grow to over thirty or forty members, with many more attending.

<sup>1</sup> Susan Olp, "Wayman Chapel's Roots Go Way Back," *Billings Gazette*, September 8, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1901 *Billings (Yellowstone County, Mont.) City Directory*. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., "Billings, Montana," (New York, New York), sheet 9, 1903.

<sup>4</sup> "Noted Bishop to Dedicate Church," *Billings Gazette*, July 23, 1909, page 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., "Billings, Montana," (New York, New York), sheet 24, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> "Walker Browning Obituary" *Billings Gazette*, Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1925. Accessed at ancestry.com

<sup>7</sup> Susan Olp, "Wayman Chapel's Roots Go Way Back," *Billings Gazette*, September 8, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census, 1910, (*Billings Ward 3, Yellowstone, Montana*; Roll: T624\_837; Page: 12B; Enumeration District: 0248; FHL microfilm: 1374850).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census, 1930, (*Billings, Yellowstone, Montana*; Roll: 1264; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0011; Image: 855.0; FHL microfilm: 2340999 Accessed online at ancestry.com.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Olp, "Wayman Chapel's Roots Go Way Back," *Billings Gazette*, September 8, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census, 1930, 1940, (*Billings, Yellowstone, Montana*; Roll: 1264; Page: 3A; Enumeration District: 0011; Image: 855.0; FHL microfilm: 2340999 ) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

<sup>12</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1901-1917 *Billings (Yellowstone County, Mont.) City Directories*.

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### *The Pastors of Wayman Chapel*

According to newspapers and city directories, the Reverend Benjamin McCully served as the first pastor of Wayman Chapel.<sup>13</sup> McCully's ecclesiastical life was very much typical for the period and for A.M.E. pastors in general. From the origination of the church, McCully occupied the pulpit until 1904, at which point he moved to Great Falls to lead the historic Union Bethel A.M.E. church. He remained there for only a year, and in 1906 he moved to Anaconda, presumably to preach at the local A.M.E., which was still in operation at the time. Following his short stay in the smelter city, Rev McCully returned to the pulpit of Wayman Chapel in 1907.<sup>14</sup> During the next ten years, the church congregation grew to twenty plus members, and plans to build a new building, which never fully materialized, added to the instability of the church. From 1910 to 1916, three different pastors filled the pulpit on Sundays. The 1920s also saw an inconsistency in the position of spiritual lead for the congregation. Albert Liles, H.C. White, and David Somerville all were sent by the main A.M.E. Church body to lead the services. Not until the hiring of Rev Robert Freeman in 1957, would the church have a steady pastor. Until his death in 1997, Freeman served as a pillar of the dwindling African American community.<sup>15</sup>

### *Wayman Chapel in the Billings Community*

Like many black churches in the west, Wayman Chapel not only served as a religious and spiritual center for the congregants but also as a social center for community events and functions. These functions ranged from very typical dinners and luncheons to raise money for various causes to political movements. The most notable service churches often provided was a space for progressive social groups. As women tended to be the center of the church body, so too did the colored women's clubs tend to be the center of the black community. This was the case all across Montana, including Billings. The Montana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, or MSFCWC, worked to promote education, the family, and the general enhancement of black women in the home and the community. This state-wide organization had a significant impact on the lives of African Americans in Montana, as they fought to quell prejudice in the community, pushed for civil rights legislation in the Capitol, and helped dozens of black students pay for college.<sup>16</sup> The Billings Chapter, called the Phillis Wheatley Club, along with the Angeline Chase Missionary Society both worked within the Billings community to make a better future for African American children.

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<sup>13</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1901 *Billings (Yellowstone County, Mont.) City Directory*. 39.

<sup>14</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1901-1903 *Billings (Yellowstone County)*, 1904-1906 *Great Falls (Cascade County)*, 1906 *Anaconda (Deer Lodge County)*.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Pickett, "Billings Church Closing After 112 Years," *Billings Gazette*, July 26, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Christene Meyers, "Negro Women Talk Disbanding the Club," *Billings Gazette*, June 18, 1972.

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### Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for Walker Browning. Results included: "Walker Browning Obituary" Billings Gazette, Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1925; U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940.

Meyers, Christene. "Negro Women Talk Disbanding the Club," *Billings Gazette*, June 18, 1972.

"Noted Bishop to Dedicate Church," *Billings Gazette*, July 23, 1909.

Olp, Susan. "Wayman Chapel's Roots Go Way Back," *Billings Gazette*, September 8, 2006.

Pickett, Mark. "Billings Church Closing After 112 Years," *Billings Gazette*, July 26, 2008.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Billings (Yellowstone County, Mont.) City Directory*, Salt Lake City, UT: R.L. Polk & Co., 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1912, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1922, 1925, and 1944.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. "Billings, Montana." (New York, New York). sheet 24, 1912.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. "Billings, Montana." (New York, New York). sheet 9, 1903.

"Walker Browning, Billings Pioneer, Summoned by Death." *Billings Gazette*. February 8, 1925.

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### Statement of Significance

Wayman Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church at 402 S 25<sup>th</sup> St is one of only a small number of buildings associated with the history of early African Americans remaining in the city of Billings, and is one of only about five African Methodist Episcopal chapels built during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition to its rare property type, the church building also gains significance for its association with certain early black pioneers of Billings, such as church founders, Walker Browning, Captain Horace Bivins, and their families. Furthermore, Wayman Chapel is of special significance for its location in Billings' Southside neighborhood. Between 1910 and 1930, the nearby blocks had dozens of homes owned or rented by African Americans. In fact, the neighborhood to which the church building was physically moved in 1916, was home to nearly every resident of color in Billings at the time. Though it is not clear whether or not Billings was residentially segregated at the time, the fact that every early black family lived within several blocks of one another further adds to the historical significance to the location of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.



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

Though several major modifications and refurbishments have taken place since the construction of Wayman Chapel around 1896, include the relocation of the building itself, most changes to building occurred during the period of historical significance. The original rectangular, wood frame structure with a salt-box roof was significantly altered in 1909 with the addition of the steeple tower and false gable fronts. Following the building's move to 402 S 25<sup>th</sup> St in 1916, the building continued to be modified with the addition of a brick façade on the lower half of the steeple tower, and several additions of stain-glass windows. All of this took place within the period of significance and added to its historic aesthetic as a church building. However, since the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building has been damaged by floods, and the original stain-glass windows broken, which led to an effort to remodel the building to restore the functionality of it as a church again. The exterior walls have been resided and painted, and the windows have all been replaced with similar stain-glass style fixtures. While these recent changes have diminished the integrity of the building slightly, the materials used are for the most part appropriate, and the design, workmanship, and feeling of the structure retain high integrity. Likewise, the historic location of the church in Billings' southside, and its continued use as a A.M.E. church preserve its historic location, setting, and association as well.

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

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### Photographs



Wayman Chapel  
Northeast Façade, facing Southwest  
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

**Montana Historic Property Record Form**

Property Name:

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Wayman Chapel  
Northwest and Southwest elevations, facing east  
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

**Montana Historic Property Record Form**

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Wayman Chapel  
Partial Northeast and Southeast elevations  
With Northeast and rear elevations of Wayman Chapel Parsonage, facing west  
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

**Montana Historic Property Record Form**

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Wayman Chapel Parsonage  
Northwest Façade, facing Southeast  
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)



Montana Historic Property Record Form

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Site Map/Aerial Photo



Wayman Chapel  
402 South 25<sup>th</sup> St,  
Billings, Mt  
T01 S, R26 E, S03  
Google Earth satellite image 2015



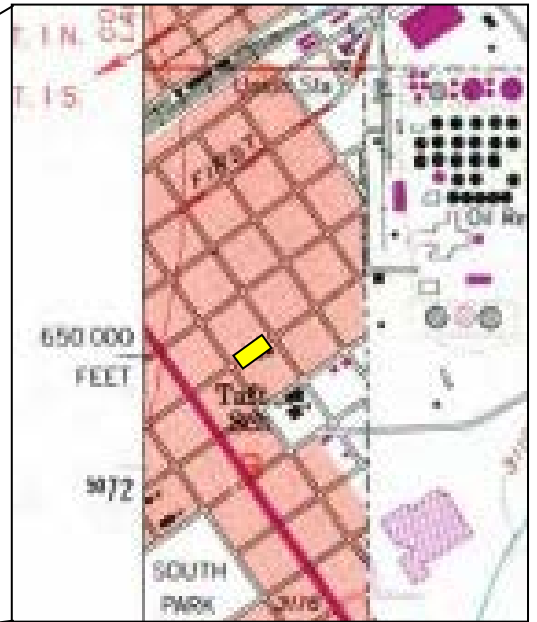
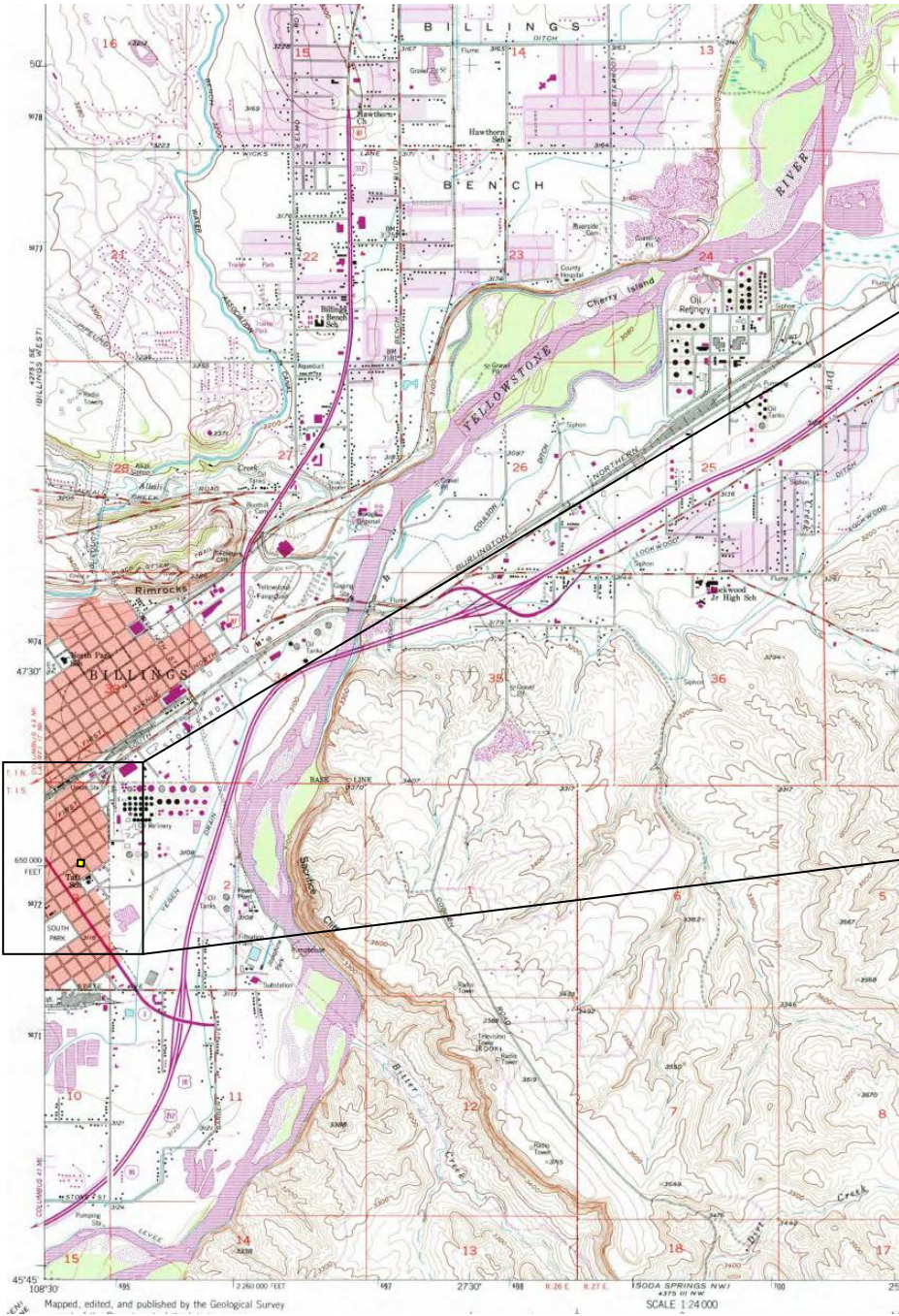


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## Topographic Map



Wayman Chapel  
402 South 25<sup>th</sup> St,  
Billings, Mt  
T01 S, R26 E, S03  
USGS Topographic Map, 1:24K