

TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR WRITTEN NARRATIVE

Page Numbers

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Introduction	E-1
Early Settlement and Community Development, 1891-1892	E-1
Transportation, 1891-1942	E-8
Ethnic Heritage, 1891-1942	E-16
Community Planning and Development, 1892-1942	E-22
Development of Commerce and Industry, 1891-1942	E-29
Lumber Industry, 1891-1942	E-33
Architect-designed Buildings, 1891-1942	E-37
Influence of Federal Government, 1891-1942	E-39
Social and Cultural Development, 1891-1942	E-41
Movement of Buildings, 1891-1942	E-46
Conclusion	E-50

F. Associated Property Types

Residences and Associated Outbuildings	F-1
Architect-designed Resources	F-3
Resources Associated with Commerce	F-4
Resources Associated with Industry	F-5
Resources Associated with Social and Cultural Development	F-6
Resources Associated with Government	F-8
Resources Associated with Transportation	F-9
Parks and Gardens	F-11
Residences That Have Been Moved	F-12

G. Geographical Data G-1

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods H-1

I. Major Bibliographical References I-1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 1

E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

The City of Kalispell, with a current population of approximately 12,000, is located at the intersection of Highways 2 and 93 in the Flathead Valley of northwestern Montana. The Continental Divide lies 60 miles to the east and the rolling foothills of the Cabinet Mountains to the west. The international boundary line is less than 100 miles to the north. A dominant feature of the valley is Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. This lake, which is approximately 28 miles long and nine miles at its widest, lies just nine miles to the southeast of Kalispell. Flathead Lake is fed by the Flathead River and its many forks and tributaries (including the Whitefish, Swan and Stillwater rivers), and the main channel of the Flathead River runs just one mile to the east of the city. The Flathead Valley continues south of the lake; Kalispell lies within the "upper" Flathead Valley, at the beginning of the Rocky Mountain Trench (a long, level depression extending northwest more than 1,000 miles through Canada). Kerr Dam at the foot of Flathead Lake provides some hydroelectric power, and the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead provides flood control and power that feeds into the Columbia River Basin system. The main line of the Great Northern Railway ran through Kalispell from 1892 until 1904. The town is now on a spur line for freight but not passenger rail traffic.

The Flathead Valley is about 30 miles long by 15 miles wide. Kalispell's elevation is 2,955 feet above sea level and it lies on the relatively flat valley floor. The intermontane valley has fertile bottomland soils, and Kalispell receives about 15" in annual precipitation. The valley is surrounded by mountains covered with Douglas fir, western larch, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine and other species of trees. A century ago, the valley was cloaked in thick pine and fir forests with only occasional natural meadows. Today almost all of the valley has been cleared for farmland.

Much of the land surrounding the valley has been under federal management since the late 1800s. Land managed by the Flathead National Forest surrounds the Flathead Valley and includes popular recreational areas such as the Jewel Basin Hiking Area and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. The west entrance to Glacier National Park (with Waterton Lakes Park to its north) is about 30 miles northeast of Kalispell. Land under tribal management is also nearby; the northern boundary of the Flathead Indian Reservation is about halfway down Flathead Lake.

Both the geography and the economy link northwestern Montana more closely to the Pacific Northwest than to eastern Montana.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, 1891-1892

The Flathead Valley was one of the last areas in the trans-Mississippi west to be settled by whites, primarily because of its geographic isolation. Surrounded by rugged mountains and a large lake and characterized by long, hard winters, the valley remained difficult and hazardous to access for decades after the first whites came through the area in the early 1800s. The establishment of the Blackfeet and Flathead Indian Reservations in 1855 insulated the region further. In the 18th and 19th centuries, bands of Kootenai lived at the head of Flathead Lake and hunted and fished in the valley, but they did not have large, permanent settlements in the area. A few trappers and traders passed through the valley in the early 1800s, and around 1812 the Hudson's Bay Company established an outpost, Howse House, near the head of Flathead Lake. Following the Treaty of 1846, which designated land south of the 49th parallel United States soil, various prospectors, trappers, settlers and adventurers passed through the Flathead Valley. But, none are known to have settled permanently, and the area remained virtually unknown to the outside world.

This situation changed because of developments in Canada. In 1862, gold was discovered in the Kootenai district of British Columbia north of the Flathead Valley, and miners and freighters bringing supplies from Missoula passed through the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 2

upper Flathead Valley on their way north. A minor gold rush on Libby Creek in 1867 again brought people through the general area. The trail to the gold fields followed a rough wagon road along the west shore of Flathead Lake, crossed Ashley Creek near the present site of Kalispell, and then continued north along the Stillwater River and on to the Kootenai River. This north/south route was used for a number of decades to connect western Montana with southern Canada.¹ Some miners stopped to prospect in the Flathead, but little was found and no one stayed long.

In the 1870s, a number of men arrived in the upper Flathead Valley intending to graze cattle. Many were unsuccessful and left soon after, but a few stayed. Both geographic isolation and economic conditions in the cattle industry worked against these stockmen. By 1890, in fact, much of the land that would have been suitable for grazing had been converted to agricultural use.²

The beginnings of permanent settlement in the upper Flathead Valley were established in the 1880s. In 1881 Selish, the first town in the upper Flathead, was established on the Flathead River five miles east of the present town of Somers. The first real influx of white settlers to the valley arrived in 1883 after the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR) was completed to Ravalli, north of Missoula. Some of the valley's early settlers were actually NPRR workers whose jobs had been discontinued and who decided to locate permanently in Montana. To accommodate the Flathead Lake traffic, a slow sailboat was converted in 1883 to steam. Steamboat service was established on Flathead Lake in 1885 to carry settlers and supplies to the upper valley.³

The two main towns in the Flathead Valley prior to Kalispell's existence lay within a few miles of the future site of Kalispell. Ashley was the first trading center, established in 1884 or 1885. The small settlement featured a few residences plus a general store, post office, blacksmith shop, saloon, drug store, and even a literary and debating society. The town was named after Joe Ashley, a trader who had come to the Flathead to homestead in 1857. Even after Demersville was established in approximately 1887, Ashley remained the largest town in the Flathead Valley until 1890; even settlers 70 miles to the north received their mail at the Ashley post office. In 1889 Ashley had approximately three times as many voters as Demersville. The city of Kalispell has now grown around the original site of Ashley, which was located on Kalispell's southwest perimeter in the vicinity of Meridian Road and 7th Street West.⁴

Demersville was the main town in the upper valley from 1887 until 1891, when Kalispell took the lead because of the impending arrival of the railroad. The town was founded by French-Canadian T. J. Demers, cattleman, merchant and freighter on the Fort Steele route. Demersville's chief advantage was its location at the head of navigation, approximately 20 miles up the winding Flathead River from the north end of the lake. Soon after its founding, the town was supporting

¹Isch, Flora Mae Bellefleur, "The Development of the Upper Flathead and Kootenai Country," (M. A. Thesis, Montana State University, 1948), p. 65.

²Isch, Flora Mae Bellefleur, "The Importance of Railroads in the Development of Northwestern Montana," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (January 1950): 19-20.

³"Flathead Facts, Descriptive of the Resources of Missoula County" (Missoula, MT: Missoula Publishing Co., 1890), available in Montana - Flathead County - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, MT, p. 21; Isch, "Development," p. 73; Swaney, Andrew, "Statement of Andrew W. Swaney" (1923, typed), available in Montana - Flathead County - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, MT, p. 1.

⁴"Kalispell, the Metropolis of Flathead County, Montana," *Kalispell Bee*, December 18, 1903, p. 1; Schnell, Jerry, editor, "George McVey Fisher: Pioneer Montana Presbyterian Minister" (1991), p. 13; Foy, Leslie, "Walkup and Swaney Trading Post on Ashley Creek" in Flathead County - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana; Ingalls, "Over Trails of the Past," in Johns, Samuel E., "The Pioneers," (compiled 1943), available at Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana, vol. 2, p. 7, vol. 10, pp. 28-29; Elwood, Henry, *Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1980), pp. 6-7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 3

the Demersville branch of the Missoula Mercantile, plus a post office, town hall, hotel, livery stable, two real estate offices, a weekly newspaper, and a military installation with soldiers temporarily transferred from Fort Missoula.⁵ Demersville was, by all accounts, a rough-and-tumble boom town, with settlers flowing in and out and most people trying to profit from the Flathead's abundant resources or from each other. Demersville's heyday was in 1890, when it served as headquarters for the Great Northern Railway grading contractors building the line west from the summit of Marias Pass. As early Flathead settler and author Frank Linderman described this time, "Demersville saw a rosy future and preened herself accordingly."⁶

James J. Hill, Great Northern Railway president, decided to extend his northern rail route all the way to Seattle (at first, the line ran from St. Paul, Minnesota to Great Falls). Engineers sought the best route across the Continental Divide, basing their work on previous surveys and on published maps of the area. Flathead Valley homesteaders Major Marcus Baldwin, Hugh G. Good, James O'Boyle and a Mr. Spotts traveled across what is now known as Marias Pass in the fall of 1889 and reported to James Hill on their success at finding the route across the mountains used by local Indians and trappers. Hill then sent Great Northern engineer John F. Stevens to verify the location. Stevens traveled with a Kalispell Indian from the east side of the mountains to the summit, thus "discovering" Marias Pass. At approximately the same time, Charles F. B. Haskell, a Great Northern survey engineer, surveyed a route from Marias Pass into the Flathead Valley and later the route west to the Kootenai River (across "Haskell Pass").⁷

In 1890 there were an estimated 3,000 people in the upper Flathead Valley. The coming of the railroad promised to increase the population of the region dramatically and to open up vast new markets for farmers, loggers, and others.⁸ New towns sprang up (for example, Columbia Falls was established in the spring of 1891), hoping to reap great profits from the coming railroad. Everyone speculated wildly about the exact route of the railroad line and the location of the railroad division point. Some of the valley's early settlers stood to make a great deal of money by selling land to the railroad, but to avoid speculation the railroad attempted to keep the route secret.

Demersville residents felt confident that their town would be the railroad division point, but their town enjoyed only a brief railroad-related boom. Construction of the railroad grade, bridges and tunnels employed a tremendous number of men (one contemporary newspaper account said the contractors had 6,000 men employed and were said to want 4,000 more). According to George Stannard, a Demersville real estate agent, the town "sprung at once into the limelight, and here congregated gamblers, dance houses, saloons, theaters, hurdy-gurdies, and all kinds of people, to relieve the poor laborers of the heavy burden of packing around the gold and silver coin." Shepperd-Seims of St. Paul, Minnesota had the contract to construct the railroad line from Havre west, and the company built its warehouse and distributed its payroll in Demersville until moving to Kalispell. In 1891 Demersville had a population of 1,500, and about 100 four-horse teams were coming into and leaving the town every day. According to one account, after the roads dried in the spring of 1891, 50,000 pounds of goods moved daily by wagon between the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern construction crews.⁹

⁵"Flathead Facts," *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12; Elwood, Henry, *The Train Didn't Stay Long* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1982), p. 7.

⁶Linderman, Frank B., *Montana Adventurer: the Recollections of Frank B. Linderman* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 57.

⁷Elwood, Henry, "The Flathead Country," in Flathead County Superintendent of Schools, *Sagas of the Pioneers*, (1956), p. 110.

⁸Burlingame, Merrill G. and K. Ross Toole, *A History of Montana* (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), vol. 2, p. 234.

⁹"Flathead Valley," *Inter Lake*, April 10, 1891; Stannard, George F., "Navigation of Flathead waters," reprinted in *Kalispell News Centennial* (1992), originally written December 21, 1929, p. 11; Stannard, George, "The Early Story of Flathead Valley, Mont." in Kalispell Water Department, "8th Annual Report" (1921), p. 43; Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 4

During the boom days of Demersville its supply point was Missoula, 125 miles to the south, and all goods were freighted to the new town from there. Goods were hauled by train to Ravalli, freighted by wagon more than 30 miles to the foot of Flathead Lake, then carried by steamboat to the head of navigation at Demersville. Construction of the Great Northern Railway was not the only railroad work that kept Flathead Valley residents employed, however. The Canadian Pacific Railroad was also being constructed across Canada in the 1890s. Supplies for railroad workers at Fort Steele were brought to Demersville by boat and then hauled north by freighters. This continued long after the Great Northern came to Kalispell.¹⁰

While railroad construction crews rushed to lay tracks over Marias Pass and into the Flathead Valley, the towns of Demersville, Ashley and Columbia Falls competed with each other for designation as the railroad division point, their residents knowing that whichever town was chosen would be guaranteed prosperity. Demersville boasted of being the head of navigation, Ashley of its location at the valley's natural outlet to the west, and Columbia Falls of its location where the tracks would emerge from the mountains. None of these towns were chosen, however. According to the generally accepted story, Charles E. Conrad, representing James J. Hill, first tried to purchase land in Columbia Falls but the landowners asked too high a price. Hill instructed Conrad to "go and buy a townsite and I'll build the railroad to it." Conrad subsequently bought part of the homesteads of Reverend George McVey Fisher and several others. Fisher's irrigated timothy hay meadow became the central part of the townsite of Kalispell.¹¹ According to an 1896 Great Northern publication, the railroad "naturally selected a site that promised to be the commercial centre of this part of the country." The Great Northern Railway rejected Demersville as the division point, reportedly because of its less satisfactory railroad grades and because Kalispell had a better water supply.¹² The Kalispell division point became the headquarters for the railroad between Cut Bank, Montana on the east and Troy, Montana on the west.

Demersville residents apparently remained confident that their town would continue to play a major role in the valley's transportation network. The price of lots in Demersville rocketed upwards, and additions were made to the original townsite. This continued until the late summer of 1891, even though the new railroad town of Kalispell had already been platted and business and residence lots in Kalispell were being sold by an agency established in Demersville.¹³ An earlier attempt to buy land for the railroad had not quite worked out as planned. In August of 1890, David R. McGinnis (later to settle in Kalispell and become one of its prominent boosters) and Joe Conner, both agents of Jim Hill, arrived in the Flathead Valley to locate and buy a townsite for the railroad division point, but they pretended to be laborers. They disguised themselves with hickory shirts and hands stained with walnut juice and obtained land for the townsite that lay along the railroad survey line marked across the valley. Just a few days later, however, the proposed route was moved, and McGinnis had to return to the Flathead to buy 200 acres of land where the main part of Kalispell would be located.¹⁴

¹⁰Swanberg, A. V., in Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹¹Houtz, G. M., "The Birth of Kalispell," *Great Falls Tribune*, December 16, 1934, p. 16.

¹²Howe, R. S., *The Great Northern Country, Being the Chronicles of the Happy Travellers Club* (St. Paul, MN: Great Northern railway, ca. 1896), p. 132; Hidy, Ralph W., *The Great Northern Railway: A History* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1988), p. 12.

¹³Houtz, G. M., quoted in Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁴McGinnis, David, "My First Trip to Flathead Valley," in Kalispell Water Department, "12th Annual Water Department Report" (1925), pp. 76-81.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 5

Land for the new town of Kalispell was purchased by several Great Northern townsite representatives from seven homesteaders. The new town of Kalispell was surveyed and platted in April of 1891, most of the purchases being in the name of A. A. White of Minnesota, a Great Northern Railway townsite man. The layout of Kalispell conforms to that of many other Great Northern Railway towns. The town plat has a "T-town" arrangement, with its main street perpendicular to the railroad tracks and development concentrated on one side of the tracks (the south). Although it was not built until 1903, the Flathead County Courthouse also conforms to a typical railroad-town plan in that it is located as an anchor in the middle of Main Street, on the south end facing north towards the railroad tracks.¹⁵

The town of Kalispell was formally established on March 17, 1891, and its name announced at that time. The name Kalispell (originally spelled Kalispel) is attributed to several sources and is given various meanings. Some said that it was named by James Hill after the Pend d'Oreilles term for the area meaning "upper flat country." Others said it was named after the Indian tribe of the same name, or that it was named for the post established by David Thompson at Thompson Falls called "Kulleyspell." Some believed that Charles E. Conrad named the new town. One of the early Flathead Valley residents, Duncan McDonald, felt that Kalispell was a corruption of the Flathead Indian words for camas prairie. Local historian Henry Elwood says it is believed to mean "camas" or "the prairie above the lake." The *Inter Lake* newspaper on March 30, 1891, reported that the new town would be called Kalispel, "the liquid Indian synonym for Flathead." The second "L" was reportedly added to place the accent on the last syllable.¹⁶

- ✓ The original Kalispell Townsite Company, incorporated January 20, 1891, at St. Paul, consisted of S. G. Comstock and A. A. White (GNRR townsite men), C. E. and W. G. Conrad of Fort Benton (soon of Kalispell), representatives of the Agricultural Press Association, Joseph Coram of Boston, W. P. Clough of the Great Northern Railroad, and others. Clifford and Stannard, real estate and insurance agents of Demersville, originally owned much of the townsite property.¹⁷

On the first day that lots were sold, in April of 1891, buyers crowded around a map placed on a table pointing to the lots they wanted. According to an 1892 newspaper article, "Within thirty days after the plat was placed on the market \$300,000 worth of lots were sold."¹⁸ The *Missoulian* reported that the buyers on the first day were from all over, with residents of Portland, St. Paul and Great Falls the heaviest buyers. (Some of the Great Falls buyers had made fortunes buying lots in that city in 1884). Corner lots sold for as much as \$1,250.¹⁹

Kalispell boomed until June, but then "The town went on the rocks" and "the ground squirrels played tag in the streets." The footloose left town temporarily or permanently because of rumors that the railroad would not reach the Flathead for

¹⁵Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 31; "Kalispell, the Metropolis of Flathead County," *Kalispell Bee*, December 18, 1903, p. 1; Hudson, John C., "Towns of the Western Railroads," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (winter 1982): 47, 49.

¹⁶"Kalispell, the Metropolis," *Kalispell Bee*, December 18, 1903, p. 1; Whipps, W. C., *Memoirs*, p. 108, available at Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, MT; Ingalls, Emma, "Over Trails of the Past," in Johns, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Johns, *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 85; *Daily Inter Lake*, July 7, 1925, p. 5; Shaw, Charlie, *The Flathead Story* (Kalispell, MT: Flathead National Forest, 1964), p. 50; Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 31. W.C. Whipps said the second "L" was added by Conrad in an attempt to invalidate the incorporation of First National Bank, a competitor to the Conrad National Bank.

¹⁷Stannard, George, "The Early Story of Flathead Valley, Mont.," in Kalispell Water Department, "8th Annual Water Department Report" (1921), p. 43; "Kalispell, the Metropolis" *Kalispell Bee*, December 18, 1903, p. 1; Murphy, James E. *Half Interest In a Silver Dollar* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1983), p. 145; *Inter Lake*, January 3, 1890, p. 1.

¹⁸*Kalispell Graphic*, December 28, 1892.

¹⁹Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 31; "Harry Stanford, Kalispell's First Police Force, Tells Story," *Kalispell News*, 50th Anniversary Edition (1941).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 6

two years.²⁰ In the summer of 1891, Jack Graves, an Ashley resident, harvested hay growing in the surveyed streets of Kalispell by driving his mower along the streets and alleys of the grassy town, much to the fury of the townsite company. Other towns in the valley called the new town "Wait a Spell," "Alkali Flats" or "Collapsetown." Kalispell did not revive until the railroad construction crews were within a few miles of town.²¹

In 1891, when the townsite of Kalispell was platted, the site consisted of irrigated hay meadows with the brushy banks of Ashley Creek winding through the valley. An 1891 traveler through the Flathead reported that "[on May 3] there were only 2 stacks of hay on the Kalispell townsite. On the return four days later there were 4 buildings up and a score or more under construction."²² One early resident said, "I can remember the sound of the saws and hammers which could be heard far into the night. Everybody seemed to be in a hurry to build."²³ During that first summer of Kalispell's existence, 23 saloons, six gambling halls, six honky-tonks, two Chinese restaurants, two Chinese laundries and four general stores were reportedly established.²⁴

Bessie Kirk lived in one of the first houses built in Kalispell. In 1891, from her house on the west side, "the present town of Kalispell was one vast field. She saw the timber line to the east, the hills on the west, and the lights of Demersville to the south."²⁵

On Jan. 1, 1892, the first Great Northern construction train rumbled into Kalispell and the "iron horse...at last snorted in the Garden of Eden of Montana."²⁶ According to an eyewitness, "Beer and whiskey were as free as the fresh air, and that evening there were many men that were partly sober."²⁷ Passenger trains began running through Kalispell in August of 1892. At that time, both passenger and freight trains were running daily.²⁸

Soon the young town, like the rest of the country, was hit hard by the financial panic of 1893. In addition, during a 30-day railroad strike in 1894 not a train came through Kalispell. Agricultural prices plummeted. Hoboes, even members of Coxey's Army, passed through town. As a local newspaper observed several decades later, "enthusiasm was substituted for cash and credits were stretched beyond all limits" before the financial panic, but then quite a number of Kalispell's early investors found it necessary to liquidate their assets and leave town.²⁹

²⁰Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 7; "When Kalispell Was Sowing Her Wild Oats," *Flathead Monitor*, December 16, 1926, p. 18.

²¹Mulany, W. F., "Recollections of Kalispell," in Kalispell Water Department, "11th Annual Water Department Report" (1924), p. 35; Houtz, G.M., "The Birth of Kalispell," *Great Falls Tribune*, December 16, 1934, p. 16.

²²"The Flathead Metropolis Has Made Great Progress," *Great Falls Tribune*, available in Montana - Kalispell - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana.

²³Swanberg, A. V., in Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 106.

²⁴"Brief Local History Reproduced By Chamber of Commerce," *Kalispell News*, September 9, 1948.

²⁵*Daily Inver Lake*, November 20, 1949.

²⁶*Kalispell Graphic*, January 1, 1892.

²⁷Stannard, George, quoted in Johns, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 99.

²⁸Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁹"Former Kalispell Man," *Flathead Monitor*, January 16, 1936, p. 8.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 7

By 1895, however, the demand for lumber was rising, and Flathead mills were working to capacity. Mill owners combined to send a representative to Iowa and other midwestern states to solicit workers, and several thousand easterners reportedly responded, many of whom became permanent residents of the Flathead. As the depressed economy revived, many people built substantial homes and business blocks in Kalispell. In the years 1899, 1900 and 1901 construction in the town boomed, with approximately 130, 200 and more than 300 homes built in those years respectively.³⁰ In 1901, according to the *Kalispell Bee*, "many of our residence buildings are artistic and modern, and would be ornaments to a city many times the size of Kalispell."³¹ From approximately 1907 until 1910 Kalispell was "on the boom," partly because of the anticipated opening of the Flathead Indian Reservation to the south for white settlement.³² Kalispell again experienced a building boom in the late 1920s, partly due to the impending completion of the highway across the Continental Divide at Marias Pass, and then another revival in construction as the Great Depression ended. From its early days, the Flathead Valley had been known as a healthful place to live. Quite a large number of settlers in both Kalispell and the outlying areas chose to move to the valley to improve the health of someone in their family. Although many of these people came to the Flathead from other states, some were Butte miners and their families who saw the Flathead Valley as an opportunity to escape working in the mines.

The Klondike gold rush of 1897-1898 helped the Flathead by providing a far northern market for local farm produce. At the same time, it drew away some of the young men of the area who dreamed of wealth in the form of gold in the Yukon. Kalispell residents were treated to the sight (and business) of "argonauts" streaming through on the Great Northern Railway to Seattle. Several carloads of Laplanders and their reindeer, part of a doomed government plan to transport food and mail in the Yukon, even arrived on the train and were delayed in Kalispell ten days, to the great interest of the townspeople. Great Northern employee Joe Rogers left Kalispell to go to Skagway, Alaska and work on the railroad that carried miners north to the Yukon, and several other Great Northern employees followed him north.³³

Another drain on the supply of young men in Kalispell was the Spanish-American War. Company H of Kalispell had about 65 enlisted recruits who went to the Philippines.³⁴ Although taking away laborers, the war also created a demand for horses and other supplies. Kalispell, as a division point on a transcontinental railroad, profited accordingly.

Kalispell served as the railroad division point between Cut Bank and Troy from 1892 until 1904, until the railroad route was resurveyed and the division point moved north to Whitefish. Kalispell's early history is therefore strongly linked to the railroad. In 1892 the railroad constructed service facilities in Kalispell including a depot, a water tank, a freight depot, a 10-stall roundhouse, a section house, an ice house and coal bunkers. Kalispell housed the division road master, the master

³⁰Houtz, G. M., "Enthusiasm of Kalispell," *Great Falls Tribune*, February 17, 1935, p. 6; Elwood, *Kalispell*, p. 32; "The Flathead Metropolis Has Made Great Progress," *Great Falls Tribune*, available in Montana - Kalispell - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana; *Kalispell Bee*, December 20, 1900, p. 11.

³¹"Kalispell's Building Record for 1901," *Kalispell Bee*, December 18, 1901, p. 12.

³²"Not Afraid of Kalispell," *Kalispell Bee*, January 9, 1906, p. 8.

³³Houtz, G. M., "Enthusiasm of Kalispell," *Great Falls Tribune*, February 17, 1935, p. 6; *Kalispell Bee*, June 19, 1900; "An Old Timer's Tale," *Inter Lake*, January 7, 1926, p. 2.

³⁴Swanberg, A. V., in Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 8

carpenter, the division master mechanic and the train dispatcher, and the Great Northern Railway payroll was the mainstay of Kalispell's economy.³⁵

The Great Northern Railway developed business by an active advertising campaign that encouraged people to settle in towns along its line. Thus the railroad was a large factor in building up commerce in the Flathead Valley. The trains hauled timber, minerals and agricultural products to near and distant markets. After the establishment of Glacier National Park in 1910, the railroad also promoted tourism in the area.

Unlike true "boom towns," Kalispell's population did not rise and fall dramatically during the historic period. Ever since the railroad arrived in 1892, the town has experienced gradual population growth, reflecting its relative stability and diversified economic base. In October of 1891, the population of Kalispell was enumerated preparatory to incorporating the town. At that time there were 645 residents living in the original townsite of 920 acres. Sanborn fire insurance maps listed the population in July of 1892 as 1,000 and in October of 1894 as 2,400. In 1895, the population of Kalispell was estimated in a promotional brochure to be about 2,500 people. The 1900 census showed the population of Kalispell as 2,526 (and of Flathead county as 9,375). In 1910, the city had 5,549 residents. Kalispell's population actually declined slightly by the 1920 census, to 5,147. Then it began a steady climb, reaching 8,245 in 1940.³⁶ In 1990, the federal population census put the population at almost 12,000.

Another early factor in the leading role of Kalispell in the Flathead Valley was its designation as the center of county government. From the establishment of Montana as a territory in 1864 until 1893, the upper Flathead Valley was part of Missoula County, with the county seat at Missoula. Flathead County was created in 1893, and at that time it included the entire northwestern corner of Montana (Lincoln County was formed in 1909 and Lake County in 1923). In 1894 Kalispell beat Columbia Falls by approximately 400 votes to become the county seat of the recently created Flathead County.³⁷

TRANSPORTATION, 1891-1942

Kalispell owes its existence to the laying of the Great Northern Railway track through the Flathead Valley. Access by train to distant markets allowed the new town to grow and become the regional trade center, serving the Flathead Valley and other parts of northwestern Montana and even nearby Canada. Other forms of transportation, however, have also played important roles in the development of Kalispell.

In 1891, the first year of Kalispell's existence, most people arrived in the new town from the south. The town's first residents would take the Northern Pacific Railroad to Ravalli (north of Missoula), a stage from there to the foot of Flathead Lake at Polson, a steamboat to the head of navigation on the Flathead River at Demersville, and then another stage to Kalispell. The trip from Ravalli to Demersville took approximately 20 hours.³⁸ Early settlers often recorded with pride not only the month and year of their arrival in the Flathead but also the name of the steamboat they arrived on.

³⁵Kalispell Graphic, December 28, 1993, p. 1; *Inter Lake*, May 13, 1892, quoted in Johns, *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 75.

³⁶Articles of Incorporation of the Town of Kalispell, available in Montana Historical Society vertical files, Helena, MT; 1892 and 1894 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Kalispell, Montana; "Kalispell and the Famous Flathead" (1895), p. 22, available in the Montana-Flathead County - History file, Flathead County Library, Kalispell, MT; Sanders, Helen Fitzgerald, *History of Montana* (Chicago, IL: Lewis Publishing Co., 1913), p. 755; "1970 Census of Population, volume i: Characteristics of the Population" available in Flathead County Library, Montana-Kalispell-Population file, Kalispell, Montana.

³⁷Baldwin, Major M. B., in Johns, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 142.

³⁸"The Fertile Flathead Country," *Northwest Magazine* (July 1891); Houtz, G. M., "Steamboating," *Great Falls Tribune*, January 6, 1935, p. 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 9

Although a wagon road had been carved out along the west side of Flathead Lake, it was very rough and had steep, difficult hills. The road was only used by freighters and a few settlers. By 1887 the water route had become established as both the easiest and cheapest way to bring supplies into the upper Flathead Valley, except in winter when the lake was sometimes impassable.

Until 1890, steamboat traffic on Flathead Lake was not heavy. This changed when the Great Northern began building its line through the Flathead Valley and on towards the west. All construction materials and workers were hauled from Ravalli by wagon across the reservation, then to Demersville by boat. The freight traffic, plus the increasing number of settlers, created a demand for more steamboats on the lake.³⁹ Early in 1891, two sternwheel steamboats with large cargo capacity were put into operation. Passenger facilities on these boats included private cabins, kitchen galleys, and dining salons, and they could navigate the run from Polson to Demersville in three hours.⁴⁰

There was no road on the east side of Flathead Lake until 1889. That road was completed in the 1910s, mostly by convict labor.⁴¹ By 1891 the Great Northern had built a very rough construction road over the Continental Divide at Marias Pass, but only a few people came into the valley along that route before the railroad began running.

The isolation of the upper Flathead Valley ended abruptly with the arrival of the first train on Jan. 1, 1892. Overnight, the barriers to travel into the Flathead were removed. For many years after that date, most people traveled to Kalispell by train rather than by steamboat or wagon road. Only those coming from the south (from Missoula or the reservation) continued to ride on the steamboats. The Great Northern and the Northern Pacific Railroads used the steamboats as a connecting link between the two transcontinental lines, and travelers often traveled west on one railroad and east on the other. Not all freight out of Kalispell originated in the upper Flathead Valley; some agricultural products from the Polson area were shipped across the lake by steamboat and then loaded onto Great Northern freight cars. The steamboats stopped at many small ports along the shores of the lake.⁴²

In 1900, the GNRR built a spur line to the John O'Brien tie plant and mill at Somers. This line gave steamboat passengers immediate access to the railroad line, so boats no longer had reason to navigate the Flathead River to Demersville. The increase in north/south travel via the lake after the opening of the Flathead Indian Reservation in 1910 led to the establishment of separate passenger trains running twice daily. Passenger traffic on this spur line declined eventually, however, because of the increasing popularity of automobiles, and the service to Somers was discontinued in 1929.⁴³

The large boats on Flathead Lake were gradually replaced in the 1910s by smaller, faster boats. The *City of Polson*, launched in 1914, was considered the speediest boat; it could travel from Somers to Polson in two hours and 20 minutes. The Northern Pacific Railroad completed a branch line to Polson that opened in 1918. Even so, regular freight and

³⁹Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁴⁰Houtz, G. M., "Steamboating," *Great Falls Tribune*, January 6, 1935, p. 12.

⁴¹Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴²Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁴³Elwood, Henry, *Somers, Montana: The Company Town*, (Kalispell, Montana: Thomas Printing, Inc.), pp. 33-34.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 10

passenger service ended on the lake in 1929, although lumber company tugboats continued to operate for another 20 years.⁴⁴ The federal highway along the west shore of the lake was completed soon after.

During their heyday, the Flathead Lake steamboats were an important part of valley life for social activities as well as for transportation. Steamboats provided excursions to picnic spots and moonlight dances on barges. Sometimes people would hire one of the smaller steamboats for a pleasure trip and operate it themselves.⁴⁵

At one point, Kalispell tried to imitate Demersville's earlier prosperity as the head of navigation. In 1907 plans were drawn up to make Kalispell a river port by dredging a channel from the mouth of the Stillwater River to the eastern edge of the city.⁴⁶ This channel was never constructed.

Once the railroad had reached the valley, the next challenge was to construct roads and bridges to make all parts of the valley accessible from the railroad. Most of the early roads were primitive. Until the steel bridge was built across the Flathead River in 1895 a few miles east of Kalispell, the east and west sides of the valley were connected only by ferries.⁴⁷

Horse and wagon remained the primary method of transportation within the Flathead Valley for many decades. By 1895, Kalispell had four livery stables. Several stage lines carried both passengers and freight. In 1901, stage lines ran from Kalispell to Dayton on the reservation and to Somers, Tobacco Plains and the Northern Pacific Railroad. All the stores delivered their products by horse and wagon. For example, the Pioneer Meat Market in 1891 had two wagons that delivered meat twice a week to their customers on the east and west sides of the Flathead River. In 1907, reported one old-timer, the main recreational activity of area residents was a horse and buggy trip.⁴⁸

An alternative to the horse for some was the bicycle. Kalispell residents joined in the nation-wide craze for bicycling that began in the 1890s and lasted until the automobile era. According to Charles O'Neil, an early Kalispell resident, the first shipment of safety bicycles arrived in the city in 1895 or 1896 (previously, some cyclists had owned the type with the large front wheel). In 1895, George Stannard advertised that he could repair both guns and bicycles. The *Inter Lake* reported in April of 1896 that the Kalispell Wheel Club was being organized, saying that there were already more than 75 "wheels" owned by individuals and more on the way. That same spring, the Montana News and Stationery Company advertised bicycles for sale on easy payments. O'Neil bought one, then learned how to ride on the city's wooden sidewalks. In addition to buying bicycles, people could rent them by the hour or day. They were initially used primarily for recreation, or "social wheeling." In the 1890s, bicycle races were held every summer Saturday at a track northeast of the railroad depot. O'Neil recalls group picnics of bicyclists at the head of Flathead Lake, in Bigfork, at the Soldier's Home in Columbia Falls, and elsewhere. He said that men would often escort their dates on a bicycle ride. Newspapers of the period frequently mentioned groups of cyclists going for a Sunday tour. A few Kalispell citizens even went on much longer

⁴⁴Elwood, *Train*, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 172; .

⁴⁵"Early Day Boats Were Steam Powered," *Kalispell News*, 1949 Progress Edition, Transportation Section.

⁴⁶Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

⁴⁷Isch, "Importance," *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 26.

⁴⁸Quoted in "Early Day boats Were Steam Powered," *Kalispell News*, 1949 Progress Edition, Transportation Section; Kalispell City Directory, 1901-02; *Flathead Herald-Journal*, January 3, 1895; Dickinson, E. F., "I Remember Kalispell," *Kalispell News*, July 23, 1964, p. 6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 11

tours, despite the poor conditions of roads in those days; for example, Arthur Hollensteiner pedaled to Fort Steele, British Columbia, and Reverend Falls biked through Yellowstone Park.⁴⁹

Bicycles were used for both recreation and work-related tasks. The City Council established ordinances to prohibit "scorching" (riding at high speeds) and requiring bells to be rung at intersections. Police Commissioner Johnson, himself bicycle-mounted, handed out fines to violators.⁵⁰

Kalispell residents enjoyed being on the main line of the railroad for 12 years. Many people who lived in Kalispell worked for the railroad in such jobs as dispatchers, office men, conductors, engineers, firemen, shop foremen, and general laborers. In 1904, the receipts at Kalispell were more than \$1 million, almost one quarter of the gross earnings of the Great Northern Railway (presumably in the state) that year.⁵¹ Then, in October of 1904, the Great Northern Railway changed its route west of the Flathead to take advantage of the lower summit elevation, less steep grades, fewer curves, and the necessity for fewer bridges on a new route that stayed in the north end of the valley. The original survey of the route west of Kalispell done by Charles F. B. Haskell had taken place on a quick trip in the middle of winter; Haskell had not had the time or opportunity to survey the route to the north that the railroad ended up preferring.⁵² The railroad division point changed to the new town of Whitefish, and about 300 Kalispell railroad workers and their families immediately packed up and moved by train to the new town carved out of the woods. Railroaders nicknamed Kalispell "Fishhook" because, so the newspaper reported, it was at the end of the line. Kalispell residents, on the other hand, referred to Whitefish as "Suckerville." Ironically, Kalispell served as the construction headquarters for the 4,000 men building the new line from Columbia Falls to Jennings.⁵³

The removal of the division point to Whitefish had a dramatic effect on Kalispell, and many of the town's businessmen feared that their businesses would go under. The day the last transcontinental train came through Kalispell, "The railroad boys hitched all the engines together and pulled out with the throttles all wide open and whistled as long as we could hear them. It was a sick looking crowd that left for home that evening." According to another account, "dejected citizens" watched the trains pull out and listened to "a long echoing wail of lament and goodbye to the loved town and the kind friends within it."⁵⁴

Kalispell had lost the "juicy" monthly railroad payroll, but it did remain on a spur line (served by a branch line train nicknamed the "gallopin' goose"). After 1904 no more transcontinental trains ran through town. A Kalispell reporter

⁴⁹*Flathead Herald-Journal*, September 26, 1895; *Inter Lake*, April 10, 1896, p. 8; *The Call*, March 19, 1896; Swanberg, A. V., in Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 108; O'Neil, Charles L., "The Bicycle Craze in Kalispell," in Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁵⁰O'Neil in Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁵¹"Flathead County, Montana," *The Coast* 11 (January 1906), p. 3.

⁵²The reason for the relocation of the route has been debated ever since it occurred, but most agree that the tracks were moved for engineering reasons. W. C. Whipps felt that the Conrad brothers' "hoggishness in handling the town disgusted Jim Hill, and it no doubt had a great deal to do with Kalispell losing the main line of the railroad." - Whipps, p. 115.

⁵³"Have Gone to Whitefish," *Kalispell Bee*, October 4, 1904, p. 1; *Kalispell Bee*, October 25, 1904, p. 8; Elwood, Henry, interview with Kathy McKay, August 1992; "Kalispell Is the Hub," *Kalispell Bee*, March 3, 1903, p. 5; "Work for 4,000 Men," *Kalispell Bee*, March 10, 1903, p. 5.

⁵⁴"An Old Timer's Tale," *Daily Inter Lake*, January 6, 1926; Houtz, "Enthusiasm of Kalispell," *op. cit.*, p. 6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 12

commented in 1935 that the commuter train to Columbia Falls ran "when the company pleased," and the connecting train returning to Kalispell "when the authorities wished."⁵⁵

The railroad did not remove the line to Bitterroot Lake because that lake provided a reliable source of ice for the railroad and of logs for the Somers Lumber Company. Tracks beyond Marion, however, were torn up. Several Pleasant Valley ranchers sued the company because of their loss of access to market, and the case was settled out of court.⁵⁶

Early Kalispell newspaper editor George Houtz stated in 1935 that Kalispell brought the loss of the division point upon herself. He said the leading citizens hired Abram Jaqueth, city engineer, to survey a route from Kalispell to the international line, hoping to take advantage of the Canadian Pacific trade coming through that point. They sent the results to Jim Hill and he realized the potential to build west of Columbia Falls along an easier grade and join the existing line at Jennings. The railroad sent A. N. Lupfer, some time prior to 1902, to make the final survey, using part of the Jaqueth survey. Construction on the new line began in 1902 but, according to Houtz, Kalispell residents continued to hope that the passenger line would still run through their town--that the Great Northern would, in essence, be a double track.⁵⁷

The town of Kalispell survived and even prospered, however, after the loss of the main line because of its already-established role as the trade center of a large area. After several months of lethargy, the town began to revive. With help from the county, the city improved wagon roads leading to and from Kalispell, a good road was built to Whitefish, stores carried "tempting stock," and the lumber industry increased in volume, helping to keep Kalispell an important shipping point. In 1910 the Flathead Indian Reservation was opened to settlement by non-tribal members. Kalispell was a registration point for those drawing for numbers in the selection of homesteads. As a 1909 newspaper article commented:

Main street of Kalispell is getting to look like a Donnybrook fair. There are shacks and booths of boards and canvass lining the street, where lunches are to be sold or the pilgrim is to be registered. The flood of new business houses overflows into First avenue east where there is a lunch counter and a number of registration booths.⁵⁸

Of the thousands who came through town then, many settled in Kalispell instead of on the reservation. Kalispell became the gateway and base of supplies for the settlers, and navigation on the lake revived. As Kalispell's promoters liked to state, "All roads lead to Kalispell."⁵⁹

In 1913, local newspapers reported rumors that Jim Hill might be planning to return through trains to Kalispell, but this never happened. Two spur lines did continue from Kalispell and served Somers and the Smith Valley to the west of Kalispell to Marion. By 1920, the Marion line ran on Fridays only. A route from Kalispell to Ravalli was surveyed in 1908 for a branch railroad line, perhaps inspired by the impending opening of the Flathead Indian Reservation to settlers,

⁵⁵Houtz, "Enthusiasm," *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Kalispell Journal*, July 15, 1909.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*; "Kalispell and the Famous Flathead Valley" *op. cit.*, p. 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 13

but this never materialized. The Somers and Marion branch lines were operated by Somers Lumber Company under lease from the railroad (which owned Somers Lumber Company) beginning in 1934.⁶⁰

Beginning in the 1880s, several Montana towns and cities had street railway companies that provided passenger and freight service both within and between communities. The same month that lots first were put on sale in Kalispell, the *Inter Lake* mentioned a report that an "electric line of railway" connecting the towns of Demersville and Kalispell had already been contracted for.⁶¹ This was never built, but it indicates the belief that such lines served communities well.

When Helena and Anaconda were competing in the 1890s to be the site of the state capital, Marcus Daly promised Kalispell that he would build a railroad from Anaconda to Kalispell if his city won. This too was never built.⁶²

Kalispell citizens began a campaign for an interurban railway in the early 1900s, the first known attempt being in 1904. A committee of 15 men formed to promote the line, but it never materialized. Then, in 1911, the Flathead Interurban Railway was incorporated with David McGinnis as its manager and principal booster. The incorporators planned to build an electric railway system connecting all the major communities in the valley. The initial route was to be from Kalispell to Whitefish. Farmers donated rights-of-way to the promoters and offered to help with the construction, and citizens purchased bonds to provide the needed capital of \$40,000. Ground was broken for the line at the southwest corner of the fairgrounds in October of 1911, with several hundred spectators as witnesses.⁶³ Then the project quietly faded away, perhaps because of undercapitalization and competition from the increasingly popular automobiles.

The first car to arrive in the Flathead Valley was a Maxwell Runabout, delivered to Hugh Thibodeau in 1905. Later that same day, according to one account, Dr. Morris Bottorf received a Franklin Touring car (Bottorf's wife Phebe, also a doctor, was the first woman in the Flathead to learn how to drive). Generally, doctors and merchants were the first to purchase automobiles.⁶⁴ Parts for these early autos had to be ordered direct from the factories, often taking weeks to arrive. Kalispell at first had no trained auto mechanics; motorists depended on blacksmiths for help, and thus blacksmith shops and liverys often evolved into car repair shops and dealers. For example, in 1907 Dr. Bottorf and partners bought a blacksmith shop on 1st Avenue East in Kalispell and turned it into a repair shop. A historic photograph of the Shaffroth and Michel shop during this transition period shows a sign advertising bicycle and automobile repair, bicycle rental, gun repair and auto supplies for sale.⁶⁵

The road from Kalispell to Libby was completed in 1913. The previous year, Frank Stoop, a Kalispell auto dealer and good roads enthusiast, drove with his wife all the way to Libby, startling people along the way who had never before seen

⁶⁰*Kalispell Bee*, August 26, 1920, p. 8; "Business Boom in Kalispell," *Kalispell Bee*, August 11, 1908, p. 1; "G.N. Would Resume Old Branch Lines," *Kalispell News*, April 9, 1942, p. 1; "Kalispell To Be on the Main Line," *Kalispell Bee*, November 17, 1913, p. 1. In 1942 the Great Northern filed application with the I. C. C. to resume operation of these two branch lines.

⁶¹*Inter Lake*, April 10, 1891.

⁶²Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁶³Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 146; "Kalispell Terminal for Electric Lines," *Kalispell Bee*, November 4, 1904, p. 1; "Flathead Interurban Is Progressing Nicely," *Kalispell Bee*, October 6, 1911, p. 1; "Work Will Start on the Railroad Monday Afternoon," *Kalispell Bee*, October 27, 1911, p. 1; "Ground-Breaking Meeting an Enthusiastic Affair," *Kalispell Bee*, October 31, 1911, p. 1; "Work Is Begun on Interurban Electric," *Kalispell Journal*, October 30, 1911, p. 1.

⁶⁴"Automobile History of Flathead," *Kalispell Bee*, June 19, 1919, p. 1.

⁶⁵Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124; "New Garage and Repair Shop," *Inter Lake*, November 1, 1907.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 14

an automobile. Early roads in the Flathead were rough-surfaced, single lane corridors, and one person remembers that it was "not unusual to see an owner towing his car home with a team of horses."⁶⁶

By 1910, 60 Kalispell residents owned automobiles and two owned motorcycles; the city passed an ordinance requiring automobile drivers to license their vehicles. The Flathead Motor Club was formed, partly as an advocate for good roads. In 1911 the new "park-to-park road" from Kalispell to Belton (West Glacier) was opened, with about 50 automobiles making the initial run. A state legislator commented that he had heard "hundreds of people speak of Flathead county on account of this road" and said "it will be the biggest advertisement that you can possibly get."⁶⁷ Flathead automobile owners often got together for social events, such as the 147 who motored to the Kelley and Evans summer home at Swan Lake for a chicken dinner in 1913.⁶⁸

By 1923, Kalispell had eight "large modern garages representing the leading manufacturers." In 1919, the Flathead Valley boasted about 2,000 automobile owners. The City Water Department Report for 1920 speculated that one reason the auto industry was doing so well in Kalispell was because the city was "the very center of all this loveliness" in the form of mountains, lakes and valleys to explore by automobile. In 1921, Kalispell had five motor agencies plus 12-16 automobile repair shops and a dozen licensed taxi drivers and oil dealers.⁶⁹

Horse and buggy and farm wagons remained the principal means of transportation, however, until after 1917. A bulk station company delivered gasoline by horse and wagon to local garages and to outlying farms. All the stores delivered their products by horse and wagon. In 1921 four stage lines still served the Kalispell area, including ones to Kila and the Pleasant Valley, Whitefish, Somers, Holt and Bigfork. Car owners bought gas in five-gallon cans in hardware or grocery stores or at hand pumps by street curbs.⁷⁰ After World War I, people could easily travel between Flathead Valley towns in one day by car. The county's new gravel road system encouraged rural residents to shop in Kalispell stores, with their greater selection and lower prices.

The development of the automobile industry and the improvement of roads in the Flathead Valley greatly increased the attraction of the area to tourists. Glacier National Park, once the exclusive domain of the wealthy who could afford long vacations, expensive railroad fares and extended stays at luxury hotels, was now accessible to the middle class. Kalispell promoters saw the opportunity this afforded their town, which they advertised as "the gateway to Glacier Park." The link between good roads and tourist revenue was clear. By 1928, Flathead County was advertising 16 dude ranches, two of them with Kalispell offices. Many of Kalispell's prominent citizens were part of the good roads movement, and local bicycle clubs, automobile clubs and farmers all contributed their efforts to the cause. As was the case throughout the United States, in the early 1900s virtually all of the roads in the valley were unsurfaced and were often impassable. By the early

⁶⁶"Find People Near Kalispell Who Never Saw an Automobile Before," *Kalispell Bee*, November 15, 1912, p. 1; Green, Charles, *Montana Memories* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, Inc., 1982), v. 3, p. 78.

⁶⁷"Many Autos in Kalispell," *Kalispell Bee*, September 27, 1910, p. 8; "The Flathead Motor Club Opens Park-to-Park Road," *Kalispell Bee*, September 12, 1911, p. 1.

⁶⁸Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁶⁹Kalispell Water Department Report (1920), p. 48; "Automobile History of Flathead," *Kalispell Bee*, June 19, 1919, p. 1; "Automobile Industry a Thrifty Business," *Kalispell Times*, July 14, 1921, p. 1.

⁷⁰Houston, Clinton, "I Remember Kalispell," *Kalispell News*, November 21, 1963, p. 6; Stout, Tom, *Montana, Its Story and Biography* (Chicago, IL: American Historical Society, 1921), v. 1, p. 727; Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 15

1920s, a route connecting all national parks had been signposted, but an interconnected concrete system of highways was not developed on a national level until 1930.⁷¹

As transportation in the area improved, Kalispell residents began to use Flathead Lake more and more for recreation. Well-to-do Kalispell residents, especially professionals and businessmen, bought lots on the lakeshore for summer homes. A. A. White of the original Kalispell Townsite Company bought land on the west shore and established the town of Big Arm. The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce advertised the charms of the lake and emphasized its "splendid" 110-mile highway.⁷² With improved transportation, Kalispell's elite traveled further to their summer homes. For example, several had houses on Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park. Many others spent their Sundays in the summer traveling to the park (the Apgar area) to enjoy its natural attractions.

Kalispell businesspeople built cabin camps and campgrounds to attract travelers to stay in their city and spend some of their vacation money locally. A 1922 newspaper article described a Kalispell "tourist camp" as having electric lights, oven, hot plates, washing machine and irons, wood ranges and ovens, tub and shower baths and shelter buildings for autos.⁷³ Tourist camps were followed by more substantial motor courts. These roadside businesses catering to Americans on the move were located primarily on Kalispell's Idaho and North Main Streets. Auto tourism ended temporarily, however, in 1942 with the war-time ban on passenger car production for the civilian market and the rationing of gasoline and tires. After the war, automobile tourism grew rapidly in popularity.⁷⁴

Many Kalispell residents built automobile garages on their lots when they purchased cars because they still needed to use their barns for horses (horses hitched to a cutter were still superior to cars in the winter time). Garages were built separate from houses, partly because of the danger of fire from the early automobiles, until the 1930s.

Kalispell had motorized taxi service and bus systems as well. The Kalispell-Whitefish Bus Line began operation in 1915, carrying both freight and passengers between the two towns. In 1921, buses served Bigfork and Swan Lake, and several automobile and boat lines also provided public transportation. In 1950 the branch line train from Columbia Falls to Kalispell was taken out of service and was replaced by a bus that met the trains at Whitefish.⁷⁵

The Theodore Roosevelt Highway over Marias Pass was completed in 1930. After the Going-to-the-Sun Road through Glacier National Park was completed in 1933, more and more visitors came to the Park by automobile rather than by train. In 1932, the federal highway connecting Missoula with Kalispell was completed. All of these highway projects increased Kalispell's accessibility and visibility, "putting Kalispell on the map" for automobile travelers.

Kalispell had airplane service fairly early. The city purchased a 137-acre aviation field in the fall of 1928, just south of the city limits. Soon, it was equipped with a runway and a hangar. Later, commercial air service was available at the county airport. Many valley residents had seen their first airplane years earlier in 1911 when Eugene Ely, a government aviation researcher, flew his bamboo framework plane at the fairgrounds for a demonstration. In the fall of that same year,

⁷¹Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, "The Flathead a Paradise," (ca. 1928), p. 11.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷³Bernard, F. N., "Kalispell, Queen of the Upper Flathead," *Daily Missoulian*, Souvenir Edition, July 20, 1922, p. 35.

⁷⁴Flink, James J., *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), pp. 169-186.

⁷⁵Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 264; Stout, *op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 727; Elwood, *Train, op. cit.*, p. 13.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 16

Kalispell's own Chris Best, one of the owners of the Kalispell Malting & Brewing Company, flew his plane for the enjoyment of visitors at the Flathead County Fair.⁷⁶

ETHNIC HERITAGE, 1891-1942

The original inhabitants of the Flathead Valley were bands of Indians, primarily Kootenai during the historic period. Little reference is made in the historic record concerning the presence of Indians in Kalispell. In Demersville, the case had been different. There, two Indians were lynched in 1887 following the murders of three prospectors. Several other violent incidents occurred, and for a while black soldiers from Fort Missoula were stationed in Demersville to protect the citizens.⁷⁷

Harry Stanford, the first chief of police, recalled that in the 1890s the Kootenai were "much about," and he later missed the all-night chanting of the Kootenai and their rhythmic beating upon cottonwood logs.⁷⁸ Others mention tribal members camping in the swampy area east of town that became Woodland Park and in the poplar groves along Ashley Creek and Spring Creek, and fishing in the Flathead River near the steel bridge east of town. Very few were permanent residents of Kalispell in the early days. Census records show no Indians living in Kalispell in 1900. In 1910 there was one family of five (1/4 and 1/8 Indian) and in 1920 there were about 20 (one was married to a white and one family was farming).⁷⁹

A. V. Swanberg recalls that, "Many Indians used to come into town and walk up the alleys to see what they could lay hold of, and at times they would have a crowd in a vacant lot and gamble all day long."⁸⁰ Another source mentions that Indians set up lodges on the rock bluffs south of Kalispell and held ceremonial dances there. Children from Kalispell would go watch the dancing and sometimes would join in.⁸¹ Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, members of the Kootenai tribe camped near Kalispell, fishing on the rivers and lakes and providing services such as the exchange of hides for finished products like moccasins to area residents.

Because the Flathead Valley had been so recently settled when Kalispell was founded, virtually everyone in the new town had been born elsewhere. Many of the residents of Kalispell came to the area to visit family or friends and ended up deciding to move to the Flathead; this helped give Kalispell a strong "family town" feeling. Many of the early settlers of the Flathead Valley were first- or second-generation Scandinavians who had left the Midwest in search of cheap or free land in the West. An 1896 census of Scandinavian inhabitants of Flathead County (much larger then than it is now) found 270 males over 21 and 443 women and children.⁸² In 1900, Kalispell had over 70 residents who were born in Scandinavia

⁷⁶Kalispell Water Department, "16th Annual Water Department Report" (1929), pp. 18-19; Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

⁷⁷Isch, "Development," *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁸"Harry Stanford," *op. cit.*

⁷⁹United States Population Census, 1900, 1910 and 1920.

⁸⁰Quoted in Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁸¹Garvin in *Sagas, op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁸²*The Call*, September 17, 1896.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 17

(mostly Sweden or Norway). Ten years later, Norwegian immigrants numbered about 120, Swedes 60 and Danes 26. The 1920 figures for these groups were lower in proportion to the overall population.⁸³

In 1895, a promotional brochure stated that most of the area's residents were from Ohio, Illinois, Iowa or Nebraska, with some Germans and Norwegians from the Dakotas and also some Canadians.⁸⁴ This impression is verified by the federal census records, but many of the Germans and Scandinavians were also first-generation immigrants.

By far the largest group of immigrants who settled in Kalispell came from Canada, with French-speaking Canadians being only a small portion of this group. In 1910, Canadian immigrants accounted for over 250 of Kalispell's residents. In 1900, Germans were the next largest group (but they were outnumbered by Norwegians in the later censuses). Some people came from England, Scotland, Ireland and even Wales, and a handful represented other European countries such as Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, Belgium, and Bohemia. (There were French women in the red light district.⁸⁵) In 1910, a Bulgarian railroad crew was boarding on the west side. Two Afghani brothers had a hot tamale stand in that year, and one of them was still in Kalispell in 1920. Russians were also represented in Kalispell. In 1900 there was only one listed in the census, but by 1910 there were 24 (8 from Poland) and in 1920 there were 19 (12 from Poland). In 1873, very early in the valley's history, a Russian Jew named Isadore Cohn had operated a store at Scribner. He went back to Russia planning to bring back a colony of Jews, but he never returned.⁸⁶

The agricultural depression of the 1920s, and the depression of the 1930s, did not affect the Flathead Valley as hard as other parts of the state, particularly the agricultural areas of eastern Montana. In fact, many of the farmers of the eastern plains moved via the Great Northern Railway to the mountain valleys of northwestern Montana, hoping to continue farming in an area with higher precipitation. These new Flathead Valley settlers soon discovered that precipitation in the area was erratic and that much of the rain and snow escaped downstream in the spring runoff. Between 1930 and 1940 the population of Flathead County increased by 26%, versus 10% for western Montana as a whole.⁸⁷

Census data tended to undercount non-whites, so the record for minorities in Kalispell is probably not very accurate. The Chinese, in particular, were undercounted because so many lived in underground tunnels. In general, though, the presence of a variety of ethnic groups in early Kalispell is clear. Many who did not actually live in town came to Kalispell to do their trading. The town was more heterogeneous in its early decades than it is today.

The Great Northern brought many Japanese, Italians and Austrians to the Flathead Valley to work on the Kalispell Division. The Italians were in the valley early, as a Kalispell saloon and lodging hall was referred to in 1892 as "headquarters for the dagoes who are employed on the railroad."⁸⁸ Only four show up in the 1900 census, and all were

⁸³United States Population Census, 1900, 1910 and 1920.

⁸⁴"Kalispell and the Famous Flathead Valley," *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁸⁵Swanberg, A. V., in Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸⁷Sundborg, George, "The Economic Base for Power Markets In Flathead County, Montana" (Bonneville Power Administration, Division of Industrial and Resources Development, October 1945), p. 11.

⁸⁸"First Fire!", *Kalispell Graphic*, November 16, 1892, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 18

listed as railroad workers. Apparently, however, Japanese were preferred, as a newspaper reporter commented that Italian and Austrian workers were being replaced by Japanese who "give better satisfaction."⁸⁹

Although the Japanese worked for much lower wages than whites would accept, many white workers resented them. In 1898, when 100 Japanese were working above Nyack and 500 more were on the way, the *Inter Lake* commented, "This probably means that as far possible [sic] the Great Northern intends to displace white labor with Japanese on track work."⁹⁰ White foremen were not housed with the Japanese workers. In 1899 Kalispell contractor B. B. Gilliland built 30 3-room houses at stations on the Kalispell division for the use of section foremen. The houses were "put up on account of the employment of Japanese section men," reported the *Inter Lake*.⁹¹

The Japanese were hired and cared for by an employment agency called the Oriental Trading Company. This opened a Kalispell branch in 1899 (it formerly had been supplying Kalispell out of Seattle). The Company would pay workers' fares to the United States and then subtract regular payments plus interest from their paychecks. George K. Midzutani, a "well educated Japanese [who] speaks English very well indeed," managed the Kalispell store. In January of 1901 he had about 750 men working on the Kalispell division of the Great Northern. The company sold clothing to the workers, who had to pay the cost of goods but not the freight. The Japanese railroad workers commonly sent their earnings to Japan; in one month, \$3,000 was sent through the Kalispell post office. Midzutani described to a reporter the plans to build a hospital for Japanese workers with their own Japanese doctor. Men would be assessed 50 cents per month for medical attention and medicine. The company built a structure with an office and warehouse on the first floor and the top floors for the hospital. At the time, they had rearranged the Oriental Trading Company building to be a temporary Japanese hospital.⁹²

The 1900 census lists about 30 Japanese in Kalispell (some were railroad workers who happened to be in the hospital when the enumerator came through). All listed were either railroad workers or employees of the Oriental Trading Company (including a manager, office worker and two interpreters). There was a Japanese boarding house on the west side of town. In 1910, after the division point had moved to Whitefish, there were only six Japanese listed in Kalispell: railroad workers, a depot cleaner, and a cook in a private house. In 1920, two of the three Japanese living in Kalispell were married to French women.⁹³

Along with the Japanese section crews came Japanese camp followers. They are difficult to document, but the Kalispell newspapers occasionally mentioned their existence. For example, in 1901 two Japanese women were arrested the same week they arrived in town for "keeping a house of ill fame." Shortly after this incident K. Kabayashi, the manager of the Oriental Trading Company at that time, said there were 50-60 Japanese in Kalispell who were not connected with the company but were "camp followers" and "sports." He mentioned that this situation was demoralizing in other cities.⁹⁴

⁸⁹"Japs Preferred," *Kalispell Bee*, September 4, 1903, p. 8.

⁹⁰*Inter Lake*, October 14, 1898.

⁹¹*Inter Lake*, April 28, 1899.

⁹²*Kalispell Bee*, August 3, 1900, p. 3; *Inter Lake*, August 25, 1899; "The Japs Will Hang On," *Kalispell Bee*, January 17, 1901, p. 3; Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁹³United States Population Census, 1900, 1910, 1920.

⁹⁴"Japanese Women in Trouble," *Kalispell Bee*, March 22, 1901, p. 3; *Kalispell Bee*, March 26, 1901, p. 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 19

The Japanese definitely lived outside of mainstream Kalispell society. They had their own store, medical care and crews. They lived in a Japanese-only boarding house. Only a very few worked for whites as house servants; a notable example was a Japanese man named Hori who worked for the Conrads and eventually set up his own businesses in Whitefish.⁹⁵

The Chinese had a longer-lasting and slightly more integrated presence in Kalispell, even though they mostly lived in designated Chinese boarding houses or underground dens in "Chinatown," on 1st and 2nd Avenues West.⁹⁶ The Chinese entrepreneur Ah Hay was a well-respected merchant and cafe owner in Kalispell. He eventually managed a number of restaurants along the Great Northern Railway line, as well as running an Oriental goods store and a popular restaurant in Kalispell.⁹⁷

The Chinese came to Montana beginning in the 1860s to work in mines or for railroad or supply companies. A fairly substantial percentage of early Chinese immigrants came from the Taishan (Toisan) area in modern Guangdong province (about 60 miles almost due south of modern Canton). The NPRR hired 15,000 Chinese to help construct the line through Washington, Idaho and Montana in the early 1880s.⁹⁸ Present data do not clarify the role that Chinese laborers had, if any, in the building of the line for the Great Northern Railway on the Kalispell division. The Chinese who came to the Flathead Valley provided a variety of goods and services, such as laundries, restaurants, stores (including Oriental goods stores), servants in private homes, cooks, gardeners, etc. Many of these businesses took little capital to start up. Many of Kalispell's Chinese had been in the United States for several decades.⁹⁹

In the mid-1880s, an anti-Chinese movement throughout the West caused many Chinese to flee to urban centers. The first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, prohibiting Chinese labor immigration for 10 years. A 1902 act banned all Chinese from entering the United States for temporary settlement purposes.¹⁰⁰

Demersville had at least one Chinese business, as evidenced by a photo showing the W. O. Lung Laundry on Gregg Street with Chinese writing on the sign. Kalispell was early on quite intolerant of Chinese. In June of 1891 "the people of Kalispell fired the one lone Chinaman who was looking for a location for a hash foundry in that town."¹⁰¹ The Chinese exclusion law enacted in 1882 did not affect scholars or merchants, but it did help inflame whites against Chinese. In 1895 Kalispell labor organizations launched a boycott against businesses employing or buying from Chinese (primarily restaurants and hotels), and many businesses specified in advertisements that they did not purchase from nor hire Chinese.

⁹⁵1900 federal population census, Kalispell, MT.

⁹⁶1900 federal population census, Kalispell, MT.

⁹⁷Kalispell Historical and Architectural Survey (1992), inventory form for 142 1st Avenue East.

⁹⁸Swartout, Robert R., Jr., "Kwangtung to Big Sky: the Chinese in Montana, 1864-1900," *Montana Magazine of Western History* 38 (winter 1988): 28-39.

⁹⁹U.S. Federal Population Census, Kalispell Precinct, 1900, 1910 and 1920. According to Swartout (p. 47), the Great Northern employed very few Chinese, preferring to hire Japanese for even lower wages.

¹⁰⁰Wunder, John R., "Law and Chinese in Frontier Montana," *Montana Magazine of Western History* 30 (July 1980): 18-31.

¹⁰¹Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 269; *Inter Lake*, June 12, 1891, p. 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 20

Some boarding houses even replaced Chinese cooks with white men. This boycott began two years before the city of Butte enacted a similar boycott.¹⁰²

The "slant-eyed celestials" (as Asians were commonly called by contemporary newspaper reporters) did not all pack up and leave, however, for in 1896, according to C. D. O'Neil, there were about 150 in Kalispell, most living on 2nd Avenue West between 2nd and 3rd Streets. Most of these worked as cooks, waiters, merchants, laundry employees, gardeners and domestic help. Kalispell's Chinatown was riddled with dens, some extending 30' below street level. These dens were lined with shelves for the men to sleep on.¹⁰³

The 1900 census reported only 35 Chinese residents of Kalispell, although the number was probably much higher in that year. Their occupations were listed as house servants, cooks, laundry workers and owner, barbers, storekeepers, waiters, "capitalist," and restaurant owners and workers. Outside of Kalispell city limits, one Chinese man was renting a farm and had four Chinese laborers. In that year, most of the listed Chinese lived in a Chinese boarding house, but two were residents of an otherwise all-white boarding house (and not employees of it).¹⁰⁴

In 1901 Kalispell had four Chinese and Japanese goods shops, all located on 2nd Avenue West.¹⁰⁵ None of these buildings in the former Chinatown remain; they were burned (accidentally or by order of the city health officer) or torn down. Some of the underground tunnels, however, still remain.

Illegal Chinese aliens and the opium that many of them smoked were smuggled across the Canadian border, principally in the Tobacco Plains area, and brought to Kalispell. Kalispell officials periodically made opium raids and arrested Chinese they found in possession of the drug, also confiscating their "smoking tools." In 1902 Sheriff Hand stopped a group of eight Chinese he believed to have recently been smuggled across the border, and seven of them were returned to China (the eighth testified that he was a merchant, involved with a store in Butte).¹⁰⁶

Mixed marriages were uncommon, even though there were practically no female Chinese in the Flathead Valley. In 1901 Charlie Ling, a Chinaman, married Georgie McKnight. A 1909 state law prohibited the marriage of whites with blacks, Chinese or Japanese. By 1910, the 39 Chinese who remained in Kalispell were slightly more integrated with the community. In that year, five Chinese lived in houses on the east side of Kalispell. In 1920, three Chinese had been born in the United States and two were listed as married to whites.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰²*Kalispell Graphic*, May 15, 1895, p. 3, and June 19, 1895, p. 2; Swartout, *op. cit.*, p. 54. See *Flathead Herald-Journal*, July 4, 1895 and July 25, 1895 for statements on the Chinese boycott and the "Chinese question."

¹⁰³*Inter Lake*, February 28, 1954.

¹⁰⁴United States Population Census, 1900, 1910, 1920.

¹⁰⁵1901-02 Kalispell City Directory.

¹⁰⁶Elwood, *Kalispell*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62; "Six Chinamen Chattering," *Kalispell Bee*, February 12, 1901, p. 3; *Kalispell Graphic*, February 27, 1895, p. 3; *Kalispell Bee*, October 24, 1913, p. 8; "Seven To Be Deported," *Kalispell Bee*, November 28, 1902, p. 5; "Chinamen Arrested in This City Sent to China," *Flathead Monitor*, November 28, 1902, p. 5; Clark, Anne, "Flathead's Early Welcome Did Not Include Orientals," *Daily Inter Lake*, June 11, 1989, p. D-1.

¹⁰⁷*Inter Lake*, June 13, 1901; Lang, William L., "The Nearly Forgotten Blacks on Last Chance Gulch, 1900-1912," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (April 1979): 57; United States Population Census, 1910, 1920.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number E

Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

Page 21

Early Kalispell residents frequently recall seeing a Chinese funeral and the procession on the way to burial at Demersville, and contemporary newspaper accounts all referred to burial of Chinese in Demersville. Today, however, the Oriental names on tombstones at the Demersville cemetery are all Japanese, not Chinese. It is possible that these Kalispell residents were confusing the Japanese and Chinese, but a burial site for the Chinese residents of the Flathead Valley has not yet been identified.¹⁰⁸

The Chinese in Kalispell may have been primarily from the Kwangtung region of China, like the Chinese in other Montana towns.¹⁰⁹ This common origin allowed social organizations to be based along traditional clan or district lines. The community's stress on clan and religion would have helped hold the group together. The New Year festival, for example, was celebrated traditionally in Kalispell. It is not known where the local temple, or joss house, was located in Kalispell.

The Chinese community in Kalispell, as in other towns in the western United States, disappeared as a result of laws prohibiting immigration and because the group was overwhelmingly male. By 1940, Flathead County reportedly had only two Chinese residents.¹¹⁰

Kalispell has never had a significant population of black residents. Brief references provide some information. For example, an 1893 obituary for Mrs. John A. White, who died of malaria, mentioned that her husband was a member of the colored company at Fort Missoula. A. V. Swanberg recalled two black minstrels who played banjos, sang and danced jigs every night in a Kalispell saloon (and the 1900 census lists a black man whose occupation was "dancer and singer"). In 1901, there was at least one "colored resort" in the red light district. The Flathead County High School enrolled its first black student in 1913, a sophomore from Boynton, Oklahoma.¹¹¹

Blacks numbered around two dozen in the 1900, 1910 and 1920 censuses. Their occupations in the 1900 census included janitors, train porters, servants, laborers, farming, washwomen, and hairdressers. Some lived in a boarding house that housed both blacks and whites. Others rented or owned their own homes. A group of eight black train porters lived together in a house on 4th Avenue West. One black couple owned a farm. Most of Kalispell's blacks in all these years had been born in southern states, and so the older generations were presumably freed slaves. The 1910 occupations of blacks were very similar, with one janitor living on the east side and one laundress working out of her home. The 1920 census revealed an interesting half-block on the west side, a small-scale non-white residential district. The half block on 7th Avenue West had three houses; one housed two black families, one housed an Indian family, and one housed an Indian/white family. One block to the east lived another Indian family.¹¹²

Despite the respect for certain black residents, local prejudice against blacks did exist. Old-timers remember some local restaurants displaying signs reading "No colored trade solicited." During the 1920s and 1930s (and probably earlier as well), black high school athletes had difficulty finding places to eat and sleep on road trips to Kalispell. The Ku Klux Klan experienced a general resurgence throughout the United States in the 1920s, and in 1928 a fiery cross burned on Foy's Hill

¹⁰⁸*Kalispell Bee*, November 9, 1909, p. 5; *Flathead Herald-Journal*, September 23, 1897; Mildred Rogers quoted in Elwood, Henry, "My Childhood in Northern Montana," *Kalispell News*, May 28, 1986.

¹⁰⁹Swartout, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹¹⁰Sundborg, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹¹¹*Flathead Herald-Journal*, August 18, 1893; *Kalispell Bee*, December 11, 1901, p. 2; *Kalispell Times*, October 30, 1913; Swanberg, A. V. in Elwood, *Kalispell, op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹¹²United States Population Census, 1900, 1910, 1920.