

E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Introduction

The Clark Fork River Valley served for hundreds of years as a primary transportation corridor for Native Americans and white explorers, fur trappers and traders. During the early 1860's, a significant number of white men began settling in the Missoula and Bitterroot Valleys, to the east and south of what is presently Alberton. Many of those settlers followed the Mullan Road, a military wagon road constructed by Captain John Mullan during 1860-61. The Mullan Road ran through the area that would become Alberton. By 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad had completed its line through Montana Territory, thereby providing access for mineral and timber resources in the western part of the Territory. However, the line did not extend west along the Clark Fork River until 1890.

The expansion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1890 was largely responsible for bringing W. A. Clark's lumber mill to a site near the confluence of Petty Creek and the Clark Fork River. As a result, the town of Lothrup sprang up near the mill. At its peak, Lothrup supported a population of 1300 people, 10 saloons, a general store and a number of lodging houses. When plans were announced by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Co., also known as the Milwaukee Road, to run its line across the river from Lothrup and establish a division point at Browntown along the Mullan Trail, many Lothrup residents purchased lots for homesites and businesses. A number of Lothrup buildings were moved across the Clark Fork to the new site, which was renamed Alberton, in honor of Albert J. Earling, president of the Milwaukee Road. Local legend also associates the town's name with an early settler named Alexander Albert.

In 1906, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company began constructing a line through Montana. Within three years, about 2,300 miles of track had been laid across the state, linking much of the central portion of Montana with the great midwestern cities and to the Pacific Coast. Whenever possible, Milwaukee Road officials directed their crews to lay tracks in areas that were not yet served by rival railroads such as the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern. However, the Milwaukee Road did eventually parallel the Northern Pacific for approximately 300 miles along the valleys of the Yellowstone and Clark Fork Rivers because that route served the largest population centers in Montana. At the site of Alberton, the Northern Pacific line ran along the south side of the river with a siding at Lothrup, while the Milwaukee Road ran on the northern side through Alberton.

1. THE MILWAUKEE RAILROAD AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ALBERTON, 1907 - 1940

In the late 1890's, Charles Poirier settled on land in what is now East Alberton, filing for a homestead patent on November 8, 1900. Henry Brown had filed in 1898 for a homestead patent on land adjoining the Poirier claim. In 1905, William Adams purchased land from Poirier, divided a portion of it into lots, and constructed a water system for his property. Two years later the Milwaukee Road purchased 480 acres from Brown and began constructing buildings for their division point. The structures included a roundhouse, depot, company offices, employee housing and maintenance buildings. (The major structure remaining from the railroad is the 1908 depot, a well-preserved building currently used as a community center. Most of the oil tower, and a portion of the foundation of the roundhouse are present, however, all other structures were removed by the Milwaukee Road in 1917.) Soon after building the railroad structures, undeveloped land in town was divided into lots and sold by the Milwaukee Land Co., a subsidiary of the Milwaukee Road. The company also constructed a water system for their locomotive maintenance facilities, which was fed by natural springs.

In 1907, at about the same time that Alberton was being surveyed and platted, W.A. Clark's Western Montana Sawmill at Lothrup (located two miles from Alberton on the south side of the Clark Fork River) was being disassembled and transported to a site 35 miles southeast to the townsite of Bonner. Many of Lothrup's residents chose not to move with the mill and purchased lots in Alberton on which to relocate their houses. Most of the buildings were ferried across the Clark Fork River and skidded on logs to Alberton by Bill Drost, a local house mover. (None of the buildings moved from Lothrup currently qualify for listing in the National Register due to incompatible alterations.)

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Immediately after the Milwaukee Road established their division point at Alberton, the community began to expand. During the approximate ten year period from 1908-1917, Alberton experienced slow but steady growth. At its peak in 1916, approximately 400-500 people lived in or near town. Similar to many other communities established by the railroad, Alberton's livelihood depended heavily upon the Milwaukee Road, and this reality was reflected in the way the town developed and the types of buildings that were constructed. The railroad employed between 100-150 men at its yards, which were located on the south side of the town's main street. Since a majority of the railroad employees were bachelors, a number of rooming and boarding facilities were constructed to provide housing for the workers. The railroad depot contained a "beanery," and for the early years of Alberton's existence, this was one of only a few restaurants to serve passengers traveling along the Missoula Division line.

Several Alberton businesses were conceived to take advantage of the passenger trains that made four daily, thirty-minute stops in town during the early years. Restaurants, hotels, several saloons, and a bakery provided goods and services to passengers. Nearly all of these commercial buildings were erected on the north side of Railroad Ave., directly across from the depot area. Gerrity's Saloon, a 1 1/2-story wood frame building constructed in 1908, originally had two saloons on the first floor and a dance hall on the upper floor. It is associated with Bill Gerrity and Teddie Martin, businessmen who were actively involved in the early development of Alberton. After his original business burned in the 1920's, Martin purchased Gerrity's Saloon, converting it to a general store where residents could buy dry goods, clothing, hardware, furniture and groceries, as well as carpets, glassware and crockery. (The addition of asphalt shingles on the sides of the building, and board and batten on the front of Gerrity's Saloon currently disqualifies it for National Register listing.) Also located on Railroad Ave. is Bestwick's Market, a two story structure built in 1910 which had multiple uses for over 40 years. The building was originally owned by Joe Boileau, a foreman at a planing mill in Lothrop who moved to Alberton to open a meat market. William Bestwick purchased Boileau's building in 1912 and operated the business until the 1950's. The second floor had for many years been used by the Masons, Odd Fellows and other civic organizations.

Among the residences in Alberton, those most noteworthy include the Brinks House (1912) on Railroad Ave. E.P. Brinks worked as a telegraph operator for the Milwaukee Road. He also purchased water systems owned by the Milwaukee Land Co. and William Adams, later combining both and selling them to the town of Alberton. A number of Alberton houses represent good examples of the Bungalow style popularized during the latter stages of the town's only significant period of construction (from 1908-1917). The Wilson House (1914) is associated with Clarence Wilson, employed as a conductor for the Milwaukee Road. The Thorn House, constructed in 1915, and of a slightly different Craftsman style than the Wilson House, is associated with William Thorn, who relocated his business from Lothrop when Alberton was platted. Thorn and Co. dealt in general merchandise and was one of only two stores in Alberton in 1907. Also active in politics, Thorn posted a \$4,000 bond along with seven other western Missoula County citizens during the vote to establish Mineral County. When the county was created on August 4, 1914, Thorn was appointed as one of three county commissioners.

On September 8, 1920, a petition was filed with the Mineral County commissioners by citizens from the east end of the county requesting that the county grant incorporated status to Alberton. With validation of the signatures, the issue was placed on the November ballot where it carried on a vote of 131 to 24, making Alberton the first incorporated town in Mineral County. The County Commissioners set March 5, 1921 as the date for election of town officials. Elmer G. Slater won 51-41 over other candidates. First Ward councilmen were H.C. Bennett and F.A. Chadwick; Second Ward elected W.A. Bestwick and W.E. Adams. Thus, Alberton became an incorporated town some 28 years before Superior, the county seat.

The fate of the young town of Alberton was decided in the board room of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific

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with the decision announced in 1912 to electrify the rail line from Harlowton, Montana to Avery, Idaho. As early as 1907, when the Milwaukee Road was laying tracks in western Montana, the railroad was considering how it could convert its coal-powered route to an electric system. In 1909, John D. Ryan, president of the Amalgamated Copper Company, was elected to the Board of Directors of the Milwaukee Road. Ryan's experience with the Great Falls and Thompson Falls Power Companies made him an excellent choice to guide the railroad in its goal of electrification. The Milwaukee Road was interested in securing electric power in order to reduce expenses and simplify operation of the railroad in western Montana. The railroad owned a coal mine in Roundup, Montana (350 miles east), but unlike the Northern Pacific, had no mines in Washington or Idaho for its western routes. Along with prohibitively high shipping costs, a 1910 fire prompted legislation prohibiting the use of coal- and wood-burning locomotives in the Idaho Forest Reserve. As a result, steam-driven trains were forced to rely on oil, an even more costly fuel than lignite coal. In addition, locomotives fueled by coal- or wood-burning steam engines did not perform well during the winter months, making hydroelectric power an attractive alternative.

In November, 1915, the Milwaukee Road tested the first electrically powered train in Montana. By early 1917, full, direct-current electric trains served all points on the Milwaukee Road between Avery, Idaho and Harlowton in central Montana. Substations were constructed at Primrose and Tarkio, about ten miles to the east and west of Alberton, respectively. The conversion to electric power had a drastic effect on Alberton. Whereas steam-driven locomotives required regular, 100-mile overhauls, the new electric engines performed with less maintenance. Thus, many of the locomotive maintenance stops, including Alberton, were no longer necessary to the railroad and were discontinued. While Alberton remained in operation as a freight division point for changing crews, the roundhouse and engine repair shops were closed, dismantled and removed. Approximately two-thirds of the railroad workers in Alberton lost their jobs, including the locomotive mechanics, wipers, and others employed in the roundhouse. Many employees left town immediately after the conversion, and by 1920 the population had dropped to 278 residents. The early-to-mid-1920's witnessed some limited activity in Alberton, primarily in residential construction. Many houses were built during this time, but only one building, the Chadwick House (1922), today retains sufficient historic architectural integrity to be considered for National Register nomination.

In 1919, despite the railroad cutbacks, Alberton citizens invested in the future by approving the construction of a new school, which would become the largest and only brick structure in town. Partly out of necessity (the original wooden school located on the hill next to the Catholic Church had burned in 1916) school officials turned to prominent Missoula architect, Ole Bakke, for a design for the building. Bakke, an assistant to A. J. Gibson, Missoula's most famous architect, took over Gibson's business and established a significant reputation of his own by designing Missoula buildings such as Lincoln and other schools, the Forestry Building (Pinchot Hall) and the Central Heating Plant at the University of Montana, and his most ambitious project, the Wilma Building (Smead-Simons Building). For the Alberton School design Bakke created a square plan with three bays, the center one slightly projecting, a recessed front entrance with double doors, and frame construction finished with red brick veneer. Bakke's use of fine detailing, classical proportions, symmetrical organization and a well defined entrance, make this building an outstanding representation of his work and one of the most significant buildings in Alberton.

Alberton typifies a pattern of western Montana townsite development that has been arrested at the initial stages of evolution. The "first phase" of downtown construction was often characterized by single story, widely-spaced, gable- or false-fronted wood frame buildings erected on alternate lots. In its earliest days as a railroad division point, Alberton experienced a minor period of prosperity lasting about ten years that resulted in exactly this type of limited development. After the Milwaukee Road moved its facilities out of Alberton, however, the town stagnated and effectively stopped growing. It never expanded to include a mixture of multi-storied brick and wood frame buildings along an infilled main

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street that result from continued growth and prosperity. In addition, no new businesses opened in Alberton, and nearly all of the area lumber mills, the only other major employer in the area, were forced to close as a result of the Great Depression. Despite a brief resurgence in the lumber industry during the late 1940's and early 1950's, the Milwaukee Road discontinued passenger service to Alberton in May, 1961, which further debilitated the community's economy. In 1963, Interstate Highway 90 was constructed along the south side of the Clark Fork River, bypassing Alberton and effectively cutting off the community from vehicular traffic.

Though the years, Alberton continued to depend on the railroad for much of its payroll, and the work crews who spent a portion of their wages at the two bars and the Silver Grill Cafe. The Grill took the place of the original "Beanery" located in the old depot, and held the food contract with the Milwaukee Road for many years. Crew changes at odd hours of the morning kept the Grill and oftentimes the bars, open beyond normal operating hours. A grocery store situated just to the east of the Chadwick House at 320 Railroad, opened for business in the mid- 1970's. In 1980, the unthinkable happened when the Milwaukee Road ceased operation of its western line, leaving Alberton with high unemployment, and Mineral County facing an uncertain future with the loss of the million dollar tax base that had been provided by the railroad.

As scores of former railroad workers sold their homes and left Alberton for points disperse, much of the physical evidence of the railroad's existence also disappeared. The tracks were pulled up, and the right of way was sold to private individuals who incorporated the land into their private yards. In 1983, with the help of a \$400,000 Housing and Urban Development grant, the Town purchased the area that had made up the main rail yards and rehabilitated the grounds into a town park. The then dilapidated depot underwent a major renovation and has been used as a community center and town hall since. Residents began celebrating the town's railroad heritage with an annual Railroad Day celebration and transformed a rail car and caboose into a railroad museum.

Since its inception, Alberton has undergone relatively few changes in its built environment with the exception of the removal of the machine shops to Deer Lodge when the line was electrified, the destruction of the large multi-story employee boarding house that sat on the hillside above the Alberton General Store and the loss of several of the false-fronted business structures along the main thoroughfare. Those buildings that have survived and have retained historic architectural integrity act as a physical link with the founding and development of the community in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

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The Town of Alberton does not include a historic district because neither the residential nor commercial areas contain a large number of historic structures grouped together that have retained historic architectural integrity. This lack of cohesiveness has resulted in the recommendation for individual nomination of the eight buildings listed below:

1. Milwaukee Depot, 1908 Railroad right-of-way
2. Bestwick's Market, 1910 West Alberton, Block 5, Lots 10-12
3. Methodist Church, 1912 West Alberton, Block 8, Lots 4-5
4. Brinks House, 1912 West Alberton, Block 4, Lots 13-14 and east 1/2 of Lot 12
5. Wilson House, 1914 East Alberton, Lots B and C
6. Thorn House, 1915 West Alberton, Block 1, Lots 20-21
7. Alberton School, 1919 West Alberton, Block 2, Lots 9-22
8. Chadwick house, 1922 West Alberton, Block 3, Lots 18-19 and east 1/2 of Lot 17

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Name: Historic Buildings in Alberton, Montana

Description: As befits a small, early 20th century town nestled in the narrow Clark Fork River valley of the forested mountains of western Montana, almost all historic buildings in Alberton are of wood frame construction. The two major exceptions to this rule are the Alberton School, which was constructed in brick in 1919 to replace an earlier wood frame school building that was destroyed by fire, and the cast concrete block Chadwick House. Alberton barely had the opportunity to become established as a viable community when the town's major employer -- the Milwaukee Road -- cut back its work force and slowed the pace of economic development to a crawl. Essentially, the kind and quality of buildings that represent the "first phase" of town development in western Montana remain today in Alberton, never replaced by the more substantial buildings of brick, stone or concrete that characterize the more prosperous cities and towns in the region.

Alberton's commercial buildings lined Railroad Ave. on the north side, facing the rail line and the Milwaukee Road facilities that stretched east-west through town. One- and two-story, wood-frame, false front constructions characterized the historic commercial architecture of Alberton. Gable roofs that provided the necessary water and snow drainage hid behind the cornices or stepped parapets of the false-fronts. As depicted in the numerous historic photographs of Alberton's commercial strip along Railroad Ave., the original storefront treatments of the commercial buildings followed the typical tri-part design system of the early 20th century, consisting of a wood paneled apron at the base, a recessed central or clipped corner entrance, large commercial window glazing, and a transom band above the display windows. Upper floor windows were universally 1-over-1 double hung units evenly spaced across the facade. Exterior stairways along the sides of buildings to access the upper floors were often covered for weather protection.

Residences in Alberton are modest one- or one-and-one-half-story, wood frame buildings. The gable-front cottage with a small four-room floor plan was the most popular house type during the earliest years. These buildings were set on concrete foundations and were plainly finished with front porches supported with turned posts, clapboard siding with corner boards, and 1-over-1 double hung windows. During the mid-1910's through the early 1920's, homes of a very modest scale continued to be built but with the embellishment of the Craftsman style detailing popular at the time, which included features such as full-width front porches or engaged cut-away corner entrances, bracketed roof eaves, exposed rafter tails, and multi-pane window treatments. The size of Alberton's residential stock appears to have stabilized by the late 1920's until well after the Second World War when a number of cottage style and ranch style homes were constructed and a few dozen mobile homes were moved in to increase the available housing. Due to the small size of most historic period houses in Alberton, almost every residence in the community has experienced at least one major addition, and often numerous sequential enlargements.

Historic wood-frame windows and clapboard siding are the primary character-defining aspects of the historic residential and commercial buildings in Alberton that have been most vulnerable to modernization. Replacement window sash in configurations, sizes, and materials that are incompatible with the original treatments are rampant. When window openings have been changed, a very common tendency was to cover evidence of the alterations with asphalt, asbestos, unfinished wood board and batten or vinyl siding, with the choice of sheathing material corresponding with the period of remodeling.

The railroad facilities in Alberton formed the very core of the community when the majority of workers were employed during the first decade of the town's existence. The roundhouse, depot, and ancillary structures were all of wood frame construction, which allowed for their easy erection as well as their efficient removal. Only the depot and the concrete base of an oil house remain in Alberton to recall the once active locomotive maintenance and freight division work that occupied crews around the clock during the first ten years of the town's existence.

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Significance: Well over three-fourths of the buildings in Alberton date to the historic period, and the vast majority were constructed within the first fifteen years of the establishment of the town. The fortunes of Alberton's citizens were closely tied to the operations of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, which was the major employer in the community from the inception of the townsite in 1907 until the cessation of rail passenger service to Alberton in 1961.

The historic resources of Alberton stand out today as distinctive and well-preserved examples of the kind and quality of architecture that characterizes the earliest phase of construction in a 20th century Montana community. Due to the nature of the economy of natural resource exploitation that led to the establishment of a great many short-lived Montana communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the survival of "first phase" simple wood frame buildings is not highly unusual. However, in a local context, less than 6% of the extant buildings in Alberton retain sufficient historic architectural integrity to accurately recall the period of settlement and early economic prosperity for the working people of the community. The relative scarcity of intact historic resources in Alberton lends those few well preserved properties special importance.

The eight buildings proposed for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at this time gain primary significance as well preserved examples of the architecture of "first phase" townsite development and for their associations with the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, which served as a catalyst for the town's first period of growth and subsequent sustenance. With the exceptions of the Alberton School and the Chadwick House, each building in the nomination was constructed within the ten-year span that the railroad operated its locomotive maintenance facilities in Alberton. The Alberton Depot, completed in 1908, is the oldest and most important building within the townsite. Bestwick's Meat Market, a simple, wood frame building, represents the typical form of commercial development of Alberton during the period of significance. Three of the four residences are good examples of modest Craftsman styling, which enjoyed widespread use in Alberton during the first two decades of the 20th century. The Methodist Church, still housing an active congregation, was one of two religious buildings constructed in Alberton during the historic period. The church retains excellent architectural integrity. The Alberton School, completed in 1919, replaced the first wood frame school building that was destroyed by fire in 1916. A well-preserved building with elements of Classical Revival styling, it was the only school building in town until 1960, when a new high school was constructed to alleviate overcrowding.

Registration Requirements: Simple wood frame buildings are most amenable to architectural alteration, and the historic buildings of Alberton are no exception. Few residences and commercial buildings have survived without the attachment of numerous additions, incompatible window replacements, changes in the exterior sheathing, roofing alterations and reconstruction or enclosure of once open-air porches. To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, buildings must date to the historic period of Alberton's sustaining economic relationship with the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (1907-1940) and retain a high degree of historic architectural integrity. The size of the community of Alberton has not expanded significantly since the 1920's and the general spacing, layout, and diminutive scale of the buildings, themselves, lends a strong feeling of historic setting. To be considered as representative examples of "first phase" architectural expressions, the buildings of Alberton will exhibit historic material and design integrity on the primary and secondary elevations. The tertiary elevations may be and very commonly are altered by appended building additions. While feeling and association may still be strong aspects of the presence of even a highly altered historic building today, a high level of material and design integrity will be required for National Register designation.

G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The town of Alberton, Montana is located on a broad, cleared terrace in the Clark Fork River valley, along the right-of-way for the historic Milwaukee Railroad. Boundaries for the Alberton Historic Resource Survey were determined by the corporate limits of the town, and within these platted boundaries, included all structures, foundations and historical features.

H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

In 1986, an historic resource survey of Alberton was coordinated by James R. McDonald, Architects, P.C. All of the architectural field work, write-up and historical research was conducted by Historical Research Associates. Daniel Gallacher was the project supervisor and Chris Amos was the technician.

The scope of work included an architectural survey of all buildings located within the project boundaries and the search for historical information pertaining to the town of Alberton. The boundaries of Alberton Historic Resource Survey were determined by the corporate limits of the town. The survey included all structures, foundations and historical features within the boundaries.

In 1996, this information was verified and updated by historian Allan Mathews, an Alberton resident.

Architectural Methodology

The first task in the collection of data for the Alberton Survey project involved the undertaking of the field survey. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office's (SHPO) "Architectural Description Field Sheet" provided the format for the property survey. The field survey included photographic documentation of structures and updating the map of the area.

The Montana Inventory Form requires the legal description, present owner and owner's address, date of construction and original owner. Researchers obtained the legal description and present owner information from the Mineral County Assessor's Office.

The condition, integrity and architectural significance, both individually and in relation to the surrounding area, were evaluated for each property. The integrity of a structure is based on originality and authenticity of design and materials. For example, a structure with excellent integrity would appear today as it did when it was constructed or with only minor changes; any alterations would be sympathetic to the original structure, maintaining the original character.

The significance evaluation considered the parts of a structure with respect to the whole. Significance was based largely on integrity and continuity of the parts and their relationship with the structure. This method attempts to establish an objective evaluation for each property. Each property was evaluated to determine its compatibility with its surrounding area, taking into consideration its scale, massing, materials, integrity, condition and significance in the area.

Historical Methodology

Historical investigations for the Alberton, Montana survey included research of available primary and secondary materials and the use of oral interviews for the preparation of a historic overview and for the assessment of historic associations of specific structures. Historical Research Associates (HRA) utilized the research materials maintained at a variety of repositories in the completion of the historic portion of the Alberton report. These included the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Memorial Library and K. Ross Toole Archives, University of Montana, Missoula; the Missoula City-County Library; the Montana Historical Society Library, Helena; the records at the Mineral County Courthouse, Superior; and the records of the incorporated town of Alberton. Also, HRA researchers interviewed several residents and former residents of Alberton in an attempt to obtain information about the structural development of the community that was often not available in the published and unpublished materials, the county records, and area newspapers.

The historic overview portion of the report was prepared using secondary sources almost exclusively. The citizens of Alberton have not prepared a local history of the area and HRA located only two unpublished papers specific to Alberton (see Bibliography). Oral interviews with several knowledgeable, long-time residents of the community enabled HRA to

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obtain a general understanding of the development of Alberton. However, since there was no local newspaper and since the primary and secondary research materials on Alberton were extremely limited, the historic overview is necessarily brief.

Documenting the structural development of Alberton was equally difficult. The published local histories of Mineral County and the Missoula-Frenchtown Valleys contain very few specific references to Alberton. The Montana Polk Directories, printed for Missoula between 1909 and 1914, included information concerning Alberton. The names of a number of residents, businesses, and services are provided. Yet, because of the town's size, there are no specific addresses and they are listed simply as "Alberton." After 1914, when Alberton became part of Mineral County, even this limited information ceases, because a comprehensive directory of Mineral County was never published. An annual directory published by R.L. Polk and Company, the Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Montana Gazetteer (1914-1922), provides the names of some businesses and the proprietors, but no residential information. Again, the addresses indicated are not specific and the address listed is simply "Alberton".

From its founding until the present, all Alberton residents and businesses have received their mail at the local post office. Houses and businesses have never been given street addresses. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, another valuable reference in historical survey research, are not available for Alberton since the town relied upon unorganized volunteer efforts for fighting fires.

Research at the Mineral County Courthouse included a review of records in the Tax Assessors, Appraiser's, and Clerk and Recorder's Offices. Present owners, their post office boxes, and legal property descriptions were obtained in the Assessor's office. The Alberton tax plat maps are also located in the Assessor's Office. In some cases, names of past owners, sometimes to original lot owners, were indicated. However, this historical information frequently had been erased, and only the present ownership information for specific lots was noted on the plats. Approximately 20% of original ownerships were traced through this method, while nearly 80% of the original ownership information had been erased.

The majority of the names of original lot owners was obtained from the Clerk and Recorder's Grantor-Grantee index to deed books. Most of Alberton's land was originally owned by either William T. Adams, a private landowner, or by the Milwaukee Land Company, a subsidiary of the Milwaukee Railroad (see Overview). Thus, research focused upon the grantor-grantee indexes, and HRA prepared a list of persons who purchased lots from these two original owners. The list provides the majority of ownership names that appear on the inventory forms. These individuals were not necessarily the original owners of the structures located on the specific lots. It became evident during the research that several lots or parcels were purchased by individuals as speculative property.

After preparing the above list, HRA researched the tax records for individual properties, located in the Appraiser's office, in an effort to obtain original ownership information that was not provided in either the plat indexes or the grantor-grantee indexes. The individual tax cards proved helpful by indicating on what lot buildings were located when two or more lots were owned in one parcel. However, the dates of construction for structures located on the lots were usually approximate, unless the buildings were constructed within the past 30 to 35 years. These cards sometimes noted remodeling work and the dates of these improvements, if substantial. With these three county record sources, HRA was able to obtain a date or approximate date of construction and the name of the original owner for most structures.

If these sources failed to provide the necessary information, HRA reviewed the two unpublished articles cited in the bibliography and conducted oral interviews with owners and local informants. This resource, however, provided less than 5% of the original ownership information used on the forms. Yet, these sources proved helpful because they often

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indicated which residences were associated with historic Alberton persons, although those persons may not have appeared in the county records as principal owners of those residences.

HRA also reviewed newspapers for information concerning the structural development, important individuals, places, and events in Alberton. A newspaper was never published in Alberton and, prior to 1914, news about the town appeared in Missoula newspapers. However, the Missoula papers did not provide a specific column on Alberton news. Also, the Missoula newspapers are not indexed. Thus, HRA did not conduct an intensive, issue-by-issue review of the Missoula newspapers. Rather, research focused on the Mineral County Independent and the Mineral County Press for potential news concerning Alberton. The latter newspaper, published in Superior between 1914 and 1918, contained local columns on DeBorgia, Tarkio, St. Regis, and Saltese, but none on Alberton. The Mineral County Independent, also published weekly in Superior beginning in 1914, does contain an Alberton news column. The column, supplied by a local correspondent, primarily provided social news; occasionally, the correspondent would mention that a house was being built, however, the address was not provided since none existed. The most useful information was provided in the annual Mineral County "Delinquent Tax List." Some ownership information could be verified using these lists. Yet, by the early 1920's, very few Alberton residents were delinquent in their tax payments.

Finally, HRA consulted docket books for the incorporated town of Alberton. These include a Justice's Docket (1923-1967), Treasurer's Cash Book (1927-1947), Record Book (1925-1940), and Minutes of Meetings of Alberton's Councilmen (1939-present). All of these records, except for the minutes of the Alberton Council, are contained in one volume. No earlier town books are known to exist, as the town was incorporated on April 16, 1925. The Justice Docket contains information concerning minor violations such as disturbing the peace, delinquent payments, and traffic tickets. The Record Book is similar to the Justice's Docket in content. The Treasurer's Cash Book lists funds paid and received by the town treasurer. The Town Council minutes failed to provide information concerning buildings or persons, but focused upon town decisions, debates, and elections.

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