

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

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A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Archaeological and Historic Resources of Sheridan County, Montana

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Aboriginal Subsistence in Sheridan County
Aboriginal Settlement in Sheridan County
Aboriginal Ceremony in Sheridan County
Agricultural Settlement in Sheridan County, c.1881-1942
Town-Building and Community Development in Sheridan County, c.1902-1942
Residential Architecture in Sheridan County, c.1881-1942
Transportation and Communication Systems in Sheridan County, c.1881-1942
Educational, Religious, and Civic Activities in Sheridan County, c.1902-1942
Warehousing and Industry in Sheridan County, c.1902-1942
Retail Trade and Commerce in Sheridan County, c.1902-1942

C. Form Prepared By

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Maurelle Shup MT SHPO 9-9-93
Signature of certifying official Date

MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Patricia Andrews 10/27/93
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register Date

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E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

1. Introduction

A. Geographical Background

Sheridan County is located in the far northeastern corner of Montana; it is bordered by the Canadian province of Saskatchewan on the north, the state of North Dakota on the east, Roosevelt County on the south, and Daniels County on the west. Sheridan County was created in 1913, and initially included an area of 5,019 square miles. The county's size was reduced twice during the early 1900s; in 1919 Roosevelt County was created from the southern half of Sheridan County, and the following year the county's western reaches became Daniels County. Sheridan County's 1920 boundaries remain in place today. Throughout this document, unless specifically noted otherwise, "Sheridan County" will always refer to the region within the county's current boundaries.¹

Sheridan County includes a surface area of 1,675 square miles. Its landscape consists primarily of prairie upland with gently rolling terrain. Much of the county's eastern portion is relatively level; the terrain becomes more uneven as one travels westward, culminating in relatively steep, badlands-like terrain near Redstone and Daleview. Major watercourses travel through often broad valleys, with flat bottomlands below terraced areas. The county's largest watercourse--Big Muddy Creek--flows from Saskatchewan, through the northwest and central portions of Sheridan County, and southward to a confluence with the Missouri River in central Roosevelt County. Eastern and southern Sheridan County contain numerous glaciated lakes; the largest is partly-artificial Medicine Lake, over eight miles long and four miles wide. The county's elevation ranges from 1,927 feet, where the Big Muddy crosses into Roosevelt County, to about 2,770 feet in the county's western hills.

Nearly all of Sheridan County's land is privately owned, and most of it is used for agriculture. The best farmland is in the east and south, and much of this area is used for growing wheat and other grain crops. The more rugged and arid land to the west is primarily used for grazing. In total, approximately 57% of the county is cultivated, 41% is range and pasture land, and 2% is either under water, or developed with roads or buildings. The area receives an average of 12 to 15 inches of rainfall per year. There is significant temperature variation during the course of a typical calendar year.

The county is predominately rural. The largest community, Plentywood, had a 1990 population of 2,136, slightly less than half the county's total population of 4,732. The remaining residents live either in one of several very small towns or on farms. Most of the towns are connected both by paved state highways and railroad branch lines; gravel county roads reach most of the rest of the county. The southwestern portion of the county is within the boundaries of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, although much of the reservation land is now owned by Euro-Americans.

B. Organization of the Contexts

This document is intended to provide a framework for the evaluation and nomination of those significant properties in Sheridan County falling within two broad groups: sites relating to the aboriginal occupation of Sheridan County (primarily eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D), and properties relating to the occupation of Sheridan County during the Euro-American historic period (primarily eligible for the National Register under Criteria A, B, and C). These two major classifications are discussed separately below.

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The most significant themes in both the county's aboriginal and Euro-American history have also been identified; these form the basis for the written contexts which follow. Three specific contexts are provided to discuss aspects of Sheridan County's aboriginal occupation, and seven contexts discuss aspects of the county's Euro-American history. The contexts provide a specific, thematic framework for the evaluation of individual cultural properties in the county.

2. CONTEXTS FOR ABORIGINAL SITES

The aboriginal subsistence, settlement, and ceremony contexts in Sheridan County presented in this section are primarily based on conjecture because so little research on the subjects has been conducted in the county. Data obtained from other portions of the Northwestern Plains are used here to present an overview of prehistoric and protohistoric aboriginal life as reflected in the archaeological record.

As background for the following, Table 1 is a proposed chronology of aboriginal occupation of the Northwestern Plains. It is a combination, with minor adjustments, of Frison's Northwestern Plains and Dyck's southern Saskatchewan cultural chronologies, and Morlan's radiocarbon data for Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric Period sites.² Note that the Besant complex, characterized by dart points but with subsistence patterns similar to the arrow-using Avonlea complex peoples, lies intermediate between the Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric Periods. In the following contexts, Besant sites are usually discussed with Late Archaic Period sites unless radiocarbon dates place them clearly within the Late Prehistoric Period.

In several respects, the separation of aboriginal occupation of Sheridan County into three contexts has proved awkward because the three topics are intimately tied. Sites logically discussed in the "Settlement" section may have "Subsistence" functions also. For example, a residential campsite may lie within 50 m of a bison kill site and have been the place where most of the animal processing occurred. While we have chosen to discuss animal kill sites, plant collecting areas, and lithic quarries under the "Subsistence" context and open camps and tipi ring sites under the "Settlement" context, we recognize that the nature of associated features and the distribution of any particular site type is as much explained in the "Subsistence" as the "Settlement" context.

Context 2-A: Aboriginal Subsistence

Ethnographic and historic accounts of Indians living on the Northwestern Plains identify bison as the primary food of the semi-nomadic peoples, and archaeological data indicate that the animal played a significant role in aboriginal subsistence throughout prehistory. Other mammals, including elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, and small animals such as rabbits and ground squirrels supplemented the diet. The role of plant foods in the aboriginal diet from PaleoIndian times to the Protohistoric Period is debated, but archaeological data suggest its limited contribution in the northern part of the Northwestern Plains.

In addition to providing food, area flora and fauna were used by aboriginal peoples to make tools, shelter, clothing, and medicine. Generally, collection of materials for these purposes did not dictate camp location or frequency of moving camp, as did bison procurement.³

Aboriginal subsistence patterns varied over time apparently due to climatic change, changes in the methods of harvesting and food preparation, adoption of the horse, involvement in the fur trade, and the migration of new peoples into the Northwestern Plains from surrounding areas.

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Very few prehistoric sites have been excavated in northeastern Montana and none in Sheridan County.⁴ Therefore, the authors have turned to other areas of the Northwestern Plains to provide information on aboriginal subsistence patterns. For the PaleoIndian and Early and Middle Archaic Periods, there is virtually no information available from Montana sites; consequently, sites in Wyoming provide the bulk of data presented here about subsistence during those times. However, later periods are better represented at excavated sites in eastern Montana and southern Saskatchewan, and the authors have relied heavily on information from these areas for reconstruction of Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric Period subsistence practices in Sheridan County.

Paleo-Indian projectile points found on the surface of several sites in Sheridan County and elsewhere in northeastern Montana indicate occupation of the area at least as early as 11,000 BP.⁵ Until about 8000 BP, megafauna such as extinct forms of bison, camel, horse, and mammoth were exploited by the aboriginal peoples across North America, but the association of megafauna other than bison, and in one instance mammoth, with aboriginal peoples in the Northwestern Plains has not been documented.⁶

Strategies for killing bison during the Paleo Period included traps and ambushing individual or small groups of animals. With a few significant exceptions, Northwestern Plains Paleo bison kill sites indicate the taking of a small number of animals at any one time. Kills were made during the winter season and often involved running the animals into an arroyo trap. Faunal remains indicate that the animals were taken for their meat and perhaps hides, and to a much lesser extent marrow and bone grease.⁷ The meat was stored as frozen caches. Presumably, as the cache thawed, there were renewed efforts to obtain meat.⁸

Exceptions to this pattern have been found at a Goshen Complex site in southeastern Montana, an Agate Basin component in Wyoming, and several Folsom Complex sites peripheral to the Northwestern Plains. At the Mill Iron site in Montana, 30 bison were apparently taken as part of a single event kill.⁹ The Agate Basin component at the Agate Basin site (late PaleoIndian) is also apparently a relatively large kill with 10 - 20 animals killed in an arroyo trap.¹⁰ Some Folsom sites do not fit the pattern of cold-season kills. These bison kill sites in Colorado (Olsen-Chubbuck), Nebraska (Scottsbluff), and Texas (Lipscomb) represent warm-season kills and the Lipscomb site also has more animals than found at other Folsom kills.¹¹ Finally, Stewart's Cattle Guard Site in southcentral Colorado, another Folsom site, contains clear evidence of bone marrow processing at a campsite associated with a single episode, ambush kill of eight bison.¹²

Ambush kills of a small number of bison or other mammals by one or a few hunters were probably important sources of food, but evidence of these on the Northwestern Plains is rare because of their low archaeological profile. The relative importance of ambush kills is a matter of conjecture at this time; some archaeologists argue that the ambush was a year-round hunting strategy, while others suggest that it was used mostly in spring and summer after the communal hunting seasons.¹³

While archaeological evidence indicates that large mammals provided the bulk of the food consumed by PaleoIndians on the Plains, the use of plant foods is also documented. Groundstone has been found at terminal PaleoIndian sites in the mountains and foothills of Wyoming at the western edge of the Plains.¹⁴ While direct evidence for collection of flora and fauna for production of tools, clothing, and shelter is generally lacking, a small number of tools at Paleo sites suggest this activity.¹⁵

Kornfeld has argued that the appearance of heavy reliance on bison meat for Paleo subsistence may be an archaeological fabrication in part based on the unequal preservation of faunal and floral harvesting and processing tools and food waste material.¹⁶ Even with more objective discussion of the functions of recovered stone artifacts and examination of surrounding floral communities as Kornfeld suggests, real tests of the relative importance of faunal vs.

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floral foods awaits examination of more Paleo campsites, instead of kill sites. Recently, chokecherry seeds have been recovered from the Barton Gulch site in southwestern Montana, a temporary camp dating to about 9000 BP.¹⁷ This fact indicates that campsites do indeed have the capability to shed light on the question of plant resource use by PaleoIndians.

There is some information available on the procurement of lithic materials during the PaleoIndian Period for Sheridan County. Materials of PaleoIndian projectile points found at eight sites in the county indicate the use of cherts obtained locally from glacial gravels, agate and jasper from eastern Montana sources south of Sheridan County, porcellanite which is also locally available, and Knife River flint from westcentral North Dakota.¹⁸ It is not until the Late Archaic Period that other sources are represented in the projectile point collections.

Archaic subsistence strategies are varied through time and across the Northwestern Plains. Variation may be attributable to 1) climatic conditions, 2) the migration of peoples onto the Plains from the Great Basin, and/or 3) in-situ development due to other factors.

Only a few bison kill sites have been documented for the **Early Archaic** on the Northwestern Plains, most notably the Hawken site on the west side of the Black Hills and Head-Smashed-In in southern Alberta. Like several of the PaleoIndian kill sites, the Hawken kill was a classic arroyo trap. Three kill episodes are documented at the site. In one episode, nine animals were killed during a spring kill. Another kill about 400 years earlier has been identified as an early-to mid-winter kill.¹⁹ At Head-Smashed-In, the kill is an unusually early use of a jump.²⁰

Some archaeologists have suggested that the McKean complex, which dates to the **Middle Archaic Period**, began with the movement of Great Basin peoples onto the Plains. Distinctive Basin attributes, such as heavy reliance on plant foods, were gradually lost as the people or their influence reached into northern Montana and southern Alberta. McKean sites in the latter areas continue to show a heavy reliance on bison meat.²¹ Others, such as Keyser argue that the McKean complex developed in-situ in response to changing climatic conditions.²² The variation in subsistence along the north-south continuum could instead be attributed to local conditions and **not** the influence of Great Basin culture(s).

Archaeological remains of kills are rare during this time, but presumably traps continued to be important means of communal bison hunting. The Billings Bison Trap is the only Montana bison kill site dating to this period.²³ The Scoggin site, a McKean site in southcentral Wyoming, is an early example of a bison pound, a site type for which only two Middle Archaic sites have been identified. Animals were killed in the fall about 4500 BP.²⁴ In southern Alberta, Brumley presents the Cactus Flower site as an example of ambush procurement techniques.²⁵

Aboriginal peoples continued to use the meat for food almost exclusively. At sites in the southern part of the Northwestern Plains, bison bones at kill sites are generally still articulated, and there is little evidence of marrow or bone grease extraction.²⁶ However, one source has reported that it is in sites of this period in the northern part of the region "that we find the first evidence of bone boiling and bone grease extraction, as marked by the presence of fire-cracked rock, rock- and bone-filled pits, and large amounts of macerated, sometimes singed, burned bone and bone spill piles."²⁷

It was apparently during the Middle Archaic that the first tipis were constructed and used (about 5000 BP; see Context A-2). The use of bison for its hide may have increased as a consequence. As historic Assiniboine hunted bison during different seasons for meat and hides (see below), a similar hunting strategy may have been employed during the Archaic to obtain the best hides for tipi covers.

Brumley reports an antelope trap in Alberta near Medicine Hat during the Middle Archaic at about 3000 BP. At the Laidlaw site, the antelope were captured in a small pen.²⁸

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The **Late Archaic Period** saw the regular use of traps, pounds, and jumps for communal hunting of bison during all four seasons.²⁹ Corrals for use in bison pounds became quite elaborate and labor-intensive constructions, requiring a larger number of people to build and over a longer period of time than earlier communal kill sites.³⁰ The first clearly associated drivelines leading to pounds and jumps are found at Besant sites at the end of the period.³¹

Several bison kill sites in Montana and northeastern Wyoming illustrate the range of kill types and apparent preference for fall hunts during the late Archaic. Associated cultural complexes include Yonkee, Pelican Lake, and early Besant.

The Kobold site, in southern Montana, is an example of a Yonkee jump, while the Mavrakis-Bentzen-Roberts in Wyoming is an arroyo trap.³² The Ayers-Frazier trap in southeastern Montana appears to represent a late fall, single event kill with similarities to both the Yonkee and Besant complexes.³³ The setting is typical of Yonkee sites; the associated lithic material is characteristic of Pelican Lake sites; and the butchering pattern is comparable to that of Besant sites. A 10% excavation of the site has yielded the remains of at least 14 bison.³⁴

The Keaster site in northcentral Montana is a multi-component arroyo trap with a Pelican Lake component.³⁵ That component yielded a minimum estimate of only three bison. The site's excavation before the advent of recent techniques for determining animal age at the time of the kill precludes assigning a season of use. In addition to bison, some antelope and canine bone was found at Keaster.

Besant kill sites have not been excavated in Montana, but several are reported for adjacent areas. These include the Ruby, Muddy Creek, and Cedar Gap sites in Wyoming³⁶ and Old Women's, Gull Lake, and others in Alberta and Saskatchewan.³⁷ Fraley indicates that Besant sites (camps) are common in eastern Montana, but are primarily concentrated south of the Missouri River, around the Yellowstone River.³⁸ Their absence north of the Missouri in eastern Montana may simply reflect the sparsity of research in that area, given their presence in Saskatchewan.

Limited use of other animals for food continues through the Late Archaic Period. For example, a faunal assemblage from 48CA1391 in northeastern Wyoming is dominated by antelope.³⁹

Lithic procurement during the Late Archaic appears to have involved a wider range of sources than that of preceding periods. Jerde reports that the oldest obsidian projectile points observed in Sheridan County are Pelican Lake points, and likewise the use of Phosphoria chert from the Pryor Mountains apparently first dates to Pelican Lake times.⁴⁰ Besant complex peoples living in Sheridan County seem to have preferred Knife River flint in the manufacture of points.⁴¹

Aboriginal subsistence during the **Late Prehistoric Period** has been recorded at numerous sites on the Northwestern Plains. Bison jumps and pounds were common during this period, although traps predominate at Avonlea sites.⁴² Evidence for a possible Late Prehistoric surround has been found at the Rousell site in Saskatchewan.⁴³ The very large kills that one often associates with Plains Indians were usually the result of the more widespread use of the jump technique which requires 50-100 bison or more to keep the animals running toward the kill site and pushing over the precipice.⁴⁴ Frison identifies "a high incidence of late summer and early fall kills" during this period, but evidence of kills at other seasons is beginning to accumulate.⁴⁵ A late spring kill has been reported for the Vore site in northeast Wyoming,⁴⁶ and Wilson found evidence of small-scale bison kills throughout the year over a period of 200 to 250 years at the Henry Smith site in northcentral Montana.⁴⁷

The bone bed deposits at the Gull Lake site, a bison pound in southern Saskatchewan, provide an extraordinary record of the repeated use of a single pound from the Late Prehistoric to the Protohistoric or Historic Period. Pre-

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Avonlea levels contained remains of single individuals; Avonlea, between 3 and 32 animals; levels with Prairie side-notched projectile points, an estimated 14 to 28 animals; and the Plains side-notched points levels, at least 85 animals. In the Plains side-notched levels, Kehoe reports a bullet hole in one bison scapula and suggests that the uppermost levels at Gull Lake may be the remnants of Cree or Assiniboine pemmican production activities carried out for exchange.⁴⁸

The remains of associated processing and camp sites dating to the Late Prehistoric indicate extensive processing of bison for food. The carcasses at Late Prehistoric sites were heavily processed; marrow was extracted from long bones and the bone was pulverized with anvils and hammerstones to be put into stone-boiling pits or rings for bone grease extraction.⁴⁹

Bone from game other than bison occurs in few sites and generally in small numbers on the Northwestern Plains, indicating the minor role those animals played in aboriginal subsistence. This is especially true for parts of Montana north of the Missouri River where non-bison bone is especially rare. Elsewhere on the Northwestern Plains, in some instances, the mixed fauna subsistence appears to be a function of local conditions, such as proximity to lacustrine or mountainous landforms, or influence from adjacent culture areas. For example, the Avonlea component of the Beehive site, a probable winter campsite in the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming, included the remains of at least four bison, four deer, one mountain sheep, and some jackrabbits.⁵⁰ An unusual collection of bison, deer, beaver, rabbit, waterfowl, and fish was found at the Lebreton site in the Parklands of southern Saskatchewan, a site with an Avonlea component.⁵¹ Fraley reports that Late Prehistoric sites in southeastern Montana exhibit "mixed fauna utilization and indirect, but consistent evidence for plant processing."⁵² This adaptation is more broad-based than that observed at sites which lie further north. Also, Frison identifies a handful of communal antelope trap (corral) sites in Wyoming that date to the Late Prehistoric or Protohistoric Periods.⁵³ Finally, in an unusual case along the Missouri River in central Montana, the use of animals other than bison was apparently due to the threat of starvation. Davis and Fisher report that Lost Terrace, an Avonlea antelope processing site, contains the remains of over 40 animals. The antelope were killed in a single event during one mid- to late winter, and marrow and bone grease was thoroughly extracted apparently to avert starvation.⁵⁴

Information on the variety and amounts of plants used during the Late Prehistoric Period is limited. However, Aaberg has identified Chenopodium consumption at at least three Late Prehistoric sites in Montana. He also identified chokecherry seeds as food remains from Avonlea features at the Garfield Ranch site in central Montana, plus several other plant parts, including those of wild onion and red-osier dogwood, used for technological or medicinal purposes.⁵⁵

There seems to have been a shift in lithic material preference between the Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods. Knife River Flint, a popular material in this area of the Northwestern Plains during the earlier period, accounts for relatively small percentages of the Avonlea and Plains side-notched projectile points of the latter period.⁵⁶

The Assiniboine are the most recent aboriginal inhabitants, having moved into the area between 1800 and 1837.⁵⁷ The Blackfeet preceded the Assiniboine, having migrated into northern Montana by 1780. Their predecessors may be either Athabaskan or Algonkin speakers.⁵⁸ These ethnic groups occupied Sheridan County during the **Protohistoric and Historic Periods**.

Traditional methods of communal bison hunting persisted longer in this area due to the inability of the Assiniboine to obtain large numbers of horses.⁵⁹ According to Long, the Assiniboine hunted bison for food mostly in October, while harvesting the animals in November, January, and February for their hides.⁶⁰ The pound was the communal hunting technique employed. Individual bison or other medium- to large-sized mammals, such as moose, elk, deer, and antelope, were hunted by individual or small groups of men in the winter when fresh meat was desired or occasionally during the summer months. Small animals were killed for meat and skins using traps and snares.⁶¹

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In addition to meat, plants were collected for food. The Assiniboine dug wild turnips and picked juneberries, chokecherries, and rosehips.⁶² Denig reported that artichokes, serviceberries, wild plums, bull berries, gooseberries, currants, sour grapes, "and a plant similar to garden rhubarb" were collected.⁶³ Finally, some Assiniboine traded with the Mandan and Hidatsa in what is now North Dakota, offering bison meat in exchange for corn.⁶⁴

Context 2-B: Aboriginal Settlement

In this section, a context for aboriginal settlement in Sheridan County is presented. The discussion covers three major topics: the types of sites, the types and arrangement of features and activity areas at these sites, and site distribution over the landscape.

Aboriginal settlement type, size, and location were dependent on the mode of hunting practiced and the availability of game animals and edible plants during any particular period. Settlement patterns presented here have been reconstructed using archaeological data and, for the Protohistoric/Historic Period, ethnographic data.

Most PaleoIndian sites recorded on the Northwestern Plains are bison kill sites, and therefore a complete picture of early aboriginal settlement is unavailable. Lacking a sizable body of data about Paleo campsite size and location, archaeologists have developed models of "expected" Paleo settlement patterns. Two conflicting models have been presented.⁶⁵ In the first, small groups of people moved frequently, killing bison and other animals by ambush when they encountered them. In the other model, the PaleoIndians followed an 'annual pattern of aggregation and dispersal;' small groups convened for communal hunts in the fall and winter. If there was no seasonal aggregation, as the first model suggests, temporary campsites (base camps) were always small, although perhaps occupied longer in the winter when frozen meat caches and other factors dictated a stay in one particular location for an extended period of time.⁶⁶ If small groups met for communal kills in the fall and winter, as the second model indicates, campsites at those times of year would be larger. In addition to the kill and temporary campsites, lithic quarries, plant collection areas, and spiritual sites were used, but very little evidence of these has been uncovered.

At those few Paleo camps which have been found, some campsite activities have been recognized. Bison processing was split between the kill site where meat was removed from the bone and campsites where it was prepared for consumption. As mentioned in the previous section, some bone marrow extraction may have occurred at these Paleo camps. The temporary camp at the Horner I site consisted of "a number of discrete, hearth-centered activity areas" representing one or more occupations of the camp.⁶⁷ Smith and McNees observed the same phenomenon at the Rattlesnake Pass Site in southcentral Wyoming. They also identified a Folsom "secondary butchering area" where some intermediate processing took place.⁶⁸ Paleo hearths are typically surface or shallow features.⁶⁹ They apparently served as the centers of camp activities, including the repair of hunting tools and perhaps hideworking.⁷⁰

The distribution of PaleoIndian sites across the landscape is impossible to reconstruct because of the small number of sites recorded for the period. The most archaeologically visible of PaleoIndian sites, bison kills, are often in arroyos, with associated occupation sites nearby (within 50 m at the Horner site and Agate Basin 1978:155). At least one Folsom campsite, Rocky Folsom, may have been selected for its abundant plant resources, as it is "in the midst of an area rich in plant resources. ... These four communities contain year round supplies of floral resources, although the growing season is somewhat short".⁷¹

In Sheridan County, the distribution of sites at which PaleoIndian projectile points have been found suggests a preference for low, rolling hills,⁷² although one observed in southern and central Saskatchewan found that most Paleo

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sites there are "on prominent hilltop[s] with panoramic view[s] of the surrounding terrain, exposed to the prevailing northwesterly winds."⁷³

Early Archaic sites are also rare on the Northwestern Plains. Only two bison kill sites have been documented and campsites are few in number. As some have postulated that the Altithermal significantly reduced the range and size of bison herds,⁷⁴ there is every reason to believe that all aspects of the Early Archaic settlement pattern were significantly different from those of the previous period. Pithouses dating to the Early Archaic have recently been documented in Wyoming at at least two locales. Archaeological evidence indicates that these were usually circular structures, and some apparently had conical roofs. Firepits and storage pits have been found in association.⁷⁵ Early Archaic Mummy Cave series campsites in southern Saskatchewan have "shallow basin hearths with surrounding scatter[s] of artifacts and camp debris."⁷⁶

Known archaeological remains of Middle Archaic sites include three bison kills and several campsites. Dyck reports that sites of this period are common in southern Saskatchewan.⁷⁷ A pithouse dating to the Middle Archaic Period has been uncovered at the Keyhole Reservoir in northeastern Wyoming. It and another in the Wyoming Basin are similar in form to Early Archaic pithouses. The former locations of tipis are marked by stone circles beginning during the Middle Archaic Period. (The arrangement of rings within a site and of these sites across the landscape is discussed in the Late Prehistoric Period during which time most of the rings are assumed to have been built.)

Features found at Middle Archaic campsites include hearths and stone-heating pits. Hearths are both large and small, and may be lined with sandstone slabs or river cobbles.⁷⁸ As with earlier sites, animal processing at temporary campsites was dominated by meat boiling and roasting.

In Sheridan County, Oxbow, McKean, Duncan, and Hanna points, attributed to the Middle Archaic, are most commonly found in the area of rolling hills and kettle lakes in its northwestern corner. However, as this is where most of the projectile points of any type have been observed, there may have been no preference for this type of landscape during this period.

Pelican Lake complex sites which span the Late Archaic Period provide little information about activities of the time, as few of those reported have associated features. As an exception to this generalization, Munson documents a Pelican Lake campsite with well-made, stone-lined hearths in southeastern Montana.⁷⁹

Foor has identified a pattern of the distribution of winter and non-winter residential Pelican Lake settlements. Winter sites are large, adjacent to water, and "protected from the harsh winter weather." The non-winter residential campsites are on higher and more exposed ground. Plant processing is more common at the former sites and hide processing at the latter. Very short-term occupation sites, such as butchering and camps away from the main residences, are also found, but Foor does not specify preferred topographic settings.⁸⁰

The abundance of Pelican Lake projectile points at surface sites in Sheridan and nearby counties has been interpreted as possible evidence for population increase during the Late Archaic.⁸¹

Besant sites exhibit sophisticated bison hunting techniques. At one kill and associated camp in Wyoming, the Ruby site, Frison reports a large processing area with numerous distinct activity areas up to 900 ft. from the kill site. He suggests that the content and distribution of these areas, marked by concentrations of charcoal, fire-cracked rock, and broken and crushed bone, are attributable to processing by family groups, even though the kill itself was communal. Each activity area has one or two surface or shallow hearths, measuring up to 5 ft. in diameter.⁸²

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At the Mortlach site in Saskatchewan, what remains of a Besant "post-in-ground dwelling" was found. The structure "is reminiscent of the bark or mat covered houses typical of early Woodland complexes to the east."⁸³

The distribution of Besant sites has apparently not been studied; no distinctive patterns have been reported.

Late Prehistoric sites are numerous when compared with those of earlier periods. As mentioned in Context A-1, communal bison kill sites include traps, pounds, and jumps, of which the latter two were the most common. Tipi rings are apparently most commonly found at Late Prehistoric Period sites.⁸⁴ At one locale in central North Dakota, Deaver and Deaver found that tipi ring sites on the open uplands were smaller and occurred with less frequency than those on low bluff and terrace edges. They suggest that the upland sites are satellite camps, occupied for very short periods of time.⁸⁵

A second type of Late Prehistoric structure has been reported in the Avonlea component of the Beehive site at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains. There, Frison reports the remains of a probable conical timber lodge with a central, slab-lined pit hearth.⁸⁶

Processing of bison meat and bone was quite intensive during the Late Prehistoric Period, and many kill and camp sites reflect this intensification. Kill site bonebeds have disarticulated bison carcasses, and campsites regularly include stone-boiling and -heating, and cooking or roasting pits.⁸⁷

The Avonlea hearths, ovens, and fire-cracked rock clusters at the Garfield Ranch Site in central Montana are consistent with an emerging pattern of Avonlea campsites in southern Alberta and northern Montana. The camps contain "surface hearths with small, shallow adjacent pit(s) filled with ash, charcoal and [fire-cracked rock]."⁸⁸ Two activity areas at the Garfield Ranch site, perhaps occupied in summer or fall⁸⁹ showed two different arrangements of hearth features, one oval and one linear.⁹⁰ Insufficient work has been done at other Avonlea campsites to determine if these arrangements are diagnostic Avonlea traits.

At the Fantasy site, an Avonlea kill in northcentral Montana, at least three distinct processing and/or camp areas with hearths and fire-cracked rock have been identified, all 40 m or less from the kill.⁹¹

Stone-heating and -boiling pits were observed at the campsite associated with the Big Goose Creek bison kill site, a terminal Late Prehistoric Period Crow site in northcentral Wyoming.⁹² At another Crow camp and kill site in northcentral Wyoming, Piney Creek, the processing area is within 150 ft. of the kill and is recognized by the presence of "large stone-heating pits centrally located with regard to smaller stone-boiling pits."⁹³

Plains archaeologists have been particularly interested in the question of site location in relation to various topographic features. Some patterns for tipi ring location (mostly presumed Late Prehistoric) have been suggested, although the destruction of so many rings during the historic period may have obscured prehistoric patterns of site distribution. Most archaeologists identify the availability of water and wood as critical factors for selection of site location,⁹⁴ but Deaver and Deaver have shown that in southeastern Montana there is almost no correlation between site location (including locations of tipi ring sites, cultural material scatters, and other types of sites) and the locations of permanent sources of water.⁹⁵ Brumley has found that areas with greater topographic relief were more heavily used,⁹⁶ and Deaver and Morter that "the swales in glacial knob and kettle country [of northern Montana] have a higher ring density than normal uplands."⁹⁷

Reports of **Protohistoric and Historic Period** Assiniboine camps describe some of the features and settlement patterns that have been observed at archaeological sites dating to previous periods. Lowie reported the construction and use of a

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stone-boiling pit, but his informants noted that only men away from the base camp cooked meat in those pits and that women always roasted meat instead. Lowie also described the construction of a sweat lodge, but unfortunately did not record its location in relation to other features at the camp.⁹⁸ Long wrote that repeated use of the same campsites was the norm. Also concerning campsite selection, Long stated that, after a camp was established, the site for a bison pound would be scouted and selected.⁹⁹

Context 2-C: Aboriginal Ceremony

Ethnographic data document the integral role that spiritual ceremony played among Northwestern Plains Indians. The people's link to the spiritual world permeated all aspects of their lives; their religious beliefs dictated when and where a band moved, the means and the success of bison kills, the relationships between and among bands, and treatment of the dead. Archaeological manifestations of these beliefs are few and thus under-represent the importance of spirituality, and for this reason it is difficult to discuss the character of and changes in this particular aspect of aboriginal culture through time. Identification of ceremonial site function relies heavily on ethnographic and historical information, regardless of the age of the site.

Among the physical remains which clearly can be attributed to aboriginal spirituality are "medicine man" lodges associated with bison kills, burials, medicine wheels, effigies, eagle catching pits, sweat lodges, and vision quest sites.

One source identifies evidence of aboriginal spirituality at **bison kill sites** on the Northwestern Plains during the PaleoIndian Period at the Jones-Miller site, a Hell Gap site in eastern Colorado. There, an antler flute and miniature projectile point were found associated with a post hole at the center of the bone bed.¹⁰⁰

Otherwise, the earliest archaeological remains of religious activities at kill sites date to about 1800 BP. At the Ruby site, a Besant bison pound in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming, there are remains of a religious structure made of posts positioned in the shape of two intersecting arcs. Eight bison skull were deliberately placed at one end of the feature.¹⁰¹

The Glenrock bison jump in central Wyoming, a Late Prehistoric site, also contains evidence of religious ceremonies at a kill. A single stone circle measuring 9-10 ft. in diameter near the final drive lane and one overlooking the jump have been interpreted as locations where a medicine man performed ceremonies to bring the bison to the jump.¹⁰²

Among the Assiniboine, a tree was left in place near the center of the pound or a pole was erected at this location for ritual purposes. Ritual items were attached to or placed at the base of this pole and were said to have included tobacco, a piece of red cloth, and a horn.¹⁰³

No such lodge remains have been reported in Sheridan County. However, the number of known and suspected bison kill sites suggests that there is a good chance that associated medicine lodges will eventually be found or recognized.

Burials are among the most common spiritual aboriginal sites found on the Northwestern Plains. Few from the PaleoIndian and Early Archaic Periods, however, have been reported. Among the few is the Anzick [note from Chere: not clear that this is a burial] site in southcentral Montana, a Clovis burial site at which the human skeletal material and associated artifacts were covered with red-ochre and bone foreshafts were apparently ceremonially broken.¹⁰⁴

Several burials dating to the Middle Archaic have been reported. Walker has provided a synthesis of the burials from the time, discussing both Oxbow and McKean features.¹⁰⁵ He identifies "scaffolding and bundle preparations [as] the

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predominant mode of interment in prehistoric times [on the Northern Plains]." Bundles were often placed in rock crevices or under cairns for final interment, although at the Graham site, a McKean site in southern Saskatchewan, Walker reports cremation of a bundle. Although the sample of Middle Archaic sites is small, Walker has recognized differences in the mortuary practices of contemporary McKean and Oxbow peoples. McKean burials have been found beneath habitation floors, while Oxbow burials are either in large burial grounds or at isolated spots.¹⁰⁶

Late Archaic burials, specifically Pelican Lake, "are commonly on high prominent landforms, they often involve stone cairns, and usually abundant grave goods are included."¹⁰⁷ Secondary burials are most common,¹⁰⁸ but primary burials and even a cremation have been reported.¹⁰⁹ No documentation of Besant burials was found in a review of pertinent literature.

A handful of Avonlea (Late Prehistoric) burials, both primary and secondary (bundle), have been reported.¹¹⁰ Often, more than one person is buried on a high piece of ground. The grave is then covered with rock.¹¹¹ Late Prehistoric burials in the Northwestern Plains are also found in rock crevices and small caves.¹¹² Associated grave goods include lithics, especially projectile points; shell or bone beads or other ornamentation; and perhaps some animal bone.¹¹³

Denig wrote that, among the Assiniboine in the mid-nineteenth century, when the most revered of the warriors died, he might be enclosed in his lodge with "branches and dirt built up around to keep away wolves."¹¹⁴ Others warriors might request to be cremated in their lodges, but usually the dead were placed on a scaffold.¹¹⁵ Joyes writes that scaffold burials were observed in Sheridan County during the Historic Period.¹¹⁶

In Sheridan County, 11 burials have been recorded. The sites are usually on hilltops or ridges, although not necessarily the highest landforms in the local vicinity. In a few cases, tipi rings lay on the same landform, but this is the exception rather than the rule. In at least three instances, the burials were covered with rock cairns. One primary interment was observed, but modes of burial at the other sites could not be determined. Because most have been removed by artifact collectors, the human remains and associated artifacts have not been examined by archaeologists. Most of the burials found are not dated; two are Protohistoric or historic. Burial goods associated with the latter included a horn spoon, bottle, button, beads, and a leather pouch.¹¹⁷

Medicine wheels are a rare type of site found exclusively on the Northwestern Plains. The wheels have been made in various configurations and often were added to or otherwise altered by aboriginal peoples.¹¹⁸ They commonly lie in association with tipi rings and other ancillary structures, such as small rock cairns or anthropomorphic figures. They are found in a variety of topographic settings, although a significant number lie on relatively high landforms which provide a wide view. Artifacts found at medicine wheel sites suggest their construction as early as the Middle Archaic. The Blackfeet identify medicine wheels as memorials and/or burial sites for important warriors.¹¹⁹ Suggesting a slightly different function, Grinnell has noted that an old Cheyenne identified the Big Horn Medicine Wheel in northern Wyoming as "the plan of an old time Cheyenne Medicine Lodge."¹²⁰

Three medicine wheels (24SH581, 685, 861) have been recorded in Sheridan County. With the possible exception of 24SH861, their configurations place them within Brumley's Subgroup 1 of medicine wheels on the Northwestern Plains--wheels consisting of a prominent central cairn surrounded by a large ring of stone.¹²¹ The 24SH861 wheel has a central stone circle instead of a cairn. The ages of the Sheridan County wheels cannot be determined at this time because no diagnostic artifacts were observed during surface inspection. They are among only a handful of medicine wheels which have been reported in Montana (less than 20).

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The use and collection of eagle feathers was an important aspect of aboriginal religion. The feathers were commonly used in medicine bundles.¹²² In addition, eagle catching could bring a young man wealth and prestige¹²³ because they could be traded for valuable goods. The best available ethnographic and archaeological documentation of **eagle catching sites** in the general area includes the accounts of eagle catching by the Hidatsa and Mandan and the remains of timber lodges and catching pits on the Little Missouri River in western North Dakota.¹²⁴ The Hidatsa (agriculturalists) regularly combined eagle catching expeditions with winter game hunts. However, in Sheridan County which is outside the Hidatsa core territory,¹²⁵ one need not assume any relationship between the two activities. Nevertheless, several specifics of Hidatsa eagle trapping likely apply to the study area. For example, the eagle catching pits were typically placed near the edge of a high bluff or bench above a river with a clear view to the west across the stream. Archaeological information provided by Allen places the pits between 20 and 100 ft. from the edge of the high landform. They were located between ½ and 2½ miles from the camp where a lodge with the expeditions leader's medicine bundle stood. Along the Little Missouri, most of the lodges that remain standing are in thick timber off the tops of the bluffs.¹²⁶

The antiquity of eagle catching has not been established with archaeological data. The practice continued into the historic period; Grinnell reports that the Cheyenne discontinued the activity in 1860-1861 and Bowers has calculated that the Mandan no longer trapped eagles along the Little Missouri after the 1880s.¹²⁷

Eagle catching pits are very rare in Montana. In 1986, Deaver reported that only six had been recorded; only a few others have been discovered since then.¹²⁸ One site in Sheridan County (24SH664) may have two eagle catching pits on it, but the identification should be considered tentative at this time. The site is situated on a ridge which overlooks Eagles Nest to the west. The two circular pits lie within 3 m of the edge and each is 2.2 m in diameter. Lithic debitage is associated. While the location of the pits in the Eagles Nest area is suggestive, the position of the pits so near the edge and the use of the immediate area for tool manufacture is not consistent with ethnographic and archaeological reports of eagle catching sites.

Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic **effigies** are also rare aboriginal sites on the Northwestern Plains.¹²⁹ These large figures built of rock, often on prominent landforms, were constructed by Northern Plains Indians as "monuments to memorable events, using simple outline effigy figures and/or cairns."¹³⁰ Although no effigies have been recorded in Sheridan County, there is an unverified report of one or more effigies in the northwestern corner of the county.¹³¹ Several have been found in Saskatchewan immediately north of Sheridan County; among these is the Wild Man Butte Effigy. It lies on a high hill overlooking a chain of glacial kettle lakes and was associated with an elk effigy (the latter has been destroyed by vandalism).¹³² The antiquity of construction of effigies in general has not been determined, although the Wild Man Butte Effigy is estimated to have been built between 1790 and 1863.¹³³

Only three **sweat lodge** sites have been recorded in Montana, and those in the mountainous portion of the state.¹³⁴ Lowie reports that the historic Assiniboine sweat lodge had a central "fireplace" where rocks that were heated outside of the lodge were laid prior to the sweat.¹³⁵ Archaeologically, a lodge might appear as "a stone circle, a door opening to the east, a cairn like feature in the center, and an exterior hearth 8 to 10 feet east of the entrance."¹³⁶ This model roughly describes a feature at a Late Prehistoric Period site in southwestern Saskatchewan, at which Finnigan reports a small stone circle with a large cluster of rocks in the center.¹³⁷

The small number of recorded sweat lodges precludes identification of a distribution pattern; however, all lie in proximity to water. Also, with the exception of the possible Late Prehistoric sweat lodge in Saskatchewan, there is no archaeological information available on the time-depth of the ceremony of sweating.

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Two sites in Sheridan County (24SH659 and 660) may include sweat lodge features, but at this point the identification is merely conjectural. The possible sweat lodge at 24SH659 consists of a stone circle about 1½ m in diameter with a concentration of broken rock in a depression at the center of the circle. The site also includes 13 tipi rings and two hearths. The other possible sweat lodge is a pile of rock about 3 m in diameter with a concentration of rock near the center in a depression. The surrounding ground has been cultivated, and so there is no evidence of associated features. No diagnostic artifacts were found at either site.

One final aboriginal religious structure is the **vision quest** site. Traditionally, Assiniboiné spiritual life focused on the power and respect deserving of **wakan**, "a powerful, mysterious force [that] pervades the universe and can be contacted by man."¹³⁸ To communicate with the **wakan**, Assiniboiné men conducted vision quests which involved fasting and other sacrifice. Communication might have provided insight toward solving a problem or making a decision. The overwhelming majority of the vision quest sites which have been recorded in prairie areas of Montana are on isolated buttes.¹³⁹ Rarely are artifacts found at these sites and the antiquity of their use has not been established through archaeological examination.

Because no effigies or vision quest sites have been recorded in Sheridan County and because the sweat lodge site identifications are highly speculative, these three sub-types will not be discussed further.

3. CONTEXTS FOR HISTORIC SITES

Context 3-A: Agricultural Development in Sheridan County, c. 1881-1942

Euro-American settlement in extreme northeastern Montana came significantly later than in much of the northern plains. A variety of circumstances were responsible for this: the region was generally far removed from travel and immigration corridors, the land was relatively arid and devoid of timber and mineral resources, and climatic conditions were often extreme. Consequently, Euro-Americans paid little attention to the future Sheridan County until the early 1880s; instead, the region remained part of the Great Blackfeet Reservation, a huge tract of land occupying much of northern Montana and serving as the designated home of several Native American tribal groups.¹⁴⁰

The first permanent Euro-American activities in Sheridan County took place in the early 1880s and were related to ranching. Throughout the 1880s much of eastern Montana experienced a "cattle boom," as open-range cattlemen began using the vast tracts of largely empty federal land for cattle and sheep grazing. Such activities probably took place in Sheridan County as early as 1881; that year, the Star Ranch was established near the mouth of Big Muddy Creek, with cattle ranging northward into Sheridan County. Other ranch operators followed, and some ranches began to be based in Sheridan County. The first permanent settler in the county (near Daleview) arrived in 1884.

The level of cattle and sheep ranching in Sheridan County increased steadily during the rest of the nineteenth century, significantly aided by two events of the late 1880s. During the summer of 1887, the Great Northern Railway (GN) constructed an east-west main line across much of northern Montana. The GN's new line paralleled the Missouri River in eastern Montana, passing not far south of Sheridan County. The railroad's presence in the region greatly eased the process of shipping cattle and other products to market. The following year saw the dismantling of the Great Blackfeet Reservation, and its replacement with three far-smaller reservation units. The new "Fort Peck Reservation" in northeastern Montana extended only a short distance into southwestern Sheridan County. Although, during its existence, the Great Blackfeet Reservation probably exerted only nominal influence on Sheridan County, the removal of much of the county from reservation jurisdiction simplified the future process of Euro-American occupation.¹⁴¹

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The ranches which developed along Sheridan County's grasslands had relatively little impact on the county's landscape relatively little. The earliest cattle and sheep herders were probably itinerant, constructing few if any permanent structures and not remaining in the county for more than a few months at a time. Although they may have established temporary camps in the area, neither the existence nor the location of such sites can be documented. Relatively few workers were needed to sustain open-range grazing operations, and the number probably did not increase significantly even after permanent ranch operations began appearing in the county. The ranchers were, however, the only major Euro-American presence in the county during the nineteenth century.

In common with much of the Great Plains, large-scale Euro-American settlement in northeastern Montana hinged on the arrival of the farmer. In Sheridan County, little agricultural activity took place until the early 1900s. Eastern Montana was, in fact, among the last regions of the United States to be exploited for its agricultural potential, due both to the area's remoteness and to the land's perceived aridity and harshness. These obstacles disappeared over time as railways penetrated the area and a greater awareness of the region developed. Much of this increased awareness was promulgated by the railways themselves; during the early twentieth century all of Montana's railroad lines actively promoted the state as a mecca for prospective farmers. The result was a rapid, sustained, and massive influx of new farmers into Sheridan County and the rest of eastern Montana.¹⁴²

The earliest Sheridan County farmers probably settled along the Big Muddy near the turn of the century, squatting on unplatted federal land. Enough farmers had arrived by 1902 that, in combination with the area's ranchers, the Plentywood region had sufficient residents to support its first post office. The number of Sheridan County farmers initially remained small, however, due both to the region's remoteness from a railhead and to the fact that northeastern Montana was largely unsurveyed. In 1902, the Plentywood region was some 45 miles from the nearest railroad line, making the transportation of farm products to market both difficult and impractical. The lack of a formal government survey in Sheridan County meant that homestead entries could not be filed in the area, since legal descriptions of land parcels required the existence of survey points.¹⁴³

Both these obstacles to settlement were removed during a great rush of activity that began in approximately 1908. Interest in dryland farming in eastern Montana was growing rapidly, spurred by the heavy promotional activities of the Great Northern and other western railroads. The demand for additional homestead land caused the United States Land Office to undertake a comprehensive legal survey of northeastern Montana, and two railroads -- the Great Northern and the Soo Line -- began to plan extensions into Sheridan County. The first Great Northern train arrived in Plentywood in 1910; by then much of the area's best land had been surveyed by the Government, opened to settlement, and promptly claimed by homesteaders.¹⁴⁴

The formal process of agricultural settlement in Sheridan County -- land survey followed by homestead entry followed by development and cultivation -- occurred with surprising rapidity. The first surveyed lands were opened for homestead entry in approximately 1909, and within four years nearly all of the county's potentially suitable farmland had been appropriated. The process was often bypassed by eager settlers, however. Government land surveys in the region took place over a period of years, as resources were available, and consequently individual townships were opened for formal settlement on a piecemeal basis. Actual settlement of the surveyed lands, however, often occurred several years before the completion of a government survey; these early settlers occasionally recorded their claim on an unsurveyed parcel by filing a "Certificate of Occupancy" document with the County Clerk & Recorder. Some of the last lands opened, however -- in areas formerly reserved to the Ft. Peck Indian Reservation -- were awarded to settlers through advance applications submitted to the federal government.¹⁴⁵

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Sheridan County's homesteads were typical of early twentieth-century family farms across the Great Plains. The Homestead Act, as modified in 1909 and 1912, allowed for 320-acre homestead entries, title to which would go to the settler after three years of occupancy. Homesteaders were required to live on their claim for at least seven months of each year, and to cultivate and construct improvements on at least part of the property.¹⁴⁶ Settlers worked to fulfill these goals, and to maintain a livelihood, by rapidly constructing a house and beginning the process of cultivation. The small homesteads which resulted displayed farming methods and building types typical of northern plains agriculture of the period. Due to the local lack of timber, many of the earliest houses were of sod. When the railroad's arrival made sawn lumber readily available, however, it quickly became the material of choice. Few of these first-generation homestead houses appear to survive locally (and no sod houses are known to remain), but period photographs indicate that early Sheridan County farms utilized vernacular building forms typical of northern plains homesteading. A farm's first "homestead shack" was usually a single-room house with rough horizontal or vertical wood siding, no permanent foundation, and either a gable or rounded roof. Such buildings offered little more than immediate shelter, and, as resources permitted, they were quickly replaced by more substantial dwellings. Early outbuildings displayed the same primitive construction as the houses they accompanied. A few exceptions did exist: some settlers near the Big Muddy had access to timber and built log structures, and in the ethnic Danish community of Dagmar at least some settlers attempted to build homes emulating European forms.¹⁴⁷

The earliest Sheridan County farmers probably practiced subsistence agriculture, at least in part due to the marketing difficulties caused by the area's poor transportation system. The railroad-induced homesteaders, however, immediately began growing crops for sale. Initially, the primary cash crop was flax. A 1912 newspaper report on the area's crop season predicted that 1,000,000 bushels of grain would be shipped from Plentywood that year, 85% of which would be flax, 10% oats, and 5% wheat.¹⁴⁸ For unknown reasons, however, wheat quickly replaced flax as the county's dominant crop. In 1913, the region's crop was only 2/3 flax, and by World War I most of the county's farmland was producing wheat.¹⁴⁹ Wheat remains the major crop today.

Other characteristics of the typical Sheridan County farm also evolved rapidly after the period of initial settlement. The first local farming was probably undertaken using relatively simple agricultural methods: small, horse-drawn plows and wagons, and much hand labor. Nationally, however, the 1910s were part of a period of innovation and technological advancement in agriculture, and new farming methods quickly arrived in northeastern Montana. Buoyed with revenue and enthusiasm from the first years of successful crops, many farmers invested in steam or gasoline-powered tractors and combines, allowing individual farmers to effectively cultivate more land. Simultaneously, additional buildings were constructed on the farms, and the original, primitive houses and outbuildings were replaced with larger and more sophisticated designs. By the 1920s, buildings on a successful Sheridan County farm might include a 1 1/2 story Craftsman-style house, a large wood-framed barn with a gambrel or rounded roof, one or more wooden granary buildings, and other outbuildings such as coops, workshops, and cattle feeding sheds.

Both the population of Sheridan County and its agricultural production increased dramatically during the first years of the 1910s. The county's homestead rush ended only when virtually every arable acre of land had been claimed; this included nearly all of the county, with the exception of areas of rugged badlands near Daleview, which were left to the few remaining cattle operations. The result was a very significant change in both the physical landscape of the county and the economic patterns of its inhabitants. By the late 1910s, nearly all of the county displayed visual evidence of human presence; much of the land was in active cultivation, and surveyed section lines were marked by fences and an expanding grid of unpaved county roadways. The county's strong agricultural influence was clearly reflected in the character and composition of the county's towns, as well. Retail businesses existed in greater number and variety, due to the substantial farm population which patronized town businesses. Educational, social, and civic institutions also expanded. The county developed its first substantial wholesaling and warehousing industry, in the form of tall, wooden grain elevators which

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dominated the skyline of every town. Nearly all aspects of the county's development focused, directly or indirectly, on agriculture.

In general, Sheridan County's first years of crop production were highly successful, with encouraging crop yields and relatively high market prices. By the late 1910s, however, a prolonged drought was causing markedly lower crop yields, and wheat prices had collapsed following the end of World War I. The result in Sheridan County, as in much of eastern Montana, was a decline in the number of active farms and farmers, as unsuccessful homesteaders left in search of other opportunities. In much of eastern Montana, the effect of this was catastrophic, resulting in large areas being almost wholly depopulated and returned to open range. The impact on Sheridan County was less dramatic, since much of the land was relatively well-suited for agriculture. Nevertheless, much of the county's relatively unproductive western third was gradually returned to range, and individual homesteads in other parts of the county began to be combined into larger, more productive farm units. This gradual increase in average farm size, made possible in part by a greater reliance on mechanized agriculture, resulted in the creation of farms that could reliably support a family.

The gradual process of farm consolidation continued into the 1940s and beyond. For Sheridan County, the primary consequence of this trend was a gradual reduction in the area's population, appearing first in the rural areas and later in the small towns which relied on the farms for their survival. In the rural landscape, this evolution is reflected by the groups of abandoned farmstead buildings which dot the county's rural roads. At the still-occupied farms, horse-drawn equipment has given way to mechanization, and prefabricated metal buildings supplement the older wooden structures. In other ways, though, the county's agricultural regions are little-changed from the boom years of the 1910s. The rural landscape continues to display seemingly endless fields of wheat, bisected by wire fences and gravel county roads, and dotted with grain elevators at lonely railroad sidings.

Context 3-B: Town-Building and Community Development in Sheridan County, c. 1902 - 1942

Euro-American settlement began in Sheridan County in the early 1880s, nearly thirty years before the arrival of the railroads and the large-scale settlement they encouraged. The area's earliest arrivals established only temporary ranch camps. The first settlements to resemble later patterns and density of population began to appear with the arrival of farmers after the turn of the century. The establishment of the earliest post offices--in 1902 at the site of the first Plentywood and several more in 1905 and 1907--led to the creation of small clusters of businesses nearby. While these places served as gathering points for settlers, they were not towns with formal plats and residential and civic functions.¹⁵⁰

The railroads played a primary role in changing Sheridan County from a sparsely-populated grassland to a region with many small towns and intensive agriculture. The railways provided the first reliable, all-weather transportation; brought in large numbers of settlers; created most of the permanent towns; and tied the people into national networks of transportation, communications, and agricultural exchange.

Between 1910 and 1914 two railways built branch lines across Sheridan County, and railroad subsidiary companies platted eleven new towns in the county. The Great Northern founded Plentywood in 1909 (through the Dakota & Great Northern Townsite Co.); Homestead, Medicine Lake, and Antelope in 1910 (the Medicine Lake Realty Co.); and Archer and Redstone in 1913 (the Northern Town and Land Co.). The Soo Line's townsite subsidiary--the Tri-State Land Co.--platted Westby, Comertown, Dooley, Outlook, and Daleview in 1913-1914. This accounted for all but three of the fourteen towns ever platted in Sheridan County.¹⁵¹

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Railroad towns on the Great Plains

Railways created towns along their lines for two major reasons. They wanted to create local, on-line traffic for their trains by encouraging both rural and community settlement. Furthermore, they wanted to control the placement of commercial centers which would funnel freight traffic to and from the surrounding countryside efficiently, without either duplicative services or gaps. This generally resulted in railroad-platted towns at intervals of seven to ten miles. In theory this placed a community within a one-day round-trip wagon ride for any farmer within a fifteen-to-twenty mile wide corridor centered on the rail line. Along new main lines the creation of new towns and local traffic was secondary to the establishment of long-distance traffic. Hence, town-platting was often delayed or left to independent speculators. On branch lines, however, no through traffic was intended and the immediate creation of local business and locations for shipping were essential to pay construction and operating costs.¹⁵²

Railroads and their townsite subsidiaries sometimes located their new towns close to already existing settlements. Occasionally this was done for engineering reasons--such as when the best route for low gradients, minimum curvature, and the least earthwork lay away from established population centers. More often, however, the railway created a new town, allowing it to control aspects of the town's configuration and makeup, and hopefully generating a profit from lot sales. At several points in Sheridan County, the towns platted by the Soo or GN were the second or even third (in the cases of Westby and Redstone) settlements of that name.¹⁵³

Standardized railroad-platted towns consisted of several parts. Within the right-of-way (station grounds) were the railway's structures--usually station, water tank, section house--and space for lease to industrial or warehouse operators. On the Great Plains, the structures on the right-of-ways included primarily grain elevators, as well as feed mills, stock yards, and dairy processing plants. The right-of-way was a strip of land, up to perhaps 300 feet in width, following the railroad track generally along one edge of a townsite. The rest of the plat consisted of blocks, usually 300 feet square. Within each half block were six 50-foot wide residential lots or twelve 25-foot wide commercial lots. Depth of both residential and commercial lots varied between 130 and 150 feet. Alleys, which usually ran north-south through the middle of blocks, were 20 feet wide. Streets were 60 to 100 feet wide. While railway platters sometimes set aside blocks for schools, parks, or other public use, this did not occur in Sheridan County. The original townsites in Sheridan County ranged in size from six blocks (for instance, at Archer and Homestead) to nineteen full blocks (at Plentywood).¹⁵⁴

By the beginning of the twentieth century, railways had used several types of townsite plats. Almost all of the early plans had streets organized parallel and perpendicular to the alignment of the railway. The first such towns were split by the railway line with businesses facing the tracks. The Northern Pacific used this arrangement often along their main line in the 1880s. It proved unsatisfactory for community cohesiveness, however, and this plan was rarely used after the 1880s. The popular successor plan consisted of a town on one side of the tracks, with the business district concentrated on a street (almost always called Main Street) perpendicular to the tracks--called a "T-town" by geographer John Hudson. A refinement--the "crossed-T town"--located more commercial development on an intersecting street perpendicular to Main Street, moving the town's focus away from the railway. These two types of plats were used dozens of times along the Great Northern main line and its branches. A final type of plat consisted of a townsite on one side of the tracks with the streets aligned to the cardinal directions--north-south and east-west. This pattern reflected layouts which preceded the railways in the United States, and had precedents in eastern North America and in Europe and Asia. The earliest common use of this plat by the railroads on the northern plains was in the late 1890s. It was used extensively by the Milwaukee Road and Soo Line after the turn of the century.¹⁵⁵

Many towns grew beyond the original platted townsites. Additions were platted in a variety of layouts. Often where the original townsite was aligned to the railway--off the north-south and east-west grid--the additions were arranged to the

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cardinal directions, resulting in a town with two grid orientations. Additions made in the mid-twentieth century often had larger residential lots and curved streets. All of these variations are evident in Plentywood. Development could, of course, occur beyond the platted parts of towns. With the growth of auto and truck transportation, commercial "strips" along highways approaching towns became common, and some residential development took place on individual lots carved from agricultural land.

Railroad towns in Sheridan County

The six towns platted by the Great Northern's land companies in Sheridan County represent the uniformity of railroad-platted towns. Except for occasional larger gaps--including one just inside the Fort Peck Indian Reservation--these towns were spaced six to eight miles apart. All the towns were east or north of the railway and had their streets parallel and perpendicular to the tracks. Main Street--with two or three blocks of commercial lots on each side--and other named streets were perpendicular to the railway. Half the towns (Plentywood, Homestead, Archer) were of the T-town layout; the others (Medicine Lake, Antelope, Redstone) were crossed-T towns. Railroad Avenue was next to the tracks; similarly, numbered avenues were parallel to the railway.¹⁵⁶

The five towns platted by the Tri-State Land Co. for the Soo Line had more variety among them. They were spaced from eight to ten miles apart. All shared some characteristics, including street grids aligned north-south and east-west. Main Street--with two or three blocks of commercial lots--and other named streets ran north-south; numbered avenues ran east-west. Of the five towns, Daleview was the only exception to the above--in it, the grid was turned ninety degrees. Two of the towns (Comertown and Daleview) were of a T-town type; three (Westby, Outlook, and Dooley) had the crossed-T layout. In two of the towns, one street was platted off the grid of cardinal directions. Called Front Avenue in Westby and Railroad Avenue in Comertown, it ran next to and parallel to the Soo tracks. Another unusual aspect of platting was in Dooley, which was located about 400 feet from the railway.¹⁵⁷

Other towns in Sheridan County

The three towns in Sheridan County not platted by railways displayed a variety of forms. In 1911 the General Land Office platted the townsite of Reserve for the U.S. Indian Service. Reserve was located on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in a gap in the regular spacing of GN towns. The townsite was planned with several unusual features. The blocks are larger than normal (300 by 400 feet) but maintain the fifty-foot-wide residential lots. Streets are oriented in the cardinal directions. Lettered streets run east-west; numbered streets run north-south. The town was platted on both sides of the railway; the right-of-way makes an awkward, diagonal swath across the plat. Several odd-shaped blocks on the edge of the townsite were designated as public reserves and a school reserve. Because taverns were not allowed within the reservation, a group of such establishments congregated just east of the platted town, across Big Muddy Creek.¹⁵⁸

On the Soo Line--in the only gap in its evenly-spaced towns across the county--local settlers established Raymond. Its grid was more conventional and resembled a Soo-sponsored town: Main and numbered streets ran east-west, named streets ran north-south. Railroad Avenue was next to the tracks.¹⁵⁹

The town of Dagmar is quite different. It was established--without a plat and away from a railway line--in 1907 as the center of a rural colony of Danish immigrants. The town was not officially platted until 1959, when a court decision mandated the creation of a plat to codify lot boundaries. Dagmar's plat displays an irregular rectangular grid and very large, unevenly-sized lots, reflecting existing conditions rather than serving as a guide for future development.¹⁶⁰

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Other small communities also existed in Sheridan County. They were away from railway lines and were never platted. The largest of these was Coalridge. The presence of coal in amounts that made mining feasible led to the creation of a small business and social center by 1910. After changes in mining activities, the community was moved to its present location in 1924. On a smaller scale, places like Welliver never consisted of more than a post office-general store, a community hall, and a few houses.¹⁶¹

Success and failure of Sheridan County towns

The success of a townsite venture could be measured in several ways. The platters and promoters working with the railways wanted the rapid sale of lots and a quick return on their investment. John Hudson, in his study of northcentral North Dakota, found that few townsites platted after 1905 fulfilled this expectation. The railways wanted a reliable and ever-growing source of freight traffic. The visual measure of this in Sheridan County was the grain elevators built next to the tracks in each town (see Context 3-F). For the citizens and merchants who purchased lots and became residents, success consisted mainly of long-term stability and growth of both population and economic activity (see Context 3-G).¹⁶²

Several towns in Sheridan County were successful by at least one of the above measures. The best examples--in terms of population and commercial growth and stability--are in Plentywood, Medicine Lake, and Westby. All three were incorporated as towns in the 1910s and gained residents through the drought and depression decades of the 1920s and 1930s. There are several factors which might explain this stability. Perhaps most importantly, the three were all on the improved road system within the county which had developed by the late 1930s and far enough from each other (twenty to twenty-five miles) to not share local market areas. All three towns had their origins in unplatted settlements which preceded the railways. In response, they were laid out with more blocks (fifteen or nineteen) than most other Sheridan County townsites (each six to twelve blocks). Plentywood was easily the most successful of the towns, and its success relative to the others increased as the years passed; the town benefitted greatly from the added activity caused by its designation as county seat.¹⁶³

The rest of the towns in Sheridan County declined for decades after short initial periods of growth. Two--Antelope and Outlook--were incorporated in the 1910s. The former--only eight miles from Plentywood on the main road--began to lose population in the 1920s and was disincorporated the following decade. Outlook was the only incorporated town not on either of the state roads in Sheridan County. Its population declined from the 1920s through the 1940s. The other towns never incorporated, and hence were not specifically enumerated by the federal census. Other than Plentywood, Medicine Lake, and Westby, Sheridan County and most of its communities suffered from the range of problems affecting the Great Plains and rural America. Population declined due to farm failures and consolidations; most people displaced in these ways moved out of the region. The increased use of the automobile over improved roads led to the concentration of shopping, banking, and entertainment at a few towns at the expense of the many. The latter were often reduced to just a few economic and civic functions--grain shipping, postal service, and rare retail outlets.¹⁶⁴

The creation and growth of towns in Sheridan County represent the impact of the railroad on the human landscape of the Great Plains. In turn, the decline of many of the towns reflects the ascendancy of the automobile and truck at the expense of the railways and animal-powered conveyances. More significantly, though, the cycle of town growth and decline reflects the exuberance and optimism of the turn-of-the-century homestead era, and the belated realization that much of that optimism was untenable.

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Context 3-C: Residential Architecture in Sheridan County, c. 1881-1941

Sheridan County is the product of a surprisingly brief period of Euro-American settlement and development. The first permanent Euro-American houses in the county were probably not erected until the beginning of the twentieth century, and within perhaps fifteen years the region was settled more densely than ever before or since. Following this initial period of rapid settlement, Sheridan County's population began a long, slow period of decline, never regaining the vitality that it had during those first few years. The county's historic period, then, contains only *one* period of strong, sustained growth -- and one period when the rate of new building construction was high. That period consists of much of the 1910s and 1920s. Most of Sheridan County's historic residential buildings date from this time, giving the county's early residential architecture an unusually high level of similarity and visual cohesiveness.

The residential architecture which remains in Sheridan County, though, rarely includes the earliest houses in a given area. The area's first Euro-American residences were quickly and cheaply built, as part of the initial settlement process. Many of these buildings were of sod; others may have been constructed of log where a timber source was available. All were probably single-level buildings, consisting of only one or two rooms. These houses were seldom intended for long-term use, and nearly all were probably abandoned by the early 1930s. No earth-walled houses are known to remain in Sheridan County in 1992, although at least two examples of pioneer log construction survive.

The period of sod and log house construction in Sheridan County was relatively brief; by the early years of the twentieth century, nearly all new houses (and other buildings, as well) were being constructed of sawn lumber. Sheridan County's relatively treeless landscape meant that commercial lumber had to be brought in from elsewhere, and therefore the construction of sawn lumber buildings hinged on the development of a transportation infrastructure to serve Sheridan County. This had begun to occur by the 1880s; the completion of the Great Northern Railway's main line south of the county in 1887 meant that much of the county was only a two-day wagon trip from a railhead. This greatly eased the chore of obtaining retail goods (including building materials) by the region's few residents. It is likely that the builders of at least some of the county's log and sod houses took advantage of the region's nascent retail economy by utilizing doors, windows, or other hardware in their construction projects.

The informal townsites which began springing up in Sheridan County soon after the beginning of the twentieth century (see Context 3-B) probably hosted the first significant numbers of wood-framed residences, although contemporary farmsteads also began utilizing wood-frame construction. The adoption of sawn wood as a building material was facilitated by the continually improving transportation into the county, primarily the completion of two railroad lines across the county between 1909 and 1913. The change indicated the beginning of a transition from "frontier" building methods and forms to construction styles more typical of settled rural regions. In size, craftsmanship, and style, however, the county's first wood-frame buildings still bore a strong resemblance to their sod and log predecessors. The houses were mostly small and fairly primitive, and often built without foundations; the latter characteristic allowed for the house's easy relocation as necessary. Again, these houses were often intended only as interim living quarters, intended for replacement if or when a family's financial circumstances permitted. Relatively few of these "first generation" houses (rural or urban) remain; nearly all that do survive have stood abandoned for decades.

Most of the county's "first generation" rural and urban houses were probably either abandoned or replaced fairly quickly, generally within the first decade of a site's occupation. The replacement houses (most constructed in the late 1910s and 1920s) displayed increasing efforts by Sheridan County residents to construct homes reflecting the nationwide architectural fashions of the period. Reflecting the county's status as an increasingly settled, diverse community, the region's "second generation" houses were characterized by an increased variety of size and configuration, improved construction quality, and the first attempts at decorative detail. Many, if not most, of these houses display varieties of

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Craftsman detailing, in common with national fashions of the time. Lesser numbers of houses utilized other building forms, primarily vernacular Colonial Revival variants. A few later homes imitated a variety of other styles, including Picturesque Revivals, Mission, and Cape Cod. Almost all later houses were constructed of wood.

Nearly all Sheridan County houses were relatively modest. A typical Craftsman farmhouse in Sheridan County might have included a four-room first floor with a dormered second story containing three bedrooms. A cellar or partial basement and an inset front porch often completed the plan. With a few exceptions, the county's in-town houses were generally smaller and less detailed. The tree-lined streetscapes with large, prosperous turn-of-the-century homes which graced many small towns are noticeably rare in Sheridan County. Among the county's historic houses, though, there are visible variations in the amount of stylistic detail, depending on the original size and cost of the house.

As with other aspects of Sheridan County's history, the "boom" period of Sheridan County housing construction was busy but relatively brief. Few permanent homes were constructed in the county prior to the 1910s, when local prosperity brought by the homestead era was at its peak. Simultaneously, the county's long population decline following the collapse of the homestead era lessened the need for new home construction. These events resulted in a brief period of relatively intense home construction, beginning just before World War I and continuing into the late 1920s. By far the largest body of historic homes in the county today consists of houses constructed during this period. Consequently, the cultural (?-Chere wondering) landscape of residential architecture in Sheridan County is unusually cohesive, largely featuring Craftsman residences from the second and third decade of the twentieth century.

Context 3-D: Transportation and Communications Systems in Sheridan County, c. 1881 - 1942

Trails and early roads

The first historic transportation routes into Sheridan County were trails and primitive roads serving the early ranchers and farmers. These routes reached the county from railways to the south and east. Most of the trails used in the 1880s and 1890s were not clearly defined. After the turn of the century, a couple of well-defined routes emerged. Culbertson, on the Great Northern Railway along the Missouri River, was the southern terminus for the mail stage line which began service on a road from there to the first Plentywood in 1902. Between 1906 and 1913, the Ambrose Trail ran west from the Soo Line end-of-track at the North Dakota town of the same name (twenty-five miles from the Montana border). The trail ran westward, near a route followed by the Soo Line construction in 1913, into the northeast corner of Montana. Over the Ambrose Trail travelled farming settlers who came to the northern plains on Soo immigrant trains, freight wagons, and mail to the first settlement of Westby. Surviving into the early automobile era, the trail became a primitive road; at the eastern end in Sheridan County it was known as the Comertown-Westby Road.¹⁶⁵

Railroads

The arrival of the railways into the county in the early 1910s brought the first efficient, all-weather transportation to the area and tied it into the national, industrial economy. The Great Northern Railway reached northeastern Montana in 1887 and completed its main line from St. Paul to Seattle in 1893. Between the Red River of the North and northern Idaho, its line lay within seventy-five miles of the Canadian border. As only a few other railways had lines in the area between the border and the GN, this railroad assumed that it would carry almost all the traffic to and from this corridor. Like most railroads, it expected its shippers to come to the main line--it was reluctant to build branches to shorten the wagon haul of people several days' journey away. Often only the threat of a competing railway encroaching on territory it considered its own could make the GN heed requests for branches. The Soo Line did this.¹⁶⁶

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By 1905 the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie was an important railway in the northern Great Plains. Usually called the Soo Line and controlled by the Canadian Pacific Railway since 1888, it had main lines connecting the Twin Cities with Chicago and the Canadian border at Sault Ste. Marie, at a point south of Winnipeg, and at Portal, North Dakota, seventy miles east of the eastern border of Montana. In the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Soo challenged the Great Northern throughout much of northern North Dakota, particularly in the corridor between GN's main line and the Canadian border. This "railway war" resulted in the construction of hundreds of miles of branch lines and the platting of dozens of townsites. Toward the end of this era, this competition moved westward to the northeastern corner of Montana.¹⁶⁷

Both the GN and the Soo built their branches in Sheridan County in stages. The Soo built from Flaxton, North Dakota, on the Minneapolis-Portal main line, west to Ambrose in 1906. In the following years, as the Soo considered extending westward into Montana, the GN responded by planning a branch into Sheridan County from its main line along the Missouri River. A new railway conflict began. Grading of the GN line north from Bainville to Plentywood began in 1909 and tracklaying was completed the next year. In Sheridan County the track ran close to the course of Big Muddy Creek. In the early 1910s, both the GN and Soo considered westward extensions from their existing railheads. In 1913 both companies resumed and completed construction. The Soo's line--located only four to nine miles south of the Canadian border in Sheridan County--reached Whitetail. Besides serving its immediate corridor in the United States, this branch also provided the closest rail transportation for the adjacent townships of Saskatchewan. (The Dakota, Missouri Valley & Western has operated this line since 1990.) The GN built west from Plentywood along Big Muddy Creek to Redstone and Scobey, keeping ten to fifteen miles south of the international boundary. (The further extension to Opheim was completed in 1926 and abandoned in 1991; since 1970 the branch has been part of the Burlington Northern RR.) In western Sheridan County, the two railways are only five to nine miles apart. The pattern of railways in Sheridan County was complete.¹⁶⁸

Two other rail lines affected Sheridan County. While they did not enter it, they were close enough to change traffic patterns around the edges of the county. The GN completed a branch from Stanley to Grenora, North Dakota in 1916. Grenora, only five miles from the eastern edge of Sheridan County, was the closest railhead for the area south of Coalridge and east of Dagmar. A branch line in Saskatchewan also had an effect. At the end of the 1920s the Canadian Pacific Railway completed a line to the town of Minton, twenty miles directly north of Raymond--and twelve miles above the Canadian border. This drew traffic from the Minton area which had previously gone to Sheridan County towns for shipment on the Soo Line. Although it was farther from any part of Sheridan County than the GN or Soo, it offered farmers in the northern part of the county alternative rates and routes not available in the United States.¹⁶⁹

For many decades, the Soo and GN provided a wide range of transportation services to Sheridan County. Before automobiles, trucks, and improved roads became common in the 1920s and 1930s, the railways were essential for almost all transportation beyond local travel. They carried passengers, mail, express, and all kinds of freight, in small (less-than-carload) and large shipments. In the first several decades of operation, traffic on both lines probably consisted of a passenger train and freight train in each direction five or six days a week, with extra freights to carry grain during and after harvest. Between the 1920s and 1950s, road transportation gradually took from the railways all but freight shipments in carload lots and larger. Passenger service lasted through most of the 1950s, consisting in the last years of mixed freight-passenger trains on the Soo and self-propelled motor cars on the GN. The Soo and GN carried the county's mail in Railway Post Offices into the early and late 1950s, respectively. Less-than-carload freight traffic ended within the following decade. Railroads remained vital for carrying out grain and bringing in agricultural supplies such as fertilizer.¹⁷⁰

The presence of the railways in Sheridan County consisted of those features, structures, and employees found in small towns and rural areas throughout the United States. The primary feature was the track--a single line with passing and

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industry sidings--with the parallel pole line for telegraph and telephone communications. At towns were standardized passenger-freight stations staffed by agent-telegraphers and section houses and tool sheds for maintenance-of-way workers. Because of the lack of main lines or terminals in Sheridan County, the number of railroaders was low. In 1940 the GN and Soo had thirty-five men and two women as employees.¹⁷¹

Roads and bridges

The road system of Sheridan County evolved over several decades. Until the late 1920s, it consisted of many miles of unimproved dirt roads, both following section lines and cutting diagonally across the land survey system. The popularity of auto and truck transport led to pressure for improving the road network. This began on trunk routes and moved outward to places like Sheridan County.

The development of the highway system was clarified by the 1930s. In 1916 Congress approved federal aid to states for road building; a decade later the system of numbered federal roads was instituted. The northernmost east-west route in the country--U.S. 2--ran next to the GN main line, seventeen miles south of the southern border of Sheridan County. While some of this route was graveled by 1925, no tributary roads--such as into Sheridan County--were improved. By 1932 some of the Culbertson-Plentywood road was improved (such as surfaced with gravel); the rest of the route next to the GN branch line was of graded dirt. By the end of the decade, much had changed.¹⁷²

Sheridan County had a diverse road system at the end of the 1930s. State route 16 ran between Sidney and the Canadian border north of Raymond, passing through Medicine Lake, Plentywood, and Raymond. It provided a direct connection with U.S. 2 at Culbertson. South of Plentywood it was paved; to the north it was graveled or otherwise improved. State route 5 ran east-west between the North Dakota border at Westby--through Plentywood and Redstone--and Daniels County. It was paved west of Plentywood and improved to the east. (These state roads remain virtually unchanged today, with only a few changes in alignment.) All the other roads in the county were of ungraded dirt.¹⁷³

With the development of the road system came bridges. The earliest crossings of creeks were most likely fords at places of low banks, shallow water, and solid creek beds. With the creation of Sheridan County in 1913, the issue of bridges at certain crossings became more important than it had been to Valley County commissioners in Glasgow. For people south and west of Big Muddy Creek, separated by that watercourse from most of the towns and grain elevators in the county, bridges were obviously important. Groups of citizens in a locality could petition the county commissioners to approve the construction of such crossings. In the following years, several similar bridges--mainly sixty-foot, single-span, riveted Warren pony trusses -- were erected over Big Muddy Creek.¹⁷⁴

Communications

The beginnings of modern communications systems preceded the railways into Sheridan County by less than a decade. The first post office was established at the original site of Plentywood in 1902. Others followed: Redstone in 1905, and Medicine Lake, Coalridge, Daleview, and Dagmar in 1907. In 1908 telecommunications reached the county, in the form of a telephone line from Culbertson to Plentywood; the line was extended to Redstone in 1909. The county's telephone network was expanded by various local firms, such as the Antelope Telephone Co., which after its creation in 1914 built lines from Antelope to Dagmar, Coalridge, and Reserve. The early telephone lines probably ranged from wires on crossarms high on peeled poles to a single wire attached to fenceposts. The telegraph came to Sheridan County with the railways, using their pole lines and locating agencies in their stations.¹⁷⁵

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In the first four decades of the twentieth century, modern transportation and communications helped change Sheridan County from a remote, sparsely-settled rangeland to a well-populated region with a network of railway tracks, roads, and wires of telecommunications.

Context 3-E: Educational, Religious, and Civic Activities in Sheridan County, c. 1902-1941

Inevitably, new Euro-American settlement on the northern Great Plains during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was accompanied by the development of civic, cultural and community institutions designed to serve a region's new residents. Such organizations filled a variety of social needs, as perceived by the settlers: the need for government, for organized education, for religious and social organization. The creation of such institutions was a major component of the settlers' communal effort to impose their concept of "civilization" on the frontier they inhabited; consequently, the types of social institutions created, and the methods of their formation, are reflections of the social and political attitudes and needs of the settlers. While these institutions evolved at different rates, and took varying forms, social organizations in each of the following broad groups were nearly ubiquitous in agricultural regions across the northern plains:

- ▶ **Local government organizations:** A variety of local government entities were established in Great Plains regions. The county served as the basic rural political subdivision below the territory or state level, and provided a variety of services, including law enforcement, deed registry, property assessment, and road construction and maintenance. In some heavily settled rural areas, parts of these functions (primarily road maintenance) were delegated to formally organized townships; this seldom took place in Montana, however. Platted townsites which achieved a level of size and perceived permanence could become incorporated villages, towns, or cities; these entities could assume some law enforcement and other duties from the counties, and could provide the additional services required by an urban population, such as zoning regulations or the construction of water and sewer systems.

Each of these entities constructed buildings and other structures in the course of fulfilling their administrative roles. These facilities included courthouses, township and city halls, jails, waterworks, maintenance buildings, and others. In addition to their civic functions, some of these buildings also filled other roles, such as hosting social, fraternal, or civic events.

- ▶ **Educational organizations:** The development of a public education system was generally among the earliest group concerns of a newly-settled region. In the northern plains, most public schools were sponsored by organized school districts which oversaw the construction and operation of a single rural or town school, within guidelines set by both state and county agencies. State agencies provided these districts with sample building plans for schools, and other forms of assistance and supervision.¹⁷⁶ Rural schools were numerous, with each serving a relatively small area to reduce travel by schoolchildren. Most rural school districts operated a one-room schoolhouse which provided only elementary-grade instruction. School districts in the towns often constructed larger buildings to handle greater numbers of students, and high schools were gradually established in many towns. Some of these high schools operated dormitories for the use of rural children who lived beyond commuting distance of a high school.
- ▶ **Religious organizations:** Organized religious activities often quickly appeared in newly-settled areas, as well. More than other cultural institutions, however, the establishment of local churches depended on the social and ethnic characteristics of a region's settlers. In much of the agricultural West, the initial settlement of a specific region was dominated by members of one ethnic or cultural group, and church buildings intended for that dominant group appeared relatively soon after settlement. In Sheridan County, this is most apparent in the Danish settlements near Dagmar, although the large number of rural Lutheran churches suggests a strong Scandinavian presence across much

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of the county. (Some of these churches initially offered services in both Norwegian and English.) A more diverse religious presence generally appeared only in the larger towns.

- ▶ **Social and fraternal organizations:** Social and fraternal organizations developed less frequently and evolved more slowly than other forms of civic institutions. Since participation in such activities was normally considered recreational rather than necessary, the development of social and fraternal groups often waited until the population and economy of an area had begun to stabilize following the initial rush of settlement. The local organization of such groups in farm areas was further inhibited by the scattered pattern of rural settlement -- in many regions, there were simply not enough people to support active fraternal groups. Most traditional fraternal organizations, therefore, were found in the towns, and many mid-sized Great Plains communities ultimately hosted chapters of the Odd Fellows, Masons, or Modern Woodmen of America. While such organizations seldom existed in rural areas, Grange associations or groups reflecting a particular ethnic heritage could be found there. Most chapters of all of these groups met in rooms or halls specifically intended for that purpose. While some met in meeting rooms of public buildings or had separate meeting areas in urban retail buildings, the majority constructed and maintained their own buildings.

The buildings in these four broad categories reflect a wide variety of purpose. They all share a common thread, however, in that they were built for community rather than private benefit. Within this generalization, however, there are a number of subtypes. Some buildings were constructed by and for the group as a whole: schools, jails, community halls, and others. Others were built by and for a defined minority within the larger group: churches were sponsored by members of their congregation, ethnic and political halls by individuals sharing a common heritage or cause, grange and township halls by farmers working in a given geographic area.

In Sheridan County, as elsewhere in the west, few if any buildings with a purely civic purpose were constructed during the earliest period of Euro-American settlement. The construction of buildings to house such institutions understandably waited until the more immediate personal concerns of shelter and livelihood were handled. By the early 1900s, though, the county's patterns of settlement were becoming well-established, and population density was increasing rapidly; this allowed for the relatively rapid development of civic institutions, often within just a few months of an area's first settlement. The Danish community of Dagmar, for example, met to make concrete plans for establishment of a school, church, and cemetery during the first spring the group lived in Sheridan County. Nearby Antelope operated its first school in 1904, soon after the arrival of the first significant numbers of farmers and six years before the formal platting of the town.¹⁷⁷ The establishment of an elementary school was generally undertaken first, followed by churches and still later by governmental and other civic buildings. Often, the establishment of the institution preceded the construction of a building to house it, and the first school terms or seasons of church sermons would be held at a private home, a large retail building, or other available space.

Unlike retail buildings, which were community-centered, and residential buildings, which were community or farm-centered, civic buildings were often highly dispersed. While nearly all of Sheridan County's platted townsites included a school and one or more churches, a larger number of civic buildings were scattered across rural areas according to population density. Such buildings were usually isolated structures, often far from other areas of development. The locations chosen for rural churches and schools often reflected the approximate centerpoint of a loosely-knit rural community; school districts were often organized by township, with the school site near the center of the township. Buildings sites also needed to be accessible, and most were therefore alongside county section-line roads. Finally, an effort was occasionally made to find a visually appealing site -- usually on a hilltop. This made the building visible for a greater distance, and also provided something of a view from the building itself.

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Although Sheridan County's civic buildings varied somewhat in design and configuration, in many cases the variations were relatively minor. Almost all of the county's small churches, for example, were gable-roofed buildings with center steeples on the entry façade. Most schools were small gable or hip-roofed buildings with entry vestibules on the south or east wall, and a single large bank of windows on the left wall of the classroom. In all cases, the meeting room (classroom, chapel, or social hall) was the most important feature of the building and occupied almost all of its interior space. Ancillary rooms were generally limited to cloakrooms, vestibules, closets, or storerooms; these small rooms were often located near the building's entry area.

In common with most other classes of buildings in Sheridan County, by far the largest number of the area's civic and community buildings were constructed during the homestead boom period preceding World War I. As the county's population declined in the years that followed, fewer civic buildings were necessary and most that existed were abandoned and not replaced. The only significant exception to this is in Plentywood, where additional buildings have been constructed through the years, and where most of the older school and church buildings have been replaced, from the 1960s on. Elsewhere in Sheridan County, relatively few civic buildings remain in active use, but many small rural churches and schools, now long abandoned, still dot the county landscape.

Context 3-F: Warehousing and Industry in Sheridan County, c. 1902 - 1942

Since the arrival of the first Euro-Americans, the economy of Sheridan County has been almost entirely agricultural, concentrating on the production of wheat and other grains. This is reflected in the types of industrial and warehousing activity present in the county. The functions of purchasing, warehousing, and transporting wheat have historically been filled by the country grain elevator, and in Sheridan County grain elevators are by far the most common and visually striking industrial structures, as they have been throughout the county's twentieth-century history.

Sheridan County Grain Elevators

The grain elevator is one of the most distinctive symbols of agriculture and railroad-era settlement on the Great Plains. Its tall profile dominates the skylines of thousands of towns on the prairies, visible from a distance when nothing else but perhaps a water tower and church spire can be seen above the curve of the land. Grain elevators are where farmers and local grain dealers meet the railways and the international market.

Most grain elevators fall into one of two major and several minor types. Country elevators serve as initial gathering points for the crops, from which the grains are shipped to terminal elevators at major railyards or at ports on the Great Lakes, rivers, and seacoasts. Crops also moved to receiving elevators at processing facilities, such as flour mills, macaroni plants, and breweries. A small number of elevators with small storage capacities served mainly to transfer or clean grain. All of the elevators in Sheridan County were country elevators.¹⁷⁸

The country grain elevator was the first stage in shipping crops to their final destination. With grain stored in the main structure and sometimes in additional cylindrical bins, an average country elevator had a capacity of 30,000 to 50,000 bushels, with some larger examples holding up to 100,000 bushels. (A bushel is about 1.25 cubic feet in volume, or sixty pounds of wheat.) Farmers brought grain--direct from the fields during harvest or from silos on their land--in wagon or truck loads of 100 to 150 bushels each. The country elevator stored--after sometimes drying or cleaning--the grain until ready for shipment to market. Elevator managers arranged transportation and oversaw the loading of rail boxcars (which carried about 2,000 bushels). [Now most grain moves in either railroad covered hopper cars or trucks.] Some country elevators also sold certain agricultural, construction, and fuel supplies, such as seed, lumber, and coal.¹⁷⁹

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Ownership of grain elevators fell into three main categories. Line elevators were owned by a company which located them along the tracks of an affiliated railway. For instance, the St. Anthony & Dakota Elevator Co. had about 150 country elevators along the lines of the Great Northern Railway in 1904. Independent owners and grain buyers also had individual elevators. In response to the local near-monopoly power exercised by the private owners, farmers often organized their own elevator operations. These cooperatives became common as farmers sought to control the flow of and returns from their crops after it left their land.¹⁸⁰

All of the known commercial grain elevators in Sheridan County were located in towns along the Great Northern and Soo Line rail branches. One of the railroads' criteria for locating townsites was to insure that a town--and grain elevator--was within one day's wagon journey (fifteen to twenty miles) for most farmers within a corridor extending outward eight to ten miles from the rail line. In Sheridan County--as elsewhere on the Great Plains--this resulted in towns spaced at intervals of six to ten miles. In Sheridan County virtually all named stations along the railways had grain elevators within a couple years after the rail line was completed.¹⁸¹

Grain elevators in Sheridan County quickly followed the arrival of the railways. By 1912--two years after the completion of the GN line to Plentywood--there were thirteen elevators in five communities along the route. With an average capacity each of 30,000 bushels, this amounted to 390,000 bushels of storage space. Plentywood's three elevators had a combined capacity of 90,000 bushels; that year, however, some 600,000 bushels of grain were shipped from Plentywood station. Two years later, with the rail system in Sheridan County completed, thirteen places had thirty-four elevators with a total capacity of 965,000 bushels. The number of elevators in each GN town ranged from Archer with just one elevator to Antelope and Medicine Lake, each of which had four. Elevators along the Soo had a slightly smaller average capacity, with individual operations having approximate capacities of from 20,000 to 30,000 bushels. In 1914 the greatest amount of grain storage available in the county was at Outlook, where five elevators offered 140,000-bushel total capacity.¹⁸²

In many grain-producing regions of the northern plains, two or three major companies dominated grain elevator ownership in a local area. Often, a company would construct and operate elevators at many towns along a railroad's branch. This practice was apparently less common in Sheridan County, although local patterns of elevator ownership remain incompletely documented. Most towns initially had one or more locally-owned elevator companies, operating either as the for-profit ventures of local businessmen, or as cooperatives established by area farmers. Other local elevators were constructed by larger companies working to establish an economic presence in the county. Among the companies operating multiple elevators in Sheridan County were Montana & Dakota, Occident, and Victoria. As the twentieth century progressed, a larger percentage of the county's elevators were operated by regional or national companies, and the number of locally-owned elevators declined. The total number of active elevators declined as well, and the capacity of the surviving elevators increased.

In 1922 the county had thirty-two elevators, a decline of two from eight years earlier. Most owners had only one elevator in the county. Several firms had two elevators--one in each of two towns along the same rail line. Only one company--the Montana & Dakota Elevator Co.--had three elevators in Sheridan County. It had two on the GN (Homestead and Plentywood) and one on the Soo (Raymond). The presence of line companies was minimal--for instance, the St. Anthony & Dakota Elevator Co. had only one elevator in the county, at Medicine Lake. Nine elevators had names including the word "Farmers," ranging from the Farmers Elevator Co. in Homestead and Outlook to the Farmers Co-operative Elevator & Trading Co. in Comertown. Whether all or most of these were cooperative elevators is unknown.¹⁸³

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Other Forms of Warehousing and Industry

Although Sheridan County's economy was heavily dependent on the growing of small grains, a variety of other manufacturing and industrial enterprises also took place in the county, albeit on a generally small scale. Most were related to agricultural production in some way. Feed mills (at Antelope, Plentywood, Westby and elsewhere) prepared and mixed grain for livestock feed, and sold ranching supplies. Stockyards at several locations held cattle and sheep awaiting shipment to market by rail, or later by truck. Plentywood boasted a small co-operative creamery which processed raw milk from the county's dairy farms. As with the more-common grain elevators, most of the county's other agricultural processing and warehousing activities were located on leased industrial lots along railroad rights-of-way. Few, if any, of these historic operations survive today.¹⁸⁴

Non-agricultural industry in the county was significantly less common. By the 1920s, the larger townsites included one or more bulk oil stations, which received shipments of petroleum products (usually by rail) for resale to local residents and retailers. Most local manufacturing activity was of a small scale and very short-lived. A small brick plant, for example, briefly existed at Redstone, and a one-time resident of Archer reportedly operated both a tiny cigar factory and a facility that manufactured circus wagons.¹⁸⁵

Mining and other energy development has also occurred in Sheridan County since the early years of the twentieth century. Extensive coal veins exist just below the surface in several parts of the county, particularly near Daleview and Coalridge. Commercial mines operated near both towns, and other coal outcrops were informally utilized by farmers as a fuel source. Both the Coalridge and Daleview mines operated primarily to provide fuel to county residents; the Coalridge mine was established as a stock cooperative among local farmers. Commercial coal mining in the county ended with the closure of the Acme mine in Coalridge in 1968, and the sites of both the Coalridge and Daleview mines have been reclaimed by the Montana Department of State Lands.¹⁸⁶ More recently, large areas of the county have been explored for oil and gas reserves, and significant drilling and extraction has taken place. Nearly all this activity, however, occurred after the close of the historic period.

Context 3-G: Retail Trade and Commerce in Sheridan County, c. 1902-1942

History

In common with much of the northern plains, the evolution of retail trade and commerce in Sheridan County was dependent on both the rate and pattern of Euro-American settlement in the region. The earliest settlers were scattered and largely self-sufficient; their numbers were too small to support formalized local retail activity, and perhaps as a consequence early ranchers utilized a means of living which required only infrequent trips to a trade center. Retail purchases at such locations were primarily limited to bulk quantities of foodstuffs which could not be locally produced (such as coffee and sugar), along with those carpentry and tack supplies which could not be easily home-made. In rural frontier areas, a single general store was normally equipped to provide all the retail goods, regardless of type, that a settler was likely to need. Most of Sheridan County's first settlers utilized trade centers to the south of the county, either along the Missouri River, or, after 1887, along the main line of the Great Northern Railway.

Frontier trade centers often included a second, more compelling attraction for rural settlers, as well: a rural post office. Access to a nearby post office filled important social needs for the settlers: the mail waiting there provided the only means of contact with friends and relatives who lived elsewhere, and the arrival of newspapers and magazines helped further ease a settler's sense of isolation. Some rural post offices were established at the farm or ranch house of the first

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postmaster, but others often operated in conjunction with isolated general stores. The latter proved to be an efficient arrangement, since it allowed one individual or family to operate both enterprises, and permitted rural settlers to handle both retail and postal transactions with one stop.

The combined appeal of post office and store often led to their location becoming a local center of social activity. As a region's population grew and other community-based institutions began to appear, they were often placed near a country post office. Similarly, when an area's population grew large enough to support additional, more specialized retail businesses, the newer enterprises were almost always located near the nucleus of the first post office and store. In many cases, then, the establishment of a post office/general store combination signified the incipient arrival of a new frontier town, and was the foundation upon which future urban development could occur -- if the area's economy later proved to merit it.

In Sheridan County, this informal, evolutionary process of town-building occurred several times, resulting in an irregularly-spaced series of small retail centers. Most of the county's current platted communities, including Plentywood, Outlook, Medicine Lake, Redstone, and Westby, began in this way. When the railroad companies established formally-platted townsites in the county in the early 1910s, businesses at most informal townsites quickly migrated to that town's platted successor community and helped form its initial retail core. Once the county's series of platted townsites was in place (by the mid-1910s), they became the site of nearly all the county's future retail development and activity.

The establishment of Sheridan County's platted townsites altered the county's retail business environment in a number of ways. The formal establishment of the towns strengthened their positions as centers of community life. The towns' existence also led to the arrival of Sheridan County's first non-rural settlers; businessmen, railroaders, and others whose livelihood did not depend directly on the land. In contrast with farmers and ranchers, most townspeople depended almost exclusively on retail trade when acquiring the necessities of life. These changes resulted in an increased demand for local retail businesses in the county. Simultaneously, the arrival of the railroads and slow improvements in vehicular transportation greatly eased the process of bringing trade goods into the county, while making the local trade centers more accessible to rural residents.

Throughout the 1910s, as Sheridan County's new townsites quickly achieved at least moderate levels of prosperity, the area's patterns of retail trade changed rapidly and significantly. With the exception of a few areas still well-removed from rail lines (such as Dagmar and Coalridge), the era of the isolated rural general store/post office largely drew to a close. In its place grew organized commercial districts in most of the platted towns. This introduced a variety of concepts to the county's retail trade: increased specialization, local competition, and an expanded variety of goods. Where a community in 1908 might have had only one or two stores selling general merchandise, a decade later it might boast a dozen or more specialized retail establishments. By the mid-1910s, for example, the townsite of Westby counted:

... two large general stores, two meat markets, three stores handling groceries, four wholesale houses, two barber shops, two pool rooms, two saloons, two livery barns, one bank, one hotel, three elevators, one garage, two rooming houses, four restaurants, one moving picture show, two lumber yards, three real estate offices, two blacksmith shops, three hardware stores, one drug store, one bowling alley, three dray lines, one confectionery store, a cream station about to be started, two implement houses, electric light plant, feed mill, two oil stations, one dairy farm, one newspaper, one millinery store, doctor, lawyer, one exclusive gents furnishing store, one photograph gallery.¹⁸⁷

Although each of Sheridan County's platted communities experienced a significant level of retail growth and diversity during the 1910s, the amount of such growth varied from town to town. Westby, Medicine Lake and Plentywood soon

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emerged as the county's largest retail centers, perhaps due in part to the geographical separation between the three towns. From the beginning, Plentywood was the largest and most important commercial center in the county, benefitting both from its central location and its early designation as the Sheridan County seat. Still, nearly all of the smaller communities offered at least a basic assortment of commercial services during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, including mercantile stores, lumberyards, implement dealers, liverys, and banks.

Beginning in the 1920s, and continuing for the next three to four decades, the commercial districts of the smaller Sheridan County towns underwent a gradual, but permanent decline. In part, this was caused by the county's declining number of farmers, but an equally important factor was growth of private motor transportation. Farmers who owned automobiles were not limited to shopping in the nearest town, but could drive to Plentywood to take advantage of the greater variety of retail goods available there. This pattern expanded as highways in the region continued to improve, allowing Sheridan County residents to shop in Williston or Minot, North Dakota, or Billings, Montana with relative ease. By the last half of the twentieth century, the retail districts of places such as Comertown and Dooley had completely disappeared, while most other towns retained only a post office, a tavern, and possibly a single store. Only Plentywood continued to support a significant variety of retail businesses, although even there the number and type of operating businesses was in decline.

Architecture

Throughout Sheridan County's history, most commercial buildings have been small vernacular structures with little pretense or decorative detail. The earliest businesses were probably housed in small, roughly-built buildings of log or sawn lumber without permanent foundations -- buildings which were visually similar to residences of the period. Nearly all of the buildings in the county's earliest, unplatted towns probably shared these qualities. When Sheridan County's platted townsites first appeared, many of these first business buildings were physically moved to lots in the new towns, forming the initial nucleus for the community's commercial district.

The county's platted townsites suggested a greater degree of permanence than did their informal predecessors, and gradually the commercial architecture in the townsites began to reflect this as well. By the late 1910s commercial buildings in most of the towns were generally larger and were being constructed on permanent foundations. Most were of balloon-frame wood construction, although some brick and concrete buildings began to appear, as well. Plentywood was the site of most of the county's masonry commercial construction, and by the 1920s the town boasted a nearly unbroken three-block-long streetscape of solid, one- and two-story business blocks. A variety of approaches to both design and construction were evident, including an assortment of cornice and window treatments. While some wooden buildings existed on Plentywood's Main Street, by the 1920s most buildings were of brick; concrete commercial blocks and at least one stone building were also present.

Similar, but smaller streetscapes existed in other Sheridan County towns, containing fewer two-story and fewer masonry buildings, interspersed with empty lots. The commercial district in Dooley, for example, was dominated by a single two-story business block with a brick veneer; it was surrounded by a scattering of perhaps fifteen one- and two-story wooden business buildings, as well as a small, single-story brick bank. Concrete sidewalks lent a touch of urbanity to the otherwise frontier-appearing streetscape. Among the town's business buildings, only the Citizens State Bank displayed a conscious utilization of architectural detail, with its brick pilasters and belt courses, and patterned cornice. Design detail in the remaining buildings was generally limited to the use of a wooden false front, perhaps with a stepped or vernacular Italianate cornice. Banks of commercial windows along the street facade provided the primary visual detail for most buildings.¹⁸⁸

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In common with the communities they served, the commercial districts of most Sheridan County towns were at their peak by the late 1910s or early 1920s. This period of prosperity was brief, however. In the following decades, commercial activity steadily declined in the small towns and the number of operating businesses dwindled. The relatively brief lifespan of many of the county's businesses meant that most of the county's towns saw the construction of only one generation of commercial buildings; that is, the business buildings constructed during the initial boom period were generally not replaced by later, more modern structures. Instead, the first generation business buildings were gradually abandoned and later lost to fire or demolition. In Dooley, fires in 1916 and beyond, as well as a 1934 windstorm, destroyed much of the town's business district. Today, only concrete sidewalks and building foundations remain.¹⁸⁹

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NOTES FOR SECTION "E"

1. Unless otherwise indicated, material in this section is drawn from Robert E. Richardson and Lawrence T. Hanson, *Soil Survey of Sheridan County, Montana* (n.p.: National Cooperative Soil Survey, 1977). Pages 55-58 provide a basic introduction to the county's geography and history.

2. George C. Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains*, 2d ed., (San Diego: Academic Press, 1991), 24; Ian Dyck, "The Prehistory of Southern Saskatchewan," in *Tracking Ancient Hunters: Prehistoric Archaeology in Saskatchewan*, ed. Henry T. Epp and Ian Dyck (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, 1983), 65-68; Richard E. Morlan, "Avonlea and Radiocarbon Dating," in *Avonlea Yesterday and Today: Archaeology and Prehistory*, ed. Leslie B. Davis, (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, 1988), 291-309.

3. J. Michael Quigg and John H. Brumley, *Stone Circles: A Review Appraisal and Future Directions*, (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1982), 43.

4. A test excavation at the Shippee Canyon site (24SH514) consisted of a single unit measuring 5 feet square; Dennis Joyes, "The Shippee Canyon Site," *Archaeology in Montana* 14, no. 2 (1973), 49-85. This is considered a "test" and not an "excavation."

5. Dennis Joyes and Tom Jerde, "Northeastern Montana Archaeology," *Archaeology in Montana* 11, no. 4 (1970), 3-6.

6. George C. Frison, "Paleo-Indian Winter Subsistence Strategies on the High Plains," in "Plains Indian Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honor of John C. Ewers and Waldo R. Wedel," ed. D.H. Ubelaker and H.J. Viola, *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology* 30 (1982), 199-200; Idem, "Prehistoric, Plains-Mountain, Large-Mammal, Communal Hunting Strategies," in *The Evolution of Human Hunting*, ed. Matthew H. Nitecki and Doris V. Nitecki, (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 183.

7. Ibid.; Idem, *Prehistoric Hunters*, 2d ed., 163; Lawrence C. Todd, Jack L. Hoffman, and C. Bertrand Schultz, "Seasonality of the Scottsbluff and Lipscomb Bison Bonebeds: Implications for Modeling Paleoindian Subsistence," *American Antiquity* 55, no. 4 (1990): 823.

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13. Craig S. Smith and Lance M. McNees "Rattlesnake Pass Site: A Folsom Occupation in South-Central Wyoming," *Plains Anthropologist* 35, no. 129 (1990), 282.

14. Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters*, 2d ed., 89.

15. Ibid., 51; Idem, "The Tool Assemblage, Unfinished Bifaces, and Stone Flaking Material Sources for the Horner Site," in *The Horner Site: The Type Site of the Cody Cultural Complex*, ed. George C. Frison and Lawrence C. Todd, (Orlando, Florida: Academic Press 1987), 243, 262, 364.

16. Marcel Kornfeld, "The Rocky Fools Site: A Small Folsom Assemblage from the Northwestern Plains," *North American Archaeologist* 9, no. 3 (1988), 211-216.

17. Stephen A. Aaberg, "Flotation Results from 24GV117," Appendix A in "Archeological Investigations at the Garfield Ranch Site 24GV117," by Gene Munson, (Butte: GCM Services, 1990), 16.

18. Tom R. Jerde, "Eight Paleo-Indian Period Site Locations in Northeastern Montana," *Archaeology in Montana* 22, no. 2 (1981), 32-33; Ann M. Johnson and Donna C. Roper, "Observations on Raw Material Selection in Sheridan County, Montana," *Archaeology in Montana* 15, no. 1 (1974), 25. These data concerning the use of various lithic sources through time include only the material types of projectile points in Sheridan County. All of the sites in the county with Paleo-Indian points are multiple component sites, most exposed in plowed fields. Consequently, projectile points are the only formal tools which can be convincingly tied to particular time periods. Sources identified by Jerde as "local" lie primarily within the boundaries of Sheridan County.

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22. James D. Keyser, "The Evidence for McKean Complex Plant Utilization," *Plains Anthropologist* 31, no. 113 (1986), 225. At about 5000 BP (the transition from Early to Middle Archaic), the area's climate changed from more mesic to xeric conditions; Vera Markgraf and Tom Lennon, "Paleoenvironmental History of the Last 13,000 Years of the Eastern Powder River Basin, Wyoming, and its Implications for Prehistoric Cultural Patterns," *Plains Anthropologist* 31, no. 111 (1986), 1-12.

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30. Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters*, 214-216.
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34. Ibid., 25, 34, 61.
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40. Jerde, "Eight Paleo-Indian Period Site Locations," 32-33.
41. Johnson and Roper, "Raw Material Selection," 27.

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182. *Thirteenth Report of the Bureau of Agriculture, Labor and Industry of the State of Montana For the Years 1911 and 1912* (Helena: Independent Publishing Co., [1913]), 374; *First Biennial Report of the Department of Labor and Industry 1913-1914* (Helena: Independent Publishing Co., n.d.), 230. The estimate of 1912 grain shipments from Plentywood is in the January 24, 1913 issue of the *Plentywood Herald*.

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F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

I. Name of Property Type: Homesteads and Farmsteads

II. Description

This property type includes Sheridan County locations where farm or ranch activities took place during the historic period. Nearly all Sheridan County agriculture has taken place within the context of the single-family farm, and the most common structural reminder of local agricultural production is the farmstead. While the number and type of buildings and structures on local farms has evolved over the years, in general a Sheridan County homestead or farmstead included a single-family residence and one or more outbuildings with an agricultural purpose. The earliest houses were usually small, roughly-built homestead shacks; replacement residences were often 1 to 1-1/2 story houses similar to those built in local towns (see context #3-C). In contrast, the number and type of farm outbuildings could vary widely. Since most Sheridan County agriculture has historically been devoted to the production of small grains, one or more small wooden granary buildings were nearly ubiquitous. Except for small or newly-developed farms, most agricultural properties also included a large barn, intended for the housing and care of large farm animals. Gable, gambrel, and round-roofed barns all appeared in Sheridan County; normally, the barn was by far the largest structure to be erected on a farmstead. Other types of outbuildings were not as universally needed, but were still common in the region. These included shop buildings, garages, coops, feed sheds, and storage structures. During the historic period, virtually all of these buildings were constructed of wood, although corrugated metal later became a popular siding and roofing material.

In most Sheridan County farms, all of the major buildings were constructed in a single geographical location--the farmyard. Normally, the house would be near one end of the building group (the end nearest the access lane or county road), with the remaining buildings were arranged behind the house. In large farm complexes the outbuildings could be grouped according to function. In addition to the buildings, the farmyard normally included a variety of other man-made features, many of which were nearly essential to the farm's operation. Such features included water wells and their associated windmills, corrals and water troughs, and fencing. The entire farmyard area would normally be separated from the surrounding agricultural land by a fence. Most farmyards also included landscaping features, which were usually more common as the farm became more established. Farmyard landscaping included such components as shade trees, lilac bushes, and (especially in later years) lawns. Nearly every farm maintained a vegetable garden, and some also had fruit trees.

While the farmyard area contained nearly all the major cultural features of a homestead or farmstead, it occupied only a small portion of the entire farm -- often less than one percent. Most Sheridan County homesteads were initially 320 acres in size, and the average farm size increased steadily as the years progressed. In contrast, the farmyard area typically encompassed only from one to 15 acres. In Sheridan County, most of a farm's remaining land was exclusively devoted to agriculture, and relatively few cultural features were present. The perimeter of many farms would be surrounded by a fence, but interior fencing was uncommon. Irrigation ditches, common in many agricultural areas, are rare in Sheridan County. Despite the lack of physical features, however, a farm's agricultural land is a vital, integral part of the farmstead, and should be considered when evaluating a farm for its historical significance.

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III. Significance

Agricultural properties in Sheridan County may be significant under both National Register Criterion A and Criterion C. Rarely, local farms and ranches may also display significance under Criterion B. Each of these criteria is discussed separately below.

Criterion A: Sheridan County's early twentieth-century homesteads may be historically significant as representations of the county's early twentieth-century period of homestead settlement. During the period between approximately 1900 and 1918, much of eastern Montana was dramatically impacted by a wave of new settlement in which thousands of homesteaders attempted to establish farms on nearly all of the area's potentially arable land. This "homestead boom" brought much of Sheridan County under cultivation for the first time and resulted in a tremendous increase in the county's population. These events, in turn, created substantive, permanent changes in virtually every aspect of the county's economy, lifestyle, and human geography. Surviving homestead properties are significant as the most important and visible reminders of this pivotal period in the county's history.

County farmsteads consisting mainly of features from later periods may also be eligible under Criterion A. Such properties are representative of Sheridan County's agricultural economy -- by far the most important component of the region's economic survival. This local dependence on agriculture has guided the county's Euro-American settlement and development since its earliest days, and remains the key influence in the area's economy and lifestyle.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County agricultural properties are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion B. Such an association is possible, however, if a homestead or farmstead is found to have an important association with an individual who played a significant local role in the settlement or agricultural exploitation of the region. No such properties were identified during the course of this survey.

Criterion C: Sheridan County farmsteads and homesteads may possess National Register significance under Criterion C as examples of the period's rural architecture. The county's earliest farm-related buildings, constructed from approximately the turn of the century until the late 1910s, were often quintessential examples of pioneer midwestern and western homestead design. These small homestead shacks and rudimentary support buildings, quickly and cheaply constructed either of locally-available organic materials or roughly-sawn lumber, represented the first foothold of a region's Euro-American settlers. The homestead buildings represented expediency and economy rather than comfort or style; as such, their period of use was often brief, and their disappearance from the cultural landscape relatively rapid. The surviving homestead-era buildings are important examples of the region's earliest building forms.

The agricultural residences and outbuildings constructed in Sheridan County after the close of the initial homestead era are representations of more mainstream components of early twentieth-century American rural architecture. Many of these farms boasted residences comparable in design and scale to the single-family urban homes being constructed during the period. In early twentieth-century Sheridan County, Craftsman-style homes were most popular, and many of the county's best examples of Craftsman architecture are farm residences. While some of the county's farm outbuildings displayed Craftsman detailing as well, most are more noteworthy as examples of purely functional agricultural design. The large barns found on many farmsteads are of particular note; with their varied roof designs and often complex structural configurations, some of these buildings are among the largest and most visually striking components of the county's historic built environment.

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IV. Registration Requirements

Historic farm and ranch properties in Sheridan County may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and/or C. These properties may be evaluated for National Register eligibility either as individual buildings or as historic districts consisting of two or more related farm buildings and, if possible, accompanying agricultural land. Registration requirements for each of these National Register criteria are discussed separately below, followed by a brief discussion of integrity requirements.

Criterion A: A Sheridan County farm or ranch property will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A if it continues to display a strong visual and functional association to the context of agricultural development and production in the county. Normally, this is most clearly demonstrated with a property which retains a full complement of related historic farm buildings; that is, an historic farmhouse along with its accompanying barn and outbuildings. Such a property would gain additional significance if the farm or grazing land historically associated with the property still remained as an identifiable unit.

Sheridan County retains a high number of historic agricultural properties at which most or all of the historic buildings survive. For this reason, single farm or ranch buildings that were historically part of a larger group of agricultural buildings will normally be considered to have lost too much of their historical association to be considered eligible. Relatively few "first generation" homestead buildings and related structures survive, however, and these buildings may be considered eligible even in the absence of historic ancillary structures. This provision does not, however, preclude isolated buildings from eligibility under Criterion C. All properties considered eligible under Criterion A must meet the integrity requirements outlined below.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County farmsteads are likely to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B. For a farm or ranch site to possess such eligibility, it must possess a strong, demonstrated association with a figure important in Sheridan County's past, and must retain a sufficient level of integrity as described below.

Criterion C: A Sheridan County farm or ranch property will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C if it is a representative example of typical local rural building forms, or if it is an example of exceptional period farm or ranch architecture. To be eligible under this criterion, the nominated property must display strong and largely unaltered characteristics of the building forms and styles that were utilized in Sheridan County during the historic period, with only a minimal loss of integrity. Integrity standards for a Criterion C property should be higher than those for other criteria, unless the property being considered is a rare surviving example of an important type. In judging eligibility under Criterion C, a property's level of architectural integrity should be compared against that of other Sheridan County examples of the building form.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an example of this property type, the features nominated fully retain integrity of *location* and *setting*. Most historic agricultural buildings in Sheridan County remain at their historic locations, and the visual association with an agricultural landscape is an important component in these rural historic properties. Integrity of setting shall be considered diminished or lost if an historic farmstead is in an area of significant recent urban or industrial development, or if the number and scale of historic farm buildings at a site is overshadowed by the number and scale of non-historic farm buildings. The major buildings at a farmstead or homestead site must retain integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* such that the historic massing, detailing, and use of the building remain readily apparent. Normally, these areas of integrity will be diminished if a building's historic fenestration pattern has been significantly altered, or if its original exterior siding has been covered or replaced with modern, visually

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incompatible materials. A large, non-historic addition to a building will more significantly impact these areas of integrity, and may unacceptably injure the integrity of design. Normally, a property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Townsites

II. Description

Historic townsites may be broadly defined as centers of permanent or semi-permanent group human activity. They are locations where people take up residence for purposes of conducting trade or maintaining civic institutions -- reasons other than farming or ranching the immediately-surrounding land. In addition, townsites normally include retail trade establishments and public institutions such as schools and churches. These businesses and organizations exist to serve both the inhabitants of the townsite and rural residents in surrounding areas.

Current and historic Sheridan County townsites fall into one of two general groups: platted townsites and communities which evolved without a formal plat. The earliest Sheridan County towns belonged to the latter category; they were small, informal aggregations of buildings placed in an irregular, largely unplanned group. Such towns developed in response to the perceived or demonstrated need of nearby rural settlers, and existed primarily to serve the basic commercial and civic needs of these people. They remained small, with no more than perhaps ten to twenty roughly-built wooden buildings scattered along one or two informal streets. Often, such a town was not intended to be permanent, but was seen only as a starting point for later, more organized and substantive development at the site.

Nearly all of Sheridan County's historic and current townsites began in this fashion. Few remained in this form for a significant length of time, however. Some of these early towns died out with the fading of the county's homestead boom, but most were replaced during the 1910s by successor communities developed with the benefit of a surveyed plat. A few early communities, however, were never replaced with platted townsites, and still display the irregular building and lot placement typical of informal towns. Dagmar and Coalridge are Sheridan County's best remaining examples of unplatted townsites.

A variety of town plat forms were used in Sheridan County (see context #B-2), but all of the resultant townsites shared numerous visual qualities. Most of the towns grew relatively quickly after their platting, and within two or three years included a variety of residential, commercial, warehousing, and civic buildings. Most commercial buildings were clustered along a single Main Street which was normally near the center of the plat and ran perpendicular to the railroad tracks. Residences and civic buildings were scattered in additional platted blocks flanking the commercial street. Most warehousing and industrial buildings were placed along the railroad's right-of-way. (Individual building forms are described more fully in other Property Type sections in this document.)

In addition to buildings, platted townsites typically included a variety of other features. The most prominent was a regularly-spaced gridwork of unpaved streets and alleyways. As a town grew and achieved permanence, the symmetry of the town grid was strengthened with the addition of sidewalks, curb and gutter work, and fencing. If a town was particularly successful, additional blocks would be platted along the town periphery. Normally, the layout and configuration of these added blocks intentionally matched that of the original townsite, and as the additions were settled they became visually indistinguishable from the original town. Exceptions to this rule seldom occurred in Sheridan County, but were

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occasionally present. Medicine Lake and Westby, for example, both had platted "additions" consisting of large lots (containing an acre or more) platted without alleys and with few streets. These lots were probably intended for homeowners who wished to grow foodstuffs or keep farm animals on their lots.

Although the form taken by Sheridan County townsites remained fairly constant throughout the historic period, changes since that time have been more noticeable. Successful townsites such as Plentywood have seen a variety of platted additions adjoining the original townsite. Often, these new plats utilize curved streets and asymmetrical blocks, resulting in a very different streetscape from that in the historic neighborhoods of town. In contrast, the occupation of a number of Sheridan County townsites has declined to the point where the original plat is becoming less and less distinguishable. The sites of Daleview and Archer have disappeared completely, while Dooley and Comertown are virtually abandoned but still display the historic street grid.

III. Significance

Historic townsites in Sheridan County will normally be significant under National Register Criterion A or C, although it is possible that certain townsites may also be eligible under Criterion B as well. Each of these criteria is discussed separately below:

Criterion A: Historic townsites in Sheridan County may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as reflections of the region's early twentieth century growth and, more importantly, of early town planning and "boosterism" in the county. Early, unplatted townsites reveal the near-spontaneous initiation and growth of community settlers as a consequence of increasing rural settlement in a region. Such towns indicate the settlers' need for a defined location providing basic retail, wholesale, social, and administrative functions. Sheridan County's platted townsites, in contrast, were intentionally created by railroad companies or individuals as vehicles for profit and as mechanisms to guide and encourage local patterns of growth. Most local townsites were platted by the railroads, and reflect the railroads' efforts to mold the human geography of the regions they served. The townsites also attest to the importance of Sheridan County's railroads, since all the county's platted townsites were on railway lines, and since nearly all the successful town plats were instigated by railroad subsidiaries.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County townsites are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion B. Such an association is possible, however, if the establishment or configuration of a townsite displays an important association with an individual who played a significant local role in the settlement or townsite development of the region. No such properties were identified during the course of this survey.

Criterion C: Sheridan County's historic townsites may be eligible for the National Register as examples of early twentieth-century townsite planning and design. The size, orientation, and configuration of the county's platted townsites, while varied, exist as representative examples of common plat forms utilized in frontier townsites, and in railway-platted towns in particular. They represent traditional, utilitarian town planning, with simple, rectangular grids devoid of planned boulevards, landscaped parks, town squares, or other embellishments. The plans are suggestive of the progressive, yet straightforward and hardworking nature of America's agricultural frontier. The utilitarian nature of the plats, and their generally small size, are reminders that Sheridan County was, from the outset, intended as a region largely devoted to a rural, agricultural lifestyle.

In addition to the configuration of individual plats, Sheridan County's townsites may be reviewed in their relationship to one another, and to the county's landscape. The careful, even spacing of townsites along railroad lines, and the near total lack of townsites elsewhere, reflects the strong railroad influence in the creation of a local cultural landscape.

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The placement and style of the county's townsites profoundly affected the evolution of both urban and rural settlement patterns, guiding the types of development which would occur in specific areas. The towns, along with the railroads which created them, were probably the single largest influence in the county's historical geography.

IV. Registration Requirements

The discussion on townsite registration requirements is divided into two sections: one for unplatted communities, and one for platted townsites. These discussions are followed by brief information on evaluating townsite integrity.

Unplatted communities: Normally, an unplatted Sheridan County townsite will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. To be eligible for listing, an unplatted Sheridan County townsite must have a demonstrated association with informal town development during the pre-railroad period of Euro-American settlement in the county. The townsite should continue to display the geographic and visual qualities representative of these early communities, including irregular lot size and informal streetscapes and building groupings. Both the geographic placement of the town and the grouping of its features must have taken place during the area's period of initial settlement, and in response to an apparent period need for community services. In addition, the townsite should meet the integrity described below.

Platted townsites: A platted townsite in Sheridan County may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and/or C. To be eligible for listing under Criterion A, the placement and design of a platted townsite must reflect the broad historical patterns of townsite development in early twentieth-century Sheridan County. This requirement is met if a townsite played an important local role in historic railroad and townsite development efforts, or if the town is a significant local example of non-railroad townsite promotion. To be eligible for listing under Criterion C, a platted townsite must either be a well-preserved representative example of an historically common townsite configuration, or it must be an exceptional example of early twentieth-century townsite design. For eligibility under either criterion, the townsite should also retain a sufficient portion of its historic built environment to suggest the overall form, materials, and character of the townsite's level of development during its period of significance. (The surviving features may be either buildings, landscape features, or ruins.) Additional integrity guidelines are described below.

Integrity: By its nature, any established townsite will retain integrity of *location* (the relocation of a townsite mandates the creation of a second plat, and the two locations should be judged separately). A townsite must retain integrity of *setting* in order to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Integrity of setting is lost with the creation of significant non-historic additions to a town plat, or with significant unplatted urban development around the boundaries of a plat. Integrity of *design* must also be maintained. Integrity of design is lost if significant changes have been made to the platted arrangement of a town's streets and alleys, or if the grid of streets and blocks established by the plat is no longer readily visible to an observer. Integrity of design may also be diminished if the intended uses of a portion of a plat have not been maintained: for example, if land originally platted as a park was later used for residential development. Integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* are generally not applicable to a townsite. Normally, a townsite will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the other aspects of integrity survive, but may be diminished if a townsite contains a significant number of non-historic buildings. As a general guide, the number of non-historic buildings within a townsite must not be more than two-thirds the number of historic buildings.

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Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Roads, Highways and Trails

II. Description

This property type includes linear features (including landscape features) designed and utilized in the movement of people or personal property. (Railroads are excluded from this property type because of their unique features, and are discussed separately below.) The property type includes two broad categories: *trails*, primarily intended for travel on foot or horseback, and *roads and highways*, primarily intended for travel by wheeled vehicles. For other than very short-distance travel, trails predated roads and largely disappeared when roads became available (during the early twentieth century, in most areas of Sheridan County).

Relatively few clearly delineated historic trail routes existed in early Sheridan County, since the county's era of initial settlement was both brief and rapid. The best known early route was the Ambrose Trail, which entered the county from the east; other frequently-used trail routes probably connected Sheridan County with the Missouri River and the Great Northern Railway to the south. Very little is known about the appearance of the county's Euro-American trails, but most probably existed only as vague, commonly-used routes between two endpoints. As such, the location of the trails was approximate, and subject to change from year to year. The trails probably did not include any man-made features such as bridges, trail markers, or excavations along grades. The only visual evidence of a trail's existence or location was probably a pattern of ruts or indentations in the earth, caused by the repeated passage of horses or carts. Consequently, the precise identification of an historic trail route is difficult at best, as is the association of current cultural features with these historic trails.

While some of the county's historic roadways began as outgrowths of earlier trail routes, the area's road system quickly evolved into a precisely-mapped, government-maintained network of travel routes. Initially, most Sheridan County roads consisted only of unimproved dirt tracks, running along surveyed section lines to form a grid accessing most of the county. As the area's population increased and the county's government became established, however, organized roadway maintenance efforts became an important local priority. By the 1910s, Sheridan County was constructing timber stringer and steel truss bridges where roads crossed major watercourses, and was installing culverts at minor water crossings. In the years following World War I, the county purchased mechanical road grading equipment, allowing it to blade and gravel frequently-used sections of roadway. Such projects began to transform the county's unpaved roads into the form they held at the end of the historic period, and continue to display today. Most of these roads exist on a raised berm of earth which is covered with gravel. The berm is slightly rounded, with its high point ("crown") at the center, to allow moisture to drain from the roadway. Shallow, rounded trenches parallel the roadway on both sides of the route, again for drainage purposes. The linear rights-of-way for most roadways are bounded by wire fences. The specific configuration, width, and level of maintenance of a roadway varies depending upon its level of use and on the region's topography, but the overall visual appearance of the county's unpaved roads is relatively uniform.

Most of Sheridan County's paved highways were constructed (and are maintained) by the State of Montana rather than by the county. Paved highways include the same basic components as a gravel road, although the gravel driving surface is replaced with asphalt and the roadway is generally wider. Relatively few of the county's roadways are paved, and no paved roads existed in the county until at least the late 1920s. By the end of the historic period, though, the county's current network of paved highways was beginning to take shape.

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While roads and highways are primarily linear features, they often include non-linear structural components which may be described and evaluated separately. Bridges are the most common such feature. Two broad types of bridges historically existed in Sheridan County, the "truss" and the "stringer." Truss bridges, most dating from the 1910s and 1920s, are marked by vertical trusses made of built-up steel members and placed on either side of the roadway. These bridges were historically used to span relatively large watercourses, and often displayed relatively complex designs. Relatively few truss bridges remain in Sheridan County today. Stringer bridges rely on rows of longitudinal timber, steel, or concrete beams or girders to support the roadway. Initially used only for short spans, since the 1930s this type has been used almost exclusively in Sheridan County.

III. Significance

Historic roads, trails, and highways in Sheridan County will normally be significant under National Register Criterion A, although in some circumstances Criterion C may apply, as well. Each of these criteria is discussed separately below.

Criterion A: Historic trails, roads, and highways in Sheridan County may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as reflections of historic patterns of travel and commerce. Throughout the historic period, non-commercial travel relied completely on the existence of a system of trails or roads. The presence of these travel routes was a necessary prerequisite for significant settlement in the county to occur, and for the evolution and economic expansion of the region following its settlement. In addition, the locations and routes chosen by Sheridan County's roads and trails both reflected and helped guide the geography of settlement and development in the county. Travel routes were established in locations where historical human activity dictated the need for such a route; simultaneously, the presence of roadway access to a region helped encourage still further development in that region. More than any cultural feature except the railroads, Sheridan County's roadways are a mirror of the geography of the evolution of Euro-American settlement.

The county's roadways and the ancillary features associated with them are also indicative of the role of Sheridan County's government in developing an appropriate public works infrastructure for the region's inhabitants. Since the 1910s, the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges have been among the largest expenditures for most rural county governments. This is particularly true of bridges; often, the completion of one or more truss bridges was the largest single item in a county's annual budget.

Criterion C: Relatively few Sheridan County roadways are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion C. A trail, road, or highway could, however, be eligible under Criterion C if it represents a good example of period transportation engineering, or if it displays an innovative engineering solution to a difficult roadway design problem. It is more common for historic bridges to display eligibility under Criterion C; early bridges (particularly steel trusses) may clearly display period engineering and design philosophies.

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IV. Registration Requirements

The discussion on registration requirements for this property type is divided into separate sections for trails, for roads and highways, and for bridges. These sections are followed by a general discussion of integrity considerations for the property type.

Trails: To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, an historic trail in Sheridan County must possess a documented association with both an established period and a pattern of human travel. The trail route must have been sufficiently well-defined during the historic period to make its specific routing generally known during the period of use, and to make its location verifiable to current researchers. In addition, the trail segment being considered must retain visual evidence of its use as a travel corridor, such as ruts or indentations made during the historic period.

Roads and Highways: To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, an historic road or highway in Sheridan County must follow a travel path which was important during the historic period as a primary means of access to the county, or as an important travel route within the county. The path currently followed by the roadway must follow the historic alignment closely enough so as to strongly suggest the historic landscape which existed during the period of significance. To be eligible under Criterion C, the roadway, in its current form, must strongly reflect important elements of period roadway design, routing, and materials. In addition, eligibility under either criteria requires that the roadway strictly adhere to the eligibility guidelines described below.

Vehicular Bridges: To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, an historic vehicular bridge in Sheridan County must either be a product of an important period of roadway/bridge construction in the county, or represent the crossing of a major watercourse by an important travel route. To be eligible under Criterion C, the bridge should be a well-preserved example of an important or commonly-used historic bridge design, or be an example of a locally-unusual design. In addition, the eligibility guidelines outlined below should be met.

Some of Sheridan County's bridges could also possess National Register eligibility through their association with an important regional bridge contracting company, or by virtue of their construction by a Sheridan County construction firm. Further research will be required to determine if such associations exist, however.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a linear feature under this property type must retain integrity of *location*, with the exception of short realignments undertaken as part of routine maintenance and upgrading projects. Bridges need not be at the site where they were first constructed, but should remain at a location where they carried vehicular traffic during the historic period. All properties should retain integrity of *setting* to the extent that the cultural landscape along the travel corridor has not undergone dramatic change since the close of the historic period, although the existence of non-historic buildings along the route will not damage the integrity of the route itself. The integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* is difficult to judge for roadways, since many travel routes receive significant levels of annual maintenance, as well as frequent reconstruction. Because of this, the historic surface materials of travel routes need not survive, although the current surfacing should be comparable to the material used during historic times. For example, a roadway that was historically graveled will have lost integrity if it was later surfaced with asphalt. In addition, the road should retain approximately the same width and cross-section as it had during the historic period. These areas of integrity will also be diminished if major historic structures along the route (such as bridges) have been replaced with modern structures. Bridges being nominated individually should fully retain their historic superstructure, although minor changes such as non-historic guardrails are acceptable. Normally, an historic travel route will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

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Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Railroads

II. Description

In common with much of America's Northern Plains, the early growth and development of Sheridan County was heavily influenced by the construction of railroad lines to and across the area. Although no railroad main lines entered Sheridan County, the county was traversed by branch lines of two competing companies -- the Great Northern Railway (GN) and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad (the "Soo Line"). The GN line entered Sheridan County from the south, passed through Medicine Lake, Plentywood, and Redstone, and left the county heading west. The Soo Line built into Sheridan County from North Dakota, passed through Westby, Raymond, and Outlook, and terminated in Whitetail, just west of the Sheridan County line.

Local construction on both lines was completed between 1909 and 1913, and the two railroads shared common design qualities which largely typified early twentieth-century American railway construction. Principal railroad features were constructed on a company-owned linear "right-of-way," which varied from perhaps 100 to 300 feet in width. The track itself, which normally ran along the center line of the right-of-way, consisted of a number of components: steel rails resting on wooden ties embedded in gravel ballast atop a graded roadbed. Each component is described individually below.

The railroad grade or "roadbed" consists of an earthen berm upon which the track rests. Normally, the roadbed is raised somewhat above the surrounding landscape to provide drainage. The roadbed is also intended to counteract the unevenness of the landscape by providing a relatively level surface for the railroad tracks. This is accomplished by excavating "cuts" through areas of higher elevation and constructing "fills" across ground depressions.

Dirt or gravel ballast is placed atop the subgrade and around the ties to lend stability to the track structure. Ties are hewn or sawn wood timbers, placed in the ballast to provide support for the rails. Standard railroad ties are 8'6" long, 8" wide and 6" to 7" high. Normally, ties were placed on the roadbed at approximate 20" intervals (on center). The original ties on both Sheridan County railroad lines were probably hand-hewn, and a number of these ties still survive on the Soo Line trackage in the region.

Rail pairs are laid 4'8½" apart to form the track. Rail is classified according to its weight per yard of rail; thus, a three-foot section of "75-pound rail" (typical for rural branch lines such as these) would weigh 75 pounds. Historically, rail was generally shipped in 39-foot lengths (to fit atop a standard 40-foot railroad flatcar). Spikes and Tie Plates are used to affix the rails to the ties; both are made of steel.

In addition to the tracks themselves, a variety of other linear features were present on historic railroad rights-of-way. Often, wire fences marked the boundaries of rights-of-way. Railways constructed and maintained pole lines, carrying telegraph and telephone wires, parallel to virtually every rail line. Snow fences were also erected in some areas.

Other features--both major and minor--appeared at intervals along the lines. While there were no tunnels or major bridges on Sheridan County railroads, many small timber trestles existed along both lines. What was probably the county's largest bridge (on the Soo Line west of Daleview) includes a plate girder span with trestle approaches. Numerous signs existed along both railroads' rights-of-way, and cattle guards and grade crossings were placed as necessary; many of these remain. Spare lengths of rail were kept at regular intervals for use by maintenance crews, and many of these are still in place along the Soo.

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The greatest concentration of railroad buildings and features existed in the towns, where the track structure became more complex with the addition of switches and sidings. More visually significant, however, was the proliferation of buildings along the right-of-way in towns. Generally, a portion of the right-of-way in each town was allocated for "industrial lots," which were leased to the operators of grain elevators, bulk oil plants, stockyards, and other commercial facilities. A variety of railroad-owned buildings and structures existed, as well. Virtually every townsite included a railroad depot for the transaction of company business, and larger towns often had dedicated freight houses. "Section houses," at regular intervals, provided housing and a work base for maintenance crews, and water tanks at most towns supplied water to steam locomotives.

Most major railway companies utilized standardized plans for the construction of nearly every necessary component of their railroad system. This is most evident in the design of depot buildings, but it also extended to the trackwork, bridges, fences, signs, and a huge number of more minor items. In Sheridan County, for example, the Soo built largely identical station buildings at each town along its line, and the GN did the same at all stations except Plentywood. The form given these buildings and other features by the standardized plans played a large role in forming the visual character of a railroad. In general, most railroad lines with similar traffic levels displayed the same kinds of features along their routes, but the style of these features varied considerably from company to company.

The visual quality of nearly every railroad line has changed considerably over the decades. Changing technology and traffic patterns have caused the number of trackside structures to be greatly reduced, and many railroad lines have been abandoned in their entirety. Sheridan County's railroads have not suffered such an extreme fate: all of the county's lines remain intact and many depots and other features survive, but water tanks, section houses, and other features have been lost. The lines, themselves, however, remain striking and significant features on the county's landscape.

III. Significance

In general, railway-related features may be significant for their association with the history of a region (Criterion A) or as a representation of the transportation technology or engineering of a period (Criterion C). These associations are described more fully below:

Criterion A: The construction of virtually any railroad is a complex, expensive undertaking. The two railway lines built in Sheridan County were easily the two largest construction projects undertaken in the county during its historic period. Consequently, the construction of either of Sheridan County's rail lines is, in itself, an act of sufficient magnitude to give the line significance.

Most railroad lines, however, including those in Sheridan County, produced far more dramatic historical impacts. The construction of each of these lines was an event leading to striking changes in the region served by the new route. As a direct consequence of local railway construction, agricultural settlement and production dramatically increased, most of the county's townsites were platted, and the level of business activity rose. In addition, the geographical pattern of this new settlement and activity was directly and consciously guided by the railroad companies through the companies' choice of route and of townsite locations.

The high level of railroad influence on Sheridan County's economy and lifestyle continued for decades after the completion of the lines. Until well after World War I, the railroads served as the primary means for the carriage of passengers, freight, and mail to and from the county. In particular, the county's small-grain based agricultural economy remained almost completely dependent on the railroads to carry its products to market. In the townsites, the many functions of a railroad center often made it an informal social center, where parcels and telegrams could be shipped and

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received, mail dropped off, and journeys begun or ended. While many of the railroad's roles have diminished or ceased in recent years, Sheridan County's railways remain an important factor in the county's economy.

Criterion C: Sheridan County's railway lines may be significant under National Register Criterion C as examples of early twentieth-century railway design, engineering, and architecture. In common with other major industries of the period, America's railway companies developed and implemented a largely-standardized series of engineering and architectural plans for the construction and maintenance of company facilities; these designs reflected the technical capabilities of the day, the architectural styles of the period, and the economics of the industry. Unlike most other industries, however, railroad engineering and architecture was highly visible to the public, and its near-universal presence in the country made it an unusually important component of the cultural landscape. The remaining railroad-related buildings and features in Sheridan County reflect this period of industrial design.

IV. Registration Requirements

The registration requirements for this property type are divided into two groups: linear features (such as railroad trackage) and non-linear features (buildings, structures, etc.). It is likely, however, that in many cases linear and non-linear railway features are best evaluated together as a potential historic district.

Linear features: To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, a railroad line or railway-related linear feature in Sheridan County must have served during the historic period as a primary means of access to the county, or as an important travel route within the county. The route currently followed by the railway must follow the historic alignment closely enough so as to strongly suggest the historic landscape which existed during the period of significance, and to convey the linear nature of the property. To be eligible under Criterion C, the railway, in its current form, must strongly reflect important elements of period railroad engineering; it may do this through the visible retention of historic qualities of design, routing, and materials. In addition, eligibility under either criteria requires adherence to the eligibility guidelines described below.

Non-linear features: To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, a railway-related building or structure in Sheridan County must have played an integral role in the day-to-day operation of one of the county's railroad lines. To be eligible under Criterion C, the building should be a well-preserved example of an important or commonly-used standardized railroad design, or be an example of a locally-unusual design. In addition, the eligibility guidelines outlined below should be met.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, all features described under this property type must retain integrity of *location*, with the exception of short realignments undertaken as part of routine maintenance and upgrading projects. (Both of the county's railroad lines appear to remain entirely on their original alignments today, and most of the county's surviving railway buildings are also on their original sites.) All properties should retain integrity of *setting* to the extent that the cultural landscape along the right-of-way has not undergone dramatic change since the close of the historic period, although the existence of non-historic buildings along the route will not damage the integrity of the route itself. The integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* is difficult to judge for railways, since the lines are maintained annually, and occasionally receive full reconstruction. Because of this, a railroad line's original materials need not survive, although the current materials should be visually comparable to the material used during historic times. These areas of integrity will also be diminished if major historic structures along the route (such as bridges) have been replaced with modern structures. Railway-related buildings should adhere to the integrity guidelines established for commercial

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buildings in Sheridan County (described below). Normally, a railroad property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Civic and Religious Buildings

II. Description

The broad grouping of civic and religious buildings includes a substantial variety of properties intended for several disparate uses: schools, churches, social and grange halls, and others. All, however, share the common primary purpose of housing gatherings of people at a central location. The designs of most such buildings, therefore, emphasize the creation only of one or more large interior spaces. In primarily rural areas such as Sheridan County, where the population to be served was relatively small, the buildings themselves were also small, often containing only one moderately-sized room. Similar designs were used in the county's smaller towns, while a few larger communities (primarily Plentywood) boasted somewhat larger civic buildings.

Beyond the common provision for a large interior space, the details of a specific building's design varied somewhat according to its intended purpose, although many of the county's civic and religious buildings shared additional common features. Nearly all of Sheridan County's schools and churches, for example, used designs featuring a strong vertical element on the primary façade -- a spire in the churches, and a bell tower or cupola in the schools. The building's primary entry was often centered on this elevation. Cloakrooms and storage closets were near the entry; other than the meeting room, these were often the only other rooms in the building. Nearly all the buildings had clapboard siding and concrete foundations; most had gable roofs, although some buildings featured hipped roofs. Some also had cellars or basements, containing storage or furnace rooms, or even community meeting rooms.

For many of these buildings, especially those in rural areas, the placement and surroundings of the structure are important characteristics. Most schoolhouses, for example, were accompanied by playground equipment, outhouses, and fencing; rural church sites often included outhouses, fencing, landscaping, and perhaps a cemetery. Unlike most other building forms in Sheridan County, many educational, civic, and religious buildings were isolated structures, not part of a town, farmstead, or other collection of buildings. Often, this isolation became a key element of the building's visual character, and made the building itself a principal component of the rural cultural landscape.

III. Significance

School buildings, social/fraternal halls, and other civic buildings in Sheridan County may be both historically and architecturally significant. Churches and other religious buildings are normally considered only for their architectural significance, in accordance with National Register criteria exception A. Rarely, these properties may also display significance under Criterion B. The paragraphs below provide brief descriptions of possible building significance under Criteria A, B, and C.

Criterion A: Civic and educational buildings in Sheridan County may be historically significant as representations of efforts by the county's early Euro-American settlers to create and maintain necessary cultural institutions in the area.

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School facilities typically were one of the first vestiges of civilization established in a newly settled region, an indication of the importance Sheridan County's homesteaders placed on education. The need for rural schools was especially critical for an agricultural society, since few farmers or ranchers could afford to board their children at nearby towns to attend school. In addition, children were often needed at home to help with farm work. Rural schools allowed farm children to receive an education while letting them remain at home to contribute to the family's work force in times of need. The school building often served as a center for local social and community activities, as well, giving it a varied and important role in the community.

Buildings constructed for grange, ethnic, and other civic and social organizations were less common in Sheridan County. A few important examples exist, however, such as the Danish hall near Dagmar and Plentywood's old Socialist hall. Such buildings are highly significant in the history of the groups they represent, and through inference, in the history of the county as well.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County civic, educational, or religious properties are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion B. Such an association is possible, however, if a property is found to have an important association with an individual who played a pivotal local role in the establishment or perpetuation of an important county civic institution. No such properties were identified during the course of this survey.

Criterion C: Sheridan County's civic, educational and religious buildings may be architecturally significant as examples early twentieth-century institutional building design in northeastern Montana. Small school and church buildings were among the most common building forms in the county during the historic period, and were among the most recognizable, as well. By the 1930s, one or more rural schools operated in nearly every township in the county, and other schools existed in the platted townsites. Church buildings were somewhat less ubiquitous, but were still very common in Sheridan County's townsites and rural areas. Both types of buildings were generally visually distinctive despite their small size, usually including elements of architectural detailing nationally typical for the building form. This resulted in a facility whose intended use was readily apparent, and suggested that the building was regarded as important by those who erected and used it.

IV. Registration Requirements

The requirements for listing an educational, civic, or religious building in Sheridan County on the National Register of Historic Places are briefly outlined below, grouped according to the applicable criteria. The registration requirements are followed by a brief, generalized discussion of integrity requirements.

Criterion A: A civic or educational building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A if it exhibits an association with important trends in the evolution of the county's Euro-American educational or social institutions. Because of their relative rarity in Sheridan County and their important social significance, most purely civic buildings will automatically meet this requirement. School buildings may demonstrate this association through use as an operating school for a substantial length of time during the historic period, and by serving as a social/community center during the historic period; either use suggests a central role in rural or small-town community life. Eligible properties must also meet the integrity guidelines outlined below.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County buildings in this property type are likely to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B. For a building to possess such eligibility, it must possess a strong, demonstrated

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association with a figure important in the history of Sheridan County's civic, educational, or religious institutions, and must retain a sufficient level of integrity as described below.

Criterion C: A civic, religious, or educational building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C if it is a representative example of typical local institutional building forms, or if it is an example of exceptional period institutional architecture. To be eligible under this criterion, the nominated property must display strong and largely unaltered characteristics of the building forms and styles that were utilized in Sheridan County during the historic period, with only a minimal loss of integrity. Integrity standards for a Criterion C property should be higher than those for other criteria, unless the property being considered is a rare surviving example of an important type. In judging eligibility under Criterion C, a property's level of architectural integrity should be compared against that of other Sheridan County examples of the building form.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a school, church, or civic building in Sheridan County must fully retain integrity of *location* and *setting*. Most such buildings retain integrity of location, and their historic placement is often a significant element in the rural cultural landscape. A building moved to a new location after the end of the historic period should be considered for listing only if it is the only surviving representation of a particular building form or the only remaining building associated with a significant historic trend, influence, or use. The buildings should also retain integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* such that the historic massing, detailing, and use of the building remain readily apparent. A substantial addition to a building, or the removal of a major historic building component would disqualify the building from listing. The historic fenestration pattern must remain evident, although window sashes and other wood members may be absent. The building's original exterior siding must remain visible, unless the replacement siding dates from the historic period. Non-historic additions to the building must not be so large as to visually interfere with the historic building mass. Normally, a property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Urban Residences

II. Description

During Sheridan County's period of initial settlement, local residences exhibited design patterns common to area frontier towns of the day. "Urban residences," as such, did not exist; rather, the county's embryonic towns contained only simple rectangular structures of rough lumber comparable to those on the county's homesteads. The county's townsites developed relatively rapidly, though, and by the mid-1910s most of the towns included examples of a more sophisticated residential architecture. These later building styles were generally local interpretations of nationally-popular forms. With few exceptions, Sheridan County's homes exhibit straightforward plans, and relatively few large houses exist.

Because the arrival of significant Euro-American settlement in Sheridan County occurred later than in most of the United States, the county has almost no houses displaying design elements of Queen Anne, Italianate, or other popular nineteenth-century forms. Instead, smaller houses remained almost totally vernacular in design, while most larger homes exhibited varying levels of Craftsman detailing. While some of the county's smaller houses utilized a folk foursquare design similar to that constructed in working-class neighborhoods across the country near the turn of the century, they were

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locally outnumbered by simple, rectangular, end-gable designs. In both cases, these houses were small, with clapboard siding, one-over-one windows, and virtually no architectural detail.

Nearly all of the county's larger houses, however, wholeheartedly embraced the design principles of the Craftsman style. Two primary forms of the Craftsman house were common in Sheridan County. Many of the houses built in towns were small, end-gable structures, similar in appearance to each other; they possessed the deep eaves, exposed rafter tips, and narrow clapboard siding characteristic of the genre. A second group of larger homes were generally 1 1/2 stories tall, with side-gable roofs. These houses often display prominent hipped dormers; large, inset front porches; and various other aspects of Craftsman detailing. Relatively sophisticated examples of Craftsman design existed both in Sheridan County's towns and on its farms, although they were somewhat more common in rural areas.

Although relatively uncommon, examples of other period styles of residential architecture also exist, primarily in the town of Plentywood. Most of these variant architectural styles date from near the end of the historic period. Included are examples of Colonial Revival, Mission Revival Tudor, and Cape Cod residential architecture.

Outbuildings exist, in varying forms, on most dwelling lots. The earliest such buildings were stables, although detached garages became common after ca. 1920. Most early garages were simple, gabled structures of shiplap or clapboard while others (especially near Craftsman homes) display an attempted compatibility with the nearby house.

III. Significance

Sheridan County's historic residences may be significant under National Register Criterion A, B, and/or C, although this property type is primarily intended for architecturally significant buildings. Each criteria is discussed separately below.

Criterion A: Urban residences in Sheridan County may be historically significant as products of the county's early twentieth-century period of community growth and development. Although the economy and lifestyle of northeastern Montana have always been based on rural, agricultural pursuits, a significant number of small towns appeared in conjunction with early farm settlement. These communities provided the farmers with a variety of social, civic, and commercial functions. The residential streetscapes which evolved in these towns were a product of the need for urban residents to provide important ancillary services to a predominately rural society. Retail businessmen, teachers, ministers, retirees, and others all found a need to live in Sheridan County's small towns. The county's urban residential districts are a reflection of the importance of such people to the region's twentieth-century culture.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County houses are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion B. Such an association is possible, however, if a property is found to have an important association with an individual who played a pivotal role in local history. No such properties were identified during the course of this survey.

Criterion C: Sheridan County's historic residences may be architecturally significant as examples of early twentieth-century residential design in northeastern Montana. Since the county's period of initial settlement was relatively late, and its period of "boom" prosperity relatively brief, the region did not have the chance to develop the architectural diversity which marked areas with longer periods of settlement. For many of the same reasons, few examples of true "high-style" residential architecture exist in the county. Instead, the county's residential architecture largely reflects quintessential working-class and middle-class Craftsman architecture. Such building designs, as employed in Sheridan County, are highly

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representative of early twentieth-century residential architecture in the agricultural west, and their frequent local use gives the county's residential streetscapes a sense of architectural cohesiveness.

IV. Registration Requirements

The requirements for listing Sheridan County's urban residential buildings on the National Register of Historic Places are briefly outlined below, grouped according to the applicable criteria. The registration requirements are followed by a brief, generalized discussion of integrity requirements.

Criterion A: An urban residential building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A if it exhibits a strong association with important trends in the evolution of town and community growth in the county. This association may be demonstrated through the building's residential use for a substantial length of time during the historic period, *and* by being a component of a cohesive local residential district. Eligible properties must also meet the integrity guidelines outlined below.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County buildings in this property type are likely to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B. For a building to possess such eligibility, it must possess a strong, demonstrated association with a figure of unusual importance in Sheridan County's history, and must retain a sufficient level of integrity as described below.

Criterion C: An urban residential building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C if it is a representative example of typical local residential building forms, or if it is an example of exceptional period residential architecture. To be eligible under this criterion, the nominated property must display strong and largely unaltered characteristics of the building forms and styles that were utilized in Sheridan County during the historic period, with only a minimal loss of integrity. Integrity standards for a Criterion C property should be higher than those for other criteria, unless the property being considered is a rare surviving example of an important type. In judging eligibility under Criterion C, a property's level of architectural integrity should be compared against that of other Sheridan County examples of the building form.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, an urban residential building in Sheridan County must fully retain integrity of *location* and *setting*. Most such buildings retain integrity of location, and their historic placement may be significant in a community's streetscape. A building moved to a new location after the end of the historic period should be considered for listing only if it is the only surviving representation of a particular building form or the only remaining building associated with a significant historic trend, influence, or use. The building should also retain integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* such that the historic massing, detailing, and use of the building remain readily apparent. A substantial addition to a building, or the removal of a major historic building component would disqualify the building from listing. Primary components of the historic fenestration pattern must survive, and significant portions of the building's original exterior siding must remain visible, unless the replacement siding dates from the historic period. Normally, a property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

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Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Commercial Buildings

II. Description

Nearly all the commercial buildings constructed in Sheridan County during the region's initial period of growth were small, roughly-built structures typical of frontier business buildings. Such buildings were wood-framed, with gable roofs and clapboard siding. Often, these buildings were without permanent foundations, although concrete foundations became standard after the early 1910s. Few buildings were over one story in height. What little decorative detail existed on these buildings was confined entirely to the street façade; inset entries and blocks of commercial windows were occasionally present, and a few buildings boasted minimal wooden or metal decoration at the cornice level. In general, though, the county's first commercial buildings were almost purely utilitarian. Business buildings such as this appeared in virtually all of the county's early platted and unplatted towns, and the main streets of Sheridan County's smaller communities generally never progressed beyond this initial, frontier appearance. A number of these early commercial buildings survive today.

Beginning in the late 1910s and continuing through the 1920s, retail districts in the county's larger towns (primarily Plentywood, Medicine Lake, and Westby) began to see examples of more solidly-built commercial architecture. These buildings more closely resembled the retail structures which existed in more established small American towns. Many of the buildings were brick, and some were two stories high. Such two-part commercial blocks often displayed varying designs on their first and second floors: the street levels almost always had banks of commercial windows and an inset entry, while upper stories contained one-over-one windows and minimal attempts at decorative brickwork. For both wooden and brick commercial buildings, decorative embellishments existed only on the street façade.

In addition to traditional one- and two-part commercial blocks intended for retail purposes, a few other retail building forms also existed in the county. Plentywood, for example, boasted a handsome bank building constructed of smooth river stone. Hollow concrete block was used in a number of commercial buildings beginning in the 1920s, and in later years a few buildings of poured, reinforced concrete appeared. Often, the county's concrete commercial buildings were intended for automobile-related uses such as garages, showrooms, or service stations. Similar buildings were used for farm implement dealerships, and were often the largest retail buildings in a town.

III. Significance

Sheridan County's commercial buildings may be significant under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C. Each criteria is discussed separately below.

Criterion A: Commercial buildings in Sheridan County may be historically significant as surviving representations of the county's brief period of urban development and growth. In common with much of America's western agricultural frontier, Sheridan County's initial settlement was based on a rural lifestyle, but accompanying commercial centers appeared almost simultaneously with the new homesteads. Among their other functions, these small towns provided basic retail trade centers within just a few miles of nearly all of the county's farms. These small-town retail districts were rudimentary, but still vital to the county's settlers.

For most of Sheridan County's retail districts, their period of prosperity lasted no more than a generation. In the years after World War I, the county's population declined and its transportation network improved, making many of the

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smaller retail areas redundant. As the twentieth century progressed, most of the county's retail areas lost their viability, and even Plentywood's Main Street began to lose customers to larger business districts outside the county's borders. Sheridan County's surviving retail buildings, however, still reflect the county's frontier period of locally-based retail trade.

Criterion B: Relatively few of Sheridan County's commercial buildings are likely to possess National Register eligibility under Criterion B. Such an association is possible, however, if a property is found to have an important association with an individual who played a pivotal role in local trade or commerce during the historic period. No such properties were identified during the course of this survey.

Criterion C: Sheridan County's commercial buildings may be architecturally significant as examples of early twentieth-century retail building design in northeastern Montana. Few of the county's commercial buildings displayed a high level of design sophistication, and examples of the nationally-popular classical and Beaux Arts designs of the period are conspicuously absent in the county. The area's best commercial buildings are in Plentywood, and even here, most buildings are simply larger examples of pioneer building forms, perhaps executed in brick or stone. Rather than period high-style, Sheridan County's vernacular retail buildings reflect the rural, frontier nature of the county during its period of initial settlement. The fact that very few of these early commercial buildings were replaced with more sophisticated designs attests to the brief, ephemeral nature of the county's urban history.

IV. Registration Requirements: The requirements for listing Sheridan County commercial buildings on the National Register of Historic Places are briefly outlined below, grouped according to the applicable criteria. The registration requirements are followed by a brief, generalized discussion of integrity requirements.

Criterion A: A commercial building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A if it exhibits an association with important trends in the evolution of the patterns of Euro-American commerce in the county. This association may be demonstrated through the building's use by a retail business for a substantial length of time during the historic period, and/or by being a component of an important local retail trade district. Eligible properties must also meet the integrity guidelines outlined below.

Criterion B: Relatively few Sheridan County buildings in this property type are likely to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B. For a building to possess such eligibility, it must possess a strong, demonstrated association with a figure of unusual importance in the history of Sheridan County commerce, and must retain a sufficient level of integrity as described below.

Criterion C: A commercial building in Sheridan County will be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C if it is a representative example of typical local retail building forms, or if it is an example of exceptional period commercial architecture. To be eligible under this criterion, the nominated property must display strong and largely unaltered characteristics of the building forms and styles that were utilized in Sheridan County during the historic period, with only a minimal loss of integrity. Integrity standards for a Criterion C property should be higher than those for other criteria, unless the property being considered is a rare surviving example of an important type. In judging eligibility under Criterion C, a property's level of architectural integrity should be compared against that of other Sheridan County examples of the building form.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a commercial building in Sheridan County must fully retain integrity of *location* and *setting*. Most such buildings retain integrity of location, and their historic placement is often a significant element in the streetscape of a community. A building moved to a new location after the end of the historic period should be considered for listing only if it is the only surviving representation of a particular

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building form or the only remaining building associated with a significant historic trend, influence, or use. The buildings should also retain integrity of *design, materials, and workmanship* such that the historic massing, detailing, and use of the building remain readily apparent. A substantial addition to a building, or the removal of a major historic building component would disqualify the building from listing. Primary components of the historic fenestration pattern must remain evident, and significant portions of the building's original exterior siding must remain visible, unless the replacement siding dates from the historic period. Most of the county's commercial buildings retain this level of integrity on all but the street (storefront) façade. Conversely, very few fully-historic storefront façades remain in the county. For this reason, a building with an altered façade will retain eligibility if the historic appearance of the façade can be determined from the surviving materials. For multi-story commercial buildings, only the street-level façade may contain alterations; the historic design of the upper floors must remain intact. Normally, a property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

Associated Property Types:

I. Name of Property Type: Grain Elevators

II. Description

In Sheridan County, grain elevators were by far the most common type of non-retail commercial facility. Virtually every platted townsite in the county boasted from one to four competing grain elevator complexes. Nearly all of the county's historic grain elevators shared the same basic design. The most prominent feature was a tall, rectangular block used for grain storage. This block normally had wood crib walls with clapboard siding, and was topped by a characteristic central gable-roof monitor (cupola) housing the lifting and distributing machinery of the elevator. Nearly all elevators had one or more single-story, wood-frame extensions built on one side of the main elevator mass. These areas served a variety of functions; the most important was that of a receiving shed, an enclosed, drive-through area where grain wagons (later trucks) could be weighed and then unloaded. Other extensions housed the elevator's office and often a room containing electrical generating equipment. Small storage buildings and privies often accompanied each elevator complex.

Virtually all of Sheridan County's grain elevators were constructed along railroad sidings on "industrial lots" leased from one of the county's two railroad companies. The side of the elevator nearest the tracks featured sheet-metal chutes for loading the railroad cars, as well as loading docks for transferring other commodities. The office and receiving shed extensions are on the opposite side of the elevator from the railroad tracks. The row of industrial lots along a siding often hosted a row of competing grain elevators as well as other industries, resulting in a striking visual landscape and creating the only true "industrial" areas in Sheridan County.

III. Significance

Sheridan County grain elevators may be significant under National Register Criteria A and/or C. Many elevators will probably achieve significance under both criteria. Each criteria is discussed separately below.

Criterion A: The county's grain elevator complexes are historically significant as important components in the local system of grain marketing and storage. The elevators served as primary collection and warehousing points for the local wheat crop -- Sheridan County's principal agricultural product. The buildings also acted as grain wholesaling centers,

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where farmers sold their wheat crop to agents of flour and cereal producers, wholesalers, and others. In addition, the elevators served as the primary shipment points for grain traveling to distant markets. In short, the region's grain elevators filled a variety of important roles in the process of marketing Sheridan County's agricultural products.

Criterion C: The county's grain elevators are architecturally significant as representative examples of early twentieth-century country grain elevator design. With their prominent physical presence and distinctive profiles, country grain elevators were visual landmarks in nearly every small Great Plains town, and they were among the largest buildings to be erected in many of the towns. The design of the elevators was purely functional, but displayed a scale of industrial technology not found in other small-town buildings. The building's grain movement and processing functions were usually handled by electricity generated on-site, and the complex arrangement of belts, pulleys, and cables making up the elevator mechanism itself forms a good representation of period industrial design. Sheridan County's grain elevators, then, are both visually striking buildings and important examples of small-scale period industrial design.

IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for National Register listing, a Sheridan County grain elevator must continue to display an association with the broad historical themes of grain warehousing and marketing in the county. Since most of the county's grain elevators share many elements of a common design, and since many of the elevators remain in active use for their historic purpose, the evaluation of a property's relative integrity shall be a primary concern. General guidelines for evaluating the integrity of grain elevators are outlined below.

Integrity: To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a Sheridan County grain elevator must fully retain integrity of *location* and *setting*. Most elevators retain integrity of location, and the building's historic placement along a railroad siding in a designated "industrial" portion of a townsite is an important element in its historic use. Integrity of setting will be diminished if modern construction on or near a grain elevator site visually disrupts the appearance of the historic elevator; this would occur if a large, modern grain storage facility were constructed nearby, although the installation of small non-historic grain storage bins would not seriously damage the integrity of setting. The major buildings at an elevator complex must retain integrity of *design*, *materials*, and *workmanship* such that the historic massing, detailing, and use of the building remain readily apparent. Again, most elevators retain these qualities; one factor which would diminish this integrity would be the complete covering of the building's exterior siding with modern materials. (Note, however, that replacement metal siding was often added during the historic period to reduce fire hazards, and this would not injure the building's integrity.) Normally, a property will retain integrity of *feeling* and *association* if the remaining five areas of integrity survive.

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G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

This nomination applies to properties located within the present boundaries of Sheridan County, Montana.

H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

This document is one product of a comprehensive historic and archaeological survey of Sheridan County, Montana conducted in 1991 and 1992 by staff members of Renewable Technologies, Inc. (RTI), a cultural resources consulting firm with offices in Butte, Montana. The project was performed under contract to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), located in Helena, Montana. The project's primary goal was the preparation of this document -- a comprehensive Multiple Properties National Register of Historic Places nomination for Sheridan County, identifying and discussing the county's most significant prehistoric and historic themes and contexts, and developing property types associated with these contexts.

Like any Multiple Properties Documentation, this document is an open record to be supplemented as new information on the archaeology and history of Sheridan County is developed. Themes of ethnic heritage would be likely additions in this county where a portion of the land area now comprises the northeast corner of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, and where the early 20th century influx of homesteaders brought with it high numbers of immigrants. Future development of contexts on Fort Peck Reservation history and ethnic settlement in Sheridan County would result in greater understanding of the events and patterns which shaped a number of communities in this vicinity.

The Multiple Properties nomination was accompanied by a total of eight individual National Register nominations --two for archaeological sites and six for historic properties. In addition, the project generated over 200 abbreviated site forms, each containing descriptions and photographs of a single Sheridan County archaeological or historic site. "Windshield survey" maps were also prepared for each of the county's platted townships; these maps serve to identify potentially historic properties in each community.

Fieldwork for the Sheridan County survey project began in May 1991, when Mark Hufstetler and Mitzi Rossillon of RTI visited Sheridan County with two SHPO representatives. During the visit, the group met with interested Sheridan County residents and prepared a basic work plan for the following months. Soon after the initial visit, Mitzi Rossillon and Mary McCormick of RTI returned to Sheridan County for an intensive two-week period of field survey. Most of the individual site forms were prepared during this visit. Sites were identified with the aid of local volunteers, representing all major regions of the county. In addition to providing volunteer guides, the county and its residents assisted by providing office space, lodging, and some transportation for the RTI representatives.

Mary McCormick and Mark Hufstetler conducted additional field work for RTI in July 1991. During the second visit, McCormick and Hufstetler recorded additional historic and archaeological properties on site forms, and conducted substantial primary and secondary research on Sheridan County's history, prehistory, and known cultural resources. They also conducted windshield surveys of the buildings and structures in Sheridan County's platted townships.

Following the second field visit, the site forms prepared for each identified property were finalized, and forwarded to the University of Montana for the assignment of site numbers. The completed site forms were submitted to the SHPO in September 1991. Preparation of the National Register nominations and survey maps took place during the spring of 1992, and these products were submitted to the SHPO in June 1992.

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