

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Roadside Architecture Along US 2 in Montana

B. Associated Historic Contexts

C. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Joe Ashley Date: October 1993
Organization: Private Consultant
Street & Number: Telephone:
City or Town: Bozeman State: Montana Zip: 59715

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.)

Maull Shaf 6-24-94
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.

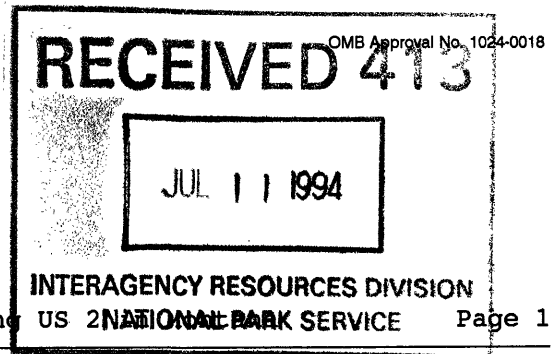
Edson H. Beall 6-25-94
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register Date

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E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Introduction

The development of a comprehensive system of interstate highways in the United States took more than a century to evolve. The call for better roads dates back at least to the early 19th Century, but with the coming of the railroads, interest in a national highway system diminished. The demand for better roads picked up again in the early 1880's when bicycles became a popular means of private transportation. Several national organizations, most notably the League of American Wheelmen, organized to promote the development of a network of regional and interstate highways.¹ It was the automobile, however, that created the most influential ground swell of support for better roads.

Automobiles first appeared in the United States in the 1890's.² Within a decade a few adventurous Americans had driven across the continent on what best could be described as a diverse assortment of unmarked, poorly maintained trails. Such primitive roadways would not long be tolerated by a society fascinated with the horseless carriage. The American automobile industry was also a highly vocal supporter of better roads, recognizing that better highways spelled increased sales and higher profits. The nation was poised for a monumental effort to open America to private citizens and their automobiles.

Early road construction projects were mostly the product of local business and civic organizations, financed mainly by private donations. These early highways were usually marked and maintained by the same group of citizens who were responsible for their construction. Most roads bore descriptive names linking nearby towns or popular local destinations. Seldom was there any thought or effort given to regional or national coordination.³

As more Americans took to the highways the inadequacies of these rudimentary roads became all the more apparent. Not only were routes poorly marked and often ill-maintained, but per capita costs of highway construction inhibited development in the more sparsely populated sections of the country. Local donations and available tax support proved woefully inadequate to fulfill the expectations of an increasingly mobile society.

As pressure mounted on Congress to do something about the abysmal condition of the nation's highways, the federal government had already developed a basic infrastructure to coordinate its role in the evolution of a national highway system. An Office of Public Road Inquiry (later known as the Bureau of Public Roads) had been created in the 1890's under the Secretary of Agriculture to study the situation but little activity and minimal financial support resulted.⁴ To encourage governmental assistance, lobbyists focused on three ancillary advantages of road building: (1) to bring farmers and ranchers closer to expanding urban markets; (2) to improve educational and cultural opportunities for rural residents; and (3) to provide door to door mail delivery to all Americans.⁵ The real basis for support, however, came from a growing number of voters who owned automobiles and wanted better roads on which to drive.

¹U.S. Department of Transportation, America's Highways: 1776-1976. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC (1976), 42.

²Edward L. Throm, ed. Picture History of American Transportation. Simon and Schuster, New York (1952), 165.

³U.S. Department of Transportation, 83.

⁴Quinta Scott and Susan Croce Kelly, Route 66: The Highway and its People. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman (1988), 7.

⁵Ibid.

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The landmark piece of legislation enabling the federal government to play the pivotal role in the development of a national highway system was the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916. This law established the initial guidelines for federal leadership in the better roads crusade.⁶ In 1921 a second law was passed requiring each state to designate a connected system of rural roads that would be eligible for federal funds. Three years later a joint board of state and federal highway officials was selected to designate and number a national system of highways from those proposed by the states.

By late 1926, after careful deliberation and unprecedented political pressure, the board recommended to the Secretary of Agriculture a network of over seventy-five thousand miles of roadways to be incorporated into the first national highway system.⁷ On November 11, 1926 the proposal was approved and the system implemented.

Montana's highway network was equally slow to evolve. In 1914 Montana had less than one-hundred miles of hard-surfaced highways.⁸ Most of the remainder of the State's roads, especially those in the more rural areas, were impassable much of the year.

This situation was soon to change, however. The good roads movement finally reached Montana and the business community, in particular, was extremely supportive of programs aimed at improving automobile access to even the most remote sections of the State. Tourism had already become an important economic asset, especially in and around Yellowstone and Glacier national parks.⁹ Community leaders saw the opportunity to expand the lucrative recreation trade and also provide better access to the State's rapidly expanding farm population. The passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and heavy promotion by the railroads encouraged thousands of homesteaders to move to Montana in the years just prior to the First World War.¹⁰ Most of these settlers claimed land in the less developed eastern two-thirds of the State where roads were few and far between.

By 1920 several of the State's more heavily travelled roads had become part of a growing network of regional and interstate 'trails'.¹¹ Trail organizations, usually financed and sponsored by local businessmen along the highway, sprang up all over the country in the decade prior to the establishment of the federally sponsored national highway system. The 1921 Rand McNally Auto Trails Map identifies twenty such designations in Montana.¹² The longest highway in the State at the time was the Theodore Roosevelt International Highway. In the early 1920's this trail was part of the northern-most intercontinental road across America, linking New England with the West Coast.¹³ In 1926 this roadway became an integral part of the first national highway network. The road

⁶Ibid., 8-9.

⁷Ibid., 13.

⁸Peter J. Huggill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States 1880-1929," Geographical Review 72:3 (July 1982) 338.

⁹"Park to Park Highway will be Built this Summer," Livingston Enterprise, (June 29, 1911) 1.

¹⁰Daniel N. Vichorek, Montana's Homestead Era. Montana Magazine, Helena (1987) 11-19.

¹¹Marilyn Wyss, The Origins and Development of the Road and Trail System in Montana (unpublished manuscript), Montana Department of Transportation, Helena (1992) 24.

¹²Rand McNally Auto Trails Map (Districts 13-17). Rand McNally, Chicago (1921).

¹³Theodore Roosevelt International Highway, Montana Section. Glasgow, MT (1921) 1.

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was designated US 2.¹⁴

Context #1: Commercial Development along US 2 in Montana: 1926-1956

Over the years US Route 2 was promoted as the most direct route from the Midwest and Northeast to the scenic wonders of the Pacific Northwest. Hardsurfacing the highway in Montana began about 1930 with the completion of segments between Havre and Chinook and Glasgow and Vandalia.¹⁵ During the depression most of the remainder of the route was paved although it was not until 1948 when the job was completed.¹⁶

As the tourists came, so did the early roadside entrepreneurs; providing gas, food, lodging, and sundry other services. Before long the entrances to most communities were lined with filling stations, garages, auto camps, and cafes catering to the motorist's every need. As an example, in 1922 only one US 2 community had a Conoco filling station.¹⁷ A decade later, over fifty towns offered Conoco products.¹⁸ Auto camps followed a similar pattern of expansion, with over twenty-five complexes in operation along the highway by the mid-1930's.¹⁹

The growth of tourist services continued, almost unabated, until well into the 1960's when travel on the State's two-lane roads began to decline as a new network of limited-access, super highways entered Montana. The Interstate system, a result of appropriations provided by the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, rapidly gained favor with a majority of the motoring public, particularly those travelling long distances to reach specific recreational destinations.²⁰ The interstates were faster and safer and before long, not only traffic but also the businesses providing services to the traveller began to leave the older roads in favor of the more lucrative interstate system.

Today the remnants of this once thriving industry are subtle reminders of what formerly was a vital economic activity along the Montana Hi-Line. The architectural and commercial manifestations of this period (1926-1956) provide visual reminders of the role tourism played in the development of the northern Montana economy.

Gas Stations

The gas station is the most ubiquitous commercial manifestation of the widespread adoption of the automobile. Curbside filling stations were the first form of retail outlet to appear, following the invention of the gravity-fed gasoline pump in 1905, but they soon proved highly inefficient as well as posing a definite safety hazard.²¹ Long lines of motorists waiting to fill their tanks compounded congestion in already overcrowded metropolitan areas and errant drivers occasionally

¹⁴Official Road Map of Montana. Montana Automobile Association, Helena (1927).

¹⁵Date determined by examining a number of early Montana road maps.

¹⁶Montana Highway Map. State Highway Commission, Helena (1948 and 1949).

¹⁷Blazed Trails in Montana. Continental Oil Company, Denver (1922).

¹⁸Official Road Map of Montana. Conoco Travel Bureau, Denver (1932).

¹⁹Cottage Camp Manual (List #1). Conoco Travel Bureau, Denver (circa 1933).

²⁰U.S. Department of Transportation, 211.

²¹Daniel J. Vieyra, Fill'er Up. Macmillan, New York (1979) 4.

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collided with the pumps, igniting the highly flammable liquid. By 1920 many communities had outlawed curbside gasoline sales.²²

Even before the initiation of legal action forcing gasoline retailers to move off busy city streets, some businessmen and the oil companies themselves had begun experimenting with alternative sites. Such facilities usually consisted of two or three pumps positioned fifty to seventy-five feet off the roadway along with a small office/storage building where packaged lubricants could be stored.²³

In contrast to curbside distribution, these stations marked a dramatic change in urban/commercial land use. While the installation of the former necessitated neither demolition of older structures nor a break in the curblines, drive-in gasoline outlets required enough space for motorists to pull completely off the road.²⁴ In more congested areas this often resulted in the tearing down of older, less profitable businesses to make room for new gas stations.

The first drive-in filling stations were crude affairs and seldom was there any attempt to beautify the site. Demand for the product usually exceeded supply so there was little incentive for owners to spend any extra money on decorative frills. This situation soon changed as the number of retailers eventually caught up with demand. By the early 1920's it was not uncommon to find one or more retail outlets in every block, particularly on the fringes of central business districts and along major transportation arteries.

Drive-in filling stations were by no means confined to urban areas. Small towns also witnessed the rapid proliferation of gas stations. In fact, even in rural areas, stations appeared at virtually every important road junction. By 1920 there were already over 15,000 stations in the United States and new businesses were opening at a rate of over one thousand per year.²⁵

With large numbers of stations being built, it is not surprising that their often shoddy appearance soon came to the attention of both city officials and private citizens alike. This fact, coupled with increased competition among operators for the motorist's business, led to substantive changes in the construction and design of stations.

Standard Oil Company of California was the first large corporation to develop a chain of filling stations where a desire to blend into residential neighborhoods and create a positive company image played major roles in developing a distinctive architectural identity.²⁶ By 1920 the company had opened over thirty stations of standardized design with common color scheme and signage. As was typical of the period, the Standard outlets were small cottage-styled buildings with low-pitched hip roofs. Often canopies over pump islands were added to give structures a more impressive look as well as provide some degree of weather protection for both attendants and customers. Offices were normally quite small with one or two storage areas and rest room facilities. Entrance to the men's room was located inside the station house for the convenience of employees while the ladies rest room was usually hidden discreetly behind the building. Many other large

²²Chester H. Liebs, Main Street to Miracle Mile. Little, Brown and Company, Boston (1985) 96.

²³Ibid., 97.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Linda Bayer, "Roadside Architecture," Historic Huntsville Quarterly 9:1-2 (1983) 6.

²⁶John J. Jakle, "The American Gasoline Station, 1920-1970," Journal of American Culture (Spring 1976) 521.

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oil companies as well as independent retailers followed Standard Oil's lead and built similar, more aesthetically pleasing facilities.

A majority of early filling stations were prefabricated structures. All an operator had to do was select one of several standard models and a distinctive color scheme. Some of the larger manufacturers would custom build a design to meet the needs of better customers.²⁷ This service was of particular value to the larger oil companies who, for a minimum investment, could promote an exclusive style or decor to their franchised dealer network. The structures were easy to construct, and, if a particular site proved unprofitable, the owner could easily disassemble the building and move it elsewhere.

By the mid-1920's many filling station operators had expanded services to include basic automotive maintenance and repair.²⁸ With several million cars on the road, franchised dealers were unable to meet the demand for routine mechanical service. Initially station operators installed outside grease pits or basic rotary lifts but this soon proved inadequate, especially in areas with inclement weather. 'Lubritorium's, indoor car washes, and more sophisticated repair facilities were enclosed and attached to the small prefabricated offices.

Indoor service garages were being integrated into corporate architecture by the early 1930's. The Pure Oil Company introduced an especially popular English cottage design where a steep, gabled roof line was carried across the attached service bays.²⁹ Conoco, Texaco, and several other major companies devised similar styles.

The depression years brought many changes to the gasoline retail industry, including station design. To compensate for diminishing sales, the larger corporations introduced auxiliary product lines which required larger display and storage areas. By the late 1930's most major companies promoted their own brands of tires, batteries, and accessories.³⁰ Additionally, lagging sales encouraged many companies to expand into new territories. To attract customers away from established dealers in areas where a company had not been previously represented, new station designs and color schemes were introduced. This proved to be an effective way to establish name recognition and customer loyalty.

The porcelain-paneled, flat-roofed, rectangular oblong box design seemed to be the answer. Texaco, Shell, Socony, and a number of other major retailers rapidly embraced the new design, each incorporating a distinctive feature or color to maintain corporate identity. The architecture featured large plate glass windows to display new products and accessories as well as present an atmosphere of openness and cleanliness; something that had not been a hallmark of the service station industry in the past.³¹ More women were now driving automobiles and their business represented an increasingly important share of gasoline sales. Marketing strategists reasoned that the light, airy appearance of the new service stations would attract a larger percentage of female drivers.

²⁷Liebs, 100.

²⁸Vieyra, 9.

²⁹Scott H. Suter, "Neither Weird nor Elegant: The Evolution of the Cottage-Style Gas Station," Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal 12:3 (1993) 9-10.

³⁰Liebs, 104.

³¹Charles D. Olson, "Sign of the Star: Walter Dorwin Teague and the Texas Company," Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal 11:1 (1990) 3.

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The late 1930's oblong-box has remained the basic component of gas station design well into the 1950's despite industry attempts to mask the older architecture.³² Over the years office roofs were raised above adjacent service bays, building corners rounded to present a more streamlined appearance, as well as sundry other architectural modifications to present a more distinctive image. Even the skyward-canted canopies of the 1960's and the mansard roofs of the 1970's did little to alter the rectangular, box-like design.

³²Jakle (1976), 532.

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Motels

The American motel as we know it today evolved over a thirty year period during the early days of long distance automotive travel. In the western United States its roots can be traced to the municipal auto camps that appeared prior to 1920. Before auto camps, motorists were forced to seek overnight accommodations in downtown hotels which were not well suited to the autoist.³³ Most such establishments were built before the turn of the century when the railroads carried a majority of out-of-town travelers. Hotels were usually located near train depots, within easy walking distance of the central business district. For tired, dirty motorists who had fought poorly maintained roads and unreliable automobiles for the better part of the day, the obstacles required to reach the local hotel often seemed insurmountable. In larger towns traffic congestion was the immediate challenge, followed by an often unending search for a place to park the automobile for the night. This, however, was not the end of the motorist's grief. They were then required to parade through public lobbies in their dishevelled clothing to register. When women were in the party, this was an especially uncomfortable experience since most hotels catered almost exclusively to a male clientele. Usually this included a few unsavory characters who were apt to make a disparaging remark or two about the physical appearance of the newly arrived guests.³⁴

Most early cross-country automobilists chose an alternative by exercising their new-found freedom to stop anywhere they pleased and camp by the side of the road.³⁵ At first this system worked well but as the number of motorists increased, the popularity of camping began to create serious problems, especially in densely settled areas. As is often the case, a few inconsiderate individuals ruined a positive experience for the majority. Landowners complained about damaged fencing, abandoned trash, and other undesirable activities. Farmers, who initially welcomed travelers, soon placed no trespassing signs along many of the nation's most popular routes.³⁶

At this time a solution to the dilemma appeared in the form of free municipal auto camps. Many local businessmen recognized the economic potential of the automobilist if he or she were to stay in a community for an extra day or two. Providing free overnight camping facilities seemed like an effective way to increase the amount of money coming into a community. Small campgrounds were established on five to ten acre tracts, usually on the outskirts of town adjacent to the most heavily travelled roads. In the West where alternative accommodations were few and far between, camps soon appeared in most communities. In Denver, Colorado a large facility covering 160 acres with nearly 800 campsites was built before 1915.³⁷ Many municipal campgrounds became the foci of community pride with neighboring towns competing to build the most elaborate and popular facility in the region. Some campgrounds included communal kitchens, recreation rooms, and swimming pools.

Most municipal auto camps were sponsored by local civic organizations who were also responsible for their maintenance. By the early 1920's over ten million vacationers annually were enjoying auto camping.³⁸ Unfortunately, this did not always translate into community profits. It soon became apparent that most visitors did not spend the money locally that business

³³Bayer, 25.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Warren J. Belasco, Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945. MIT Press, Cambridge (1979) 7. This book is a definitive study of the evolution of motels in the first half of the 20th Century.

³⁶Liebs, 170.

³⁷Bayer, 26.

³⁸Belasco, 20.

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promoters had envisioned. Furthermore, along with the more affluent tourist, came an increasingly larger percentage of homeless transients. By the mid-1920's automobiles were no longer the exclusive property of the upper class.³⁹ An active used car market brought cars within reach of many people in lower economic brackets, including some who held only occasional jobs. This element, in particular, began filling the free campgrounds and discouraging more well-to-do campers from staying in such facilities. Local organizations, discouraged that camps had not met expectations, dropped their financial and logistical support. A few communities tried to maintain facilities by imposing a small fee as a means of both deterring undesirable campers and to financially support their operation. Usually such attempts were doomed to failure as few communities had the business experience to run the campgrounds in a professional and profitable manner. Most municipal campgrounds ceased operations by the mid-1920's.

Some communities avoided the town-supported campground experience by turning to the private sector in the very beginning. Los Angeles was one of the first cities to take this approach.⁴⁰ Commercial campgrounds were more flexible and could respond more quickly to customer needs. Facilities could be easily upgraded as demand warranted, which is exactly what occurred within a relatively short time. Operators were quick to realize that the more desirable/affluent traveller was more than willing to pay for more elaborate accommodations. Soon pre-erected tents, cots, and bedding were made available to those not wishing to carry camping equipment. In addition to saving space for other personal belongings, the autoist also saved valuable time by not having to setup and teardown camp each day.

A natural progression from privately-run 'tent cities' was the construction of crude enclosures or cabins, providing the camper with a choice of accommodations. The cabin camps as they became known, afforded much better weather protection for about fifty cents additional charge per night. A majority of travellers opted for the more secure facilities. Soon most tent sites had been replaced by individual cabins.

Cabin camps were usually located where land was cheap, a mile or two outside the city limits.⁴¹ Camp owners came from many walks of life although a significant number already owned and operated another form of roadside business. The average complex consisted of six to ten units which could easily be operated by a husband and wife who normally lived on site.⁴² Informality was the rule in auto camps as opposed the more stringent social etiquette required at downtown hotels. Guests were free to dress any way they chose and did not have to search for a place to park or carry baggage long distances. Travellers simply pulled up next to their cabins, unloaded the car, and relaxed and socialized with other guests until turning in for the night. For many people, these leisurely evenings were the highlights of the trip.⁴³

Favorably located cabin camps flourished during the early years, despite the economic difficulties of the Great Depression. The U.S. Bureau of Census reported almost 10,000 "tourist camps" in operation by 1935.⁴⁴ Articles published in the

³⁹Liebs, 172.

⁴⁰Bayer, 29.

⁴¹John J. Jakle, "Motel by the Roadside: America's Room for the Night," Journal of Cultural Geography (Fall/Winter 1980) 39.

⁴²Estimated by taking a sample of cabin camps listed in the Tourist Camp Directory. American Automobile Association, Washington, DC (1932).

⁴³Belasco, 133.

⁴⁴Jakle (1980), 40.

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National Petroleum News encouraged gas station operators to enter the overnight lodging business, citing numerous examples of just how profitable such ventures could be.⁴⁵

By the mid-1930's many cabin owners, especially in northern states, had converted what initially had been summer operations only into year-around businesses by weatherproofing structures and installing wood stoves or other heating systems for winter use.⁴⁶ Many operators also added indoor plumbing, better furniture, and sundry other amenities as business warranted. By the late 1930's the cost of a room for the night at a more upscale complex was two to three dollars.⁴⁷

During the 1930's most cabin operations became known as cottage courts which reflected the upgraded facilities as well as the more precise arrangement of individual sleeping units.⁴⁸ Cabins, which initially were discrete physical structures, were soon joined by interconnecting roofs, giving the courts a more substantial appearance. Usually the covered spaces between units served as garages for the travelers' automobiles.

As the nation pulled out of the depression in the late 1930's, roadside businesses boomed as millions of Americans took to the highway. A new generation of entrepreneurs sought to cash in on what was perceived to be the industry of the future.

Unfortunately, construction costs had also risen sharply, forcing many would-be operators to find more inexpensive ways of building lodging facilities. The answer seemed to be the integration of electrical and plumbing lines into a single structure.⁴⁹ To maximize space utilization, garages were eliminated and individual rooms were linked to one another in a continuous row. Privacy was reduced but the expense of touring was held in check.

To reflect this new architectural style, these new complexes were called 'motor courts'.⁵⁰ Most were single-story structures consisting of fifteen to thirty units.⁵¹ The demands of such an operation usually required owners to hire one or two employees to help maintain the premises. Small cafes and attached filling stations were not uncommon. In the western United States 'western' or 'Spanish' architecture and names prevailed while in the East the Colonial motif seemed to dominate the industry. In 1948 there were over 30,000 lodging businesses in operation.⁵²

The building boom in the lodging industry continued into the 1950's, fueled in part by a robust economy and a tremendous increase in automobile production after 1948. Revisions in the federal tax code implemented in 1954 and initiation of the

⁴⁵E. L. Barringer, "Highway Cabin Camps," National Petroleum News Oct 9 (1935) 32, Oct 23 (1935) 43, and Dec 25 (1935) 42.

⁴⁶Bayer, 31.

⁴⁷Estimated by taking a sample of cabin camp rates for the late 1930's from period cabin camp directories.

⁴⁸Bayer, 31.

⁴⁹Tania Werbizky, "Accommodating the Traveler: The Development of the Tourist Court on U.S. Route 20 in New York State," Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal 12:2 (1992) 2.

⁵⁰Liebs, 181-182.

⁵¹Estimated based on author's visits to numerous early motor courts across the United States.

⁵²Jakle (1980), 41.

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interstate highway program in 1956 opened new opportunities and territories to roadside entrepreneurs.⁵³ On the downside, as soon as the limited access arteries opened, many older businesses on the abandoned two-lane roads became obsolete as traffic shifted to the new highways.

During the 1950's the lodging industry moved toward larger and more elaborate facilities.⁵⁴ In many respects this trend represented a return to many of the things early motorists had shunned. These establishments were known as 'motor inns' and they provided services and facilities quite similar to early twentieth century hotels. Public space was dramatically increased and the formality of lobby and restaurant returned to greet the highway traveller. Buildings were often two or three stories high and access to rooms frequently required a long walk from one's automobile. Bellhops returned to some of the plusher establishments and valet service was a common amenity. Newsstands, gift shops, and banquet/meeting facilities also were part of larger complexes in major metropolitan areas.

Prior to the Second World War, small businessmen dominated the roadside lodging industry but after the war increased construction and operating costs required considerably larger capital expenditures. While lending institutions were generally cooperative, they frequently wanted assurance the new businesses would become profitable operations.

Enter motel chains and franchising! The idea was not new to the lodging industry. As far back as the late 1920's auto camp and cabin camp organizations had existed. Most of these early associations served mainly as an advertising and marketing tool but did provide a certain amount of operational security, or at least so the promoters promised. Such organizations were called referral chains and consisted of privately owned businesses whose owners adhered to an established set of operational guidelines.⁵⁵ The 1950's era manifestation of this system was even more restrictive in certain ways, such as requiring a certain architectural style and common signage. To a bank, however, such conformity spelled financial peace of mind.

⁵³Jakle (1980), 34.

⁵⁴Liebs, 185-190.

⁵⁵Jakle (1980), 45.

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Cafes

The evolution of thousands of family restaurants, cafes, and drive-in eateries that line the American roadside today began several decades before the invention of the automobile, during the era of westward expansion. Chester Liebs, in his excellent book, Main Street to Miracle Mile, traces the cultural and economic elements leading to America's infatuation with dining out.⁵⁶ If there is one element that appears paramount to all the other factors involved with this social trend, it is our passion for time or, better yet, our insatiable desire to conserve and preserve as much of it as possible for other discretionary uses.⁵⁷

By the turn of the century the American lifestyle had changed dramatically from the more orderly and leisurely pace prevalent a generation before. In large cities a majority of the labor force were engaged in manufacturing and service activities instead of being self-employed as small businessmen or farmers. Most of these people were required to punch a time-clock and adhere to a prescribed agenda laid out by their employers. As cities grew, most workers were forced to take public transportation to and from their work place, further eroding into their tight schedules. Eating out was one way to save precious time, especially if the meal could be served in a prompt and efficient manner. The choice of entrees was a secondary issue, thus allowing the vendor to concentrate on just a few dishes that could be served both inexpensively and expediently.

Cafeterias, delicatessens, and mobile lunch wagons responded to the demand. Eateries were located near factory gates and by trolley and railroad stops.⁵⁸ As the food service industry boomed, other merchants, such as druggists and variety store owners, installed lunch counters to serve the ever-expanding clientele.

Recreational eating was also on the upswing in America during the latter part of the 19th century as evidenced by the emergence of soda fountains and ice cream parlors.⁵⁹ Such businesses became focal points of social interaction, especially in rural communities.

The rapid rise in the production and availability of the automobile in the first two decades of the 20th century both accelerated and facilitated the national pastime of dining out. The restaurant could be the destination, or simply an extra pleasure for those taking a leisurely ride in the country on a Sunday afternoon.

In the early years motorists were forced to take their meals in downtown restaurants or in hotel dining rooms since there were few alternatives. Soon, however, the business community responded by providing a wide array of roadside eateries from which to choose.

The first highway cafes were located on the outskirts of town along the major routes. Buildings were usually positioned fifty to one-hundred feet off the highway to provide convenient parking yet still remain visible from the road.⁶⁰ A large and often colorful sign usually beckoned to speeding motorists. In rural areas the average cafe could accommodate from

⁵⁶Liebs, 193-227.

⁵⁷Liebs, 193-197.

⁵⁸Phillip Langdon, Orange Roofs, Golden Arches. Knopf, New York (1986) 9.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Author's estimate based on visits to many early roadside cafes.

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fifteen to thirty diners while in more populous regions, seating capacities were considerably larger.⁶¹ The menu at the typical roadside cafe consisted of standard American fare but often with a regional flavor. In the Southwest, Mexican dishes were commonly offered while in New England, clam chowder and seafood specialties were a must. Southern restaurants promoted pork barbecue, hush puppies, and country fried chicken. By the late 1930's the average town of five thousand supported four or more such businesses.

The American diner is an interesting stylistic variant of the roadside cafe. Diners evolved from mobile lunch wagons common to major industrial areas in the late 19th century.⁶² As far back as the early 1920's most commercial diners were factory-made, pre-fabricated structures specifically designed for a particular market. Competition between manufacturers was intense, leading to a dazzling array of exterior styles and colors.⁶³ While primarily located within the central city in the early years, diners spread to the roadside by the 1930's. The gleaming stainless steel, porcelain-enameled panel structures rapidly became roadside meccas for tired and hungry travelers. Diners developed a carefully orchestrated reputation for cleanliness, speedy service, and well prepared, reasonably priced meals. Truckers in particular, with their notoriously healthy appetites, appreciated the ample portions and friendly service.

Most diner manufacturers were located on the East Coast so few commercially-assembled units were sold in the western states. Back East, however, diners remain a popular attraction with a loyal following of regular patrons.

Paralleling the growth of roadside cafes and diners were a wide variety of smaller, more specialized restaurants commonly referred to as food stands.⁶⁴ These simple and often primitive businesses exploded in the postwar years into the multi-billion dollar fast-food industry that dominates the restaurant trade today.

Most early roadside food stands were small, one-person operations, offering a limited menu of traditional American favorites such as hot dogs, hamburgers or a distinctive regional specialty.⁶⁵ While many businesses developed a positive image, others were short-lived, unsanitary fly-by-night operations. Most were seasonal businesses, open only for short periods to catch the tourist traffic.

The buildings came in a wide variety of sizes, designs, and colors. Most had one thing in common: low overhead.⁶⁶ While visible and accessible from the highway, few occupied prime locations. Usually they were relegated to more rural settings or on side streets where rent was considerably less. Profits, especially from part-time operations, seldom supported a family. Owners often had second jobs to make ends meet. Such businesses were ideal, however, for school teachers, retirees, housewives and others not requiring a full-time income.

The foregoing description of economically marginal operations obviously did not apply to all such businesses. A few individuals were able to take advantage of a good idea and develop it to maximum advantage. White Castle and Steak &

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Richard J. S. Gutman, American Diner: Then and Now. Harper-Perennial, New York (1993) 12-21.

⁶³Ibid., 42-57.

⁶⁴Liebs, 204.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 205-207.

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Shake are excellent examples of small specialty businesses that prospered in the prewar era.⁶⁷ It was the postwar years, however, that represent the pinnacle of success for the burgeoning fast-food industry.

To a majority of Americans, McDonald's restaurants represent the epitome of the fast-food industry today. Volume buying, rigid standardization, assembly-line efficiency, common architecture, and a self-service format are the hallmarks of the company's success.

Until the mid-1970's virtually all fast-food outlets were concentrated along commercial strips and at other locations convenient to the motorist. A recent trend, however, is to locate franchises in downtown areas; convenient to foot, bus, or subway traffic. This marketing strategy began soon after the OPEC oil embargo in anticipation of a less mobile America in the latter decades of the century.

The drive-in restaurant illustrates an even more pronounced relationship between the food service industry and the American motorist. Drive-ins can be traced back at least to the early 1920's.⁶⁸ While the first drive-in remains debatable among researchers, all agree that by the mid-1920's a number of businessmen had followed the lead of J.G. Kirby, a Dallas, Texas entrepreneur who is said to have once remarked, "People with cars are so lazy they don't want to get out of them to go eat".⁶⁹ Kirby and others converted this concept into highly profitable businesses. In Texas, New York, and California, millions of Americans were soon taking their meals while seated in the family automobile. A&W, Pig Stands, Hot Shoppes, and sundry others offered the public another alternative to eating at home around the family dining table.

The demand for car hops, or tray girls as they were sometimes called, provided employment for countless teenagers during the heyday of drive-in restaurants.⁷⁰ The drive-ins themselves, evolved into focal points of social activity for several generations of high school-age youth. Drive-ins reached their zenith in the early 1960's, and declined thereafter.

Architecturally, drive-ins have come in an infinite array of sizes, shapes, and exterior configurations. Some were circular, others linear, while a few were multi-level, neon-bedecked extravaganzas. Except for chain operations, design seems to be a matter of personal taste, or at least someone's perception of what would attract passing motorists. Canopies prevailed in northern states to provide an element of weather protection but in California and other warmer areas, customers and attendants enjoyed an open-air environment. Later, many operators installed limited indoor seating but for most customers, dining in one's automobile was the primary attraction.

Supper clubs or nightclubs as they are sometimes called, represent the last major type of automotive-associated food service activity. Supper clubs most likely evolved from early roadside taverns so popular in America in the early 19th century, although no definitive research on this topic has been completed. Supper clubs generally are located outside urban areas, often at a conspicuous bend or crossroads site, far removed from major residential areas. Undoubtedly lower property values were an issue but perhaps just as importantly, such locations provided isolation from those citizens and institutions who frowned upon the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The availability of beer, wine, and liquor was, and still is a major attraction of such businesses. Succinctly defined, a supper club is a combination restaurant and bar. During prohibition many such establishments gained an unsavory reputation as bootleg liquor remained available behind closed

⁶⁷Langdon, 30 and 67.

⁶⁸Dwayne Jones and Roni Morales, "Pig Stands: The Beginning of the Drive-in Restaurant," *Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal* 12:1 (1991-92) 2.

⁶⁹Langdon, 59.

⁷⁰Liebs, 208.

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doors. Illegal gambling and prostitution also were often associated with some operations although certainly a majority of businesses were operated within the boundaries of our legal system.

Today most supper clubs cater to a more sophisticated clientele, specializing in fine food, drinks, and often live entertainment. In rural areas and especially in the Rocky Mountain states, such businesses attract customers from many miles away who come to enjoy a good meal and socialize with friends from surrounding towns and ranches whom they seldom see in their day to day routines.

Automobile Dealerships

The marketing of automobiles, both new and used, has evolved like the gas station, motel, and roadside eatery as an elemental part of our nation's commercial landscape. Manufacturers, hard-pressed for both time and money to maintain the competitive edge in the early 20th century automobile industry, soon turned to local businessmen to sell and service their products. Franchised dealers were granted exclusive rights to market, repair and promote a particular make of vehicle in a generally well-defined territory. With some modifications, this system remains in place today. The acquisition of a Ford, Chevrolet, or Plymouth franchise has often spelled economic prosperity for many a small town businessman as the automobile rose to its preeminent position in American society.

The first automobile dealers or 'agents' as they were commonly called in the early years, were usually Main Street businessmen who also engaged in more established business activities such as operating the local hardware store, blacksmith shop, or the farm implement franchise.⁷¹ As the popularity of the automobile increased, many businessmen dropped other enterprises in favor of the more financially rewarding car dealerships.

The Ford Motor Company was the first major manufacturer to recognize the importance of establishing a solid dealer network. From the first modest agency located in San Francisco to an organization of over 12,000 outlets nationwide at its peak, Ford franchises symbolized the growing significance of the automobile to the economic well-being of Main Street America.⁷²

Early automobile showrooms were rudimentary affairs; often simply an open corner in the local hardware store. The corners of the display area were lined with spare parts and the few accessory items available at the time. The buildings themselves were usually located within the community's central commercial district. Generally there was little or no space allocated for repairs since most buyers maintained their own automobiles. A used car area was not required since most customers were first-time buyers with no trade-ins.⁷³

As automobiles grew in popularity, so did the structures housing the dealerships. By the early 1920's architects were being hired specifically to design buildings appropriate to the needs of the automobile retail sales industry.⁷⁴ In larger markets, showrooms were large enough to display three or more cars and the furnishings were often quite elaborate, especially where more expensive makes of automobiles were sold.⁷⁵ Downtown locations still were favored by a majority of dealers

⁷¹Henry L. Dominguez, The Ford Agency: A Pictorial History. Motorbooks International, Osceola, WI (1981) 14.

⁷²Ibid., 11-12.

⁷³Peter H. Phillips, "Walking In and Driving Out: A Brief Architectural History of Automobile Dealerships," Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal 12:3 (1993) 3.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Liebs, 80-81.

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so most buildings consisted of two or more levels to house the company's inventory, service area, and used car sales as these functions became more important activities after the First World War.

Despite the economic hardships of the Great Depression and the demise of most of the small independent manufacturers soon after the stock market collapse of October 1929, the automobile industry rebounded dramatically by the mid-1930's. With the growing emphasis on service and used car sales, space requirements rendered downtown locations where space was very expensive obsolete. Multi-story buildings with their mechanical elevators and concrete ramps were especially inefficient and unsuited to the new demands placed on the industry. Manufacturers themselves promoted new designs to take the industry into mid-century.⁷⁶ For those financially able to invest in new construction, single-story structures became the norm with greater emphasis given to shop areas and used car displays, each visible/accessible from the front of the property. Moderne or Streamlined designs prevailed with an occasional Art Deco touch. Small-town dealers tended to be more fiscally conservative so few new buildings were built before the beginning of hostilities in Europe and the Pacific in the early 1940's. As a result, most rural dealers continued to use 1920's vintage buildings through the war until the sales boom of the late 1940's.⁷⁷

After the Second World War, pent-up demand for new cars resulted in the industry's most financially rewarding era. In a 1950 article, Fortune magazine noted:

"...you will go a long way before finding a class of legitimate businessman that has made so much money so easily as the automobile dealers of America in recent years. ... As a 'small' independent business, a good automobile franchise is beyond comparison with anything else in the retail field for value and opportunity."⁷⁸

In response to the economic conditions alluded to in the foregoing quotation, thousands of individuals were anxious to take advantage of these fortuitous circumstances. The number of automobile dealerships grew to over 43,000 by 1950.⁷⁹ Even the smallest communities had two or three dealerships, many occupying postwar structures that incorporated many of the trends and materials introduced just prior to the war in addition to a few new ideas. The streamlined architecture of the earlier years was out, having been replaced by what is known as International styling. A well-lit, highly visible showroom was necessary since most prospective buyers were now driving rather than walking past dealerships.

By the end of the 1950's the impact of the space age was evident in dealership design.⁸⁰ Angular roofs jutting skyward or circular, almost spacecraft like structures appeared. Buildings were set back further from the highway and showroom glass area continued to increase as bulkheads almost totally disappeared.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Property Type: GAS STATIONS

⁷⁶An example of such promotional material was: Oldsmobile Motor Works, Modern Buildings for Modern Automobile Dealers. General Motors Corporation, Lansing, MI (1936).

⁷⁷Phillips, 5.

⁷⁸"Great Day for the Dealer," Fortune (Nov 1950) 90.

⁷⁹ ⁷⁹Automobile Facts and Figures, American Manufacturers Association, Detroit (1950) 69.

⁸⁰Phillips, 5-6.

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Description: Fifty-six 1926-1956 era gas stations have been identified along US 2 from the North Dakota line to Browning, Montana. Fifteen stations date from the 1920's, fourteen from the 1930's, nine from the 1940's, and eighteen from the early 1950's. Unfortunately, a majority of the older stations have structurally deteriorated or been substantially altered. There are, however, a few excellent examples that illustrate most of the major design trends over the study period (1926-1956).

Domestic-Style (House) Gas Stations: Filling stations built before the early 1930's typically resemble the inexpensive single-family bungalows of the period. The so-called 'house' type station was normally of wood-frame or brick construction with either gabled or hip roof, usually sheathed in wood. Commonly a later application of asphalt shingles or metal sheeting cover the original roofing material. Windows were wood sash, varying in configuration depending on styling pretensions, including Craftsman, Rustic, and Cottage. A canopy normally extended over the pump island, supported by one or two columns. Since service was not yet an important part of the retail gasoline business, an enclosed garage was seldom attached.⁸¹ The office itself normally contained a storage room for bulk lubricants and rest room facilities in addition to basic office accouterments. In more rural areas, a limited variety of groceries was often carried for the convenience of local customers.

It is difficult to establish corporate identity with any particular variant of the 'house'-type filling station during this early period of gas station design with the notable exception of the English cottage style introduced by the Pure Oil Company in the late 1920's. Conoco and Texaco incorporated a similar architectural style into many of their retail outlets during the early 1930's.⁸² Otherwise, varying color schemes and common corporate signage were the only indicators of brand identity. Unfortunately, these are usually the first characteristics to change as a building shifts from one association or business activity to another.

Early Corporate-Style Gas Stations: Due to increasing space requirements for merchandising ancillary automotive products and to provide a wider array of mechanical services, gas stations expanded in size by the mid-1930's. The addition of service bays was the most obvious manifestation although office space for retail sales was also increased. While some companies simply expanded existing domestic styles to accommodate changing requirements, many corporations commissioned substantially revised designs. Exterior walls were often of glazed brick or stucco and the steeply-pitched gable roofs were frequently modified to incorporate a distinctive flair at the eaves. Tile or slate were occasionally used in place of more conventional roofing materials to add color and a more distinctive touch. Typically roofs over service bays would be set perpendicular to that of the office to lend complexity, interest, and charm to the structure. This design was especially popular in larger cities where 'service' stations encroached on older, established residential neighborhoods.

During this same time, a few corporations began to feature a more Moderne styling that was rapidly gaining favor in some parts of the nation. Standard Oil of California, Mobil, Sinclair, and Richfield stations of the mid to late 1930's serve as excellent examples.⁸³ In Montana the H. Earl Clack Company also began to incorporate many of the latest trends in its

⁸¹Outside grease pits and associated service facilities were common in Montana well into the early 1930's before enclosed bays became popular.

⁸²Rainbow Conoco in Shelby is an excellent example of this architecture.

⁸³Issues of the National Petroleum News from the era provide numerous illustrations.

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stations by the late 1930's.⁸⁴ These wood-framed buildings were generally rectangular in form with stucco-covered walls that were rounded slightly at the parapet of the flat roof. Typically the service bay was attached and accessed by a large overhead wooden door. A distinctive semi-circular canopy with metal support poles usually extended over the pump island.

Just before the Second World War even more elaborate Moderne service stations began to appear across the nation, including Montana. Glazed, multi-colored brick exteriors, rigid symmetry of window and door treatments, decorative pilasters and corbelled belt coursings were incorporated in some of the most ornate stations. Northwest Refining Company of Cut Bank sponsored several such facilities about 1940.⁸⁵

Corporate Oblong Box Gas Stations: The porcelain-enameled oblong box service station was introduced by the Texas Oil Company in 1937 with several variations from which to choose.⁸⁶ Within a decade this functional design had become the industry 'standard' and was adopted by most major oil companies. The typical floor plan included two service bays, rest rooms, and corner office. In an attempt to individualize their stations, many of the larger corporations covered the exterior in distinctive patterns, materials, or colors. Standard Oil Company of Indiana used brick to set their stations apart from the competition while North Dakota-based Westland Oil used gleaming white porcelain-enameled panels trimmed in red and black.⁸⁷ The architects working for Chevron Oil developed another distinctive variant; a steel-framed, metal-clad prefabricated structure that conspicuously displayed the corporate colors of brown, green, and cream.

Significance: Historic gas stations possess both historical and architectural significance. The earliest tiny domestic stations fulfilled the basic need of supplying the motorist with fuel in a safe location off the roadway. Where canopies existed, the automobilist was also protected somewhat from inclement weather. The rapid diffusion of gas stations during the first third of this century marked the increasing importance of the automobile as America's preferred means of private transportation. During this period the increase in locally-owned stations marketing locally-produced petroleum products reflected an oil industry that was far less centralized and included corporations of more varied size and style than is the case today. Over the years gas station design evolved from small domestic cottages set in residential neighborhoods to gleaming rectangular boxes. Each company sought to establish a distinctive design that would separate it from the competition, and in so doing, gain a larger share of the expanding market. Corporate identity from the mid-1930's onward could be easily read from the use of form, materials, and colors as well as signage.

Registration Requirements: To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A historic gas stations must clearly convey their associations with servicing early automobile travellers. The station must be located adjacent to the historic or current roadway. The building form must clearly depict its historic use as a fueling and, in some cases, service station, although the gas pumps themselves may have long ago been removed and the property put to another unrelated use. Gas stations that are associated with significant Montana oil companies need to retain the distinctive design characteristics of the corporate type. The retention of corporate signage, colors, insignias, etc. adds to the significance of

⁸⁴H. Earl Clack was a Havre, MT businessman who entered the retail gasoline business in the late 1920's. Twenty years later he owned a chain of stations selling Hi-Power gas, extending from the eastern base of the Cascade Mountains of Washington eastward into North Dakota. His business was purchased by Husky Oil Company of Cody, WY in 1955.

⁸⁵The 1939 Heltne Oil Company station in Havre is an excellent example. In the early 1940's the business sold Grizzly gas, a product of Northwest Refining in Cut Bank, MT.

⁸⁶Olson, 4.

⁸⁷The former Standard Oil station in Chester, MT and the old Westland Oil Company outlet in Glasgow are fine examples.

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the station, but is not a requirement for registration. The addition of service bays to historic gas stations do not detract from their architectural integrity, but reflect the evolution of the businesses.

Gas stations listed in the National Register under Criterion C must possess a high level of integrity of design and materials, because it is the very form, detailing, and exterior sheathing materials that lent these buildings their architectural identity during the historic period. Early domestic-style stations must retain the original building form, although roofing, siding, and support posts may have been covered or replaced with more modern materials. Historic exterior sheathing materials must be preserved on oblong boxes, especially those clad in porcelain-enameled panels. Fenestration patterns were an important aspect of the design of gas stations of all eras. Sufficient integrity remains as long as the original window openings still read as voids even though replacement sash may have been installed. Many historic stations have suffered the construction of modern additions to increase service space. When the physical damage to the historic gas station has been minimal (i.e., only one exterior wall has been affected), and the new addition is clearly separate and distinct, the basic architectural cohesion of the original portion of the building is considered to remain intact.

Property Type: MOTELS

Description: Twenty-three pre-1956 lodging facilities have been identified along US 2 between the North Dakota line and Browning, Montana. Nine of the complexes date from the 1930's, four were constructed in the 1940's, and ten were built in the early 1950's. Sadly, every prewar complex has been substantially altered. In the lodging industry, perhaps more than in other roadside businesses, owners seem compelled to modernize every decade or so. The 1954 tax revision encouraged this trend by limiting a business' life expectancy to about ten years (physical depreciation allowance). Short term ownership and repeated renovations are the result of this taxation system.

Cabin Camps: Cabin camps were a natural outgrowth of early auto camps. The typical complex consisted of six to eight small wood-frame bungalows, with wood or asphalt shingles covering steeply pitched gable roofs. Architectural frills were seldom added since most operators attempted to minimize construction costs. A small combined grocery store/gas station building, which also served as the camp office, was usually located in front of the cabins, adjacent to the highway. A combined shower and rest room facility commonly was positioned near the center of the complex. Cabin furnishings were minimal with mattresses and bedding costing the customer an additional fifty cents above the average rental rate of a dollar per night.⁸⁸

Cottage Courts: As the travelling public began to expect more substantial overnight accommodations, camp operators were forced to upgrade facilities. These more elaborate complexes became known as cottage courts. Individual structures were winterized, furnishings improved, and most importantly, each cabin included a private bathroom. Family units were found at some complexes where basic kitchen facilities were available for budget-minded tourists.⁸⁹

While some cottage courts were nothing more than modified cabin camps, many newer constructions were architecturally more elaborate than the basic, no-frills twelve by twelve bungalows of the past. Individual units were normally arranged in a precise, often symmetrical pattern around a central courtyard. 'L' and 'U' configurations were especially popular.⁹⁰ Space not used for automobile parking was landscaped. The buildings were generally larger than their predecessors and

⁸⁸Prices determined by consulting period cabin camp directories.

⁸⁹Family units were especially common near major destination resort areas.

⁹⁰Jakle (1980), 39.

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frequently included a small porch or portico over the entryway. Chairs were provided so guests could relax out-of-doors before retiring for the night. Decorative cornices often graced facades and two-toned color schemes were common.⁹¹ Wood-frame, wood-sided construction predominated although brick, stucco, and log exteriors are not uncommon. In the northern states individual units were sometimes connected by integrating roofs, providing shelter for guest's automobiles between previously separated structures.

In Montana only a few cottage courts have weathered the ravages of time and the competitive nature of the lodging industry today. Most complexes that have survived were extensively renovated in the early postwar years so few retain their original styling, material, or furnishings.⁹² Nonetheless, a few generalizations with respect to regional architecture is appropriate. In the mountainous western part of the State the rustic motif (log exterior, simple gable roof) was especially popular while east of the divide, a more spartan, functional style predominated (wood siding, gable roof, with minimum decorative trim). No good example of a 1930's era cottage court could be found in the study area.

Motor Courts: To most Americans what the commercial archeologist refers to as a motor court is simply a motel.⁹³ The typical motor court can be distinguished from its predecessors by a single roof line where plumbing, heating, and electrical facilities for the enclosed units are completely integrated. A complex may consist of one or more buildings with each containing several separate rental units.. Motor courts are usually single-story structures displaying an infinite variety of architectural styles and construction materials. Western Rustic, Spanish, and Colonial themes were especially popular in the early postwar years, using stucco, brick, and wood exterior trim. Roofs were sometimes flat or gently-sloping; incorporating both gabled and hip-roof styling. A combined office/manager's living quarters is normally located at the front of the complex, directly off the highway. A large metal-neon sign beckons oncoming motorists. Signage varies from mundane to elaborate, sometimes incorporating animated graphics.⁹⁴ In many areas swimming pools were included in a landscaped area in front of the complex. Telephones, televisions (especially by the mid-1950's), and ice and vending machines were normal amenities.

Significance: Historic motels possess both historical and architectural significance. The first motels, usually referred to as cabin camps, provided the early 20th century motorist with an inexpensive alternative to camping by the side of the road, or staying in downtown hotels that were not compatible with the needs of the automobilist. As the traveler's requirements increased, the lodging industry responded by providing a wide array of accommodations from which to choose. The proliferation of such facilities represented one of the few economic growth areas during the Great Depression and substantially facilitated the rapid rise in automotive pleasure travel through the early postwar years. During this period, the overwhelming majority of businesses were privately owned, mostly family-operated enterprises, while today the industry is dominated by large, multi-faceted corporations. Over the years motel design evolved from simple individual wooden structures, usually located on the outskirts of town, to large, multi-story, lavishly furnished downtown complexes. The vernacular designs and owner-inspired tastes in materials, colors, and signage have been replaced by that of the chain motel. In little more than sixty years the industry has come nearly full circle, from both an architectural and service

⁹¹Advertising postcards from the 1930's record a wide array of decorative techniques employed to make nondescript cabins appear more luxurious.

⁹²No pre-war US 2 court in the study area is a good example of period architecture as described above.

⁹³The term 'motel' was not widely used in Montana until the early 1950's.

⁹⁴The early 1950's neon sign at the Bear Paw Court in Chinook, MT is an excellent example of the more elaborate advertising techniques used by a some owners to attract highway business.

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perspective. Initially conceived as a convenient alternative to urban hotels, the motor inn today is amazingly similar in both design and function to the very establishment shunned by early 20th century motorists.

Registration Requirements: To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A historic motels must clearly convey their associations with serving the early automobilist. The motel must be located adjacent to the historic or contemporary roadway. The building form must clearly depict its historic use of providing overnight accommodations although the structures themselves may now be used for other purposes. While the retention of original exterior colors, trim, and signage are desirable, they are not a requirement for registration. Additions and renovations do not necessarily detract from the building's architectural integrity so long as they represent the evolution of the business during its formative period.

Motels listed in the National Register under Criterion C must possess a high level of integrity of design and materials, because it is the very form, detailing, and exterior sheathing materials that lent these buildings their architectural identity during the historic period. Early cabin camps must retain the original building form, although roofing and siding may have been replaced with more modern materials. The more elaborate decorative trim normally associated with later cottage or motor courts must be preserved where such features helped to establish the stylistic identity of the business in relation to other motels within the immediate vicinity. Many historic motels have been enlarged to remain competitive. When physical damage to the original structure has been minimal (i.e., only one exterior wall has been affected), and the new addition is clearly separate and distinct, the basic architectural cohesion of the original portion of the building is considered to remain intact.

Property Type: CAFES

Description: Nineteen pre-1956 roadside restaurants were identified along US 2 within the study area. A majority of the businesses: (1) have been extensively remodeled, (2) no longer in operation, or (3) were housed in buildings that are now used for different purposes. Those that have survived relatively intact can be subdivided into three categories: cafes, drive-ins, and supper clubs (nightclubs).

Cafes: Most US 2 cafes can be conveniently divided into two general sub-types: downtown cafes and roadside cafes; the major difference being their relative location to the community's central business district. In the smaller towns there was no need to relocate businesses since parking and congestion were never a problem. The roadside cafes, however, were built with the motorist's interests in mind.⁹⁵

Downtown cafes are usually located in old buildings that have been used for a variety of purposes over the years. The exteriors defy generalization with the exception that most buildings are of wood-frame construction and virtually all have received a facelift over the past thirty years. Plastic seems to be the preferred sheathing material although both wood and vinyl are also found. The interiors, however, are strikingly similar. A long counter is commonly found along one wall with booths arranged parallel in one or two rows. The larger restaurants also may have a small dining/meeting room toward the back of the building. Signage is usually attached to the building since the fronts of the businesses abut sidewalks.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Most such establishments also catered heavily to the needs of local residents since few businesses could be supported solely on the basis of the highway trade.

⁹⁶The Johnnie Cafe in Glasgow and O'Brien's Cafe in Saco, MT are classic examples of downtown cafes.

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Roadside cafes are architecturally different in that the buildings they occupy were built with food service to the motorist in mind and are considerably more modern. Many Montana roadside cafes originated as drive-ins and were later converted to indoor dining facilities due to climatic considerations.⁹⁷

A typical roadside cafe is a one-story structure, with ample parking in front or to the side. Interiors include a small counter that is semi-circular or parallel to the front of the building. Table seating is normally greater than counter space with both booths and tables used. Large windows surround the dining area on three sides, lending a brighter, more airy atmosphere to the restaurant. Large plastic or neon signs are attached to tall pylons along the highway since the structures are usually setback thirty feet or more from the right-of-way.

Drive-ins: Most 1950's era Montana drive-ins were soon converted to indoor restaurants, given the State's short summers. Some businesses, however, maintain curbside or window service during the warmer months. A few operations are seasonal businesses only, but most provide indoor dining facilities from September to May.

The Tastee-Freez chain entered Montana in the early 1950's and most of the remaining drive-ins originated in this form. A majority now go by different names although their architectural heritage remains discernable.⁹⁸ Buildings are small, almost square with a slightly canted flat roof. Two service windows are located at the front of the buildings, surrounded on three sides by large plate glass windows. Canopies occasionally are attached to one side to facilitate curb service.

Supper Clubs: Supper clubs are normally located outside urban areas, either a few miles beyond corporate limits or far removed from any established population center. Most buildings date from the 1930's although some are of postwar vintage. Architecture defies generalization. One commonality, however, is that most have undergone several renovations and/or expansions and tend to be stylistically a hodgepodge of designs.⁹⁹ Interior space is divided between dining room and bar although alcoholic beverages are available in either space. With Montana's recently liberalized gaming regulations, poker machines and poker tables are often in evidence; in fact, a separate gaming room is not unusual. Normally a small stage and dance floor are also present. Flashing or brightly illuminated signs commonly are positioned along the highway to catch the motorist's attention.

Significance: Historic cafes may possess both historical and architectural significance. Early downtown and roadside cafes fulfilled a basic need by providing sustenance and a place to relax after long hours behind the wheel of often rudimentary automobiles over less than adequate roads. The rapid diffusion of roadside eating establishments after 1920 marked the rapid rise of the motorist as an increasingly important segment of the food service market. Most restaurants constructed after this time catered, to some degree, to the needs of the highway traveler, while some new forms, such as the drive-in, were designed almost exclusively with the motorist in mind. Owners often went to great extremes in terms of design, colors, and signage to capture a driver's attention and hopefully, his business. Architecture of the period virtually defies generalization except to note that the most gaudy and flagrant statements were often the most successful. Franchising arrived in the early 1920's and brought with it some degree of architectural uniformity, especially in larger cities where

⁹⁷Pat's Diner in Shelby is such a business, having been converted exclusively into an indoor restaurant in the 1970's.

⁹⁸Former Tastee Freez drive-ins still operate in Chinook and Malta. In Wolf Point the business is still operated as a Tastee Freez.

⁹⁹The State Line Nite Club on the Montana-North Dakota line is such a structure. Due to fire, a changing business emphasis, or the personal tastes of a succession of owners, the building has undergone at least four major renovations since it opened for business before the Second World War.

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corporate involvement was concentrated. The use of a particular design or exterior sheathing would often separate a member establishment from the competition. In rural areas, however, an owner's tastes and imagination continued to dominate the industry well into the postwar years.

Registration Requirements: To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A historic cafes must clearly convey their associations with providing sustenance to the early motorist. The building must be located adjacent to, or within a short distance of the historic or current highway. The building must clearly depict its historic use as a restaurant. Cafes that were/are associated with a particular corporation (franchise), must retain the distinctive design characteristics of the corporate type. Additions are acceptable as long as they do not destroy the original architectural integrity, and reflect the normal evolution of the business.

Diners, drive-ins, and chain restaurants listed in the National Register under Criterion C must possess a high level of integrity of design and materials, because it is the very form, detailing, and exterior sheathing that lent these buildings their architectural identity during the historic period. Early diners must retain the original building form. Where stainless and/or porcelain-enamel panels were the historic exterior sheathing, these materials must be preserved. Drive-ins must retain canopies when part of the original structure, although more modern materials are acceptable when required to preserve the structural integrity of the complex. Additions to increase service space are permissible when the physical damage to the historic structure is minimal (i.e., only one exterior wall has been affected), and the architectural cohesion of the original portion of the building remains intact.

Property Type: AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIPS

Description: Sixty-two automobile dealerships built between 1912 and 1955 were identified in US 2 communities between Bainville and Browning. This total is greater than in any other roadside category inventoried in the study. The high survival rate of dealership buildings is probably due to their large size, solid construction, and the fact that the physical plants are well suited to a variety of uses. Thirty-three structures date from before the Second World War, twenty were constructed during the late 1940's, while the remainder were built in the early 1950's. Less than twenty percent of the buildings still serve as dealerships although many continue to house automotive-related businesses. Some have undergone extensive renovation, to the point where identification is difficult while others look much as they did a half century or more ago.

The number of new car dealers in HiLine communities has dropped precipitously in the last forty years as is typical in rural areas nationwide. Larger, higher volume operations dominate the industry today, brought about by both economic and demographic circumstances.

Downtown Dealerships: Most downtown dealerships were constructed before 1935, and in Montana, many were originally built to house horse-related businesses. The majority of buildings are two stories or at least contain sizeable lofts or attics. About half are brick while the remainder are wood-frame, stucco-covered structures. Outside display space was at a premium, requiring owners still operating dealerships in the postwar years to acquire additional open areas to display cars. Roof styles include flat, barrel, and gable. Showrooms are small and generally devoid of significant ornamentation. One or two small glass-enclosed offices were commonly located off to the side of the main display area where customers and management could discuss financial issues. While a few buildings were modernized in the early postwar period, glass area remains small in comparison to later styling. Usually several large overhead wooden doors provided access to service and display areas.¹⁰⁰ Old-fashioned freight elevators connect the main floor with basements and loft areas.

¹⁰⁰Most original wooden doors have been replaced by more energy-efficient metal units.

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Streamlined Dealerships: No Montana dealerships are truly Moderne or Streamlined although several have notable architectural characteristics of the period.¹⁰¹ Late 1930's buildings are normally one-story structures with emphasis on frontal exposure of showrooms, repair areas, and used car displays. Open space often equals enclosed space. Glazed brick, tile, and glass blocks were commonly used to accentuate the modern nature of the complex. Gas station sales were normally part of the service operation with a small pump island located adjacent to the metal front overhead service door. Showroom windows are quite large and sometimes rounded in the popular style of the day. Occasionally two-toning was applied to exteriors.

Postwar Functional Dealerships: A number of rural automobile dealership buildings constructed in the late 1940's-early 1950's period are the epitome of functional, inexpensive, enclosed space.¹⁰² The structures are usually rectangular in form and constructed of concrete block, brick, or metal. A long span, slightly curved roof caps the majority of buildings. False fronts are not unusual, with several large plate glass windows along the facade. The new car display area is located at the front of the enclosure with metal/glass partitions along one wall to provide office space for salespersons. A parts counter is normally situated to the side or rear of the showroom. The remaining two-thirds of the building is devoted to servicing with side and/or rear overhead metal doors providing access. The buildings are usually set back fifty feet or so to permit outdoor displays in front of as well as along side the dealership. Signage is sometimes attached to the structure but more often is mounted on a large pylon or pole adjacent to the highway.

Postwar International Style Dealership: In larger towns or when more money was available for construction, early postwar dealership buildings usually were done in what is sometimes referred to as a modified International style. Roofs tend to be flat or gently sloping to the rear of the structure. Walls are composed of concrete blocks or brick with a minimum of ornamentation. Large expanses of windows extend from floor to ceiling surrounded by ultra-thin stainless-steel frames. Internal pipe columns provide roof support. Showrooms often jut out forward of the main building and are surrounded by glass on three sides. Forward canted pylon signs extend from the roof of the display area. Entry to the service area is usually from a recessed area adjacent to the showroom via a large overhead metal door.

Significance: Historic automobile dealerships possess both historical and architectural significance. The earliest downtown agency fulfilled the basic need of supplying gasoline and lubricants and mechanical repairs as well as the automobile itself before the days when used cars were readily available through private sources. Dealers also frequently provided emergency road service to those stranded far from the nearest garage. Most early dealerships were housed in buildings not originally designed for the sale and servicing of the automobile, but as the horseless carriage grew in popularity, many businessmen invested in larger and more elaborate facilities. Over the years dealership design evolved from totally enclosed, multi-story structures to single level, glassed-enclosed complexes with extensive outdoor displays. Signage progressed from the earliest electric signs illuminated by hundreds of light bulbs to the modern plastics of today. Each company developed a distinctive color and logo to separate it from the competition.

Registration Requirements: To qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A historic automobile dealerships must clearly convey their associations with the sales and servicing of the automobile. The dealership must be located near the historic or contemporary highway. The building form must also clearly depict its historic use as a sales and servicing facility. The retention of corporate signage, colors, insignias, etc. adds to the

¹⁰¹Terry Chevrolet-Buick and Hansen-Mersen Motors in Glasgow and Rathert-Schreiber Company in Wolf Point, MT are the best examples of this architectural style in the study area.

¹⁰²This is by far the most common dealership design found along US 2 today.

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significance of the structure, but is not a requirement for registration. The addition of service bays, parts storage facilities, or an enlarged showroom does not necessarily detract from the architectural integrity of the dealership, but may solely reflect on the evolution of the business.

Automobile dealerships listed in the National Register under Criterion C must possess a high level of integrity of design and materials, because it is the very form, detailing, and exterior sheathing that lent these buildings their architectural identity during the historic period. Streamlined dealerships must retain their distinctive glazed brick, tile, or glass block-enhanced facades. Large plate-glass windows extending from floor to ceiling are an equally significant element of postwar dealerships where International styling prevailed. Fenestration patterns are an important aspect of dealership design from all eras. Sufficient integrity remains as long as most of the original door and window openings still read as voids even though replacement units may have been installed. Most historic dealerships have suffered the construction of modern additions to increase service space. When the physical damage to the historic structure has been minimal (i.e., only one exterior wall has been affected), and the new addition is clearly separate and distinct, the basic architectural cohesion of the original portion of the building is considered to remain intact.

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G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The study area consisted of a two mile wide corridor along U.S. Route 2 in Montana from the North Dakota border westward to Browning. Portions of Roosevelt, Valley, Phillips, Blaine, Hill, Liberty, Toole, and Glacier counties were included in the survey.

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H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The multiple property listing of Automobile-Related Commercial Development along US 2 from the North Dakota Line to Browning, MT: 1926-1956 is based on an intensive eighteen month study. Joseph M. Ashley of the Department of Earth Sciences, Montana State University conducted the investigation. The research focused on identifying and documenting automotive-related businesses in operation sometime between 1926 and 1956, within a two-mile wide corridor along the eastern two-thirds of US 2 in Montana. Old gas stations, motels, cafes, and automobile and truck dealerships were selected for analysis. The time period chosen extends from the beginning of the federally regulated highway system through the early postwar years when automobile pleasure travel was approaching its zenith. US 2 was Montana's major east-west highway linking the Northeast to the scenic wonders of the Pacific Northwest before the days of the Interstate system.

During the spring and early summer of 1992 an extensive bibliographic search was conducted to identify documents pertinent to the study. The resources of the State Historical Library, Montana State University's Renne Library, and numerous other facilities in the Northwest were searched and a preliminary bibliography compiled. During this same period site inventory forms were prepared and maps of the study area ordered.

Field investigation and inventory began in early July, consisting of three distinct segments. The initial task involved identifying and photographing subject structures. The second part of the investigation centered on interviewing present and former owners, employees, and other local residents who remembered a particular business. Lastly, courthouse records were screened for relevant data. Discrepancies were noted and field checked to clarify conflicting historical and/or architectural information.

Between field trips, site inventories and base maps were prepared in the laboratory at Montana State University, and film submitted for processing. According to a pre-arranged schedule with the State Historic Preservation Office, inventory forms, maps, and photos of each building were delivered to Helena on a monthly basis. By December one-hundred and sixty sites had been documented and submitted.

The primary means of building identification was by sight recognition. A secondary technique was to use old telephone and business directories to supplement visual analysis. Thirdly, personal interviews occasionally yielded pertinent information on certain structures overlooked during field reconnaissance or that were not part of any available business listing.

After site inventories were completed, each packet was evaluated to determine which structures met National Register requirements. After careful examination, six buildings were identified as outstanding candidates; five historic gas stations and one automobile dealership. Unfortunately no early motel or cafe in the study area possessed the same degree of integrity with respect to location, association, or architecture as did those selected for nomination. Additional historical information was gathered on the chosen buildings/businesses, required imagery obtained, and the National Register of Historic Places registration forms prepared.

The last phase of the project consisted of finalizing the Multiple Property Documentation Form and preparing a slide presentation on automobile-related commercial architecture. The slide show, along with accompanying text, will be available on loan to interested parties through the State Historic Preservation Office in Helena.

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