

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Carpenter Paper Company

Other names/site number: Western Newspaper Union

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2019 Montana Avenue

City or town: Billings State: MT County: Yellowstone

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☐
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse; business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

DOMESTIC: multiple dwellings

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Western Commercial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

CONCRETE (foundation)

BRICK (walls)

SYNTHETIC MEMBRANE (roofs)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Carpenter Paper Company building faces south toward Montana Avenue and stands between the former location of 21st Street and 20th Street (Block 116, Lots 9-12), east of downtown, in the Original Townsite of Billings, Montana.¹ Montana Avenue lays directly north of and runs parallel to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway right-of-way that passes through the city. Montana Avenue bounds the Carpenter Paper Company building to the south, with open parking areas to the west, and a car repair lot to the north and east. A spur rail track once ran north of the building.

Billings architect Curtis Oehme designed the massive, two-story, 1917, Western Commercial style building purpose-built by Western Newspaper Union. Beginning in 1922, the Carpenter Paper Company and Western Newspaper Union jointly occupied the building. From this location, Western Newspaper Union produced boiler plate and patent insides for local and regional newspapers until 1940, while the Carpenter Paper Company came to supply paper

¹ At an unknown date after the 1950s, 21st Street north of Montana Avenue disappeared and replaced by new commercial development. The building in this nomination as the Carpenter Paper Company as historically known for most of its existence.

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products throughout Montana, northern Wyoming, and western North Dakota. The Carpenter Paper Company purchased the building in 1929 and operated almost continuously in it until 1994.²

Carpenter Paper Company Building Description

Located on busy Montana Avenue, across the street from the railroad tracks and just northeast of the Northern Pacific Depot and Billings Townsite Historic District, the Carpenter Paper Company building stands as one of the most substantial historic warehouse buildings in Billings. In 1917, Western Newspaper Union company superintendent of construction A.C. Busk oversaw the construction of the massive two-story building atop a daylight basement.³ Tall one-story wing additions to either side of the original block enlarged the footprint during the historic period: the east addition begun in 1922, completed by 1923, and rebuilt in 1952, and the west also constructed in 1952. The polychromatic red brick building, including its additions, rests on a concrete wall foundation. A stepped parapet surrounds the original bay's flat roof. A soldiered belt course sets off the parapet base, and raised bricks set in a regular pattern form a panel at center. The original construction's flat roof accommodates a brick mechanical room centered on its east edge, and a tall brick interior chimney centered on the north side of the east edge. Unadorned parapet walls encircle the additions' flat roofs; each serve as platforms for three modest 8' x 12' decks that serve the upper story's individual loft apartments. Synthetic membrane covers the flat roofs.

Billings' founders oriented their townsite to the railroad tracks, so the downtown street grid angles 45 degrees north from southwest to northeast. For ease of description, the author describes the Carpenter Paper Company Warehouse's (formerly Western Newspaper Union building) southeast elevation as the south, the northeast as the east, northwest as north, and southwest as west.

1917 (original) Building:

South (front) elevation:

The south elevation's center bay constitutes the original 1917 portion of the building and rises two tall stories above a daylight basement. Evenly fenestrated, the bay contains three recessed brick panels that cross the first and second story levels. Each panel contains openings across its first and second stories, where continuous soldiered brick lintels and rowlock sills define the window sets. Bricks set in a cross-hatched pattern adorn the space between the stories' window sets, and rowlock and stretcher courses form a belt course between the basement and first story. The recessed panels give the wall plane the appearance of pilasters above the basement level to the parapet. Bricks set in a diamond shape filled with stucco adorn each false pilaster at the top of the second story level.

² Between 1960-1970, the company briefly merged with another company with name changes but by 1970 again became Carpenter Paper Company.

³ "Wholesale Paper Warehouse Established in Billings," *Billings Evening Journal*, March 14, 1917, p. 4; "Press Service Finished New Building," *Billings Evening Journal*, September 15, 1917, p. 10.

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The central panel contains a set of three single window openings at both the first and second stories. The west panel contains two openings at both stories. The east panel extends to the street level to house an entry, and exhibits two windows at the second story. When constructed in 1917, the Architect Curtis Oehme's rendering in a very early newspaper image show 9-over-1 double hung windows throughout the building. By mid-century, however, replacement windows or brick infill appeared in the openings.⁴ Today, steel-frame modern windows have been introduced, and resemble those dating from the 1950s. At the first story, the west and central panels house tall, steel-frame, windows – each displaying three-light fixed sashes over an awning window: two in the west panel and three in the center panel. At the second story level, one-over-one single-hung, steel-frame windows fill all the openings except those either side of center, which remain infilled with brick. The east panel's entry retains much of its original trim. Original cast terracotta blocks and brackets appear as a shallow pediment above a modern steel double door and transom assembly. Within the pediment is a metal plaque that reads "2019." Above the pediment, the cross-hatched brick pattern runs six courses high, topped by a single rowlock course that defines the bottom of the east recessed panel. The soldiered belt course that accents the first story lintels continues across the east panel at the same level.

The south elevation's basement level features openings in line with the larger window openings above: two at the west side and three across the center. Each contains brick infill two-thirds the opening height from the concrete sill beneath a historic three-light steel-framed awning. Pipes protrude from the westernmost opening's brick infill, and a large round vent appears in the other west side opening's infilled area.

On the roof, the mechanical room's south elevation contains no fenestration.

West (side) elevation:

The 1917 building's upper story remains visible above the west addition. Oehme's design included similar features on the west elevation as the south façade: recessed window sets, a stepped parapet, and soldier and stretcher belt courses at the parapet base. Across the top of the west elevation wall, white paint covers the brick courses above the lintels to the lowest level of the stepped parapet. During the historic period, this white space provided a background for black lettering that read "CARPENTER PAPER COMPANY."

From north to south, the five window sets contained six, three, six, three, and six openings respectively across the elevation, for a total of 24 windows. Over the course of the period of significance, brick infill replaced the original nine-over one-light windows. The recent rehabilitation design introduced modern metal frame, one-over-one single-hung windows to ten of the openings: they appear, from north to south, in opening numbers five, seven, eight, ten, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty-two. The new design called for

⁴ "Billings Becomes Hub of Industrial Wheel; Western Newspaper Union Brings Plant Here," *Billings Gazette*, December 18, 1916, p. 6.

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enlarging the base of openings six, sixteen, and twenty-four to accommodate one-light metal doors. Finally, openings one, nine, and twenty-one display modern vertical metal siding infill.⁵

The mechanical room atop the roof features a single metal pedestrian door off-center to the south on its west elevation.

East (side) elevation:

An historic addition across the east elevation obscures the 1917 building's original basement and first story levels. Historically, fenestration on the second story level included only a small multi-light-over-one single-hung window low on the wall and off-center to the south, and a larger, nine-over-one window higher on the wall and off-center to the north. The larger window remains in place. Brick has filled the south opening since the historic period, and the north window retains the mid-century steel-framed window assembly, with single fixed lights above and below a one-light awning.

While the east elevation did not contain window sets like those on the façade and west elevation, concrete block treatments divide the exterior wall into eight evenly-spaced flush brick panels, and give the appearance of bays. Three concrete block courses span the elevation below the parapet, offering a relative flat surface for painted signage. For much of the historic period, the space read "CARPENTER PAPER COMPANY" in black letters on a white background.

The 2020s rehabilitation project introduced new openings to the east elevation's second story. These include one-over-one single-hung metal-framed windows: three to the south, two off-center of the north side, and another farther north. Two modern, one-light, metal-framed doors offer access to 8' x 12' modern rooftop decks: one between the second and third windows from the south, and the other south of the northernmost window.

Two window openings also appeared in the mechanical room, evenly-spaced across its east elevation.

North (rear) elevation:

The 1917 building's north elevation stands immediately adjacent to a fenced, crowded parking lot of a car repair business' parcel outside the proposed National Register boundary, which makes accessibility to and photography of the north elevation difficult. The north elevation's original configuration offered tall windows, likely the nine-over-one configuration as drawn in Oehme's design, at both the first and second stories. Brick infill, lintels, and recessed areas indicate the north elevation's first story contained one set of three tall windows at both the east and west sides, a single entry off-center to the east, and another single window off-center to the north. Three evenly-spaced openings appear across the second story, each filled $\frac{3}{4}$ height with brick above rowlock sills. Much of the elevation's brick infill has a weathered appearance, and indicates the paper company closed most of the openings during the historic period.

⁵ AT Architecture, "Tenant Improvement for: 2019 Montana Avenue," project drawings on file at MT SHPO, September 22, 2017.

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The 2020s rehabilitation project provided three, one-light, metal-frame, fixed windows at each story within the infilled openings. At the first story, single windows occupy the upper third of three original openings: the center opening of the east and west sets and the former door opening. Smaller versions of the modern windows fill the upper quarter of the second story's openings. Modern standing-seal metal siding covers the north elevation's short, unadorned parapet wall.

Interior:

Generally, the 1917 building's first story retains its historic open floorplan. Concrete floors, exposed brick walls, unadorned bearing posts, and a ceiling open to the structural system reflect the warehouse's historic functions. The 2020s renovation introduced several wood-frame and gypsum board partition walls at the center third of the building, which define restrooms, dressing rooms, storage, a break room, and an office space. These new rooms are placed along the edges of the historic space and do not interfere with the interior's open feeling, nor do they detract from the historic materials still present across the majority of the interior surfaces. The historic in-floor scale remains intact and functional, as do the stairwells, though modern fire-safe crash doors provide access to the stairs. The south third of the building's first floor contains a finished space that retains its original plaster walls. This space reveals tall original window openings, now covered from exterior view by the historic west addition, across its west wall. Glass block fills the openings.

The basement also retains its open floorplan and unfinished surfaces. On the second story, the 2020s renovation introduced loft apartments into the original open floorplan and a few south-facing rooms. Despite the second story floorplan changes, the original wall finishes (exposed brick), concrete flooring, ceiling structure, stairwells, and elevator shaft location remain. Gypsum board covers the new partition walls and dropped ceilings.

West Addition:

The one-story historic addition runs the full length of the original building's west elevation. Completed by 1952, the addition functioned as paper storage and staging. It features polychromatic red brick, a flat, unadorned parapet, and a concrete wall foundation.

South elevation:

The west addition's south elevation contains two large original openings. Historically, wooden multi-panel overhead garage doors occupied the openings. Today, a metal-framed pedestrian door and transom assembly, and a fixed metal-frame, 12-light window fill the lower two-thirds of the larger opening to the west. Metal panel siding fills the space above the entry and window. Two modern sconces provide illumination from above the entry's upper corners, and a single sconce appears near the roofline centered above the west opening. A four-light metal overhead door occupies the narrower, east opening. An original smooth concrete application covers the elevation's lower third at either side of both openings.

West elevation:

The smooth concrete finish of the west elevation's foundation rises several feet above grade, and follows the shallow slope down from north to south. A smooth concrete finish also appears horizontally across the wall at the roof level below the parapet, and vertically as mock posts to

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define eight flush false bays. Historic centered openings occupy the space high in each false bay except the one off-center to the south. These openings contain their original, eight-light steel-frame fixed windows, except the northernmost bay, where the brick infills the opening. The northernmost bay also contains a large opening, filled with metal panel siding and a modern flush metal pedestrian door off-center to the north. A modern concrete stairway, with a metal tubing rail, provides access to the door. A vertically-ribbed overhead door, with a shallow loading dock below, occupies the historic opening in the second bay from the north. Modern black metal sconces, matching those on the addition's south elevation, illuminate the adjacent parking spaces, doors, and signage.

North elevation:

Prefabricated metal siding now fills the north elevation's only opening, located at the east side of the elevation.

Interior:

The west addition's interior floorplan reflects its historic use, and has no basement nor second story. The south room contains a large loading dock at its north end, accessed by stairs along the west wall's north side. A modern half-wall separates the loading dock access from the entry and stairs. Interior finishes include the exposed brick of the original 1917 building's west wall, and its seven original openings at the first story and six corresponding openings at the daylight basement level. Glass block fills four of the upper window openings, and the rest display brick infill. Clay tile bricks constitute the west interior wall, and horizontal shiplap clads the room's north wall. Exposed brick and some modern drywall cover the south wall.

The interior's center third remains open as it was historically, and displays a ceiling open to the framing, concrete floors, the west wall's clay tile finish, and the 1917 brick wall's original openings, most infilled with brick. Shiplap covers the center room's south wall. A gypsum board partition wall extends from the west exterior wall across half the width of the addition to define the northernmost third of the first floor plan. This northern third displays the same finishes as the center third.

East addition:

In 1951, construction began on a new west wing, and a new east wing that replaced a 1920s one-story addition that appears in a mid-1920s historic photograph.⁶ Completed by 1952 and constructed on the same footprint as the 1920s edifice, the east wing features one tall story atop a raised basement. Dark red polychromatic brick set in a running bond faces the south (front) elevation, and brighter red brick interspersed with lighter red and tan and set in a common bond, covers the east (side) and north (rear) elevations. An unadorned, flat, shallow parapet, capped with red metal, surrounds the addition.

⁶ "Construction Progresses in Midland Empire," *The Billings Times*, October 4, 1951, p. 1.

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South (front) elevation:

A single, large, centered, historic opening punctuates the south elevation, where a three-light, metal overhead garage door fills the opening. Historic photographs show a twenty-panel, four-light wood garage door once provided access there.

East (side) elevation:

Mirroring the west addition's west elevation, the smooth concrete finish of the east elevation's foundation rises several feet above grade, and follows the shallow slope down from north to south. A smooth concrete finish also appears horizontally across the wall just below the roof level, and vertically as mock posts to define seven flush false bays. Original centered openings occupy the space high in each false bay. These openings contain their original, eight-light steel-frame fixed windows.

North (rear) elevation:

Historically, a wood loading dock bumper and overhead garage door functioned from the center of the north elevation. That single opening now displays brick infill flush with the exterior wall.

Interior:

The east wing's interior space retains its open floorplan. The ceiling is open to the structural elements and concrete covers the floor. Original clay tile brick dresses the interior side of the north, south, and east walls. The 1917 wall at the west side of the room, retains structural beams and posts parged with concrete. Evidence of some original openings remain, variably filled with regular brick, clay tile brick, and open to allow access between the main building and the wing.

Carpenter Paper Company Building Integrity

The Carpenter Paper Company building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. While some modern infill, small-scale modifications, and window and door assemblies appear across the exterior elevations, they occupy original openings and do not overwhelm the building's ability to convey its historic and architectural significance. The building stands in its original location opposite the intersection of Montana Avenue and 21st Street. Dominated by historic warehouses and railroad infrastructure, the property's setting remains intact. By 1952, infilled openings, new window styles, and massive additions to the side elevations masked and replaced some of the original features, but these historic changes allowed Architect Oehme's 1917 design to remain discernable. The building's first and second story floorplans also reflect their historic design – open spaces conducive to storage and the free flow of goods and people. Upstairs, the loft renovation introduced partition walls, new plumbing, and other fixtures, but the floors, ceilings, and exterior walls represent intact historic finishes. Similarly, the majority of materials, including the bricks, most windows, concrete floors, and exposed structural elements, date to the historic period. The workmanship evident in the building's construction, materials, and craftsmanship testifies to the quality of the materials, as well as the craftsmanship and skill of the master masons and carpenters who built it and the architects who designed it.

The warehouse's appearance, large open spaces, and retention of materials and setting all contribute to its high integrity of feeling and association. These qualities express both the

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aesthetic and historic sense of the historic period; they remain sufficient to convey the importance of the Western Newspaper Union's and Carpenter Paper Company's operations and use of the building for decades in service to the Billings region and beyond. Further, the high integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association effectively reflect the property's historic and architectural significance.

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Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☒

A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐

B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒

C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐

D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐

A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

☐

B. Removed from its original location

☐

C. A birthplace or grave

☐

D. A cemetery

☐

E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure

☐

F. A commemorative property

☐

G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCIAL

Period of Significance

1917-1975

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Significant Dates

1917, 1922, 1923, 1929, 1940, 1952

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Curtis Oehme

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Carpenter Paper Company building (constructed by Western Newspaper Union but used for a greater time by Carpenter Paper Company) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local and state level of significance. From 1917 to 1940, Western Newspaper Union operated in this building where it supplied both boiler plate and patent insides along with other printing-related supplies for most, if not all, Montana's weekly newspapers, providing national and international news, photographs, serialized fiction, features and advertisements that fleshed out local newspapers. In 1922, the Carpenter Paper Company began joint occupancy of the building with Western Newspaper Union and in 1929, purchased the building outright from the Western Newspaper Union. From 1922 to 1940, the two business shared the building until Western Newspaper Union's move to a different location. From 1922 to 1996, the Carpenter Paper Company essentially operated as the primary distributor of paper products in Billings, eastern Montana and northern Wyoming.

The Carpenter Paper Company building conveys its local and state significance for its historic association with not only the economic development of Billings, Montana, but also the major role it played in the dissemination of news and newspaper content through

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an area that included parts of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and eastern Washington. The city of Billings became the trade and distribution center (hub) in the early twentieth century for the surrounding region; its strategic location with its three rail-lines and ground transportation routes spurred the success of both companies and allowed expansion throughout the region. The Carpenter Paper Company building represents one of the most substantial brick warehouses constructed during this period along Montana Avenue and its continuous operation to nearly the end of the twentieth century reinforces its significant contribution to the economic prosperity of Billings.

The well preserved Carpenter Paper Company building gains additional significance under Criterion C as representative of Western Commercial Architecture, an architectural style that emerged to house the commercial/industrial businesses in the ever expanding market in Montana into the late 20th century. The building is also associated with Curtis Oehme, a prominent Billings architect in the first two decades of the 20th century. The massive two-story warehouse stands north of Montana Avenue and retains a high degree of integrity that includes the blending of additions completed in 1952.

The period of significance begins in 1917 with the construction of the original block, and ends in 1975, the end of the historic period. Significant dates include 1917, reflecting the initial construction effort of the building. The year 1922 notes when the Carpenter Paper Company moved into the building and began sharing it with the Western Newspaper Union. Nineteen-twenty-three is the year the east addition was completed after its construction began in 1922. The year 1929 notes when the Carpenter Paper Company purchased the building. Nineteen forty represents when Western Newspaper Union vacated the building. The year 1952 reflects when the 1923 addition was replaced and the west addition completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The following historic context is taken from National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Northern Hotel by Jon Axline and Joan Brownell (listed June 12, 2013, NR #13000369)

Yellowstone River Valley

The Billings area was well-known to Native Americans for thousands of years and has an unusually high density of pre-contact archaeological sites. Nearby Alkali Creek provided a natural travel corridor between the Yellowstone River and the bench lands leading to the Musselshell and Missouri rivers. As early as 4,000 years ago, the area's aboriginal inhabitants ran bison off the sandstone cliffs bordering the Alkali Creek valley and processed the animals on the creek bottom. During the historic period, both the Blackfeet

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and the Crow Indians frequented the area. This region, however, is generally recognized as being within Crow territory.⁷

The first recorded Euro-American description of the Billings area is generally credited to William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806. In July 1806, Clark and eleven others, including Sacajawea and her newborn son, Pomp, undertook to explore the Gallatin and Yellowstone valleys. On July 24, 1806, the party passed through the area now occupied by Billings. Clark was clearly awed by the abundant wildlife living along the Yellowstone River:

Saw emenc [sic] number of deer, elk and buffalow on the banks. Some beaver . . . [For] me to mention or give an estimate of the different Spcies [sic] of wild animals on this river particularly Buffalow, Elk, Antelopes and wolves would be incredible.

Clark also noted the presence of a recently abandoned Crow Sun Dance lodge on a large island in the Yellowstone. The captain detailed Nathaniel Pryor, George Shannon, Richard Windsor, and Hugh Hall to drive the company's horses overland on the south side of the Yellowstone, while the rest of the party proceeded downriver in cottonwood canoes to rendezvous with Meriwether Lewis at the mouth of the Yellowstone.⁸

Even before the Lewis and Clark Expedition returned to St. Louis in September 1806, it met men ascending the Missouri River with the intention of trapping beaver in Yellowstone River Country. East of Billings, Missouri Fur Company factor Manuel Lisa established a small trading post on the Yellowstone at the mouth of the Big Horn River in 1807. Although abandoned in 1810 because of Indian opposition to the fort, a succession of trading posts followed between 1821 and 1876. The Yellowstone River near the mouth of Alkali Creek was well-known to fur trappers and traders from 1807 onward. In 1822, Blackfeet Indians ambushed and killed Missouri Fur Company trappers Robert Jones and Michael Immel along with five others near the mouth of Alkali Creek.⁹

In late 1837, smallpox felled a band of Crow Indians near the existing MetraPark in Billings. According to Crow legend, two young warriors found their village stricken by the terrible disease when they returned from a war expedition. Despondent and frustrated because they could do nothing to alter the course of the disease, they dressed in their finest clothing and mounted a snow-white horse. Riding double and singing their death-songs, they rode the blindfolded horse over a cliff [Kelly Mountain] and landed at what is

⁷ Personal communication with Steve Aaberg, 19 October 2006.

⁸ Gary E. Moulton, Ed., *The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark: Over the Rockies to St. Louis*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), pp. 217-219.

⁹ Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier*, (Helena: State Publishing, 1942), 47, 48; Mark H. Brown, *The Plainsmen of the Yellowstone*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), pp. 86-88.

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now the eastern end of the Yellowstone County Fairgrounds. The location then became known as “The Place Where the White Horse Went Down.”¹⁰

The US Army’s successful campaign against the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho during the winter of 1877 made the Yellowstone Valley in this area attractive for settlers and entrepreneurs. In 1877, Perry W. McAdow, his brother William, Henry Frith, and former trapper Henry Keiser established a small settlement on the eastern edge of the Clark’s Fork Bottom of the Yellowstone and named it Coulson after the owners of a steamboat line they hoped to attract to the area. The McAdow brothers established a store, sawmill, and hotel at the site. Eventually the community boasted a brewery, school, newspaper, post office, and Chicago Jane’s notorious brothel. The settlement flourished as a river port and stagecoach station until about 1882, when replaced in popularity by the newly created town of Billings. Coulson was a tough town as evidenced by Boot Hill Cemetery (24YL755) [situated where Alkali Creek emerges into the Yellowstone Valley], which contains the remains of at least forty individuals who died violent deaths in the settlement in the 1870s.¹¹

City of Billings

As the Northern Pacific Railway (NPRR) pushed its way up the Yellowstone in 1881, railroad land speculators scouted in advance for suitable sites for towns to serve the line. In the summer of 1882, the NPRR’s Minnesota & Montana Land & Improvement Company (MMLI) platted a city on an alkali flat about two miles north of Coulson. The company christened the city Billings after former NPRR president Frederick Billings. The Northern Pacific reached Billings in August 1882.

The MMLI platted the new town of Billings in the classic Northern Pacific railroad townsite design, with the railroad corridor at the center, flanked by two parallel streets fronting the railroad and a systematic grid pattern of streets both north and south of the railroad tracks running perpendicular and parallel. Billings became known as the “Magic City” due to its surprisingly rapid growth in a relatively short period of time. The primary business district developed on the north side of the tracks, first along Montana Avenue that parallels the railway and gradually further northward.

The new city, however, was not without its difficulties. Railroad officials accused MMLI agent Heman Clark of gouging potential settlers who wanted to settle on the company’s land, driving them away to cheaper land. The city was also plagued by streets that turned into quagmires during rains or after spring thaw and complaints about the pervasive bad smell emanating from the city dump northeast of town. Wannabe vigilantes didn’t help

¹⁰ Jon Axline, comp. *Montana’s Historical Highway Markers*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2008), pp. 172-173.

¹¹ Brown, *Plainsmen of the Yellowstone*, pp. 61-63, 220, 356; Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1999), pp. 356, 357; Myrtle E. Cooper, *From Tent Town to City: A Chronological History of Billings, Montana, 1882-1935*, (Billings: The Author, 1981), pp. 2, 12, 15, 19.

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things much when in 1891 they strung up a man on a lamppost next to the NPRR tracks after he murdered a popular bartender.

Despite the drawbacks, Billings steadily grew through the late nineteenth century, becoming the economic hub for the surrounding region. By the end of 1882, it boasted a population of 1,000 people. By 1900, its population had grown threefold to 3,221 people.

Billings was fortunate in being located at the right place at the right time. The city boomed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The fertile river bottoms made the Yellowstone Valley around Billings a paradise for farmers, especially after the completion of the Big Ditch (24YL0664) in 1883 and the Billings Bench Water Association Canal (24YL0161) in 1904. In 1905, the US Reclamation Service (USRS) established the Huntley Irrigation Project about fifteen miles northeast of Billings. The project was among the first and most successful of the USRS's early western projects.

Billings quickly became an important trading and transportation center, especially after the arrival of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad in 1894 and the Great Northern Railway's line from Great Falls in 1908. In 1909, the federal government enacted the Enlarged Homestead Act. This act, which provided 320 acres to any person willing to improve and farm it, attracted thousands of dry land farmers to south central and eastern Montana between 1909 and 1918. With this influx of homesteaders, Billings prospered as a trade center and transportation hub with access to three transcontinental railroads. Billings also profited by the presence of a Great Western Sugar refinery in the city that processed sugar beets harvested in the surrounding area.¹²

Although hard hit by the collapse of the Homestead Boom by 1919 due to drought and the resulting economic depression during the early 1920s, Billings survived because of its status as a transportation hub on the northern Great Plains. Not only was it served by three railroads, but it also depended on interstate highways US Highway 10 and US Highway 87 to provide better access to markets throughout the region. The depression years of the 1930s affected Billings, like the rest of Montana. While everything slowed during the depression, Billings' businesses began to recover by 1935.

Oil and gas developments in the surrounding region helped maintain Billings' economy during hard times. In 1929, the Yale Oil Company constructed a refinery at Billings and manufactured gasoline, which was sold throughout the region. The discovery of rich oil fields in southern Montana and northern Wyoming also provided a steady source of revenue to the area, especially after Carter Oil and Conoco built refineries in the "Magic City" in the 1940s. The discovery and exploitation of oil in the Williston Basin in North

¹² Spritzer, *Roadside History*, pp. 359, 368; Cooper, *Tent Town to City*, pp. 29, 42; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, revised ed. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), p. 238.

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Dakota and Elk Basin in Wyoming in the 1950s had a profound effect on Billings as it became a significant refining and pipeline center.¹³

The entrance of the United States into World War II curtailed activity in Billings. However, it appears that Billings benefited in its position as the transportation network and trade center of the region during the war years. The post-World War II economic boom in Billings saw the city's population grow over 30% from 23,261 people in 1940 to 31,724 residents in 1950. Billings became the oil and gas capital of the region by the early 1950s. Along with the three oil refineries, the five oil companies had division offices in Billings, and 43 oil companies maintained district offices in the "Magic City." The per capita and family annual average income in the Billings trade area was above the national average. The boom caused by the oil industry fueled the expansion of Logan International Airport and the city's medical facilities, and contributed to a significant increase in retail sales in the area. The city claimed a population of 65,000 in 1957.¹⁴

The continued expansion of the oil facilities in the 1960s and 1970s and the city's proximity to Interstates 90 and 94 made it an even larger transportation hub with a trade port and many other distribution and trans-loading facilities. The city also benefited from the presence of two major hospitals, a significant commercial business district on the west side of town, and proximity to eastern Montana and northern Wyoming. In 1996, historian Michael Malone wrote:

The new Billings economy continues to rest upon traditional energy, agricultural marketing, and tourist travel bases; for instance, the city's three refineries now process well over five million barrels of crude oil daily and have an annual payroll of over \$165 million.¹⁵

The diverse economy and its strategic location have combined to provide Billings a relatively steady rate of growth, and its evolving significance as Montana's largest metro area has confirmed the dreams of the city's founders.

Montana Avenue

Montana Avenue is the original primary east/west-trending downtown corridor for the City of Billings; it lays parallel to the Burlington Northern Sante Fe right-of-way

¹³ Carroll Van West, "Good Times, Bad Times," in *Stories from an Open Country*, ed. William L. Lang (Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 1995), 123-126.

¹⁴ Spritzer, *Roadside History*, 359; Stevens and Redman, *Billings A to Z*, (Billings: Friends of the Library, 2000), pp. 88, 92; Anneke-Jan Boden, *Billings: The First 100 Years*, (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Press, 1982), pp. 139-140; "Montana, Its Growing Says the Census," *Montana Treasure Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (August 1950), p. 2; "Billings, The Magic City," *Montana Treasure Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (August 1950), p. 6; Sue Hart, *Billings: Montana's Trailhead*, (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Press, 2009), pp. 79-80, 82; "Dynamic Billings: New Oil Center of the Northwest," *Out West Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 7 (August 1954), pp. 16-17, 22-23.

¹⁵ Michael P. Malone, *Montana: A Contemporary Profile*, (Helena: *Montana Magazine*, 1996), p. 47.

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(formerly the Northern Pacific Railway). The closest historic district to the Carpenter Paper Company building is the Billings Townsite Historic District, listed in 1979; it included 16 historic commercial buildings north of Montana Avenue built between 1899 and 1920 plus the Northern Pacific Depot (or Union Depot) situated adjacent to the railway south of Montana Avenue. In 2006, a boundary increase to the Billings Townsite Historic District included five brick commercial buildings immediately west of the Billings Townsite Historic District.¹⁶

Although just east and outside the established Billings Townsite Historic District and boundary increase, the Carpenter Paper Company building, constructed in 1917, conforms to these historic districts' commercial development as many of the district buildings were also constructed towards the end of the second decade in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the immense Billings Brewery, constructed in 1899, dominated the north side of Montana Avenue between 24th and 23rd Streets, occupying an entire block until it's demolition in 1959. Commercial development east of the brewery on the north side of Montana Avenue was essentially separated from the rest of the Montana Avenue's commercial district due to the presence of the brewery.

East of the Billings Brewery, the 1923 Sanborn Insurance map shows the Sawyer Storage and Agricultural Implements building standing between 23rd and 22nd Streets while Farmers Union and Supply Co. operated between 22nd and 21st Streets (a portion of this building still stands). The Sanborn identifies the Carpenter Paper Company building north of Montana Avenue at the intersection of 21st Street (the northern segment of 21st street north of Montana Avenue was later abandoned) and Montana Avenue.¹⁷

A small railroad spur for shipping historically ran directly behind (north) of the Carpenter Paper Company building and parallel to Montana Avenue. The track extended from the Northern Pacific Railroad branch line that curved north just east of the Carpenter Paper Company building (and which the Chicago-Burlington & Quincy Railroad also used).¹⁸

2109 Montana Avenue

The following historic context presents histories of Western Newspaper Union and the Carpenter Paper Company prior to and after their arrival in Billings, Montana. Both businesses occupied 2019 Montana Avenue, Western Newspaper Union from 1917 to 1940 and the Carpenter Paper Company from 1922 to 1994.

¹⁶ Samuel M Thomas and John M. Devitt, National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Billings Townsite Historic District," on file, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT; Ann Koostra-Manning, National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Billings Townsite Historic District, Boundary Increase 1," March 2006, on file, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

¹⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Billings 1912, 1923, 1923 republished 1958, https://digitalsanbornmaps.proquest.com/browse_maps

¹⁸ Ibid.

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Newspaper Technology Used by Western Newspaper Union

Newspaper syndicates, “firms that sell and distribute the same material.... to multiple newspapers for nearly simultaneous publication,” date to at least 1861 and by the 1880s, began substantially affecting the world of publishing.¹⁹ Syndication helped fill the desire for “more reading matter to supplement the local telegraphic news and editorials” as newspapers gained popularity with an increased interest in public affairs and more leisure time.²⁰ Syndication allowed even the smallest newspapers an opportunity to exist. Early forms of syndication services included boiler plate and patent insides.²¹

The use of boiler plate and patent insides allowed smaller local publications to decrease printing costs and time. Boiler plate, also known as “ready-to-print” and plate matter, refers to the syndicated service provided to county newspapers cast into plates and consisted of all material not prepared in the composing room of the newspaper printing it—instead, the newspapers purchased the information in the “form of stereotypes from companies... located in the principal cities.”²² These large distributors of material offered everything from stories, news, articles, cooking recipes, and sketches. The desired material was set into a monotype or linotype and placed in columns, then stereotyped.²³ The distributor provided the subscribing newspapers adjustable-based pattern blocks to hold the stereotype plates. These plates generally measured one column wide and twenty inches long with the ability to be massaged to any length desired by the recipient weekly or daily newspaper for use as filler or news.²⁴ The term boiler plate originally referenced the physical plates but expanded to encompass actual content. One issue with boiler plate/plate matter service is it can only be used by newspapers that possess stereotyping machinery, and few smaller weekly newspapers did. For those that did, “the plate-making company” invested in “a news-gathering and -handling force, and supplies its subscribing newspapers with stereotypes sent ... by fast express.”²⁵

In contrast to plate matter, patent insides was much simpler for small rural newspapers who “do not receive sufficient support to allow it to incur the expense of entire home

¹⁹ “Newspaper Syndicates,” *Encyclopedia.com*, [Newspaper Syndicates | Encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/technology/encyclopedia/newspaper-syndicates), viewed June 25, 2025.

²⁰ Elmo Scott Watson, *A History of Newspaper Syndicates in the United States*, Chapter 10, 1936, reprinted at <https://strippersguide.blogspot.com/2016/07/history-of-newspaper-syndicates-by-elmo-22.html>, accessed June 25, 2025.

²¹ The terms boiler plate, plate matter, and ready-to-print can be used interchangeably. The term plate insides, ready print, cooperative can be used interchangeably.

²² Bruce Bliven, “Our Changing Journalism,” *The Atlantic*, December 1923; Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr. *The Handbook of Journalism*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1913), p. 114.

²³ Stereotype is a “plate cast from a printing surface.” Merriam-Webster online dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stereotype>, accessed June 26, 2025.

²⁴ Bruce Bliven, “Our Changing Journalism,” *The Atlantic*, December 1923.

²⁵ Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr. *The Handbook of Journalism*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1913), p. 116.

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production.”²⁶ Patent insides, also referred to as “ready print” or “cooperative,” arrive to a local or county publisher featuring one clean side with the other displaying editorial material and advertising, requiring the subscribing newspaper to furnish material only for the clean pages.²⁷ The local paper added its own material that often included local advertising to defray costs of the patent insides, and cover the costs of paper, composition, and presswork.²⁸ The use of patent insides reduced cost as technically only half the content needed to be created. The distributor operated offices in several cities where material appropriate to the area or territory derived—the subject of this nomination representing one of them. Patent insides permitted local newspapers to deliver its product that featured both non-local and local news and information, the caveat being the local paper held no control over editorial content. Propaganda appears more in relation to patent insides than boilerplate as a county editor often reads boilerplate prior to publication allowing a rejection of certain material.

Beginnings of Western Newspaper Union

George Joslyn founded Western Newspaper Union in 1880 in Omaha, Nebraska. Born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1846, Joslyn lived in Vermont and Montreal, Canada, before moving to Des Moines in 1879, where he took a job as a bookkeeper with the Iowa Printing Company. The firm provided a variety of print-related services including patent insides and boiler plate to small newspapers.²⁹

Joslyn represents an excellent example of a Gilded Age rags-to-riches story, who by “thrift and hard work” created a virtual monopoly on the patent insides and boiler plate business in the United States by the turn-of-the-twentieth century. In 1880, Joslyn acquired controlling interest in the Iowa Printing Company and renamed it the Western Newspaper Union. He initiated an ambitious expansion program to acquire other boiler and patent insides companies in the Midwest. He grew the company’s interests to include not only selling patent insides and boilerplate to weekly newspapers, but also casting newspaper type and distributing printing supplies to newspaper publishers throughout the Midwest and East. In 1890, Joslyn moved the company’s headquarters to

²⁶ “Newspaper Syndicates,” *Encyclopedia.com*, [Newspaper Syndicates | Encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/technology/encyclopedia/newspaper-syndicates), viewed June 25, 2025; Cydney Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield, “Western Newspaper Union Building” National Register nomination, NR #07000170, listed March 21, 2007; Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr. *The Handbook of Journalism*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1913), p. 126; “sufficient support” likely refers to a limited newspaper readership.

²⁷ Bruce Bliven, *The Atlantic*, December 1923; Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr. *The Handbook of Journalism*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1913), p. 124.

²⁸ Nathaniel C. Fowler, Jr. *The Handbook of Journalism*, (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1913), p. 124.

²⁹ Omaha Exploration, “George A. Joslyn’s Western Newspaper Union,” <https://omahaexploration.com/2025/02/23/george-joslyns-western-newspaper-union-building/>, accessed June 25, 2025.

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Chicago, Illinois, and looked west to expand his business empire, opening the base of operations in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1896.³⁰

By the early twentieth century, Western Newspaper Union was the largest newspaper patent insides and boiler plate company in the United States with plants and offices in thirty-two cities. Around 1920, Western Newspaper Union provided patent insides to 7,000 weekly newspapers throughout the country. By 1923, “there are in round numbers, in the United States, 12,000 country newspapers... practically every one of these 12,000 country newspapers does business with Western Newspaper Union at some one of its 37 branches.”³¹ The company owned six plate foundries, seventeen wholesale newspaper warehouses and pulp and paper mills in northern Wisconsin. George Joslyn died in Omaha in October 1916. Described by the *Omaha Daily News* as “one of the most unassuming rich men of the city,” he set the standard for the newspaper insides business in the United States. After her husband’s death, Sarah Joslyn sold Western Newspaper Union to the company’s employees.³²

Western Newspaper Union in Billings

Western Newspaper Union’s initial effort to establish itself in Montana occurred in 1913, three years prior to Joslyn’s death. A. E. Baker, a longtime employee of the firm, told the *Billings Times* in November that the company would establish a branch in either Lewistown or Billings, with the latter city its first choice for the facility. It was not until 1916, however, that Western Newspaper Union’s plans to expand into the state solidified. In September 1916, the company purchased four vacant city lots in Billings from the North Real Estate Company at the northeast corner of Montana Avenue and 21st Street. Later that year, Western Newspaper Union hired Billings architect Curtis Oehme to design a three story, reinforced concrete “manufacturing plant... equipped with the latest and best machinery obtainable, thoroughly up-to-date in every detail.”³³

On February 1, 1917, Charles Verity, Western Newspaper Union’s local manager, announced to the Billings Chamber of Commerce and the *Billings Gazette* the company officially began operations in the Magic City. Along with that statement, Verity further declared the company would build a branch office and warehouse in the city with work on the proposed 20,000-square foot, reinforced concrete building commencing in the

³⁰ “George Joslyn’s Western Newspaper Union;” “George A. Joslyn Dies; Considered Richest Omahan,” *Evening World-Herald*, October 4, 1916,

³¹ “W.N.U. Develops Organization of National Scope,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 19, 1921, p. 83.

³² George Joslyn’s Western Newspaper Union;” “George A. Joslyn Died at His Home this Afternoon,” *Omaha Daily News*, October 4, 1916.

³³ “May Come to Montana,” *Billings Times*, November 6, 1913; “Will Build Branch of Newspaper Union,” *Billings Gazette*, November 11, 1913; “Chamber of Commerce Elects Trustees and Hears Reports,” *Billings Gazette*, December 14, 1916; “Western Newspaper Union to Locate Big Plant in Billings,” *Billings Evening Journal*, December 16, 1916; Deed Book 57, p. 239, Clerk and Records Office, Yellowstone County Courthouse, Billings, Montana; “Billings Becomes Hub of Industrial Wheel; Western Newspaper Union Brings Plant Here,” *Billings Gazette*, December 18, 1916.

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spring. Verity promised the branch office would employ “a goodly number of highly skilled and highly paid printers and pressmen,” from the Billings area. Until the completion of the building, however, Western Newspaper Union temporarily operated out of the National Register-listed Oliver Building at the corner of Montana Avenue and 27th Street in Billings.³⁴ Before the company’s new warehouse was completed, the Carpenter Paper Company, soon to share new building under construction by the Western Newspaper Union, also set up its Billings headquarters in the Oliver Building.³⁵

The Billings Gazette described the future plans for the Western Newspaper Union building:

The building will be of reinforced concrete, fireproof, 50 x 130, three full stories and the manufacturing plant will be equipped with the latest and best machinery obtainable, thoroughly up-to-date in every detail. Though not the largest of the 32 Western Union branches, the Billings establishment will not be inferior to any of the others which are located in all parts of the country, Fargo, Minneapolis, Denver and Salt Lake City being among the nearer plants, none before having been located in so small a city as this, a tribute to the growing importance of Billings as a distributing center.

As a wholesale house, supplying paper, envelopes, cards, type and machinery to printers, the concern will speedily rank with the heaviest shippers in Billings, and this will extend the trade territory of this city quite materially.³⁶

Excavation for the foundation of the warehouse began on April 2, 1917, with an Omaha contractor named Russell supervising the work. J.H. McElroy was awarded the excavating and concrete work.³⁷ By the end of April, the foundation was excavated and the reinforced concrete footings installed along with half the concrete posts needed to support the upper floors. Two weeks later, the contractor completed the basement. The *Billings Evening Journal* estimated the cost of the building at \$30,000. While the building was under construction, Western Newspaper Union incorporated in Montana on June 25, 1917, with a capitalization of \$6.5 million; the articles of incorporation noted

³⁴ Listed December 19, 2008, NR #08001228.

³⁵ “Billings’ Newest Industry Makes First Shipment Today,” *Billings Gazette*, February 1, 1917; “Billings Becomes Hub of Industrial Wheel; Western Newspaper Union Brings Plant Here,” *Midland Empire News*, December 19, 1916; “Carpenter Paper Company Opens Billings Offices,” *Billings Evening Journal*, April 17, 1917.

³⁶ “Billings’ Newest Industry Makes First Shipment Today,” *Billings Gazette*, February 1, 1917, p. 2.

³⁷ “Paper Jobbing House To Open,” *Billings Gazette*, March 14, 1917, p. 5.

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Western Newspaper Union provided “thousands of country weeklies with ‘patent insides’ and plate matter.”³⁸ Charles Verity was appointed as the local manager at this time.

Despite Verity’s estimated time of completion as July for the new Western Newspaper Union building, the contractor did not finish work until mid-September. The *Evening Journal* stated, “with the establishment of a branch here, Billings will become one of the most important distributing points in the country for supplying newspapers with plate matter and printers’ supplies.” Verity noted, the arrival of the business in Billings “is a boon to the country paper almost incalculable,” as it “brings the news of the world direct to the smallest weekly.”³⁹ The Western Newspaper Union’s territory encompassed Montana, northern Wyoming, and northern Idaho and by the 1920s, likely supplied patent insides and boilerplate to most, if not all, of Montana weekly newspapers.⁴⁰ Around the same time as the Billings’ opening, Western Newspaper Union announced its acquisition of the American Press Association, a rival business; the acquisition further solidified Western’s growing footprint.

Favorable reviews about the opening of the business included, “a new industry begins operations in Billings today... one which will eventually be of great importance to this city, as well as to the publishers and printers of Montana, Wyoming and other northeastern states.”⁴¹ Two towns who immediately subscribed to the services offered by Western Newspaper Union were Libby and Rudyard, Montana. With the move of the business to its new location, the subject of this nomination, Western Newspaper Union “will begin supplying publishers with printed newspaper service and with wholesale paper and printing supplies, furnishing publishers and printers with ‘everything for the printer.’ ”

The building will be of reinforced concrete, fireproof, 50 x 130, three full stories and the manufacturing plant will be equipped with the latest and best machinery obtainable, thoroughly up-to-date in every detail. Though not the largest of the 32 Western Union branches, the Billings establishment will not be inferior to any of the others which are located in all parts of the country, Fargo, Minneapolis, Denver and Salt Lake City being among the nearer plants, none before having been located in so small a city as this, a tribute to the growing importance of Billings as a distributing center.

³⁸ “Rush Work on Building,” *The Billings Evening Journal*, April 2, 1917; “Work is Progressing,” *Billings Gazette*, April 20, 1917; “Rush Erection of Two New Buildings,” *Billings Evening Journal*, May 4, 1917; “Publishing Concern Files Incorporation,” *Billings Evening Journal*, June 25, 1917; Articles of Incorporation, Western Newspaper Union, viewed at <https://biz.sosmt.gov/search/business>.

³⁹ “Paper Jobbing House To Open,” *Billings Gazette*, March 14, 1917, p. 5.

⁴⁰ “Press Service Finishes New Building,” *Billings Evening Journal*, September 15, 1917.

⁴¹ “Billings’ Newest Industry Makes First Shipment Today,” *Billings Gazette*, February 1, 1917, p. 2.

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As a wholesale house, supplying paper, envelopes, cards, type and machinery to printers, the concern will speedily rank with the heaviest shippers in Billings, and this will extend the trade territory of this city quite materially.⁴²

The arrival of Western Newspaper Union in Billings resulted in the “first carload of news print ever shipped into Montana for jobbing purposes” as the company “formally took over all that territory embraced in northern Wyoming and Montana... ‘everything that printers need’ is the motto.”⁴³ The Western Newspaper Union’s office in Billings intended to make the most of the new location by enticing customers with competitive rates: “the news print stock will be sold to papers of Montana and northern Wyoming at an attractive figure. The price will be materially lower than if they purchase this commodity in large quantities at a very modest price... it will be distributed throughout the two states on a narrow margin of profit.”⁴⁴

By 1921, Western Newspaper Union began soliciting for additional help:⁴⁵

Wanted:

- 1 Compositor, hand work
- 1 Cylinder pressman
- 1 Cylinder press feeder
- Open shop.
- Permanent positions.

Western Newspaper

**Union,
Billings.**

The additional help appeared warranted as, “Billings has in Western Newspaper Union the only house north of Denver, between the Twin Cities and Spokane, supplying paper, type, presses, plate and printed newspaper service, dealing exclusively with printers.”⁴⁶ Salesmen stayed busy travelling “perhaps... as much of the territory tributary to Billings as that of any other wholesale house in the city... calling regularly upon all of the printers and publishers at intervals of about 60 days.”⁴⁷ The salesmen’s calls involved discussion of the services offered that included “presses, type, printers’ papers, cards, envelopes, linotype composition, newspaper service in what is popularly know as ‘ready prints’ and

⁴² “Billings’ Newest Industry Makes First Shipment Today, *Billings Gazette*, February 1, 1917, p. 2.

⁴³ “Paper Jobbing House To Open,” *Billings Gazette*, March 14, 1917, p. 5.

⁴⁴ “Paper Jobbing House To Open,” *Billings Gazette*, March 14, 1917, p. 5.

⁴⁵ “Wanted,” *Billings Gazette*, May 4, 1921, p. 6.

⁴⁶ “Did You Know—?,” *Billings Gazette*, July 31, 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁷ “Western Newspaper Union Supplies Printers’ Needs,” *Billings Gazette*, January 12, 1922, p. 18.

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in plate form, the 'ready print,' service being the original basis of the business."⁴⁸ The salesmen explained that "publications are also printed complete—Western Newspaper Union setting the type, making up the forms and doing the presswork from copy furnished by the publishers."⁴⁹

Although World War I slowed the business' progress, a return to normalized times allowed the company to expand their stock "by the additions of new lines, so now it is the undisputed 'big house of the northwest.'"⁵⁰ During the War, Western Newspaper Union was praised for it "unstintedly" giving "its effort and space to every need of government without one cent of compensation."⁵¹

By 1922, Western Newspaper Union began sharing its building space with the Carpenter Paper Company after the latter purchased the former's paper stock.⁵² The close affiliation between the two companies was illustrated by their joint advertising.⁵³ In 1929, the Carpenter Paper Company wasn't just a co-tenant, but also the owner of the building, the result of its purchase from the Western Newspaper Union.⁵⁴ Western Newspaper Union occupied the basement "where supplies are located and printing presses are installed," while the Carpenter Paper Company operated on the main and second stories. Similar to the Western Newspaper Union, Omaha, Nebraska, served as the Carpenter Paper Company's base.

Although sharing accommodations, Western Newspaper Union continued to improve themselves to better serve their clients. This quest entailed the addition of "much new equipment... just recently there was installed... a new Wesel mat roller... does away with the old practice of using a brush and steam in the molding of matrices for stereotyping."⁵⁵ The newspaper noted, "few people in Billings... are familiar with the magnitude of the Western Newspaper Union" that supplies "seventy-five weekly papers in the territory... with a ready-print service from the local plant... practically every weekly in the district uses some of the products of the Billings establishment."⁵⁶

⁴⁸ "Western Newspaper Union Supplies Printers' Needs," *Billings Gazette*, January 12, 1922, p. 18.

⁴⁹ "Western Newspaper Union Supplies Printers' Needs," *Billings Gazette*, January 12, 1922, p. 18.

⁵⁰ "Western Newspaper Union Supplies Printers' Needs," *Billings Gazette*, January 12, 1922, p. 18.

⁵¹ "W.N.U. Develops Organization of National Scope," *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 19, 1921, p. 83.

⁵² "Carpenter Co. Buys Paper Stock Of W.N.U.' Means Large Expansion," *Billings Gazette*, March 31, 1922, p. 3.

⁵³ Advertisement, *Billings Gazette*, September 12, 1926, p. 26.

⁵⁴ "Local Paper Co. Owns Its Own Building," *Billings Gazette*, May 5, 1929, p. 1.

⁵⁵ "Western Newspaper Union Adds Equipment to Billings Plant," *Billings Gazette*, October 26, 1928, p. 20.

⁵⁶ "Western Newspaper Union Adds Equipment to Billings Plant," *Billings Gazette*, October 26, 1928, p. 20.

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In 1929, W.F. Blackford purchased a number of Montana newspapers, establishing his base of operations within the Western Newspaper Union/Carpenter Paper Company building.⁵⁷ These papers included those of the towns of Darby, Geyser, Joliet, Ringling, Roberts, Roy, St. Ignatius, Victor, and Wilsall; although unverified, it seems likely these papers purchased by Blackford all received services from the Western Newspaper Union. The year 1929 also marked the transfer of the building title from Western Newspaper Union to the Carpenter Paper Company for a sum of \$51,500.

The *Billing Gazette* reiterated the importance of Western Newspaper Union to not only Billings but the region:⁵⁸

Newspaper and commercial printing plants in Montana, northern Wyoming, northern Idaho and eastern Washington are fortunate in having a centrally located branch of the Western Newspaper Union in Billings. This establishment supplies "ready-prints," stereotypes plates and printing equipment and supplies to the trade.

Western Newspaper Union selected Billings as a branch location because of its excellent distributing facilities...

The Billings branch operates the only commercial stereotyping plant in Montana... the company is serving more newspapers at the present time than at any time during the last five years.

Although a significant economic driver of not only Billings but many small towns around the state and region, significant improvements in newspaper printing technology at the dawn of the 1930s witnessed a decline of those who used Western Newspaper Union services; by the 1940s, Western Newspaper Union built and relocated to a new and smaller building at 15 North 22nd Street to operate separately from the Carpenter Paper Company.⁵⁹ This new building housed the "main office, private office, file room, wash rooms and showers, main press room, stock room, stereotype room and shipping room." By the end of 1941, the Western Newspaper Union's important association with the building it constructed and subject of this nomination, ceased.⁶⁰

By 1952, Western Newspaper Union provided patent insides to only 1,145 (fifty of those newspapers were in the northern Plains and Rockies) from a peak of 7,000 papers in the early 1920s. In March 1952, Billings Western Newspaper Union manager Frank J.

⁵⁷ W.F. Blackford formerly served in the mechanical department of the *Billing Gazette*. "W.F. Blackford Of Billings Buys Nine Montana Newspapers," *Billings Gazette*, June 28, 1929, p. 3.

⁵⁸ "Western Newspaper Union Branch Here Serves Many Clients," *Billings Gazette*, July 30, 1933, p. 68.

⁵⁹ "Erect Building for Newspaper Service," *Billings Gazette*, July 18, 1940, p. 1.

⁶⁰ "7 Help Wanted, Female," *Billings Gazette*, October 7, 1942, p. 9.

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Newman announced that as of March 29th, the company would discontinue to supply material to its customers. On March 30, 1952, Western Newspaper Union shipped its last order. The Western Newspaper Union, however, lingered on, last appearing in the *Billings Gazette* in 1967.⁶¹

The Carpenter Paper Company

In 1886, the six Carpenter brothers left the family farm in Illinois with \$11,000 capital to make their way in the business world. Some of the brothers' capital came from a loan made by their father after he sold a portion of the family farm. The brothers had no concrete plans as to what kind of business to organize and according to Isaac Carpenter, they got involved in the paper business by accident. The business started in a remodeled livery stable in 1887 in Des Moines, Iowa. Two years later, the brothers incorporated the Carpenter Paper Company (CPC) in March 1889 and began expanding the firm. A true family business, the brothers served as president, vice president, treasurer and secretary. By 1900, the company distributed paper throughout the West and west coast. In 1907 the brothers built a state-of-the-art reinforced concrete warehouse in Omaha, Nebraska. The Carpenter Paper Company sold "all qualities of paper from newsprint to the highest grades of bond."⁶²

The Carpenter Paper Company of Montana

Concurrent to the establishment of Western Newspaper Union in Billings, the Carpenter Paper Company announced it initiated operations in the city in March 1917. The company decided to locate in Billings based on a recommendation by one of its salesmen and a thorough investigation by company executive Ernest Hoel. The Carpenter Paper Company chose Billings because of its central location at the hub of three railroads with transcontinental connections.⁶³

Like the Western Newspaper Union, the Carpenter Paper Company first operated out of the Oliver Building in downtown Billings. By the time it initiated operations in the city, the Carpenter Paper Company was one of the largest wholesale paper companies in the United States. The company began its Billings operations in earnest in April 1917 when it received its first shipment of stock. Manager Frank Conover told the *Billings Gazette* the Billings office opened for the purpose of "supplying the trade in this section with dispatch and promptness." He further stated the company chose Billings for its central location and access to the railroads. At this time, the Carpenter Paper Company carried a

⁶¹ "Print Service Ends in March," *The Billings Gazette*, February 13, 1952.

⁶² Paul J. Holley, "Paper-Products Company Marks 100th Anniversary," *Billings Gazette*, September 19, 1986; "Isaac W. Carpenter, Long Ill, Expires," (Omaha) *Evening World-Herald*, December 14, 1925; Carpenter Paper Co. (Nebraska); "Death Claims Paper Dealer," *Billings Gazette*, December 16, 1925.

⁶³ "Paper Concern Establishes Branch," *Billings Evening Journal*, February 28, 1917; "Carpenter Paper Company Opens Billings Offices," *Billings Evening Journal*, April 17, 1917; "Paper Concern Opens Offices," *Billings Gazette*, April 17, 1917; "Carpenter Paper Co. (Nebraska)," Undated article provided to authors by Teresa Larson.

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complete supply of bond paper, book paper, newsprint paper, stationery, and wrapping paper for stores.⁶⁴

Conover managed the business in Billings for only a short time before dying of arterial sclerosis in 1918. After Conover's death, Isaac Carpenter, Jr. took over management of the Billings branch office, a post he held for over four decades. By 1919, the Carpenter Paper Company's Billings' branch was one of the largest distributors of printers supplies between St. Paul, Minnesota and the Pacific Coast. Its Montana territory encompassed the state from Bozeman east to the North Dakota state line and into northern Wyoming. It eventually expanded to include most of Montana. The company employed seven to ten people in Billings and operated warehouses in Butte, Helena, and Great Falls.⁶⁵

In 1920, the Carpenter Paper Company outgrew its quarters in the Oliver Building. Its inventory had significantly grown since 1917 to include ledger paper, envelopes, blotting paper, cardboard, wedding and birth announcements, printers' inks, wrapping paper, toilet paper, paper bags, twine, paper napkins, suit boxes, paper plates, paper drinking cups, wood butter dishes, wax paper, paper towels, butter cartons, and fly paper. It also distributed Congoleum art rugs, and "Victrola Talking Machines." By 1922, it was the sole Montana agent for Congoleum flooring and Certainteed products.⁶⁶

In early 1922, the Carpenter Paper Company initiated its Billings expansion program and began its joint occupancy of the building with the Western Newspaper Company at 2109 Montana Avenue. The deal merged the paper stocks of both companies and gave "Billings one of the largest paper houses in the northwest." The Carpenter Paper Company relocated its offices to the first floor of Western Newspaper Union building and occupied most of the 20,000 square feet of warehouse space in the building. Western Newspaper Union moved its printing presses into the basement and continued its operations there. The Carpenter Paper Company soon expanded their number of salesmen and warehousemen. The salesmen covered what was the second largest Carpenter Paper Company territory in the country.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "Billings' Newest Industry Makes First Shipment Today," *Billings Gazette*, February 1, 1917; Carpenter Paper Co. (Nebraska); "Carpenter Paper Company Opens Billings Offices," *Billings Evening Journal*, April 17, 1917; "Paper Concerns Opens Office," *Billings Gazette*, April 17, 1917; "Billings Distributing Point for Paper and Kindred Line," *Billings Gazette*, February 23, 1919.

⁶⁵ "Conover Funeral is to be Held This Afternoon," *Billings Gazette*, November 18, 1918; "Isaac W. Carpenter, Jr.," (New Rochelle) *Standard Star*, May 9, 1983; "Billings Distributing Point for Paper and Kindred Line," *Billings Gazette*, February 23, 1919.

⁶⁶ Certainteed sold asphalt roofing, oil cloth, linoleums, varnishes, paint, and insulation. "Billings Distributing Point for Paper and Kindred Line," *Billings Gazette*, February 23, 1919.

⁶⁷ "Carpenter Buys Paper Stock of W.N.U.; Means Large Expansion," *Billings Gazette*, March 31, 1922; "Rotary Sees Paper Plant," *The Billings Gazette*, March 25, 1924; "Economy," *Billings Gazette*, February 27, 1922; "Paper Company Has Big Line," *Billings Gazette*, February 21, 1926.

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It appears the 1922 arrival of the Carpenter Paper Company necessitated the construction of an east addition where Western Newspaper Union already owned an adjacent lot and possibly served as an incentive for the Carpenter Paper Company to occupy the building. Around the time of the move, a 40-ft. x 10-ft. concrete foundation adjacent to the east wall of the building was laid. Isaac Carpenter told the *Billings Gazette*, the “foundation was constructed so that a two-story building, similar in design to the present building, could be erected. The foundation was roofed and is used by the company for warehouse purposes.” The foundation appears on the 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.⁶⁸

The Carpenter Paper Company purchased the Western Newspaper Union building for \$51,500 in May 1929.⁶⁹ The main floor housed the company’s general and executive offices and the warehouse. Western Newspaper Union leased space in the basement and continued its operations there until 1940 when it moved into new quarters around the corner on 22nd Street. By the time of the purchase, the Carpenter Paper Company did half-a-million dollars in annual business in Montana and had outgrown its available space.

In 1951, work finally began on a warehouse expansion. James F. Spelman, district manager, reported: “Work is one week under way on a \$100,000 contract for improvement and repairs on a Carpenter Paper company warehouse at 2017 Montana avenue.”⁷⁰ “The improvements, Spelman said, will include addition of north and south wings that will increase the floor space of the building to 35,000 square feet. Present floor space is 20,000 square feet.” The \$100,000 project involved the addition of wings on the east and west sides of the building. Famed Billings architectural firm Cushing and Terrell designed the additions and Billings contractor Riedesel Construction Company built the building’s new wings. The additions increased the company’s floor space allowing the Carpenter Paper Company to ramp up its operations to meet the increased demand for its products.⁷¹ The additions began in August of 1951 were completed in 1952.⁷²

From 1951 to 1961, the Carpenter Paper Company was an active member in the Billings business community. In addition to its wholesale paper business, it also sponsored a little league baseball team and a float in the city’s annual Western Days parade. It frequently

⁶⁸ Deed Book 157, p. 611; “Western Newspaper Union Supplies Printers’ Needs,” *The Billings Gazette*, January 12, 1922; “Week in Billings,” *The Midland Empire News*, May 10, 1929; “Local Paper Owns Its Own Building,” *The Billings Gazette*, May 28, 1929; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1923, sheet 15, viewed at www.sanborn.umi.com.

⁶⁹ “Local Paper Co. Owns Its Own Building,” *Billings Gazette*, May 8, 1929, pp. 1, 2.

⁷⁰ “Work Progresses on Warehouse Job,” *Billings Gazette*, September 5, 1951.

⁷¹ “Work Progresses on Warehouse Job,” *Billings Gazette*, September 5, 1951. In January of 1952, the potential free acquisition of lumber enticed Maynard Skager to steal some of the construction material—his efforts, however proved fruitless as he was caught and sentenced; “Lumber Theft Plea Brings Jail Term,” *Billings Gazette*, January 22, 1952, p. 5.

⁷² The new east wing replaced the 1922 east addition.

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appeared in the *Billings Gazette* as supporting various causes in the Magic City. In March 1961, however, the Carpenter Paper Company became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ohio-based Champion Paper and Fiber Company. The takeover by Champion compelled Isaac Carpenter, Jr. to retire after his over four-decade tenure as the Carpenter Paper Company's local manager.⁷³

Champion sold the company to Nationwide Paper, Inc. in late 1966. Renamed for its parent company, Carpenter Paper Company district manager and vice president L. A. "Curly" Newell told the *Billings Gazette* the name change "is a new suit – but underneath it's the same old lovable us." Three years later, in 1970, the firm was once again the Carpenter Paper Company. In 1986, the Carpenter Paper Company celebrated its hundredth anniversary and its sixty-ninth anniversary in Billings. The final name change occurred in 1994 when the Carpenter Paper Company became Unisource, a paper distribution company. The name change effectively ended the Carpenter Paper Company's seventy-seven-year history in Billings and Montana.⁷⁴

In the 2020s, a renovation occurred that introduced loft apartments into the original open floorplan and a few south-facing rooms of the second story. The ground floor now operates as an event center.

Architectural Significance

Western Commercial Architecture

Western Commercial Architectural Style "follows the commercial style created from construction technology advancements that permitted tall buildings (skyscrapers)." Popular from the 1890s to 1920s, commercial style buildings are designed to accommodate specific business needs. Influenced by the Chicago Style that "refers to a commercial building form that developed in the late 19th century primarily in response to new construction technology that permitted greater physical height, larger expanses of open floor space, and larger window openings that provided more natural light and ventilation."⁷⁵

Western Commercial style characteristics exhibit a long, rectangular plan perpendicular to the street and have flat or gently sloping roofs often hidden by parapets or pediments. They stand one to three stories in height, have three to five bay organizations on the façade and are clad with brick often with simple design elements. Window openings are

⁷³ "Sports Slant ...," *Billings Gazette*, April 4, 1961; "Billings Starts Western Days," *The Billings Gazette*, June 19, 1959; "Merger, Sale Affects Two Billings Firms," *Billings Gazette*, April 9, 1961.

⁷⁴ "Gets New Name," *Billings Gazette*, January 1, 1967; "Carpenter Paper – Again," *Billings Gazette*, August 23, 1970; "Paper Firm Gets New Name," *The Billings Gazette*, June 12, 1994.

⁷⁵ Alison LaFever and Maisie Sulser, National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Oliver Building," December 2007, on file, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT; PHMC Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide, <http://phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/commercial>

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generally symmetrical, simple brick raised design and patterning and symmetrical fenestration on all walls. The style allows for the architect to introduce his or her own individual design aesthetic elements.

The simple commercial design of the Carpenter Paper Company building strongly conveys the Western Commercial Style. As Billings rapidly became the strategic economic and transportation center in the early twentieth century for eastern Montana and beyond, architects embraced new innovations for main structural components for brick warehouses and large-scale commercial buildings. While buildings prior to 1910 “tended to be more ornamental in design,” the technology advancements allowed for smaller commercial buildings to incorporate concrete or steel systems in a more almost vernacular version.⁷⁶

Western Commercial style warehouses in the early twentieth century, like the Carpenter Paper Company, are “primarily utilitarian in design” and have “basic stylistic embellishments” on the elevation facing the street. The interior generally has a ground-level office in only a small section of the building while an open floor space devoted to the business at hand occupies the rest of the building. Large exterior windows provide for interior natural lighting.⁷⁷

While the Carpenter Paper Company holds similarities to other warehouses and business buildings aligned with the railroad tracks in Billings, they pale in comparison to the Carpenter Paper Company building, one of the most impressive, massive warehouses along Montana Avenue. It strongly represents the Western Commercial Architectural Style and retains high integrity in its appearance and character.

Curtis C. Oehme, Architect

Born in Germany in 1877, Curtis C. Oehme attended University of Dresden, Germany before he came to the United States in 1894 to supervise the erection of the German government building at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. He returned to Germany for a short time but then formally emigrated to the United States in 1904 and became a naturalized citizen in June 1910 in Billings, Montana.⁷⁸

Oehme came to work for the prestigious architectural firm of Link & Haire in Billings around 1907 and served as the office manager, supervising the construction of numerous Link & Haire designed buildings like the St. Patrick Cathedral, the YMCA, the Northern

⁷⁶ Ann Kooistra-Manning, National Register of Historic Places nomination, “*Billings Downtown Historic District (Boundary Increase 1)*,” March 2006, on file, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

⁷⁷ Utah Division of State History, Utah’s Historic Architectural Guide, https://issuu.com/utah10/docs/architectural_guide_booklet/49

⁷⁸ Harry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Whithey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970), 447; Polk, Billings City Directories, 1903-1923, “Citizenship Granted,” *Midland Empire News*, June 7, 1910, p. 8.

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Hotel and others in Billings. In 1909, he left Link & Haire to establish his own architectural firm, opening his office in the Stapleton Building in downtown Billings.⁷⁹

Oehme became one of the most successful and prominent architects in Billings. In 1911, only a few years after he opened his own office, the *Billings Gazette* named him one of the substantial businessmen in Billings joining the “field of high ability and fine artistic skill”, with “sterling professional and business qualifications” and “thoroughly trained by education and practical experience.”⁸⁰

Oehme produced an impressive portfolio of designed buildings throughout southeastern and southcentral Montana and into Wyoming. He designed one-room school buildings in rural communities surrounding Billings to a Carnegie Library in Cody, Wyoming. He did not concentrate on a particular architectural style but demonstrated his expertise in his designs, ranging from the craftsman style for the BPOE Lodge (Elk’s) in Red Lodge to the Renaissance Revival for the West Side and Broadwater Schools in Billings. He designed the Atlas Bar in Columbus, Montana, the Wacholz Building in Forsyth and numerous other public and private buildings.

In 1917, Oehme became the first president of the Montana chapter of the National Council of Architectural Registration Board that set professional standards for architects. He was also appointed by Governor Stewart to serve as a member of the State Board of Montana Examiner’s.⁸¹ His successful career was on an upward path until the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917 when he ran afoul of anti-German sentiment in Billings.

In November 1917, a group of Billings citizens called the “third degree committee” accused Oehme of unpatriotic activity and “traitorous acts and utterances.” In the street outside his office, they handed him an American flag and made him recite the Pledge of Allegiance. He was then “directed to carry the flag” and lead the men in a march to the Western Union telegraph office where he was “ordered to immediately wire his resignation from the architectural board” to the governor. Astounded, Mr. Oehme declared “You people are mistaken when you accused me of being a German sympathizer. I am a loyal citizen of the United States . . .”⁸²

⁷⁹ “New Architect Office,” *The Billings Gazette*, February 2, 1909. P. 7.

⁸⁰ “Substantial Business Men who Are Making Billing the Chief Metropolitan Trading Center for Eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming,” *The Billings Times*, May 11, 1911, p. 2.

⁸¹ “Curtis Oehme Honored by Governor Stewart,” March 28, 1917, p. 2.

⁸² “German-Americans Quit Service of Public When Loyalty is Questioned,” *Midland Empire News*, November 9, 1917, p.1, 7; “Take Swift Action to Check Pro-Germanism,” *Billings Evening Journal*, November 9, 1917, p.1, 6.

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It appears he tried to continue his Billings architectural practice but eventually left Montana in 1920. He moved to Portland Maine and opened an architectural office. He died near Boston, Massachusetts in 1938.⁸³

⁸³Whereas Billings newspapers often referred to his work, after this incident he is barely mentioned. "Curtis C. Oehme," <http://Ancestry.com>

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- A. Latitude 45.785800 Longitude -108.496730
B. Latitude 45.786020 Longitude -108.496290
C. Latitude 45.785720 Longitude -108.495970
D. Latitude 45.785560 Longitude -108.496280

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Carpenter Paper Company stands on Lots 9-12, Block 116, of the Original Townsite of Billings, Montana in Yellowstone County (Township 1 North Range 26 East, Section 33). The building is bounded to the south by Montana Avenue. A parking lot lies to the immediate west. A car repair business bounds the building to the north and east separated by tall, black steel fencing. Reference to the maps on pages 39 and 40 confirm this location.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary excludes the area of the parking lot west of the building, only encompassing the building's footprint and a small buffer to provide a sense of setting.

Form Prepared By

name/title: Jon Axline, Kate Hampton, Joan Brownell, John

Boughton/Historians

organization: _____

street & number: _____

city or town: _____ state: MT zip code: _____

telephone: _____

date: June 2025

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Larsen Properties, LLC.

street & number 120 Morningside Lane

telephone (406) 690-3683

city or

town Billings State MT zip code 59105

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Photo Log, All Photographs:

Name of Property: Carpenter Paper Company

City or Vicinity: Billings, MT

County: Yellowstone County

Photographer: Kate Hampton

Date Photographed: May 2025

vicinity

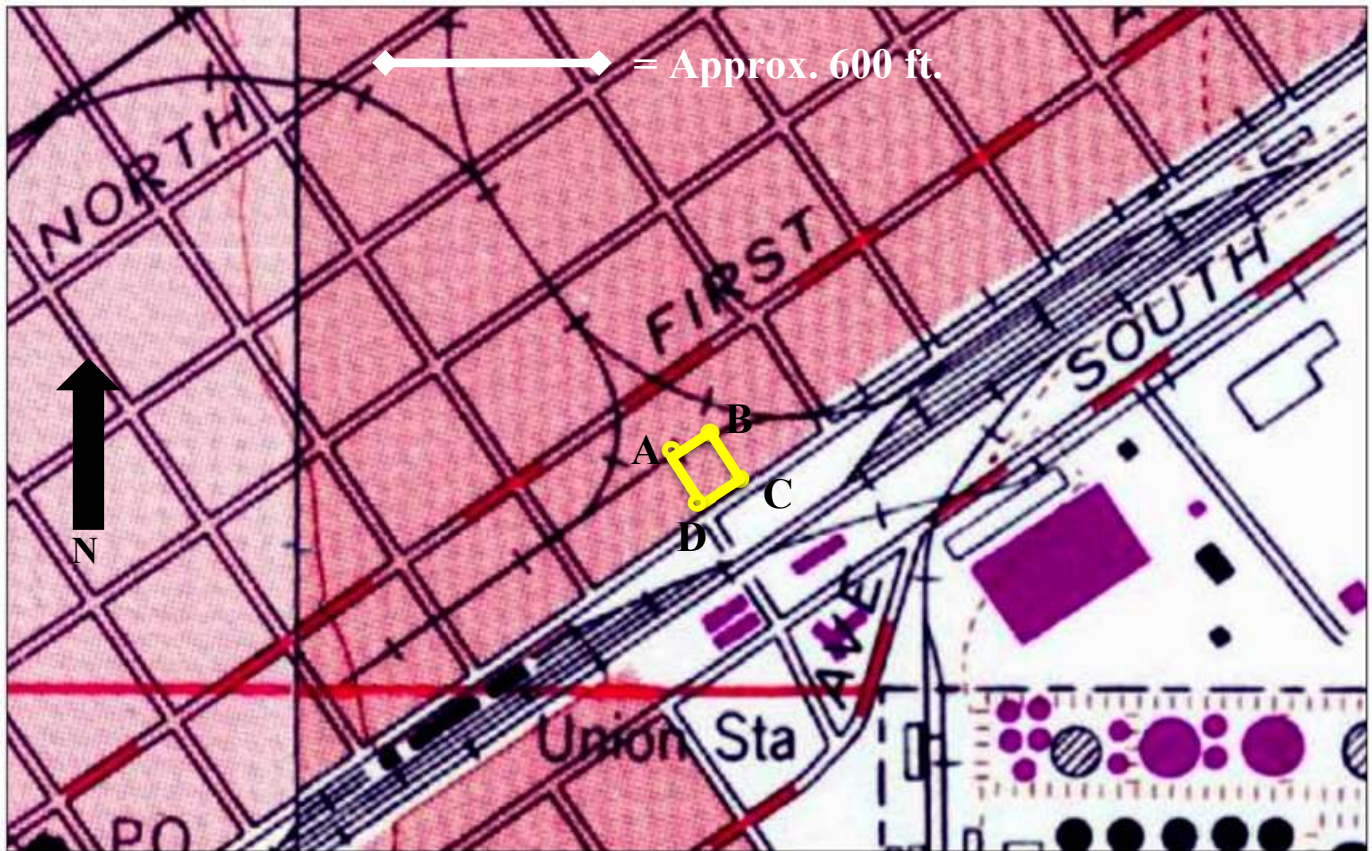
State: MT

Please See Below

Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT
County and

Maps, Aerials, and Floorplans



Location of Carpenter Paper Company. Found on the Billings East 7.5' quadrangle map (Township 1 North Range 26 East, Section 33).

- A. Latitude 45.785800 Longitude -108.496730
- B. Latitude 45.786020 Longitude -108.496290
- C. Latitude 45.785720 Longitude -108.495970
- D. Latitude 45.785560 Longitude -108.496280

Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property
State

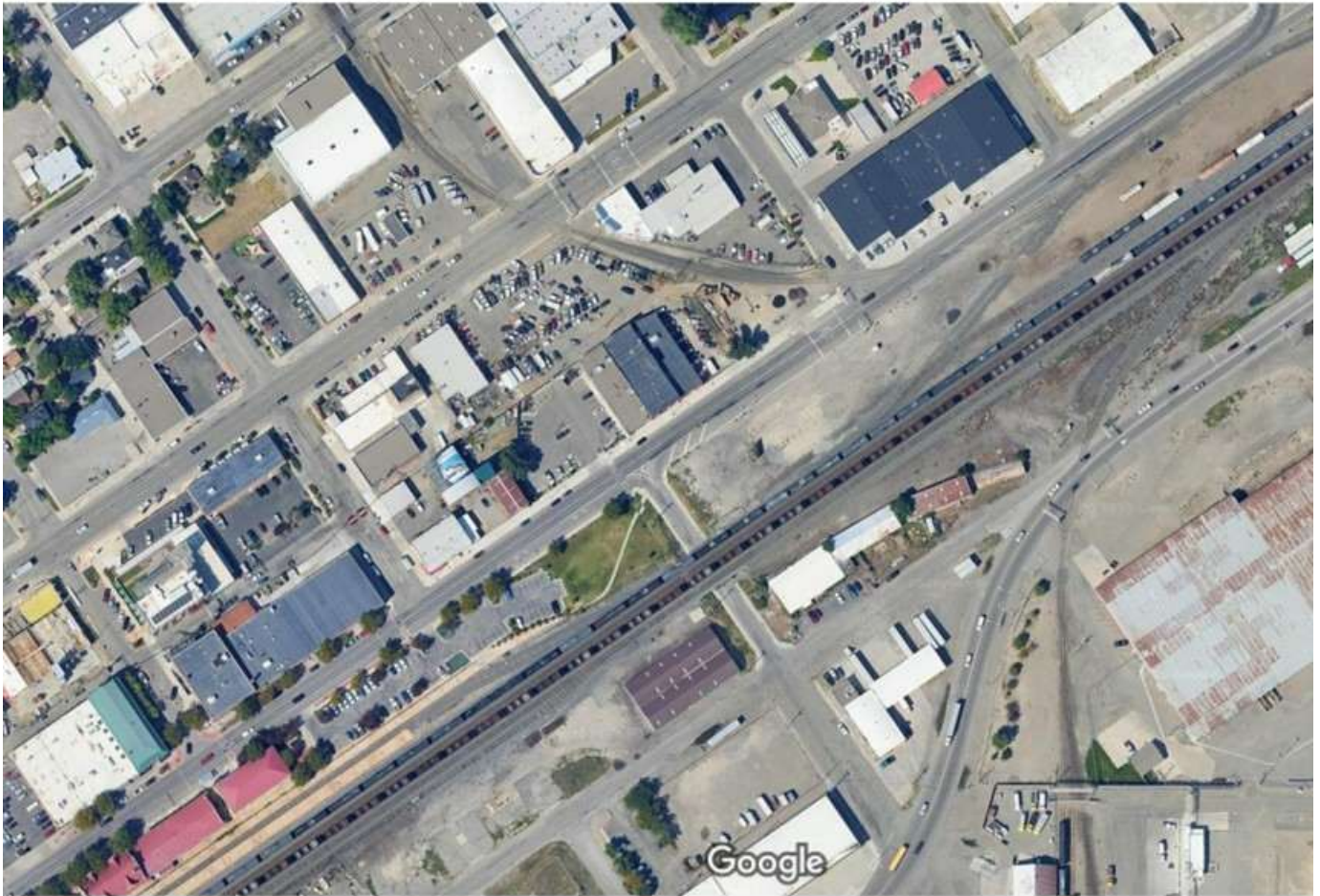
Yellowstone County, MT
County and



Imagery ©2025 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, USDA/FPAC/GEO, Ma

Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT
County and



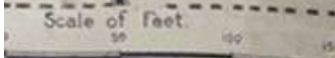
Imagery ©2025 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, USDA/FPAC/GEO, Ma

Aerial Location of the Carpenter Paper Company (Township 1 North Range 26 East, Section 33).

- A. Latitude 45.785800 Longitude -108.496730
- B. Latitude 45.786020 Longitude -108.496290
- C. Latitude 45.785720 Longitude -108.495970
- D. Latitude 45.785560 Longitude -108.496280

Name of Property
State

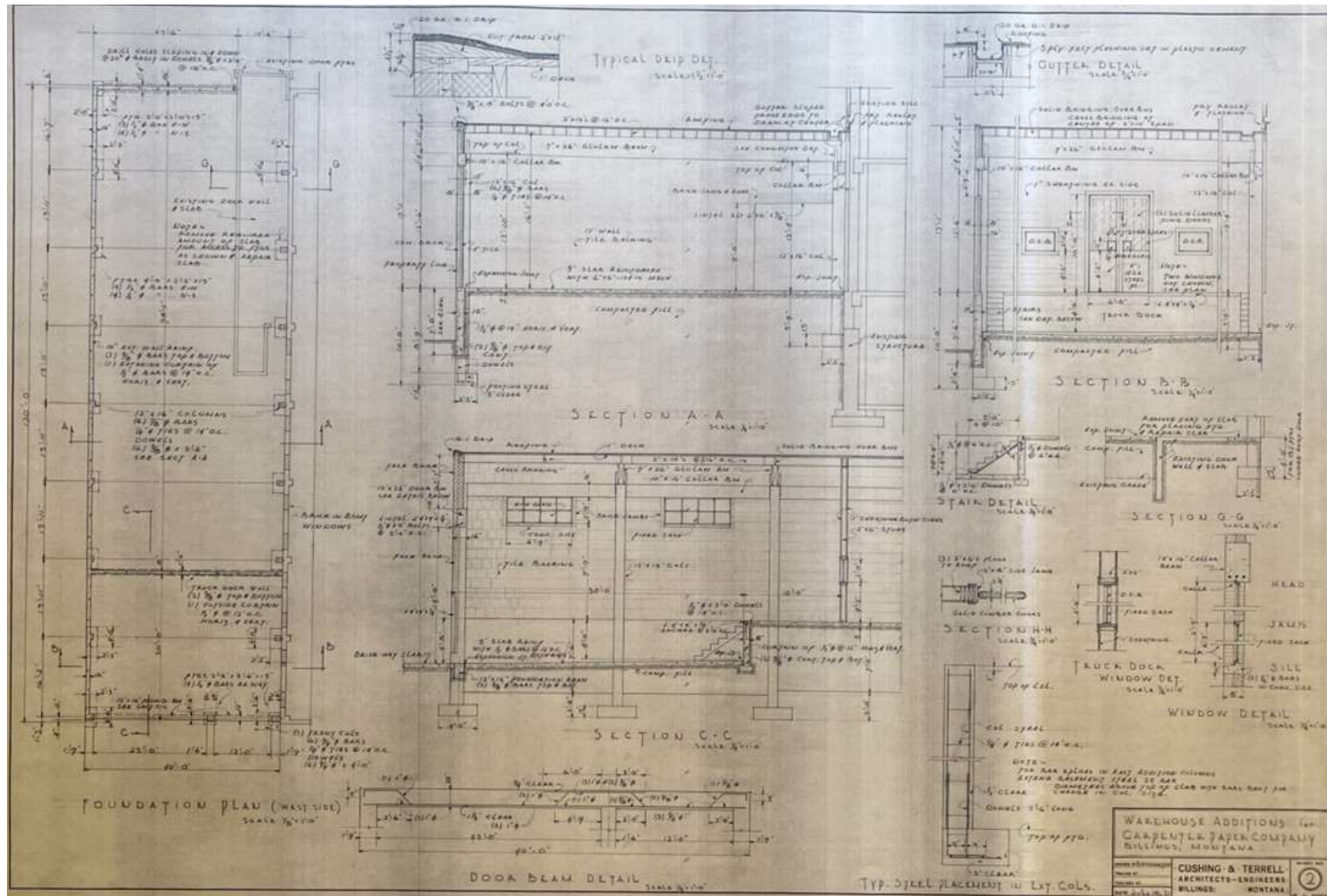
County and



indicates original block).

Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property

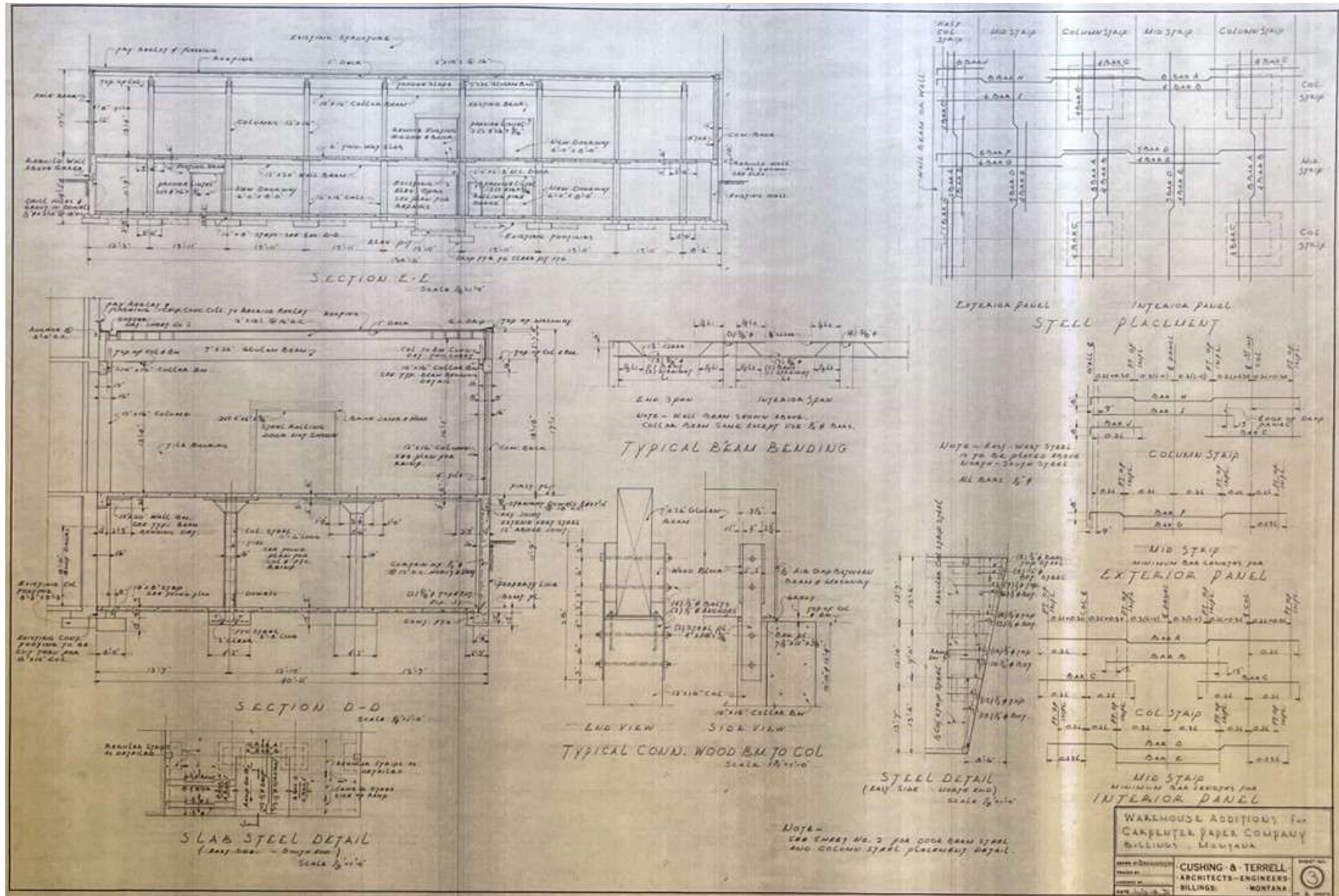
Yellowstone County, MT
County and State



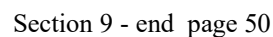
Carpenter Paper Company Warehouse additions' plans, sheet 2, 1951. Courtesy of Cushing Terrell, Billings, Montana.

Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property

Yellowstone County, MT
County and State



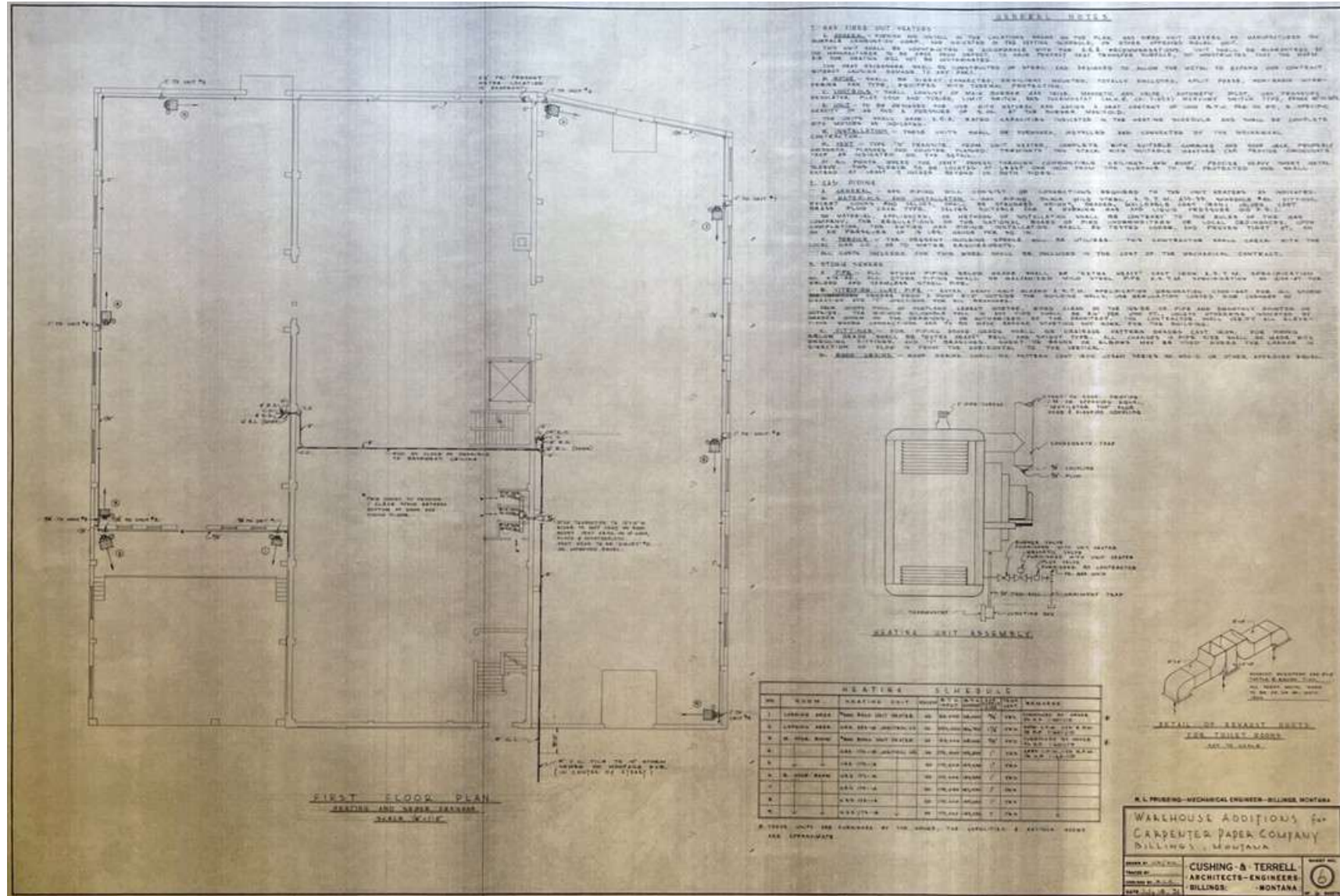
Carpenter Paper Company Warehouse additions' plans, sheet 3, 1951. Courtesy of Cushing Terrell, Billings, Montana.





Carpenter Paper Company
Name of Property

Yellowstone County, MT
County and State



Carpenter Paper Company Warehouse additions' heating and sewer, sheet 6, 1951. Courtesy of Cushing Terrell, Billings, Montana.

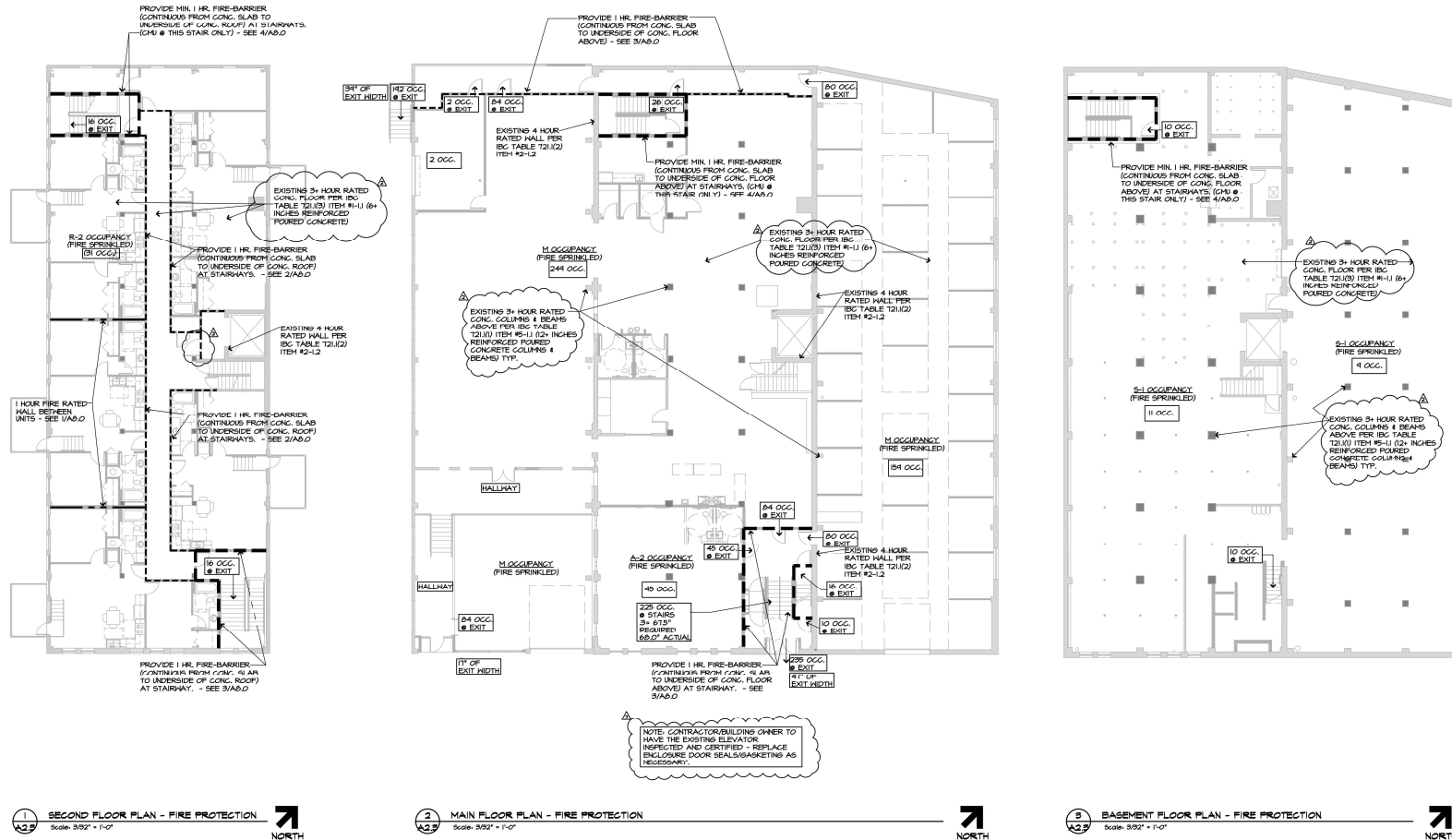
Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property

Yellowstone County, MT

County and State

Floorplan



2019 Montana Ave

BILLINGS, MT
TENANT IMPROVEMENT

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IN WRITING FROM AT ARCHITECTURE.

DATE: 04/22/2021
DRAWN BY: MD, JA
PROJECT: HTTY
REVISIONS: A PLANNING REV
CITY REVIEW: 02/02/2021

FIRE PROTECTION
PLANS

A2.3

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and

Historic Images



Historic Image of Carpenter Paper Company, circa 1920



Historic Image of Carpenter Paper Company, circa early 1950s

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



Historic Image of Carpenter Paper Company, circa late 1920s



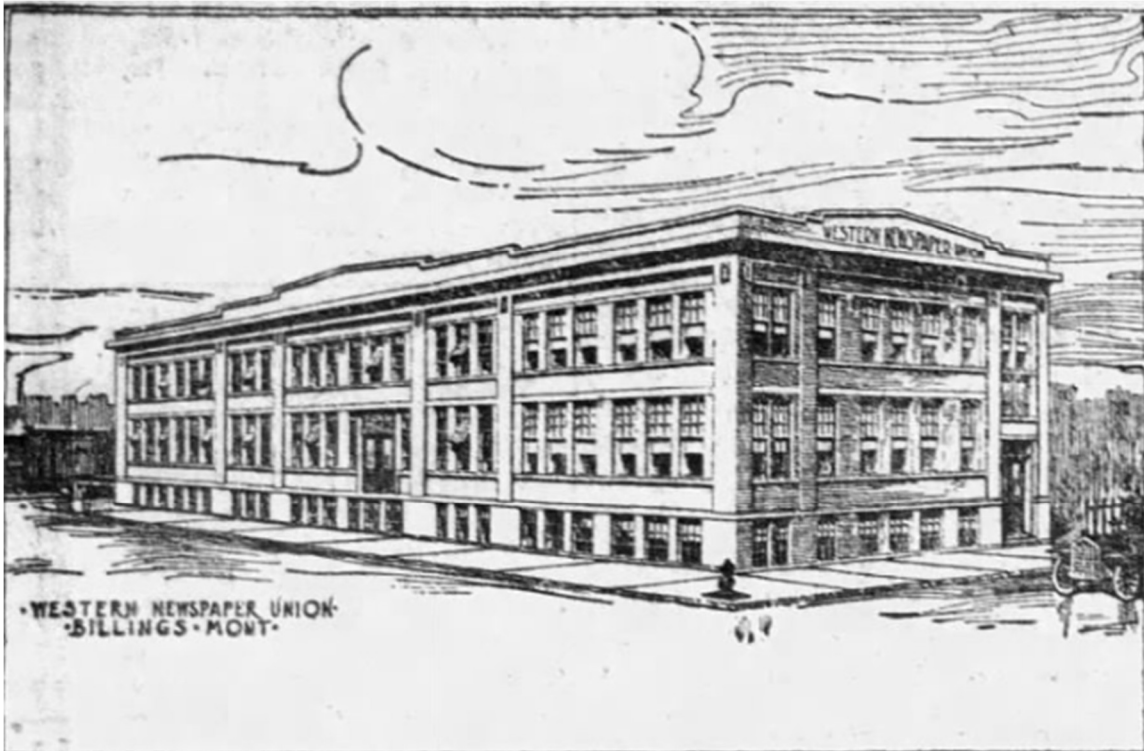
Historic Image of Carpenter Paper Company, circa 1950s

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



Architect Curtis Oehme rendering of Western Newspaper Union building pre-construction, December 1916, *Midland Empire News*.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and

Interior Images



Interior of Carpenter Paper Company, west addition, south room, view to the east.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



Interior of Carpenter Paper Company, west addition, south room, view to the south.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



Interior of Carpenter Paper Company, east addition interior, view to the northwest.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



Interior of Carpenter Paper Company, main block (1917), south room, view to the southwest.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and

National Register Photographs



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0001. South elevation, view to north.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_00-2. Close up south elevation (original facade), view to north.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT
County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0003. Close up south and east elevations, view to northwest.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0004. West and south elevations, view to northeast.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0005. Montana Ave streetscape. West and south and elevations, view to east

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0006. West elevation, view to east.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0007. East elevation, view to west.

Carpenter Paper Company

Name of Property
State

Yellowstone County, MT

County and



MT_YellowstoneCounty_CarpenterPaperCompany_0008. North elevation, view to southwest.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.