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: Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse
Other names/site number: _____
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 302 E. Main Street
City or town: Lewistown State: Montana County: Fergus
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐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 __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**

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 ☐

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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
Industry / Processing / Extraction: Mill

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant / Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements
Other: Panel Brick / Early 20th Century Commercial
Other: No Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property:

BRICK (walls); CONCRETE (foundation); SYNTHETICS: Synthetic Membrane (roof); WOOD (loading dock); CONCRETE (loading dock); METAL (rear addition)

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 well-preserved Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is located at 302 E. Main Street in Lewistown, Montana. Built in 1922 as a produce and grocery warehouse, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is a substantial, 40' x 90', brick and wood frame structure with a full basement and a central freight elevator. The building has a poured concrete foundation and is built into the east bank of the "mill ditch." This channelized diversion of Big Spring Creek once powered a large four mill on the opposite side of Main Street. The building's flat roof is hidden behind a brick parapet. The roof drains to a single scupper on the east elevation and is covered in a synthetic membrane. A small, 12' x 20' elevator penthouse sits atop the main roof just northeast of center. It has a flat overhanging roof with exposed rafter tails and is clad with corrugated metal siding. Small windows light the penthouse on all but the west elevation. The building presents two primary elevations: a short "commercial" façade along E. Main Street to the south and a long "rail-side" façade fronting the abandoned right-of-way of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (the "Milwaukee Road") to the west. Historically, a short rail spur served the west façade of the warehouse, where two loading dock segments remain intact. The only significant alteration is found on the rear (north) elevation, where a metal structure was added during the building's time as a ranch supply store and feed mill (c. 1956 – 2014). Other additions from this period, including several cylindrical grain bins, were removed sometime between 2012 and 2014.

As a utilitarian structure erected during a period of economic uncertainty, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse understandably lacks a discernable architectural style. However, its overall aesthetic could

be categorized as "Panel Brick" or "Early 20th Century Commercial."[1] These vernacular sub-styles are characterized by their brick construction and restrained ornamentation, the latter of which is usually limited to one or more of the following: decorative brick panels, corbeled brick stringcourses, and a stepped parapet. The Gamble Robinson Co. Warehouse exhibits many of these character-defining features. The primary (south and west) elevations are built with dark, decorative brick in a running bond, while the secondary (north and east) elevations feature variegated brick in a common bond. A stepped parapet adorns the Main Street façade and a corbelled stringcourse at the roofline creates as simplified cornice on both primary elevations. Like many of the brick buildings in Lewistown, the materials for the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse were produced locally at the Lewistown Brick and Tile Co.[2] Other significant features, such as original wood-frame widows and wood panel doors, are described below.

Narrative Description

Setting and Location

The Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is situated within a historic concentration of industrial and rail-related development at the east end of Main Street in Lewistown. This community of nearly 6,000 people is nestled in the southwest corner of the Judith Basin—very near the geographic center of Montana. The Judith Basin is lined by isolated "island" mountain ranges on three sides, with the Judith River running north to its confluence with the Missouri River. These ranges include the Big Snowies to south, the Little Snowies to the southeast, the Judith and Moccasin Mountains to the east, the Little Belts to the southwest and the Highwood Mountains to the northwest. The wind-swept Judith Gap between the Little Belts and Big Snowies links the Judith Basin and the Musselshell Valley to the south. Together, these two drainages make up the bulk of "Central Montana," a vast region defined by the Missouri River to the north and west, and the Musselshell River to the south and east. Because of its unique geographic setting, Lewistown is the only community of substantial size within a 100-mile radius. As such, it serves as the seat of Fergus County and also as the de-facto cultural and commercial capital of Central Montana. Helena, the state capital, is located approximately 125 miles to the southwest.

Founded in 1873 as a trading post, the historic core of Lewistown is located near the confluence of Big Spring Creek and its western tributary, Little Casino Creek. When Lewistown was surveyed in 1882, the streets were laid out diagonal to the cardinal directions, with Main Street running southwest to northeast.[3] The historic portion of Main Street is characterized by a dramatic fall between the point dividing the two creek drainages to the west and the meandering Big Spring Creek to the east. Lewistown's historic development was dictated by this natural setting. Important civic buildings, like the Fergus County Courthouse, are perched atop the elevated west end of Main Street, while industrial development, like the Judith Basin Milling Co. and the railroads, clustered at lower east end. The city's well-built commercial district runs between the two clusters.

Construction of the Milwaukee Road and the Great Northern Railway through Lewistown in 1911-1913 cemented the east side as Lewistown's industrial district. Both railroads crossed E. Main Street within one block of each other with the Milwaukee Road crossing at Miller Street and the Great Northern at High Street. The intersection of E. Main Street with the railroads fostered heavy development. By 1930, the crossing was home to the Milwaukee Road Passenger Depot, the Montana Flour Mill Co. complex, and Sawyer's (a retail grocery) on the south side of the street and the grocery warehouses of the Lewistown

[1] History Colorado. "Early-Twentieth Century Commercial," Colorado's Historic Architecture & Engineering – Web Guide. ccessed online at http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/colorados-historic-architecture-engineering-web-guide; State of New Mexico, Department of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division, "Architectural Classification: Style and Type," 2013. Accessed online at http://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/assets/files/arms/HCPIArchitecturalStyles20131115.pdf.
[2] "Art Wiedeman," Oral History Interview by Anna Zellick, October 16, 1983. On file at the Lewistown (MT) Public Library. Accessed online at http://mtmemory.org.
[3] For the purposes of this nomination "north" typically refers to northwest, "south" refers to southeast, "east" refers to northeast and "west" refers to southwest.

Mercantile Company (later Nash-Finch Co.) and Gamble-Robinson Co. on the south side. The mill burned down in the late 1960s, the Milwaukee Road abandoned its Pacific extension in 1980, and the Milwaukee Passenger Depot and Sawyer's store are extensively altered. Today, only the two former grocery houses remain intact. The Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co. Building) was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 (NR# 86000064). This nomination documents its neighbor to the east, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse, which is equally worthy of preservation.

South "Main Street" Façade

This 40'-long façade stretches along E. Main Street. Its dark brick wall surface is capped by a simple stepped parapet, connecting the building to the ubiquitous "Early 20th Century Commercial" style. The façade is penetrated by three widows on the main story and three at the basement level. On the first story, the large west and center windows light interior offices. Both contain identical paired, one-over-one wood sashes, which appear to be original to the building. The smaller widow opening to the east, which originally provided light to a bathroom, is currently boarded over with plywood. All first-story windows on this elevation have rowlock brick sills and retain their original wood frames. The evenly-spaced basement widows sit immediately above the Main Street sidewalk. The east and central windows are currently boarded over with plywood, while the west opening holds a historic tempered glass window.

A corbelled stringcourse marks the roofline of the building on this elevation. It is comprised of three corbel tables: a stretcher course flanked by rowlock courses. All three sections of the parapet have an identical corbelled brick coping. Two additional rowlock courses adorn this façade. The first stretches across the bottom of the taller central parapet, continuing the bottom rowlock course of the coping on the flanking sections. The second rowlock course is situated just above the first-story windows. It transitions back to stretcher bricks on both ends of the façade.

West "Rail-Side" Façade

The west, or "rail-side," façade is 90' long and is dominated by loading docks. Currently the docks present as two sections, but scarring on the wall face indicates that a single structure once stretched across much of this elevation. Both current loading dock sections are approximately 10' deep and have a shed-roofed awning with exposed rafter tails. The south section retains much of its historic character, while the north section is significantly altered. The south dock begins at the southwest corner of the building and runs for 36' along the west façade. The deck and front (west) elevation of the loading dock are covered in wide wood planks. Wooden steps on the south end of the loading dock provide access to the elevated main entrance of the building. They are served by a metal tube safety railing attached to building wall. The shed-roofed awning protecting the loading dock is supported by four wood posts. The north end of the loading dock is enclosed with brown-colored metal siding. Situated about 20' to the north is the other surviving segment of the loading dock. It is approximately 14' long and enclosed on all three sides by metal siding. This metal structure, an obvious recent modification, has an opening on each of its elevations. On this segment, the space below the loading deck is covered with crude wood paneling to the south and vertical metal bars to the north. There is a simple metal ladder on the front elevation of this segment. A recent concrete loading dock was added to the north end of this segment at some point during its time as a feed mill.

The main wall face behind the loading docks is similar to the Main Street façade, but there are no large office windows or parapet embellishments. Decorative brick features on the rail-side façade include the same decorative corbelling present on the Main Street façade: a roofline stringcourse and parapet coping. Also like its Main Street counterpart, this façade has two decorative rowlock courses that transition into stretcher bricks at both ends of the wall face. These rowlock courses continue the sill and lintel line of this elevation's three square windows openings. The openings are evenly-spaced and centered within the wall face. Each has a rowlock brick sill and a metal security grate, and all three are currently boarded over with plywood. The south window is located in the enclosed area of the south loading dock segments, while the center and north windows are found between the loading dock segments.

Two of the building's three elevated entrances are found on this façade. The main entrance is located near the south end. It contains double wood-panel doors that are painted white. The north door in this pair has five panels with a metal postal slot, while the south door has three smaller panels above a large rectangular panel. The second panel down is further divided into three smaller panels, suggesting it may have originally held glass. Because the doors have different designs, it stands to reason that at least one is a historic replacement. The other entrance on this elevation is located above the north loading dock segment. Currently obscured by the corrugated metal enclosure that sits atop the loading dock, this entrance contains double doors of solid wood. These doors are most likely replacement units.

East "Creekside" Elevation

The Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is the only extant structure in Lewistown built into the bank of the channelized "mill ditch" of Big Spring Creek. The ditch, which originally powered the Judith Basin Milling Co. flour mill (non-extant) runs immediately against the exposed concrete foundation of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse on this elevation. The south end of this elevation also abuts the concrete bridge that carries the Main Street (U. S. Highway 87) over the mill ditch. A final noteworthy feature of this elevation is the painted signage on upper corner of its south end. The top of the sign advertises for McEwen's, the ranch service and supply store that occupied the building from about 1956 – 1967. The lower portion is an advertisement for the Missoula Feed and Grain Company (MISCO). While this signage post-dates the period of significance, it should be considered a historic resource in its own right—especially when paired with the painted Central Feed Co. sign on the neighboring Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co) Building, which dates from the same era.

Outside of its several exceptional features, the east elevation of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is relatively straightforward. Three evenly-spaced, square windows puncture the brick wall face on the main story and the exposed basement. All six of these window openings are covered by metal security grates and all but one still contain their four-pane tempered glass windows. The top-center window is currently covered with paneling. Like all of the original window openings, these have rowlock brick sills. Two addition openings (one on each story) are found near the north end of this elevation. These are small, square openings that likely date from the building's later use as a feed mill. Otherwise, the east elevation presents an unadorned wall of variegated brick laid in a common bond.

North "Rear" Elevation

The rear elevation of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is comprised of a solid wall of variegated brick, with a single exception. There is an elevated entrance with a double wood panel door situated near the elevation's west end. This entrance, which has a rowlock brick sill, was likely used as a loading dock for the company's fleet of delivery trucks.

A 45' x 15' corrugated metal addition was built off the rear elevation during its time as a feed mill. This structure, which is open on its west end, was likely used to load and unload grain and livestock feed. The walls of the structure sit atop a concrete wall foundation. The roof, which sloped down slightly from south to north, has a metal truss system retrofitted with catwalks and a mesh safety net.

Warehouse Interior

Like its exterior, the interior of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse retains excellent historic integrity. In general, the exterior brick walls and interior frame structure of the building are exposed. The roof framing is comprised of 3" x 8" tongue-and-groove decking above 6" x 8" joists, which rest on two heavy (8" x 12") beams that run the length of the building. Each beam is supported by five square (6" x 6") wood columns. The main floor has a similar structure, except the joist, beams, and columns are generally heavier. A recent structural analysis of the building calculated the "live load" of the main floor to be 150 pounds per square foot. According to the report:

> This is a fairly heavy live load so it appears the building was originally designed to take somewhat heavy equipment and/or significant storage loads. In any case, this explains the large wood members and to some extend explains the lack of structural damage from

foundation movement since the foundation should also be designed to take the relatively heavy design loading.[4]

This assessment, completed before the history of the building was fully documented, certainly corresponds to the building's original function as a wholesale produce and grocery warehouse.

The main floor of the warehouse is divided into three sections: a slender, framed-out office space at the front (south) end of the building, a massive central warehouse space, and a slender back (north) section. An interior wood plank wall divided the central warehouse space from the back section, which holds equipment installed when the building was used as a feed mill. As such, this wall may not be original to the building. The building's original freight elevator is situated near the back (northeast) corner of the warehouse space, allowing for the easy transfer of wholesale goods between the main story and basement. A stairway to the basement is located near the office space at the front of the building. It is surrounded by a wood safety railing. The main warehouse space has a hardwood floor.

The office space is framed-out separately within the warehouse structure. Its exterior is covered in bead board. The two offices are finished with gypsum board on the walls and ceilings and linoleum on the floors. Each office has its own wood panel and glass door, with a third wood panel door linking the offices. Each office also has an exterior window and an interior window looking onto the warehouse floor. Other features include pushbutton electrical switches and a cast iron radiator. The bathroom, originally located to the east of the offices, was apparently demolished at some point.

The basement lacks sufficient light for a proper survey, but it appears to include additional warehouse space, smaller rooms created with structural clay tile and/or horizontal plank walls, and at least one wood storage crib.

Condition and Integrity

Overall, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its associational significance with the development of Lewistown as a rail-based jobbing center. The building stands at its original location and retains its original overall design. The most significant alterations, such as the construction of metal structures on the rear elevation and loading dock, are additive and reversible. The integrity of setting was compromised with the abandonment and removal of the Milwaukee Road railroad tracks. However, the conversion of the former railroad right-of-way to a trail continues its original linear alignment. The presence of another former wholesale grocery warehouse (the Lewistown Mercantile Company / Nash-Finch Co. Building) also adds greatly to the integrity of setting. The building also retains excellent integrity of materials and workmanship, particularly in the brickwork of the exterior walls and the heavy interior wood framing. The building has lost some of its original doors and windows, but others remain intact. In sum, the well-preserved physical integrity of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse evokes a powerful sense of its period of historical significance. As such, the building also possesses the more abstract components of historic integrity: feeling and association.

Furthermore, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse appears to retain excellent structural integrity. The 94-year-old building does suffer from a handful of minor cosmetic and structural issues (cracked bricks, deteriorating mortar, concrete spalling and efflorescence, general uncleanliness), but—at least according to a recent structural analysis—"will…likely provide at least another 90 years of adequate structural life."[5]

[4] High Plains Architecture (Randy Hafer) and Structural Engineering Design, PC (Jim Schilke), "Mill Building Structural Assessment," October 2016.
[5] Ibid.

8. Statement of Significance

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

- [x] 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.)

Commerce
Transportation
Community Planning & Development

Period of Significance

1922 – 1951

Significant Dates

1922
1951

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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 Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at a local level of significance. Along with its neighbor to the west, the Lewistown Mercantile Company (NR-listed in 1986, NR # 86000064), it is significant for a strong association with the development of Lewistown as a rail-based jobbing center for Montana's vast "inland empire" during the early 20th century. Further significance is derived from the building's location at the junction of the railroad right-of-way with Main Street. This busy intersection was finalized in 1913 with construction of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (or "Milwaukee Road") and the Great Northern Railroad through Lewistown. Arriving soon after the railroads were several regional and Midwestern wholesaling firms ready to profit from the flood of settlers laying claim to Central Montana's newly-opened farmland. Groceries, produce and luxury items were in high demand, and by 1916 Lewistown supported branches of the following well-known wholesaling firms: Lindsay & Co., Stone-Ordean-Wells Co., Nash-Finch Co. and Gamble-Robinson Co. The latter two firms eventually built permanent headquarters along E. Main

Street on either side of the railroad right-of-way. Backed by the Nash brothers of Grand Rapids, North Dakota, the previously NR-listed Lewistown Mercantile Company erected their two-story building at the height of Central Montana's homestead boom in 1916. Its fanciful façade reflects the unbounded optimism of the Progressive Era in Lewistown. Dating to 1922, the Gamble Robinson Co. Warehouse, located across the tracks to the east, is more restrained, reflecting its time of construction; drought, falling agricultural prices at the close of World War I, and a run of bank failures had soured the mood across much of Montana by the mid-1920s.

Architecturally, the well-preserved Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse shares many characteristics with the adjacent NR-listed Lewistown Mercantile Company building. Both present commercial facades along E. Main Street with large windows that light interior offices and varying degrees of ornamentation. Their rail-side elevations, in contrast, are clearly utilitarian with oversized openings above concrete and wood loading docks. As such, both buildings reflect their unique location at the intersection of Main Street and the railroad right-of-way. Other significant architectural features found on both buildings include a simple, rectilinear footprint, a central freight elevator with a rooftop penthouse, and the use of locally-produced brick from the Lewistown Brick & Tile Co. As such, both buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period and method of construction: the early 20th century brick warehouse and office building. Stylistically, the buildings provide an excellent counterbalance. Designed by the local architectural firm, Wasmandorff and Eastman, the previously-listed Lewistown Mercantile Company is a lovely example of the Neoclassical Revival style in an industrial warehouse setting. As such, it reflects the boundless optimism of the homestead era. Completed just six years, later the more restrained Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse reflects the economic downturn experienced across Montana following World War I.

In summation, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse possesses significance in the areas of commerce, transportation, community planning and development, and architecture. Together with the adjacent NR-listed Lewistown Mercantile Company building, the addition of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse provides a fuller, more complete history of the remaining railroad warehouse district in Lewistown. The period of significance begins with the construction of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse in 1922 and ends with its sale to a local businessman, Charles Cooley, in 1951.

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

Criterion A: Community Planning & Development, Commerce and Transportation

Introduction

On May 15, 1916, a headline in the *Ferus County Democrat* announced: "The Big Gamble-Robinson Company Takes over the Lewistown Commission." Seven months later, a similar deal between the Nash brothers and Lindsay & Co. was detailed by the same paper.[6] Both Gamble-Robinson and the Nash brothers (later known as Nash-Finch) were large grocery wholesalers headquartered in the Midwest, and their sudden interest in Lewistown, Montana was of little wonder. The booming seat of Fergus County sat at the heart of Montana's so-called "inland empire," a region not fully penetrated until the arrival of Richard Harlow's Montana "Jawbone" Railroad in 1903. Over the next two decades, central Montana experienced unprecedented agricultural and commercial development due to aggressive railroad promotion, good rainfall, high commodities prices, and liberal homesteading policies resulting in a population boom in Fergus County, which grew from just under 7,000 people in 1900 to over 28,000 in 1920, an impressive growth rate of 300%. Dozens of new towns sprang up to serve the influx of new

[6] "Deal Involves Local Concern," *Fergus County Democrat*, 18 May 1916 Page 5; "Big Deal by Nash," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 December 1916, Page 5.

settlers, while older communities witnessed exceptional growth. Lewistown, a frontier village of about 2,000 at the dawn of the 20th century, was a bustling city of over 6,000 just two decades later.[7]

For wholesaling firms, improved rail connections and a growing population translated into better profit margins and soon the tracks crisscrossing Livingston's east side were lined with brick warehouses. Two such buildings were erected at the intersection of E. Main Street and the railroad right-of-way: the 1916 Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co. Building) and the 1922 Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse. Both buildings were associated with Midwestern grocery wholesalers that came to Lewistown during the population boom of the 1910s and persevered through three more decades of drought, economic depression and global conflict. The proximity of the buildings and their similar roles in the development of the area make it virtually impossible to describe one to the exclusion of the other. It was during the prosperous postwar period that both companies left Lewistown. Nash-Finch Co. was bought out by Ryan Wholesale Groceries, a California-based firm with historic ties to Montana, shortly after World War II and Gamble-Robinson Co. sold their warehouse to local businessman, Charles Cooley, in 1951. The Ryan-Lewistown Co. continued to operate in the former Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co. Building) building through 1966, while the Gamble-Robinson Co. Building became McEwen's Farm Service & Supply Co. Then, in about 1967, the buildings were linked once more when both were purchased by the Central Feed Company. They remained in use by Central Feed (later Westfeeds) until c. 2014. The larger Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash Finch Co. Building) was purchased by Southworth Holdings LLC in 2016, while the smaller Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is currently owned by the City of Lewistown.[8]

Lewistown: "The Heart of Montana"

Montana Territory was organized in 1864, and its borders remained static even after achieving statehood in 1889. The boundaries of Montana's several regions are more fluid. "The notion of a Central Montana region bounded by other Montanas on all sides is a mental construct," wrote geographer, John Alwin, in his 1993 study, *Montana Portrait*.[9] Indeed, the various scales of Central Montana radiate outward in concentric circles. A broad interpretation of Central Montana extends between the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers, while a more focused view might include only the mountain-lined Judith Basin. The borders of Central Montana may negotiable, but Lewistown's status as its leading city is not. Founded as a trading post in 1873, Lewistown is situated very near the geographic center of Montana. This distinction, however, did not always translate into rapid growth or ready transportation connections. The same mountains and rivers that define Central Montana also create barriers to its penetration. If remoteness is one defining characteristic of Central Montana, the other is desirability. For ranchers in the late 1870s, the Judith Basin was an untapped "grassy paradise," with the most, "luxuriant grasses…to be found anywhere in the world."[10] Four decades later, the same landscape was advertised as "The Greatest Non-Irrigated Agricultural Region in the World," to hopefully homesteaders.[11] There were also mineral riches to be exploited in the surrounding mountains, including gold, sapphires, and enough coal

[7] Malone, Michael P., Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries,* Revised Edition, Seattle and London: The University of Washington Press, 1991, 182-184 and 236; Lewistown Historic Resources Commission, "Lewistown, Montana: A Tour of Historic Lewistown," March 2008. U.S. Census Bureau. "Montana - Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990." Accessed online at http://www.census.gov/population/www/ censusdata/cencounts/files/mt190090.txt; Moffat, Riley. *Population History of Western U.S. Cities and Towns, 1850-1990*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1966, 132, (referenced online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewistown, Montana).
[8] Deed. Pacific-Gamble-Robinson Co. to Charles W. and Thelma Cooley, (Lewistown Tract #177), Dated 30 October 1951; Taxpayer Index Card for Lewistown Tract #177, Fergus County Clerk & Recorder; Lewistown City Directories.
[9] Alwin, John A. *Montana Portrait*, Montana Geographic Series No. 17, Helena, MT: American & World Geographic Publishing, 1933, 112.
[10] Milner, Clyde A. II and Carol A. O'Connor. *As Big as the West: A Pioneer Life of Granville Stuart*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, Chapter 9.
[11] Hilger Loan & Realty Co. "The Judith Basin, Montana," Lewstown, MT: Hilger Loan & Realty Co., c. 1911.

to "supply the northwest for a thousand years."[12] Even if these boasts were exaggerated, the region did hold great potential for individuals and families looking to make a new life on one of America's last "frontiers."

Of course, the view of Central Montana as a remote frontier was limited to Euro-Americans. In stark contrast stood Montana's historic Indian tribes, many of whom were intimately familiar with the area. The "grassy paradise," coveted by early ranchers supported vast herds of bison and other game, making the Judith Basin a favored hunting ground for several tribes. Native people also utilized the Judith Gap, a windswept pass between the Little Belt and Big Snowy Mountains, for north-south travel between the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers. As such, the Indian tribes of present-day Montana saw the Judith Basin and surrounding region as central, not remote. It was a shared and contested space situated between the region's most powerful forces: the Crow to the south, the Blackfeet to the north, and, beginning in the mid-1800s, the Sioux to the east. Both the Blackfeet and Crow laid claim to the Judith Basin in treaties with the United States. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and Judith River Treaty of 1855 assigned the area between the Missouri and the Musselshell Rivers to the Blackfeet. Two decades later, however, another treaty promised the Judith Basin to the Crow in exchange for their reservation along the Yellowstone River. This treaty was never ratified by Congress, but it did create the first trading post at present-day Lewistown. Anticipating the relocation of Crow Agency to the Judith Basin, cattleman and trader, Nelson Story, commissioned the construction of "Fort Sherman" near the confluence of Big Spring Creek and Casino Creek in late 1873.[13]

The Crow, longtime allies of the United States in the Plains Indian Wars, were pushed out of the Judith Basin in 1874 by a neglectful federal government. President Grant issued executive orders in 1873 and 1874 that supported the new reservation, but then failed to protect it from Euro-American encroachment. At the heart of the matter was the newly-opened Carroll Trail. This overland route transported freight from Carroll Lading, a new steamboat port on the Missouri River, to the goldfields of Helena via the Judith Basin, Judith Gap and Musselshell Valley. A private enterprise, construction of the trail through tribal territory was technically illegal, but it went forward anyway with freight wagons rolling through the Judith Basin by May of 1874. A military presence protected the trail from the resistant Sioux, with posts situated at strategic points along the route. One of the new military posts, Fort Lewis, was located on Big Spring Creek near the previously-established trading post at Casino Creek. Sensing the Crow were going to stay put—at least for the time being—along the Yellowstone River, Story sold "Fort Sherman" to another trader, Major A. S. Reed, and his partner, John Bowles. The pair quickly moved the log structure about two miles downstream to where the Carroll Trail crossed Big Spring Creek. Thereafter, it was known as Reed's Fort. With the establishment of Fort Sherman / Reed's Fort, Fort Lewis and the Carroll Trail, the Judith Basin seemed increasingly less remote to Euro-Americans. It was not yet an "inland empire" of vast cattle ranches and prosperous farms, but few familiar with the area wanted to see it revert back to tribal territory.[14]

Straddling the divide between Indian and Euro-American culture were the Metis. This distinct cultural group formed organically through the marriage of French, Scotch and Irish fur trappers to Cree, Saulteaux (Ojibwa) and Chippewa women. Metis culture was originally centered in the Red River region of present-day Manitoba and Minnesota, but many Metis settled near trading posts across the Canadian and

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[12] Lewistown Chamber of Commerce. "The Judith Basin Montana and Lewistown Its Metropolis," Lewistown, MT: Lewistown Chamber of Commerce, c. 1913.

[13] Lewistown Historic Resources Commission, "Lewistown, Montana: A Tour of Historic Lewistown," March 2008; Worthen, C. B. "History of Central Montana before 1871," c. 1926; Hilger, David. "Earliest Records Relating to the Judith Basin Country and Some Stirring Adventures When This Was an Indian Hunting Ground," *Lewistown Democrat-News*, 24 December 1924; Graetz, Rick and Susie. *This is Montana: A Geography-Geographic History of Montana*, Helena, MT: Northern Rockies Publishing, 2003, 337-338.

[14] Russell, Steve F. "The Carroll Trail, 1875," Ames, Iowa: Historical Trail Research, 2002, 1; Malone, Michael P. *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* [Revised Edition], Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1991, 76-77; Foster, John F. "Early History Revolved Around Carroll Trail, Fort McGinnis," in *Lewistown News-Argus*, 16 Dec. 1984.

American West, where they worked as trappers, hunters and traders. In 1879, a group of Metis led by Pierre Berger began a migration that eventually brought about 150 families to the Judith Basin. Another leader of the "Spring Creek Community," as it came to be known, was Francis Janeaux. A seasoned trader, Janeaux quickly homesteaded on the former site of Fort Lewis and established his own trading post. Naturally, a bitter rivalry developed between Janeaux's store and the store at nearby Reed's Fort. Following quickly on the heels of the Metis was a steady stream of stockmen and gold seekers. As the Judith Basin was cleared of its native bison—the last significant hunt occurred during the winter of 1881-1882—cattle and sheep took their place. At the same time, gold was discovered in the Judith Mountains, spawning the mining towns of Maiden and Gilt Edge. Increased activity in the area also brought a renewed military presence with the construction of Fort Maginnis on the east side of the Judith Mountains in 1880. For the Metis, who had hoped to establish their own semi-autonomous society in the Judith Basin, the encroachment of Euro-Americans into the Judith Basin was disappointing but inevitable. Some Metis adapted to the increasingly white community that would soon become Lewistown, while others left the Judith Basin for good. Today, Montana's Metis are still a "landless" people seeking federal recognition, but they are recognized at the state level as the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians.[15]

Lewistown's civic development moved quickly between 1880 and 1890. Major A. S. Reed opened the community's first post office, dubbed "Reedsfort," at his homestead south of present-day downtown Lewistown in 1881. This was a slight to Janeaux, but he bested his old rival by platting a small village on a portion of his land in 1882. Two years later, a post office was secured and "Lewistown" was finally added to the map of Montana Territory. Soon after, Lewistown received a significant boost when it was declared the seat of Fergus County in 1885. The new county was named in honor of James Fergus, an early stockman in the Judith Basin who also served in Montana's Territorial Council. Another prominent early Montanan with a vested interest in the development of Lewistown was Thomas C. Power. Described variously as a "merchant prince" and business "magnate," Power got his start in the freighting business at Fort Benton, the original steamboat terminus on the Missouri River, in the late 1860s. Before long he was supplying merchandise to frontier stores across Montana Territory and the Canadian Prairies, including the trading post of Francis A. Janeaux in the Judith Basin. When Janeaux fell behind on his payments in 1883, he eventually turned over his store to Power. The Power Mercantile Co. would be a fixture of Lewistown's Main Street for decades to come. Even in the midst of his financial troubles that included relinquishing ownership of his store, Janeaux continued to make important contributions to the development of Lewistown. In 1882, for instance, he donated eight city lots for the community's first school and five years later he provided additional land for the construction of a Catholic church. After an eventful life that took him from Minnesota and Missouri to Montana, Francis A. Janeaux died on March 17, 1888 at the age of 49.[16] Montana achieved statehood the next year, and Lewistown incorporated as a city in 1899.

Laying Tracks to the Inland Empire

The Census of 1890 declared the American frontier closed—a finding permanently canonized in our national history by the influential "frontier thesis" of Fredrick Jackson Turner. "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement," claimed the Census Bureau, "but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line."[17] The place of Central Montana in this equation is unclear. Certainly, signs existed that Euro-American settlement was overtaking the region. Lewistown was a bustling town of almost 800 people by 1890 and Fort Magginis, built ostensibly to protect white settlement from Indian resistance, was

[15] Montana Office of Public Instruction, Division of Indian Education. *Montana Indian Education for All: Montana Indians: Their History and Location*, Helena, MT: April 2009, 63-67; Annette, Travis. "Where the Buffalo Roam: The Migration of the Red River Metis to Lewistown, MT," Bozeman, MT: Montana State University, Department of History, c. 1991, 19-25 and 32-37; *This is Montana*, 337-338.
[16] *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 73 and 150; Mueller, George D. "Francis A. Janeaux: Founder of Lewistown," 10 December 1978. "Where the Buffalo Roam," 28, 30 and 32-33.
[17] Turner Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Paper, American Historical Association Meeting, Chicago, 12 July 1893. Accessed online at http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf.

abandoned that same year. On the other hand, Fergus County was still sparsely populated. The Census of 1890 documented 3,514 individuals spread across the county's 7,524 square miles—a population density of just under one-half person per square mile (or one person for every 1,375 acres).[18] The population of both Lewistown and Fergus County doubled between 1890 and 1900, but the region still lacked one of the most important indicators of contemporary civilization: a railroad. The region's outlook on the railroad situation was captured by the *Fergus County Argus* in a special "pictorial issue" published on April 1, 1901. Under the headline, "Terse and to the Point," the editor expounded:

> This empire, enriched by the hand of Nature and in the heart of one of the greatest states under the flag, populated with thriving towns, is untouched by the greatest developer of modern times—the railroad…Who can say what will be the increase in various values, and who can measure the possibilities of development when he comes rushing in? Connection with the railroads is now made by stages and freight teams. The business is here, and the Burlington, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern will be, too, before long. To-day Fergus County possesses all the opportunities of a frontier in the midst of civilization. Now is the time for capital and the settler to take advantage of the situation.[19]

By their own assessment, then, Central Montanans were still living along America's settlement frontier over a decade after it was declared obsolete.

When railroad service did finally reach Lewistown in 1903, it was Richard Harlow's upstart Montana Railroad and not—as one might have hoped—a branch line of the Northern Pacific or Great Northern. Established in the mid-1890s, the Montana Railroad was constructed in fits and starts from its western terminus at Lombard, a small Missouri River town located about fifty miles south of Helena along the Northern Pacific Railroad. Harlow, a Helena attorney and entrepreneur, initially intended to tap into the silver-rich Castle Mountains near White Sulphur Springs, but his railroad arrived too late to capitalize on the mining frontier. Construction then shifted toward the Musselshell Valley, a region that held great agricultural promise. The Montana Railroad reached the hamlet of Merino in June of 1900, where Harlow immediately platted a new town named in honor of himself.[20] Harlowton would grow into a bustling community of nearly 800 people by 1910 and be declared the seat of Wheatland County in 1917. The ever-attractive Judith Basin, located just north of Harlowton via the Judith Gap, was a natural point of expansion for the Montana Railroad. After months of speculation, Harlow announce his plans to extend his line to Lewistown in the summer of 1902.[21] Construction continued through most the following year, with the "final spike" driven by Lewistown mayor, L. E. Eldridge, on October 30, 1903. As reported by the *Fergus County Argus,* any celebration of the momentous occasion was limited to:

> …A feeling that Lewistown was simply getting what was due her; that her progressiveness and importance and the marvelous resources of the surrounding country deserved the road, and that the celebration should not be all one way. For the conveniences which the railroad will bring to us, the owners of the line will derive ample returns.[22]

The Montana Railroad did not possess the development tools of its more established competitors—there were no land grants or aggressive advertising schemes. It did, however, finally connect Central Montana to the transcontinental transportation system, which was more than enough spark a major construction boom in Lewistown. An estimated $150,650 was spent on new construction in 1903 and another $210,000 in 1904. Significant commercial and civic buildings from this period include the Bank of Fergus County, the Laux Building, the War Building and U.S. Land Office, a new County Jail (all in 1904), and

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[18] Fergus County, Montana. "Fergus County – The Beginning," Website accessed online at http://co.fergus.mt.us/45-home/home-news-info/285-fergus-county-the-beginning. 9 December 2016.
[19] "Terse and to the Point," *Fergus County Argus*, Pictorial Edition, 1 April 1901, 1.
[20] Jones, Dale. "Montana Railroad Logo Story," 2012. Accessed Online at http://www.railroads-of-montana.com/.
[21] "Railroad Will Be Extended to Lewistown," *Fergus County Argus,* 2 July 1902, 1.
[22] "Driving the Last Spike of the Montana Railroad," *Fergus County Argus*, 18 November 1903, 1.

the Carnegie Library (1905-1908). Also in 1904, the Montana Railroad constructed a passenger depot near the corner of First Avenue North and Brassley Street.[23] The next year marked a major industrial investment in Lewistown, with the Judith Basin Milling Company announcing plans to construct a new flour mill for $30,000. The old mill was built by the Jackson Brothers in1886 at the east end of Main Street and was considered a "land mark of the town." It was powered by water from Spring Creek, which was channeled through a mile-long ditch. The new mill was built across the ditch from its predecessor, which was cleared to make way for a 40,000 bushel grain elevator. Also included in the project was a major expansion on the mill ditch's carrying capacity, from 2,000 to 4,000 cubic inches per second.[24]

While Richard Harlow's independent railroad pushed into the Judith Basin, Montana's transcontinental lines were in a period of consolidation. The Northern Pacific went bankrupt during the Panic of 1893, only to be bought up by powerful railroad magnate, James J. Hill, and famed New York banker, J. P. Morgan. Known as the "Empire Builder," Hill already controlled the Great Northern Railway and his acquisition of the Northern Pacific effectively created a railroad monopoly in the American Northwest.[25] Unfortunately for Lewistown, Hill's corporate maneuvering stalled the construction of several branch lines, including one that would link the Great Northern and Northern Pacific lines via the Judith Gap. By 1905, however, Hill was ready to initiate his construction program through Central Montana. The happy news was announced in the *Fergus County Argus* on December 1, 1905. Hill's new north-south route, eventually dubbed the "Billings & Northern" would bypass Lewistown to the west, but the booming city could expect a branch line as soon as possible. The same issue carried other railroad tidbits. Of particular interest to Montanans was a brief article on a recently-authorized extension of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad between South Dakota and the Puget Sound.[26]

Backed by William Rockefeller, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul promised to compete with the Great Northern and Northern Pacific—very good news for Montanans. "We want to divide our business between Rockefeller and Hill," explained the *Helena Independent*:

> We want competition. We want the swift growth of business, of profit, of prosperity, that will come when we have a railroad rich enough, independent enough and powerful enough to give the Hill system that kind of argument. In the whole country there is not a combination mighty enough to enter into rivalry with Hill for the business of the northwest except the Rockefellers. Therefore, we want the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul built into Montana before the single interest which now controls our commercial destiny devours us piecemeal.[27]

Over the next two decades, the rivalry between the "Hill lines" and the "Milwaukee Road" transformed Lewistown and Central Montana. The *Fergus County Argus* announced the selected route of the Milwaukee Road through Montana on March 9, 1906.[28] Unlike earlier transcontinental railroads, which received extensive land grants, the Milwaukee Road secured its right-of-way through the purchase of private property and small, independent railroads. The Montana Railroad, while in need of substantial improvements, provided an important link between the Musselshell Valley and the Missouri River at Lombard. That it included a branch line to Lewistown and the Judith Basin was a valuable bonus. Richard Harlow had mortgaged his railroad to Hill, but the Milwaukee Road was still able to wrestle it away. Lewistown was officially connected to Chicago in early 1908, when Milwaukee Road construction crews reached Harlowton.[29] The new (and final) transcontinental railroad drove its "golden spike" near Gold Creek, in western Montana, on May 19, 1909. The competition, Hill's Billings & Northern line, was

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[23] "Lewistown Improvements," *Fergus County Argus*, 28 December 1904, 1; Montana State Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places Sign Text – Fergus County, accessed online at http://montanahistorywiki.pbworks.com/w/page/21639748/National%20Register%20-%20Fergus.
[24] New Flouring Mill Planed," *Fergus County Argus*, 8 February 1905, 1.
[25] *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 181-182.
[26] "Surveyors are in the Field," and "Milwaukee Road is Coming," *Fergus County Argus*, 1 December 1905, 1.
[27] Quoted in "One or Both," *Fergus County Argus*, 22 September 1905, 4.
[28] "Route of the Milwaukee Railroad," *Fergus County Argus*, 9 March 1906, 1.
[29] "Railroad Men in the City," *Fergus County Democrat*, 21 January 1908, 1.

running through the Judith Gap by late 1908.[30] For the next three years, speculation swirled about construction of the promised Lewistown Branch. Then, on October 10, 1911, the *Fergus County Democrat* announced that the Great Northern was finally buying right-of-way between Lewistown and Moccasin, located about 20 miles west on the main line of the Billings & Northern.[31] When the Great Northern reached Lewistown in November of 1912, the city schools closed so that the "children might witness the historic event."[32]

The Montana Railroad / Milwaukee Road approached Lewistown from the southwest, while the Great Northern approached from the northwest. Both railroads, however, curved around to the "industrial" east side of town along Spring Creek. The Great Northern headquartered north of Main Street, constructing their $40,000 depot complex at the intersection of First Avenue North and E. Montana Street. The Milwaukee Road initially used the original depot of the Montana Railroad, but their growing commitment to Lewiston required something more substantial. Completed in 1914, the Milwaukee Depot complex was built just below the intersection of S. Miller Street and E. Main Street at an estimated cost of $100,000.[33] The railroads did not stay on their respective sides of Main Street for long. Shortly after completing their main line, the Milwaukee Road extended north and west into the hinterland, reaching Kendall (1910), Hilger (1911), Grass Range (1912), Winfred and Roy (1913) and Winnett (1916). They also completed a line to Great Falls in late 1913.[34] The northern extension took the Milwaukee tracks across E. Main Street at Miller Street before exiting town along Breed Creek. Even more ambitious was the Great Northern, who planned a 550-mile "cut-off" between Lewistown and New Rockford, North Dakota (the Montana Eastern). Shortly after arriving in Lewistown, the Great Northern announced plans to build east to Grass Range at once. They secured permission from the City Council to cross E. Main Street at High Street in February 1913.[35] This route also created an intersection between the two railroads just one block above E. Main Street. As wholesaling firms rushed to Lewistown over the next few years, this location proved particularly attractive.[36]

Boom and Bust in the Judith Basin

In addition to the arrival of the railroad, homesteading proved equally as important in the establishment and construction of the warehouses at the junction of the railroad right-of-way and Main Street. The forces behind Montana's homestead boom between 1909 and 1920 are well-documented. The advancement of dry-land farming, the liberalization of homesteading laws through the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Stock-Raising Act of 1916, heavy rainfall, high crop prices, and aggressive promotion by railroads, land speculators and community boosters all combined to bring almost 400,000 new people to Montana between 1910 and 1918.[37] Homesteaders flocked to Central Montana. During the 1913-1914 fiscal year, the Lewistown Field Office led the nation in homestead filings. Of the 20,662 homestead filings made in Montana that year, 7,103 (or 34%) originated from the Lewistown Land Office.[38] The population of Fergus County skyrocketed, reaching an all-time high of 28,344 by 1920. Lewistown grew from a town just under 3,000 to a bustling city of over 6,000 during the same period. Another marker of the city's unprecedented growth was a boom in new construction. This was evident at the close of 1913, when the *Fergus County Democrat* reported:

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[30] "Through Train Service Soon," *Fergus County Democrat,* 10 November 1908, 1.
[31] "G. N. is Buying Right of Way," *Fergus County Democrat*, 10 October 1911, 1.
[32] "G. N. Completed to Lewistown," *Fergus County Democrat*, 26 November 1912, 1.
[33] "The Transformation of the City of Lewistown: City's Record for the Year," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 December 1913, 14.
[34] Compiled from several articles in the *Fergus County Democrat.*
[35] "The G. N. Going Right on East," *Fergus County Democrat*, 4 February 1913, 1. Portions of the Montana East line were built (east to Grass Range and west to Richey), but it was eventually abandoned due to the economic concerns.
[36] Lewistown Chamber of Commerce. "The Judith Basin Montana and Lewistown Its Metropolis," Lewistown, MT: Lewistown Chamber of Commerce, c. 1913.
[37] *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 242. According to "an official state promotional publication," the population of Montana reached 769,590 at the height of the homestead boom in 1918.
[38] "Business Done by Land Office," *Fergus County Democrat*, 31 December 1914, 7.

> A million and a half for new buildings completed or now in progress of erection is the record of Lewistown this year and it is one that has never been equaled in the past. It would be a proud record for the largest towns in Montana and for one the size of Lewistown it means the practical completion of the New City.[39]

The "new" Lewistown stood at the center of a blooming agricultural district. The transformation of the Judith Basin following the arrival of the railroads was a captivating story—and not just for Montanans. This excerpt, published on June 17, 1911 in the *Omaha Bee*, expressed the excitement of the era:

> The Judith Basin woke up, and the transformation of this range country into a region of farms which than began has proceeded in the most astonishing manner….new towns sprung up like mushrooms. Back of the towns were the farms and the farmers who were making good. Grain elevators became familiar and suggestive features of the landscape.[40]

While impressive, the development touted in 1911 was only the beginning. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of farms in Fergus County jumped from 2,310 to 4,226, while the population hovered around 30,000 by 1914. Fergus County farms produced an impressive 10 million bushels of grain in 1913, including winter wheat (5 million bushels), oats (3 million bushels), barley (1.5 million bushels), spring wheat (1.4 million bushels), and flax (100,000 bushels). Ranching also continued to be lucrative, with cattle prices reaching record highs by 1914 and mutton prices holding steady.[41] As food prices climbed with the onset of World War I, so did agricultural profits. Never before (or since) has Montana experienced such wide-spread optimism.

Tragically, Montana's homestead boom was followed by a bust. Drought conditions and falling agricultural prices after World War I forced many Montana farmers from their land. "The grim statistics tell their story," writes Michael P. Malone in *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*:

> During the period 1919-25, roughly two million acres passed out of production and eleven thousand farms, about 20 percent of the state's total, were vacated. Twenty thousand mortgages were foreclosed, and half of Montana farmers lost their land.…Between 1920 and 1926, 214 of Montana's commercial banks—over one-half of the state's total—failed, carrying thousands of family savings accounts down with them. Montana had the highest bankruptcy rate in the United States.[42]

By 1930, Montana could claim another unfortunate record as the only state to lose population during the generally prosperous 1920s. Statewide population fell from an estimated 769,590 at the peak of the homestead boom to 548,889 in 1920 and 537,606 in 1930. Fergus County fared better than most during the agricultural depression of the 1920s, but still experienced a steep (41%) decline in population. The number of farms also fell dramatically from 4,226 in 1920 to just 1,918 five years later.[43] The loss of territory to Judith Basin County (1920) and Petroleum County (1926) accounted for some of the decline, but the worsening agricultural economy played a significant role as well. The population of Fergus County fell to 16,531 by 1930 and has continued to decline—at various rates—ever since. Lewistown also lost a net sum of 762 residents during the 1920s, with its population falling to 5,358 by 1930. Since that point, Lewistown has experienced periods of growth, with population spiking above 7,000 in 1960 and 1980, and decline. The 2010 Census recorded 5,901 residents in Lewistown and 11,586 in Fergus County.

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[39] "The Transformation of the City of Lewistown."
[40] "Progress of Western History: Judith Basin Transformed," *Omaha Bee*, 17 June 1911, 9.
[41] Ibid.; United States Department of Agriculture. *Census of Agriculture: 1925*, "Montana: County Table 1: Farms and Farm Acreage, 1910, 1920 and 1925," 84.
[42] *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 283.
[43] *Census of Agriculture: 1925*, 84.

In many ways, the two wholesale grocery warehouses at the intersection of Main Street and the railroad right-of-way in Lewistown represent Montana's railroad and homesteading legacy. The earliest constructed warehouse built by the Nash Brothers in 1916, the stylish and previously-listed Lewistown Mercantile Company Building, reflects the optimism of the railroad-building and homestead boom in Central Montana. In contrast, the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse is more restrained. Built in c. 1925, it conveys a quiet confidence in Lewistown's future as a distribution center—even after in the face of drought and economic depression.

"Lewistown: The Natural Railroad and Jobbing Center of Montana"

At the dawn of the 20th century, the Power Mercantile Co. still dominated the general merchandise trade in Lewistown and Central Montana. The general store expanded into a large, two-story stone building on the 300 block of W. Main Street in 1901. From there, the Power Mercantile Co. supplied the region's ranching and mining communities with everything from furniture to groceries. Other general stores, such as Chas. Lehman & Co., provided much-needed competition, but were unable to overtake their biggest rival.[44] However, once "released from its isolation," by the railroads, Lewistown was suddenly on the map of several regional wholesaling firms.[45] They were further enticed by the city's unique geography. "Lewistown is at the exact geographical center of Montana and in the center of Fergus County," explained the Lewistown Chamber of Commerce in 1913:

> It is also the center of a larger jobbing territory than any other city in the Northwest…There can be no other city anywhere near its size within a hundred miles. Nature and the railroads have combined to make it a supply point of an oval 200 miles wide from north to south and 350 miles east to west.[46]

Of course, the vast territory surrounding Lewistown would only translate into profit for wholesalers once it was sufficiently populated. The extraordinary homestead boom of the 1910s indicated that Central Montana would be blanketed by prosperous farms for years to come.

As both producers and consumers, homesteaders in Central Montana had a few basic needs. First and foremost, they required a market for their agricultural products. After the crops were harvested, the sheep shorn and the cattle corralled, the first order of business was to get each commodity to its specified shipping point. This involved a network of wool warehouses, stockyards, feed stables and most ubiquitously, grain elevators. It was the need for a grain elevator every ten to fifteen miles—the distance grain could reasonably be transported by wagon—that spurred the development of many towns during Montana's homestead boom.[47] By 1913, Fergus County claimed thirty-one grain elevators in twenty-seven communities. On the other side of the capitalist coin, these new towns also served as an initial retail outlet for homesteaders in Central Montana. While many of their essentials (food, water, wood, etc.) could be found locally—perhaps, even on their own farm—other provisions had to be purchased. Each small town usually supported a general store that carried dry goods (fabrics, clothing, etc.), groceries and specialty items like tobacco, coffee, candy and produce, among countless other products. In Central Montana the number of general stores exploded during the homestead boom. The 1908 Fergus County Directory (which also included the Musselshell Valley) listed 34 general stores in 16 communities. By 1918, the same territory supported 123 general stores in 73 communities. When listed alphabetically, the dozens of new towns dotting Central Montana's landscape represented almost every letter—only I, O, Q and X were left out of the town-naming bonanza. In larger towns and county seats, retail stores became increasingly specialized. This was evident in the growing number of grocery stores in Lewistown. Between 1904 and 1910, Lewistown supported between two and four retail grocers, but by 1918 there

[44] "Power Mercantile Co.," *Fergus County Argus*, Pictorial Edition, 1 April 1901, 35-36.
[45] "Progress of Western History: Judith Basin Transformed," *Omaha Bee*, 17 June 1911, 9.
[46] "The Judith Basin Montana and Lewistown Its Metropolis," 1.
[47] Alwin, John A. "Patterns of Montana's Towns, 1880 to 1920," Thesis, University of Montana, 94.

were twelve.[48] (Note: See Appendix A for a complete list of Central Montana towns supporting at least one general store between 1904 and 1918).

The proliferation of general stores and retail groceries in Central Montana, along with the continued expansion of the railroads, made Lewistown a natural fit for regional grocery wholesalers. Some of the first firms to enter the Lewistown market were headquartered in the Northwest. Both the Henningsen Produce Co. and Lindsay & Co. were in Lewistown by 1910. Founded in Tacoma, Washington in 1889, the Henningen Produce Co. had a thriving branch in Butte, Montana by 1902. Lindsay & Co. was a Montana firm, established in the capital city of Helena in 1883. By the early 1900s, the company had branches in most of Montana's major cities, as well as at Sheridan, Wyoming and Wallace, Idaho.[49] These regional companies competed with local wholesaling firms for the business of retailers across Central Montana. Local wholesalers ranged from well-established general stores like the Power Mercantile Co. to startup companies focused on particular line of product. Established on November 27, 1911, the Lewistown Commission Co. fell squarely into the second category. The new firm was incorporated by Charles E. Virden and Guy C. Davidson, both of Butte, along with Davidson's future brother-in-law, Carl C. Nisser, of Lewistown. As a founding member of the Butte Wholesale Grocery Company in 1905 and president of the Virden-Ryan Company, Virden was well acquainted with the wholesale grocery business. According to the *Fergus County Democrat*, the Lewistown Commission Co. would be the first locally-headquartered firm to "engage in the business of handling fruit, vegetables and produce on a wholesale basis."[50]

The Lewistown Commission Co. and Lindsay & Co. both contributed to the city's construction boom of 1912-1913. The former erected a $10,000 warehouse at the intersection of First Avenue South and Brassley Street in 1912. Not to be outdone, Lindsay & Co. built a new warehouse worth twice as much the very next year at 502 First Avenue North.[51] Despite their promising start in Lewistown, neither company would be long-lived. As the homesteading and railroad boom climbed toward its peak in Central Montana, Lewistown began to attract grocery and produce wholesalers from the Upper Midwest. These colossal corporations radiated outward along the nation's railroads, establishing branch warehouses at any distribution point with a sufficient retail market. Upon entering a new market, the Midwestern wholesalers either took over a smaller, established firm or set up an entirely new branch. By 1916, the Lewistown Commission Co. and Lindsay & Co. would both be purchased by larger Midwestern firms.

From Minneapolis to Montana: the Gamble-Robinson-Lewistown Co.

The Stone-Ordean-Wells Co. of Duluth, Minnesota was the first Midwestern wholesaler to arrive in Lewistown, opening a branch in c. 1914. This firm, however, showed little commitment to Central Montana. They built large warehouses in Great Falls and Billings, but in Lewistown were satisfied to share warehouse space with a draying company. The Stone-Ordean-Wells Co. remained a presence in Montana through the mid-1930s, but abandoned Lewistown sometime before 1922.[52] The next two arrivals, the Nash-Finch Co. and Gamble-Robinson Co., remained Lewistown fixtures until the early

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[48] R. L. Polk & Co. Lewistown & Fergus County City Directories, 1904 – 1918.
[49] Ibid., University of Montana-Missoula, Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections, "Henningsen Produce Company, Butte Division Records, 1902-1928," Finding Aid. Accessed online at http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv16762; "Big Deal by Nash," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 December 1916, Page 5.
[50] "Lewistown Commission Company is Organized," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 November 1911, Page 1; Montana Historical Society, "Hennessy Company Records, 1889-1941," Finding Aid. Accessed online at http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org.
[51] "Lewistown Commission Company is Organized," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 November 1911, Page 1; "News of Companies and Plants – Montana," *Cold Storage and Ice Trade Journal*, June 1912, V. XLIII, No. 6, 61. Accessed online at https://books.google.com; "City Record for the Year," *Fergus County Democrat*, 16 December 1913; Lewistown City Directories, 1912 and 1914. The 1913 Lindsay & Co. Warehouse is still extant.
[52] Lewistown City Directories, 1914-1922; Zenith City Online, "Stone-Ordean-Wells," Website accessed at http://zenithcity.com; Sanford, Dena, "Great Falls Railroad Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1992; Kooistra-Manning, Anna. "Billings Townsite Historic District, Boundary Increase I," National Register of Historic Places Nomination & Amendment, 2006.

1950s. As a sign of their commitment to Lewistown, both wholesalers constructed substantial brick warehouses between 1916 and 1922 at the intersection of E. Main Street and the rail-road-right of way.

The Nash brothers of Grand Forks, North Dakota established the Lewistown Mercantile Company in late 1915 and erected a fine building for the new firm at 220 E. Main Street the following year. By the end of 1916, they held a presence in every corner of Montana after buying out Lindsay & Co. of Helena. Already in control of sixty other wholesale houses, the purchase of Lindsay & Co. made the "Nash organization" one of largest firms in the United States with branches in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming and Washington.[53] The Nash brothers (Fred, Edgar, and Lewis) entered the grocery trade in 1885 with a small candy and tobacco store in Devil's Lake, North Dakota. A few years later, they hired a stock boy named Harry B. Finch, who worked his way up to an executive position. The firm moved to Minneapolis in 1919 and incorporated as the Nash-Finch Co. in 1921. Through the mid-1930s, Nash-Finch operated two wholesale houses in Lewistown: the Lewistown Mercantile Company at 220 E. Main Street and the Lindsay-Lewistown Co. at 502 First Avenue North. Then, in about 1930, the Nash-Finch Co. dissolved the Lewistown Mercantile Company and began to use its own name. A few years later Lindsay-Lewistown Co. finally closed its doors.[54]

The Gamble-Robinson Co. was the final Midwestern grocery wholesaler to arrive in Lewistown, acquiring the Lewistown Commission Co. in April of 1916. Based in Minneapolis, the firm began in about 1890 as a small commission house run by two brothers, Ross A. and David F. Gamble. In 1892, Harry L. Robinson joined the firm, forming the Gamble-Robinson Commission Co. By the time they incorporated as the Gamble-Robinson Co. in 1903, there were three branch houses in Minnesota (St. Paul, Mankato, and Duluth), as well one at Aberdeen, South Dakota. An advertisement from that era described the company as, "jobbers in fruits, vegetables, produce, dried fruits and canned goods."[55] Over the next two decades, Gamble-Robison Co. undertook an aggressive expansion program based on a network of "associate houses." The structure of the company was explained as follows in 1915:

> Each house has been located in a positon of strategic importance, and as a result of the close organization and prompt relationship between the various constitute members it has become possible to place the goods within the reach of the ultimate consumer at minimum transportation expense… At present time the organization has more than sixty traveling men in the field and about 300 employees. All houses are well located in a fast developing country where the prospects are that for years to come the facilities for supplying the demands of local trade must be on the increase.[56]

By this time, the company had about twenty associate houses covering a territory that stretched from Montana to Ontario, Canada. Gamble-Robinson's earliest houses in Montana were established at Miles City, Billings and Great Falls between about 1909 and 1914.[57]

The Gamble-Robinson-Lewistown Co. joined the vast wholesaling empire on April 20, 1916. Like all of the "associate houses," the Lewistown, Montana branch organized as an independent company led by these original officers: David F. Gamble (president), Harry L. Robinson (vice president), Ross A. Gamble (treasurer), and James H. Jameson (secretary and local manager). Rounding out the executive team

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[53] "Ready for the Contractors," *Fergus County Democrat*, 6 January 1916, 1; "Big Deal by Nash," *Fergus County Democrat*, 28 December 1916, 1.
[54] Lewistown City Directories, 1918-1938; "Milestones in Nash Finch History," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 22 July 2013, accessed online at http://www.startribune.com/milestones-in-nash-finch-history/216459321/; SpartanNash, "Company History," Website accessed online at https://www.spartannash.com/about/profile/history/.
[55] "David F. Gamble," in *History of Minneapolis, Gateway to the Northwest*, Chicago & Minneapolis: The S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1923, V. III, 200-203; "Gamble-Robinson Company," in *Minnesota: Special Limited Edition*, Chicago & New York, The Lewis Publishing CO., 1915, 271-274; "Gamble-Robinson Commission Co." Advertisement, *Minneapolis Journal*, 12 September 1903.
[56] "Gamble-Robinson Company," 271 and 272.
[57] According to city directories, the Miles City branch opened in c. 1909, Billings in c. 1913 and Great Falls in c. 1914.

were two holdovers from the Lewistown Commission Co.: Guy C. Davidson (sales manager) and Carl C. Nisser (cashier). The new Lewistown branch was one of three to open during the spring of 1916, with the other two located in Sidney, Montana and Fargo, North Dakota. "Each of these new branches," explained the *Fergus County Democrat,* "is fully equipped for the proper handling of fruits, vegetables and produce, and are also all located so they have ample trackage."[58] In Lewistown, Gamble-Robinson utilized the warehouse built by their predecessor, the Lewistown Commercial Co., in 1912. Located near the original depot of the Montana Railroad, this warehouse proved sufficiently situated to serve the Gamble-Robinson-Lewistown Co. during its first few years.

Initially, the Gamble-Robinson-Lewistown Co. competed with nearly a dozen other grocery wholesalers in Lewistown. These rivals ranged from other large Midwestern firms (Nash-Finch Co. and Stone-Ordean-Wells Co.) to smaller, local enterprises (Power Mercantile Co., Lewistown Wholesale Co., William Lang, and the Fabian Bros). However, the competition thinned significantly as the homestead boom gave way to drought conditions and bank failures. By 1925, only five grocery wholesalers remained in Lewistown.[59] As large, regional firms, the Gamble-Robinson Co. and Nash-Finch Co. were better able to weather the economic storm than their smaller competitors. In fact, the Gamble-Robinson Co. managed to expand during the difficult years following World War I. By 1922, the company boasted forty associate houses and an impressive $2 million in capital stock. Some of their expansion occurred in Montana, with new houses opening in Glasgow, Glendive, Havre, Harlowton and Roundup.[60] Moreover, Gamble-Robinson continued to erect warehouses during the early 1920s. Built in 1912, their Lewistown warehouse could hardly be considered old, but its location left something to be desired—most notably a direct connection to the Great Northern tracks. During a visit to Lewistown in October of 1919, the company's president, David Gamble, decided it was time to rectify the situation. As reported by the *Great Falls Tribune*:

> David Gamble…who has been [in Lewistown] from Minneapolis for a few days, left for his home, today, after purchasing for the company a site opposite the Montana Flour Mills for the erection of a big wholesale house for his concern, which now has a building near the old Milwaukee Depot.[61]

It would be another three years before the Gamble-Robinson-Lewistown Co. erected their new warehouse, but at least they had secured a prime location. Situated between E. Main Street and the intersection of the Milwaukee Road and Great Northern railroads, the site provided access to all three of Lewistown's primary transportation arteries. It also gave Gamble-Robinson a highly visible presence on Main Street right beside their biggest rival, the Nash-Finch Co. When the Gamble-Robinson Co. finally started construction in the fall of 1922, it was welcome news for a region in the throes of drought and economic depression. According to one report, the 40' x 90' warehouse would be the single most expensive structure erected in Lewistown in all of 1922.[62] The Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse was a substantial addition to an already busy district at the east end of Main Street that included the Montana Flour Mill complex (formerly the Judith Basin Milling Co.), the Milwaukee Passenger Depot, and the Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co.). The final addition to the district came in c. 1930 with construction of a brick building for the retail grocer, Sawyer Stores Inc., to the east of the mill complex.

Today, little remains on the south side of this district. The Montana Flour Mill complex burned down in the late 1960s and the Milwaukee Road abandoned its "Pacific Extension" in 1980. The rails were removed and the passenger depot is now part of the sprawling Yogo Inn. It is only on the north side of the district that one senses the activity that once permeated the intersection of Main Street and Lewistown's two railroads. Here, the former warehouses of the Gamble-Robinson Co. and Nash Finch

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[58] "Deal Involves Local Concern," *Fergus County Democrat*, 18 May 1916 Page 5; Lewistown City Directory, 1918.
[59] Lewistown City Directories, 1918-1922.
[60] "Gamble-Robinson Company," Full Page Advertisement in *The Western Fruit Jobber*, v. 9, 1922, 61.
[61] "Commission House Buys Lewistown Warehouse Site," *Great Falls Tribune*, 7 October 1919, 4.
[62] "Plan New Structure," *Great Falls Tribune*, 28 October 1922.

Co. face each other across an abandoned railroad right-of-way—proud sentinels of a once mighty wholesaling empire that stretched across Central Montana.

Postscript: Wholesale, Retail and Community

The Gamble-Robinson Co. went through several mergers and consolidations during its time in Lewistown. A reorganization in 1928 consolidated the company's associate houses under one name: the Gamble-Robinson Co. At that time, the various branches were organized regionally, with the Montana-Wyoming Division headquartered in Billings. Two years later the Gamble-Robinson Co. was purchased by the General Fruit Corporation, which was organized the previous year through a merger between the Pacific Fruit and Produce Co. and the Ryan Fruit Co. This created the Pacific-Gamble-Robinson Co., which went on to become the nation's largest produce wholesaler. While the company continued to experience unprecedented profits following World War II, it also made moves to consolidate many of its smaller branches. The rise of the trucking industry and a trend toward modernization made older, rail-based wholesale centers like Lewistown increasingly obsolete. As a result, the Pacific-Gamble-Robinson Co. closed its Lewistown branch in 1951. In Central Montana, however, such corporate maneuvering probably went unnoticed. The company continued to go by Gamble-Robinson Co. until it left town; the long tenue of warehouse managers like Charles E. Spence provided a sense of continuity.[63]

The Gamble-Robinson Co. specialized in fruit, but they also supplied Central Montana with a wide variety of other products, such as vegetables, candies, tobaccos, cigars and "grocery specialties." As wholesalers, the Gamble-Robinson Co. rarely advertised directly to consumers, but they still cultivated a positive community presence. The company bought advertising space in the high school yearbook and in the holiday additions of local papers. This holiday advertisement from 1925 is particularly charming:

> The Gamble-Robinson Lewistown Company extends cordial greetings and best wishes to its customers and friends in Lewistown and Central Montana for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. During the past year we have been favored with the business of a great many of the responsible merchants of this section of Montana and we hope that the quality of our merchandise, the service and courtesy of our institution may merit a continuance of these pleasant relations during the years to come.[64]

Occasionally, the Gamble-Robinson Co. even teamed up with its rivals for a promotion. For instance, during the 1922 celebration of "Community Days," Lewistown's four leading grocery wholesalers took out a joint advertisement offering free railroad fair to any Central Montana merchant who bought at least $100 worth of merchandise.[65] The Gamble-Robinson Co. also served the community through special orders. This was especially important for the area's Croatian immigrants, who each summer ordered muscatel grapes for winemaking.[66] Such transactions revealed a more human side of the grocery wholesale trade. Wholesale businesses focused on economies of scale, but access to a particular variety of fruit or brand of cigar was often of great personal and cultural value to their eventual consumers.

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[63] Deed. Gamble-Robinson Lewistown Co. to James A. Ridgeway (Lewistown Tract No. 177), 28 July 1928; Deed. James A. Ridgeway to Gamble-Robinson Co. (Lewistown Tract No. 177), 31 July 1928; "Billings Picked as Meeting Site," *Billings Gazette*, 11 February 1928; "Vegetable Concerns Announce Merger," *Billings Gazette*, 9 June 1930; "Sets Highest Sales Volume," *Helena Independent Record*, 2 April 1953; "Annual Report Received Here," *Helena Independent Record*, 6 April 1954.

[64] "The Gamble-Robinson Lewistown Co." Holiday Advertisement, *Lewistown Democrat-News*, 20 December 1925; "Gamble-Robinson Lewistown Co." Advertisement, Fergus County High School Yearbook, 1925.

[65] "Lewistown Mercantile Company, Lewistown Wholesale Company, Lindsay Produce Company, Gamble-Robinson Lewistown Company," Community Days Advertisement, *Fergus County Argus*, 12 May 1922.

[66] Zellick, Anna. "Anna: A Memoir by Anna Zellick, Aril 21, 1917 – March 30, 2002," Manuscript edited by Florence Kettering, Lewistown, Montana, c. 2002, 37; Personal Interview, Shirley Barrick, 11 November 2016.

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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
_X_ Local government
____ University
_X__ Other
Name of repository: Lewistown Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 47.068629 Longitude: -109.421737
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[ ] NAD 1927 or [X] NAD 1983

1. Zone: 12	Easting: 619834	Northing: 5213999
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

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

The nominated property is bounded on the northeast by the Spring Creek "mill ditch." This channelized waterway runs immediately against the northeast elevation of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse. E. Main Street serves as the southeast boundary of the property. The southwest boundary is a line that runs 25' from and parallel to the southwest elevation of the building. The northwest boundary is a line that runs 5' from and parallel to the northwest elevation of the building.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was selected to include all of the property historically associated the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse during its period of historical significance (1922 to 1951). The building is situated on an irregularly shaped lot (Lewistown Tract #117) that does not necessarily reflect the history of property. As such, the boundaries are based on landscape features and a historically-based "buffer zone," and not on current property boundaries. The southeast boundary (Main Street) and northeast boundary (the Spring Creek "mill ditch") are straightforward. The southwest boundary was drawn 25' from the building to include space historically occupied a rail spur. In contrast, the closer northwest boundary was drawn to exclude the foundations of several (non-extant) grain bins that were associated with the building during its time as a ranch supply store and feed mill.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jessie Nunn / Independent Consultant
organization:
street & number: 600 Meadowlark Lane
city or town: Livingston state: Montana zip code: 59047
e-mail jessienunn@gmail.com
telephone: 406-208-8727
date: December 21, 2016

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.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: **Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse**
City or Vicinity: **Lewistown**
County: **Fergus** State: **Montana**

Photographer: **Jessie Nunn / Independent Consultant**
Date Photographed: **October 28, 2016**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

0001 of 0011. South "Main Street" Façade, facing: NW
0002 of 0011. West "Rail-Side" Façade, facing: N
0003 of 0011. East "Creekside" Elevation, South End, facing: SW
0004 of 0011. East "Creekside" Elevation, North End, facing: NW
0005 of 0011. North "Rear" Elevation, Detail of Elevated Truck Loading Dock, facing: SE
0006 of 0011. North "Rear" Elevation of Metal Addition, facing: SE
0007 of 0011. Interior, Office Area with Basement Stairs, facing: S
0008 of 0011. Interior, Detail of East Office, facing: SE
0009 of 0011. Interior, Main Floor Warehouse Space with Freight Elevator, facing: N
0010 of 0011. Interior, Wood Storage Crib in Basement, facing: S
0011 of 0011. Overview of Gamble Robinson Co. Warehouse and Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co), facing: W

Photo 0001. South “Main Street” Façade, facing: NW

Photo 0002. West “Rail-Side” Façade, facing: N

Photo 0003. East "Creekside" Elevation, South End, facing: SW

Photo 0004. East "Creekside" Elevation, North End, facing: NW

Photo 0005. North "Rear" Elevation, Detail of Elevated Truck Loading Dock, facing: SE

Photo 0006. North "Rear" Elevation of Metal Addition, facing: SE

Photo 0007. Interior, Office Area with Basement Stairs, facing: S

Photo 0008. Interior, Detail of East Office, facing: SE

Photo 0009. Interior, Main Floor Warehouse Space with Freight Elevator, facing: N

Photo 0010. Interior, Wood Storage Crib in Basement, facing: S

Photo 0011. Overview of Gamble Robinson Co. Warehouse and Lewistown Mercantile Company (Nash-Finch Co), facing: W

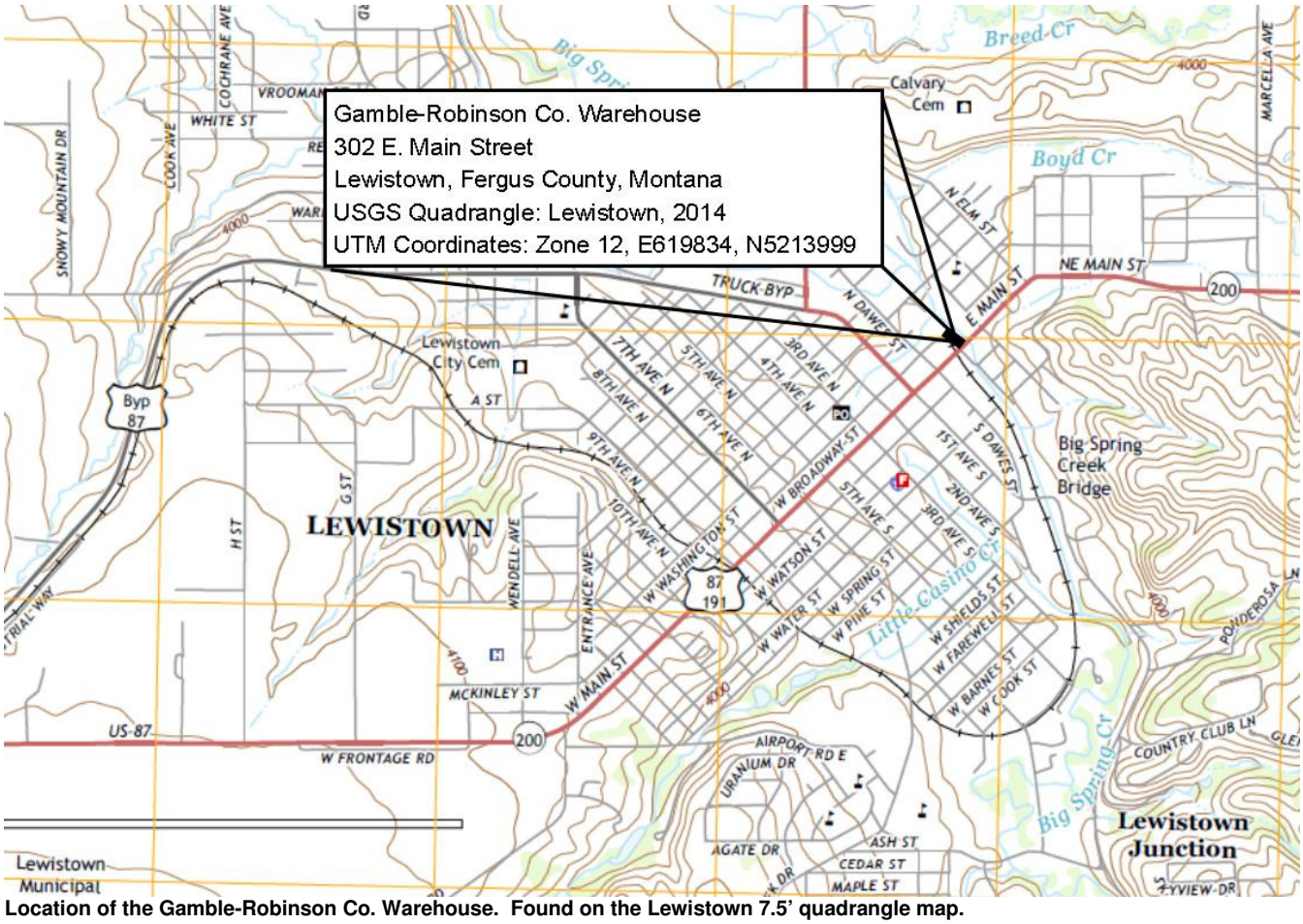
Historic Photographs

Intersection of E. Main Street and the Railroad Right-of-Ways, Looking West. High Street and the Great Northern branch to Grass Range (originally intended as the Montana Eastern line to North Dakota) is seen in the foreground. Miller Street and the Milwaukee Road's northern branch can be seen one block west. Sawyers and the Montana Flour Mill Co. are on the south (left) side of Main Street. The warehouses of the Gamble-Robinson Co. and Nash-Finch Co. are on the north (right) side of Main Street. (photo curtesy the Lewistown Public Library).

Appendix A: Communities Supporting at Least One General or Grocery Store, 1904 – 1918.
(Source: R. L. Polk & Co. Lewistown & Fergus County City Directories, 1904 – 1918).

	1904	1906	1908	1910	1912	1914	1918		1904	1906	1908	1910	1912	1914	1918
Absher					●		●	Hoosac						●	●
Acushnet							●	Hoyle							●
Aremells						●	●	Joslin							●
Arrow Creek							●	Judith Gap	●	●		●	●	●	●
Ashley							●	Kachia							●
Barber					●	●	●	Kendall	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Battrick							●	Kline					●	●	
Becket							●	Kolin							●
Belmont						●	●	Lavina	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Benchland				●	●	●	●	Lewistown	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Blakeslee							●	Lindstrom						●	●
Brooks						●	●	Little Crooked							●
Buffalo				●	●	●	●	Maiden	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Byford							●	Melstone				●	●	●	●
Carpenter Creek							●	Merino							●
Christensen							●	Moccasin					●	●	●
Christiana							●	Moore	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Coffee Creek						●	●	Musselshell					●	●	
Cushman					●	●	●	New Year		●					
Danvers						●	●	Novary							●
Deerfield					●	●		Parkingston						●	
Delphia							●	Philbrook				●			
Denton					●	●	●	Rockford	●						
Dory							●	Rothirmay						●	●
Dover						●	●	Roundup			●	●	●	●	●
Dovetail							●	Roy					●	●	●
Elso						●		Ryegate					●	●	●
Emory					●	●	●	Slayton							●
Fergus							●	Stanford	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Flat							●	Straw	●	●	●		●	●	●
Flatwillow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Suffolk							●
Forestgrove			●		●		●	Tiegen							●
Fort Musselshell						●		Tyler						●	●
Franklin					●		●	Utica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gage					●		●	Valentine						●	●
Garneill	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Waldheim							●
Gilt Edge	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Wallum							●
Glengarry					●	●	●	Weede							●
Grass Range	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Wilder				●	●	●	
Hanover							●	Windham					●	●	●
Harlowton			●	●	●	●	●	Winifred						●	●
Heath					●	●	●	Winnett						●	●
Hilger					●	●	●	Zuley							●
Hobson					●	●	●								

Maps



Location of the Gamble-Robinson Co. Warehouse. Found on the Lewistown 7.5' quadrangle map.

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.