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: ___Western Clay Manufacturing Company (Additional Documentation)___
Other names/site number: _24LC0789, Archie Bray Foundation, Kessler Brickworks__
Name of related multiple property listing**:**
_____N/A_____
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

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2. Location

Street & number: __2915 Country Club Road_____
City or town: __Helena_ State: __MT_____ County: _Lewis and Clark__
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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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:

_x_national **_x_statewide** **_x_local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_x_A **___B** **_x_C** **___D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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

This addendum to the Western Clay Manufacturing Company, listed May 9, 1985 (NR #85001052), serves to acknowledge the importance and contribution of the later history of the property, specifically, the period beginning in 1951 (though the starting date of 1890 listed in the original nomination remains the same). This amendment extends the end of the period of significance from 1957, the date listed in the original nomination, to 1967, the commonly-used 50-year cut off for nominated proprieties. In practical terms, the importance of the property extends beyond 1967 given its importance and role in the ceramic arts in the United States.

This amendment also raises the level of significance under Criterion A from local to national based on the importance of the property in terms of its contribution to the ceramic arts in the United States.

The amendment only address the portions of the form where changes occurred from the original listing in 1985 (resource counts, updated Summary Paragraph some updated resource descriptions in the Narrative Description of Section 7, updated Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph and Narrative Statement of Significance in Section 8, Major Bibliographical Reference in Section 9, author information for the amendment form in Section 11, and updated photographs. The boundary remains the same as the original nomination. Aerials are included, and updated latitudes and longitudes coordinates provided.

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	2	buildings
1		sites
	3	structures
		objects
1	5	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 30

7. Description

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 Western Clay Manufacturing Company had its origins as a late 19th century brick and tile factory established on the western outskirts of Helena, Montana. The plant was a complex of brick manufacturing buildings, downdraft beehive kilns, warehouses, and residential buildings accessed by a road and a rail spur that connected directly to the rear of the production plant.

This was a zone of industrial manufacturing located along Ten Mile Creek, a year-round supply of water, with several companies that served the growing capital city. In addition to the Western Clay brick plant, a steel foundry, gravel quarry and beer factory all tied into the rail spur. North of this zone was a large golf course, and beyond all, on the very western edge of Helena was Fort Harrison, a military installation.

The brickyard expanded in 1951, when a ceramic arts facility was founded on the property. Located within the northern portion of the Western Clay Manufacturing Company grounds, The Pottery, as it was originally known, is a one-story brick building located just south of the Western Clay office.

Today, the complex retains the majority of those resources described in the original National Register nomination although some have been removed and a few new buildings and structures associated with the Bray and its activities have been added to the property.[1]

Narrative Description

The Western Clay Manufacturing Company and Archie Bray Foundation occupies a 20-acre industrial site once dedicated to the production of brick, clay tile and pipe, and terra cotta, now a thriving ceramic center for resident artists. The property lies on the west edge of Helena, in the Helena Valley of Montana; the continental divide is 10 miles to the west.

The Western Clay Manufacturing Company was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, with the emphasis of the nomination focusing on the historic brick making of the property. At the time of the 1985 nomination, the brick and terra cotta production plant consisted of the Bray residence, the Western Clay office and brickyard, which included the production buildings and five beehive kilns, and the buildings that housed The Pottery, constructed in 1951, which evolved to become the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts.

[1] Fredric Quivik, *Western Clay Manufacturing Company National Register nomination* (listed May 9, 1985, NR #85001052), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena.

The brickyard complex is now one of the most complete late-19th-early 20th century brick manufacturing plants remaining in the United States. Research has revealed that in the mid-20th century, brick structural construction was increasingly replaced with concrete building methods, and at the same time downdraft kilns technology for brick manufacturing was eclipsed by continuous tunnel-kiln firing. This led most of the historic downdraft kilns used to manufacture clay products to be retired throughout the nation and then abandoned, which in the decades that followed resulted in most all brick plants of that era being demolished as the kilns became unstable and the sites gave way to redevelopment.

Because resources associated with the Western Clay Manufacturing Company were documented and listed as part of the original 1985 National Register nomination, those resources are not discussed further in Section 7, excepting cases of change, or removal, since the original nomination. Resources associated with the Archie Bray Foundation (regardless if they originally served as part of the larger Western Clay Manufacturing Company) are discussed below to provide the complete story of the Foundations' history.

Overview

Brickmaking in Helena began with Nickolas Kessler, a German brewer, who began in 1866 making brick near his brewery on the western edge of town. In 1885, Kessler expanded by acquiring a small brickworks from Charles Thurston on the location of what became Western Clay Manufacturing Company. Kessler recruited Charles Bray, an English brickmaker, to run the plant which grew in 1905 when Kessler merged with the Switzer brickworks, an 1890s operation that manufactured brick and terra cotta with clay mined east of Helena at Blossburg. With Switzer's equipment relocated to Kessler's brickyard in Helena, Western Clay began to produce a full range of brick, tile and clay pipe products, and grew to become the largest such facility in Montana, shipping throughout Montana and the Northwest.

Charles Bray bought out the other interests in the company in 1920, upgrading the plant by adding two new beehive kilns and enlarging and converting wood frame structures to brick. He also improved the drying process in the tunnels.[2] Following an English traditional kiln design, the kilns were encircled by wooden sheds and built in pairs, each sharing a tall stack that vented whichever of the kilns was in use at the time.

When Charles Bray died in 1931, his son Archie Jr. was elevated to president and general manager. Schooled in ceramics engineering at Ohio State University, Archie continued his father's legacy of updating the plant and increasing its production. Most notably, he converted the kilns from coal to natural gas, increased drying capacity, and installed the first de-airing machine for brick production west of the Mississippi River.[3]

In 1951, joining into a growing national interest in ceramic arts, Archie Bray, along with young artists Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio, and friends Branson Stevenson and Peter Meloy, gathered brick and hollow clay tile from Western Clay and built a one-story pottery on the brickyard grounds. Manufacture of pottery and ceramic studio work commenced, with the artists supplying labor in both the brickyard and the pottery, where Archie hoped to encourage production of functional ware to sustain the venture.

[2] Patty Dean and Sharon Reid, "From State-of-the-Art to Estate for the Arts: The Evolving Cultural Landscapes of the Western Clay Manufacturing Company and Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts," *IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology* 37, nos. 1 and 2 (2011): 138.
[3] Brett Sturm, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 7.

Archie died suddenly in 1953, throwing the brickyard and pottery to an uncertain future. His son Archie Bray, Jr. took over the business, and hoped to modernize the plant by adding a tunnel kiln in 1957 which was funded with a loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Sagging markets and technical problems with the kiln doomed Western Clay, and in 1966 the property went to auction to satisfy the SBA loan. Medicine Hat Brick and Tile Company (later I-XL Industries) purchased and then abandoned the plant, while the potters, under then-director David Shaner, managed to purchase the pottery buildings on the south end of the property.

Following the sale of the brickyard to Medicine Hat Brick and Tile in Alberta, the plant went dormant and never reopened. Meanwhile, the pottery forged on, with a series of talented directors who each oversaw a pool of resident artists during their tenure.

Finally, in 1984, Director Kurt Weiser and clay-business manager Chip Clawson led a fundraising effort and purchased the brickyard back, reuniting the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts with the brickyard from which it evolved.

Since the reunification of the property and its subsequent listing in the National Register, some changes have occurred, but the overall integrity of the complex remains very strong. The major change has been replacement of the brick manufacturing building in 2001 with a modern studio building for resident artists. In addition, a few secondary buildings have been removed including the boarding and cook houses for workers, a clay shed, and flower pot shed.

The Bray Buildings

As Archie envisioned it, the resident artist building was to be comprised of five rooms to house exhibits, a ceramics library, a main pottery room, a glazing room, and a kiln room.[4]

While Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio labored in his brickyard, Archie Bray, in conversation with Peter Meloy and Branson Stevenson, finalized his plans for "the first branch of the Archie Bray Foundation," which he called Pottery, Inc.:

> Somehow let's keep it all on the plane we dreamed – let's be practical too, let's keep it all in good fun, to roll along the whole idea built around – "A place to work for all who are seriously interested in any of the Ceramic Arts." To be high standards – to keep it nice – that it may always be a delight to turn to – to walk inside the Pottery and leave outside somewhere ... the cares of every day. Each time we walk in the door to walk into a place of art – of simple things not problems, good people, lovely people all tuned to the right spirit. That somewhere thru it all will permeate a beautiful spirit... carrying on and forwarding the intentions, the aims and the life of the Foundation.

According to the local paper, "Bray had dreamed and planned... for so long" that he needed no building plans for the pottery; "long before the structure was begun, he would explain [its floor plan] to friends by scratching it out on the ground with the heel of his shoe."

The pottery building, as it emerged from Archie's imaginings, was to be well-equipped, featuring five rooms covering 2,400 square feet. A museum space would house exhibits and a library of ceramics books. The main pottery room would "contain wheels, drying racks, areas for sculpturing and tables...for

[4] The following narrative is taken from A Beautiful Spirit, Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto. Essay published in A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence, 22.

handwork," while the kiln room would feature three gas kilns, including a salt kiln and a muffle kiln intended for porcelain and high-fire glazes. An electric kiln – cutting-edge technology for the time – would be used to test porcelains and Montana clays, and the glaze room came complete with a power-ventilated glaze booth.

And in fact, Archie's vision went further. He also had two more buildings in mind – a painting and printmaking studio and a performing arts space with theater seating for an audience of 300. These parts of the vision were never realized.

Upon completion of the pottery building, the local paper breathlessly proclaimed: "According to leading authorities, Pottery, Inc., is the only place of its kind, not only in the United States but in the world."[5] And while a large pottery studio was unique to Montana, it was not the only such facility in existence. The many letters and papers in the Bray archives do not shed light on Archie's specific influences for the design of the pottery but Rick Newby, in his essay with Chere Jiusto on the history of the Bray for the 50th anniversary, offers a likely source of information, if not inspiration for Bray's design of The Pottery:

> "Given Archie's interest in the resurgence of the crafts, his vision may well have emerged out of his reading of the works of William Morris" who had "championed a return to beautiful works skillfully crafted by hand, as antidotes to the shoddy workmanship and inferior products of the Industrial Age. Almost certainly, Archie had read Bernard Leach's influential work, A Potter's Book, was considered the potter's bible, and Archie's friend Branson Stevenson corresponded regularly with Leach. Leach's pottery at St. Ives, Cornwall, was considered a model for other studio potters, and it may well have served, at least in imagination, as Archie's ideal as he planned his own center."[6]

Contributing Resources

Contributing buildings created or repurposed to house the Archie Bray Foundation and ceramic activities include the primary buildings of the Pottery and the Kiln Annex, and the office, two galleries, buildings converted to studio space, the director's residence (formerly a chicken coop), and a large gazebo that sits in the gardens adjacent to the pottery. Building numbers presented below correspond to the numbers presented in the original NR nomination. Numbers 34 and higher represent features not included in the original nomination and are discussed in the *Noncontributing Resources* section below.

The Pottery (Building #6: 1951, one contributing building): The Pottery is the heart of the historic Archie Bray Foundation, built by Archie and the original foundation board, the founding ceramic artists, and members of the art community in nearby Helena and the surrounding area. It is small by 21st century standards, but was an important building in the mid-21st century. Built according to Archie Bray's conception of a pottery center, it featured 5 rooms.

The one-story building has a low pitched, cross gable roof and faces southeast. There is a primary entrance into the front gallery and a secondary entrance on this elevation that opens directly into the pottery studio behind the gallery. The walls on the southeast elevation are of common bond brick, fired to a toasty brown with green and orange hues. Terra cotta panels with images of kilns and pottery ornament this front elevation of the building, including the panel with Archie's famous saying "lots of brick to lay Branson, lots of brick." A cornerstone on the front wall of the pottery is inscribed 1951/1966.

[5] Helena Independent Record, October 7, 1951, as quoted by Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto, "A Beautiful Spirit."
[6] Ibid., 23.

Other walls are constructed of hollow clay tile and brick; the building stands on a concrete slab and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles and supported with steel trusses. Metal doors with upper glass windows provide access on the front, and into either end of the studio.

Stepping into the interior, the walls in the gallery are finished with common bond brick, some walls display natural finish, while others are painted white. There is a small fireplace at center across from the entrance, and a display space above storage cupboards lining the walls. A small room behind it functioned as a library and connector between the gallery and the studio. The studio is an open room separated from a glazing area by a wall with a large partition window. The exposed brick and tile walls in these rooms are all painted white, and have rectangular fiberboard ceiling panels lining the 8' ceilings. The room is lit with fluorescent ceiling lighting as well as large fixed pane windows on the southeast.

Kiln Annex (Building #5: 1952, one contributing building): Behind (west) the studio is the kiln annex. Constructed shortly after the pottery was completed, it was designed to hold two large downdraft, gas-fired kilns. Benefitting from the ceramics engineering knowledge of Archie Bray, Sr., the two kilns were the largest in the Northwest and gave the ability to fire with salt or high-fire temperatures, the only such kilns in the region.[7] On the interior, the space is open to the roof and steel trusses are exposed. A wooden stud partition wall finished with drywall panels separates the kiln room from two large studios. The kiln room and these work spaces are illuminated with glass block panels set high in the walls. The kiln room has double doors opening out to a patio on the south, the original opening has been framed in and smaller doors now fill this space.

Office (Building #2: date, one contributing building): The Western Clay Manufacturing Co. office is a small brick building that stands adjacent to the pottery and also faces southeast. This building features 1-over-1 sash windows and an entrance centered on the front is accessed with a short flight of steps. It is divided into three small rooms – a central office that one enters from the front, a small office on the south side and a meeting room to the rear. The interior has 8' ceilings finished with fiberboard panels and fluorescent lighting. During the 1980s – 1990s, the office served as a residence; since 1998 it has housed the offices of the Foundation.

Director Residence (Building #7: 1940s, one contributing building): The brick and tile building behind the Pottery and Kiln Annex was formerly a chicken coop, converted to a home for the resident director in 1951. It is a 1½ story building with an open plan kitchen living room on the main floor with a bedroom on one end; a shed roof addition over the north end was added to create a bedroom upstairs.

North Sales Gallery (Building #3: 1940s, one contributing building): The north gallery was created by joining a brick and tile storage warehouse and garage together, and linking it with an additional brick bay to a small brick storage building now used as the development office. The gallery is a large open warehouse space with wooden posts that support the roof structure covered by a shed roof. Large fixed window panels help illuminate the interior, which has a poured concrete slab floor and is painted white. On the west end, the building was joined with a brick garage which now provides storage for inventory for the gallery.

[7] Patricia Failing, "The Archie Bray Foundation: A Legacy Reframed" in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 47-48.

Archie Bray Foundation Gallery (Building #10: 1940s, one contributing building): The ABF Gallery is constructed within a hollow clay tile warehouse which stands on an elevated foundation and features a concrete loading dock that projects and spans the entire front of the building. The building has six garage door openings across the front; each opening is surrounded with brick. Two of the doorways have been retrofitted to create paired entrance doors into the gallery, with a flight of concrete steps leading to both. Glass block panels provide some illumination to the interior.

Building #11 (1890s, one contributing building): This was originally a scove kiln later converted to a kiln shed. In 1985, the gable roofed building was fully enclosed with four walls. During the 1990s, the north and east walls were opened and a shed-roofed addition placed on the east side to expand the space as it was converted to a kiln shed. It has a concrete slab floor, concrete block columns for support at the front, and steel structural framing. The remaining walls and roof are sided with corrugated metal. On the gable end, it is finished with board-and-batten.

Building #12 (1940s, one contributing building): Building 12 is a hollow clay tile warehouse and serving as the unheated Summer Studio for artists in residence. Like the other warehouses, the building stands on a concrete foundation and floor height is raised approximately 4 feet above ground. A concrete loading dock projects at the front (north), covered by the overhang at the front of the shed roof. Supported on wooden rafters, the roof is covered with asphalt.

Building #13 (1890s, one contributing building): Building 13, now labeled Building #3, is a historic 1890s scove kiln that was converted to storage by adding a pair of wooden doors on the front (north end), and a wooden, gable roof with board-and-batten in the ends. The brick walls of this structure are buttressed with brick on all sides. On the interior, it now has a concrete floor; the roof is covered with corrugated steel.

Site #35 (1898-1961, one contributing site): This site consists of a number of extremely large, striking in amount, brick piles located near the southern extent of the property. Literally thousands of refuse red and brown bricks and tile, discarded after bad firings over the years were dumped in this area. The piles have been preserved by the Archie Bray as an essential element of the historical landscape. In recent decades, sculptural works, such as Louis Katz' Brickyard Kiln in 1988, have been built from the bricks and perched on top and among the piles.

Resources removed since 1985

The following buildings were present when the property was listed in the National Register in 1985; they have since been removed: Buildings 8 (bunkhouse), 9 (flower pot storage shop), 24 and 25 (brick manufacturing plant), 28 (cookhouse), 29 (garage), 30 (log barn), and 31 (wood frame house). These resources were included as contributing buildings in the original nomination; however, despite their removal, their locations are still generally marked by either foundation remains or building remains; as such, they are now considered contributing sites.

Noncontributing Resources

David & Ann Shaner Resident Studio (Building #34: 2001, one noncontributing building): This large building, designed by Jeff Downhour of the Helena firm Mosaic Architecture, is steel-framed with brick veneer, and is laid out in an ell. The east wing serves as a long hallway that opens into artist studios on each side, and leads to a large state-of-the art kiln room on the west end. The north wing houses a large

meeting room, rest rooms, and kitchen for the artists and public programs. The building wraps around a large common area out front, used for public events.

Aruina (Structure, #36: 1988, one noncontributing structure): *Aruina* is a work by Robert Harrison that assembles black, white, and unglazed bricks in a spiraling pattern to create a series of Roman columns. The piece sits at the western edge of the property and frames a viewshed of the hills west of town.

Tile-X (Structure, #37: 1984, one noncontributing structure): *Tile-X* was the first of Robert Harrison's sculptures installed on the grounds of the Western Clay brickyard, just shortly after the facility returned to ownership by the Archie Bray Foundation. It is comprised of stacked sewer pipe in a pyramidal form on the axis of an X.

The Potters Shrine (Structure, # 38: 1985, one noncontributing structure): Most prominent is the Potters Shrine, constructed of various bricks, tile and pipe gathered in the buildings and from the reject piles of brick strewn across the grounds. Constructed in a circular layout, the shrine houses work by illustrious ceramic artists who have worked at the Bray through the years, including Akio Takamori, Kurt Weiser, Chris Staley, Sarah Jaeger, Beth Kennedy, Chou, Pang-ling, David Regan, Louis Katz, Linda Sikora, Michio Sugiyama, Josh DeWeese, and Ei (Sano) Yamamoto. And at center, placed at eye level, is the 1952 bust of Archie Bray sculpted by Rudy Autio.

Gazebo (Building #4: built 1890, moved 1985, one noncontributing building) A wooden gazebo sits south of the pottery, providing outdoor space during nice weather. Salvaged when the nearby Broadwater Hotel was demolished, it formerly functioned as a 3rd floor turret on that stylish Queen Anne-period hotel. It has a pyramidal roof with a crowning finial and round-arched openings. The sides are finished with wood shingles and there is a wooden floor on the interior.

Small-scale Resources

Since the Archie Bray Foundation re-acquired the brickyard in 1985, the historic brickyard has evolved through interaction of the artists who were drawn to fill it with ceramic work made through residency on site. These small-scale features are not included in resource counts. However, Nicholas Bonner's 1992 installation, Light Cistern, is worth mentioning as it memorializes the origination of the foundation. Made with small wooden pallets once used for drying hollow clay tile, Light Cistern occupies the space in the tile plant drying room where Voulkos and Autio first began making artwork in 1951.

Integrity

The Western Clay Manufacturing Company property, including the portion devoted to the Archie Bray Foundation, retains good integrity as the majority of the buildings discussed in the original nomination remain.

Materials, workmanship, and design remain strong, harkening to the original antecedents of the property. According to Frances Senska, who drove over from Bozeman to help out along with her partner Jessie Wilber, "so many amateurs laid bricks for those walls, it's a wonder they remain standing." And yet 66 years later, The Pottery still stands along with the various other buildings constructed for the foundation; over the passage of time, these primary buildings of the foundation and the earlier Western Clay Manufacturing Company have for the most part, changed very little. Upon entering the grounds of the property, the view remains much as it has for decades. The original Bray House, the Office, the Pottery

and the historic kilns and tile factory building occupy their original locations. A strong cohesion exists of all that was original to the factory and the pottery in the mid-20th century.

Integrity of location, setting, feeling, association remain strong. The surrounding area remains, for the most part, rural, continuing to evocate the isolated nature of the property. Reinforcing this unchanged character is the fact that the brickyard sat dormant over decades following its 1961 closure and sale to Medicine Hat Brick and Tile Company. In fact, the whole plant took on a haunted feeling as all the machinery, equipment, and various fired wares were left in place when the factory shut down.

Today, the condition of the facility is deteriorating but this abundance of belt-driven equipment, and full array of furnishings and production materials remain on site. According to study by the University of Pennsylvania's Heritage Conservation program, there are six other brickyards listed in the National Register. Their study concluded that the Western Clay Manufacturing site, with five of the original beehive and two older scove kilns still standing, and all the associated buildings and artifacts, is the best-preserved early 20th century ceramic manufacturing plant remaining in the U.S.[8] Indeed, given the enormity of the scale of what remains, the efforts to keep the entire site stabilized have been important. Over time, roof repairs and more current efforts to stabilize the kilns and kiln sheds have ensured that most of the essential portions of the factory are preserved.

While some new construction and the loss of some buildings has occurred, this to some degree reflects the evolution of the property from its historic use as a brick, tile and terra cotta manufacturing facility to its present use as one of the most-respected art campuses in the United States. The one significant loss on site was the brick production building and drying shed, when it was replaced in 1985 with the Shaner Resident Studio. While this loss was unfortunate, the new building was designed in a way responsive to the surroundings, and is set toward the rear of the property.

Construction of a new Education Building is planned. This will be placed along the driveway behind The Pottery, a relatively sensitive placement for a new facility.

[8] Brett Sturm, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 6.

8. Statement of Significance

Period of Significance
1890-1967

Significant Dates
1951

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 Western Clay Manufacturing Company, which had its origins as a brick, tile and terra cotta factory in the late 19th century, was listed in the National Register in May of 1985. Located within the Western Clay Manufacturing Company grounds, and lightly touched on in the original nomination, the Archie Bray Foundation gives immeasurable additional complexity to the story of this brickyard and lends the entire historic complex a level of significance under Criterion A that rises without question to the national level.

Beginning in 1951, the brickyard's history became richer and more significant when owner and manager Archie Bray, along with a circle of friends and artists, established a pottery on the grounds. With a mission to be "a place to make available for all who are seriously interested in any of the branches of the ceramic arts, a fine place to work," the Archie Bray Foundation became an incubator for young artists exploring clay as an artistic medium.[9] The property represents the birthplace of studio ceramics including residency of some of the giants in the world of American ceramics.[10] The founding artists Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos are now recognized as leading the vanguard of 20th abstract expressionist ceramicists, succeeded by a line of resident artist/directors each of whom are ranked among the top ceramic artists of our day. The influence of the Archie Bray Foundation grew across the decades as the institution provided space to more than 600 resident artists and hosted hundreds more in classes and workshops.

Now in its 66th year, the location commonly known as the Bray is widely regarded as an international incubator for artists working with clay to advance their work and expand their vision. This amendment to the original National Register listing for the Western Clay Manufacturing Company documents the outstanding influence that the Archie Bray Foundation has had in the national and international ceramics world.

[9] "About Us," Archie Bray Foundation, Dedicated to the Enrichment of the Ceramic Arts, last updated August 11, 2017, accessed August 11, 2017, http://archiebray.org/about_us/abf_about-us.html.
[10] Brett Strum, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 9.

The property continues to retain its significance under the previously determined Criterion C level based on the collection of resources that allows for the entire interpretation of brick making, from its beginning from the soil, to a complete product used for construction. As stated by Brett Strum, "The successive eras of heavy clay technology on display—from the scove and beehive kilns to the retrofitted gas lines and building additions—only deepen this narrative of one of the country's oldest industries."[11] The Western Clay Manufacturing Company represents one of six brickyards listed in the National Register and stands as the most complete of any of the six listed.[12]

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

The history of the Western Clay Manufacturing Company (hereinafter referred to as Western Clay) and its outstanding manufacturing history as the leading brick production site in Montana is documented in the 1985 nomination for the property. However, at the time of its National Register listing, the interest focused more on the industrial aspects of the property; the import of the later chapter of the property as an incubator in the mid-20th century American Ceramics movement was not detailed, primarily as it had not passed the threshold of the 50-year mark in its history.

In 2016, the Archie Bray Foundation celebrated the 65th anniversary of the founding of the pottery, and with each passing year the importance of this institution in the world of ceramic arts increases. Current efforts are underway to preserve the kilns and historic facilities at the brickyard, making it timely to reflect on the significance of the Bray by acknowledging its preeminent role in the history of 20th and 21st century ceramic arts.

It was an alignment of forces that gave rise to the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana in 1951 within the boundaries of the Western Clay Manufacturing Company.

Early history of the Archie Bray Foundation

Archie Bray was groomed by his father Charles, a British brick maker, to take over operation of the brick plant when his career ended. Archie Bray was educated in the Ohio State University ceramics engineering program and upon the death of Charles in 1931, Archie Bray stepped into a new role as the owner and manager of the plant, whereupon he updated many aspects of the manufacturing, and converted the coal-fired plant and kilns to natural gas.[13]

Though schooled in the technical manufacturing of ceramics, Archie Bray was at heart an art lover and patron. As owner of Western Clay, he annually dedicated considerable resources to sponsoring live performances in Helena of music, theatre and dance. Bray befriended a circle of friends who were equally creative and experimental, including Peter and Hank Meloy who, in the 1940s began to form pottery and small sculptural pieces from clay they dug up on their family ranch near Townsend, some 30 miles east of Helena, and then fire it in the blacksmith forge on the ranch.

[11] Brett Strum, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 9.
[12] Brett Strum, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 9.
[13] Brett Strum, *Heritage Conservation Praxis 2011-2013, Western Clay Mfg. Co., Helena, Montana* (Philadelphia: UPenn Praxis, 2013), 7; The early history of the Archie Bray Foundation is also well described by Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto, in "A Beautiful Spirit."

Although it was a homegrown operation, Hank Meloy was an accomplished artist whose career included study at the Chicago Art Institute and teaching at Columbia University. He was primarily a painter whose life in New York brought him into contact with the abstract expressionists including George Grosz and Willem deKooning, and whose work was immersed in the landscapes and horses of Montana interwoven with the stylized nudes and abstract color patterning of the 20th century urban movements.[14]

Peter and Hank Meloy established their friendship with Archie Bray through the 1940s, during which time they built a pottery studio with a small electric kiln in Peter's backyard in Helena and began experimenting with clay from the pits in Blossburg where the Brays mined fine-grained clay for their brickworks. Eventually Hank suggested firing one of his horses formed of this clay in a kiln at Western Clay, and it became the first of many clay pieces fired in the beehive kilns in years to come.[15]

Archie Bray, the Meloys, and Branson Stevenson, a close friend from Great Falls who shared the curiosity about clay and what could be made with native materials, began talking in earnest about the possibility of establishing a pottery on the grounds of Western Clay. In the late 1940s, Stevenson studied at the Great Falls College of Education (now the University of Great Falls) with artist Sister Trinitas, the first to set up a kiln in a university art program in Montana.[16]

Word of these experimental clay projects spread from Helena to Montana State College at Bozeman (now Montana State University) and in the spring of 1951, two young artists traveled to Helena to check this out. Both were Montana natives – Peter Voulkos from Bozeman and Rudy Autio from Anaconda. Their meeting with Archie Bray immediately gave rise to an arrangement whereby they worked for Archie in the brickyard by day, and created pots and ceramic sculpture in a corner of the tile drying shed by night.[17]

Soon, the artists were assisting with construction of a separate ceramic studio building and the long-held vision of a pottery took form. In the summer of 1951, Voulkos, Autio and fellow art-grad Kelly Wong hired on to build the pottery, along with Meloy, Stevenson and volunteers from the arts community.[18]

The pottery walls rose over the summer, inlaid with hand-made plaques depicting beehive kilns and one inscribed with Archie's signature phrase "lots of Brick to lay Branson, Lots of Brick."[19] In the fall, a roof was added and the papers were drawn up to establish "Pottery, Inc.," a not-for-profit corporation. In addition, the kiln annex was built that summer behind the pottery with a large well-designed gas down-draft kiln and 30' high stack, giving the artists the facilities to pursue far larger and higher-fired work.[20]

On October 20, 1951, The Pottery was formally dedicated with a gala dinner and presentations including a Bernard Leach pot and a plaque to Archie Bray, and a film on pottery making. Peter Voulkos "threw the first pot in the new building," launching the Bray on its odyssey as a center of ceramic art making and experimentation.[21]

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[14] Rudy and Lela Autio, in *Henry Meloy, Five Themes: 1945-1951*, exhibit catalog published by the Yellowstone Art Center, Billings, 1990.
[15] Peter Meloy Interview, June 19, 1977, with Martin Holt. Sadly, Hank Meloy died in 1951. Had he not, he surely would have taken an interest and perhaps some role in Archie Bray's fledgling pottery.
[16] Branson Stevenson interview, Aug 2, 1978, with Martin Holt.
[17] Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto, "A Beautiful Spirit: History of the Archie Bray Foundation," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 23.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Branson Stevenson, Aug 2, 1978, Interview with Martin Holt. Stevenson remembered one night, before the pottery walls were all laid up, Archie took tile clay and sgraffitoed this inscription that he often used to sign his letters to Branson.
[20] Peter Voulkos, Aug 7, 1978, Interview with Martin Holt; Newby and Jiusto, "A Beautiful Spirit," 24.
[21] Ibid.

Visit by Leach, Hamada, Yanagi

> "*They called this studio The Pottery, because back in that time, pottery is what really defined ceramic art as a whole. Unknowingly, though, they would really begin, with the studio and the foundation, the first artists-in-residence program dedicated to ceramic art in the United States... But what happened next, and who came next, really becomes perhaps the most crucial part of the story*."[22]

With The Pottery now a reality, Archie Bray and the artists began to form a vision for its future. This was not an easy time in the relationship, as Bray favored the tradition of a production pottery while the artists were following a path toward greater independence and artistic expression. This led to a number of tense conversations and much frustration on the part of Archie Bray, who gave the artists room and materials to experiment but also saw no harm in them supporting the pottery through sales of flower pots, ashtrays, dishware and strawberry planters. Still, he did allow for much freedom by the artists despite his conflicting views.[23]

In perhaps the most seminal event in the foundation's history, in 1952, Branson Stevenson, learned of an American tour by potters Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach, and philosopher Soetsu Yanagi, and convinced them to add Helena and the Archie Bray Foundation as a fourth and last stop on their tour to the United States.[24]

In the foreword to the history of the Archie Bray Foundation, published at the foundation's 50th anniversary, preeminent ceramic critic Garth Clark wrote of this famed visit by Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi, as a watershed moment in the birthing of the Bray as a ceramics center.

> Leach was then England's leading potter and an influential writer. Hamada was Japan's most important potter. The philosopher Yanagi founded the influential Mingei craft movement. They were visiting the Bray as part of a national tour organized by Alix MacKenzie. Photographs taken during that visit are among the most significant documentary icons of the post-World War II [ceramics] movement.[25]

Clark notes that "in ceramic terms" this constituted,

> the meeting of the old world and the new on the very eve of the changing of the guard. It can be argued that at this moment, the fuse of America's ceramic revolution first began its slow burn. Admittedly none of the players were aware of the import of their meeting at the time. Voulkos and Autio were, relatively speaking, promising youngsters. Leach and Hamada, on the other hand, were the most famous potters in the world...[26]

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[22] Steven Young Lee, "A Brief History of the Archie Bray Foundations for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana" (TED Helena, Feb 2017).

[23] Letters, Archie Bray to Branson Stevenson, 1951-52; Oral Interviews by Martin Holt with Peter Voulkos, Aug 7, 1978 and Rudy Autio, 1979.

[24] Garth Clark, "The Bray Incubator," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Patricia Failing, "The Archie Bray Foundation: A Legacy Reframed" in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto, "A Beautiful Spirit: History of the Archie Bray Foundation," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Branson Stevenson, Aug 2, 1978, interview with Martin Holt.

[25] Garth Clark, "The Bray Incubator," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

[26] Ibid.

Voulkos and Autio both had occasion years later to reflect on the influence of that visit. And as author Rick Newby observed, it was the immediacy of Hamada's relationship to the clay and the directness of his approach in working with clay that seemed to have the most lasting effect.

> For both Autio and Voulkos, it was the living example of Shoji Hamada that most affected and influenced them. As he had at Black Mountain—where he used the "clay and glazes available" with sureness and delight—Hamada proved wonderfully adaptable to local conditions in Helena. Frances Senska remembered that "they went out to do watercolors, and it was cold, and the water froze on the paper. And Hamada was so tickled [by the] effect of the watercolor freezing on the paper." As Rudy Autio watched Hamada at the wheel, he "saw that there was more to pottery making than just making pots and selling 'em in some kind of dime store. I saw ... the true connection with the work." After the workshop, Autio "tried to make Hamada pots for a while, and it didn't work all that well, but it did, in a way. And certainly, left some impact." Autio has said elsewhere, "Shoji Hamada, more than any other person, gave me an insight into what clay was about."
>
> But for Peter Voulkos, the example of Hamada was even more profound as well as more intimate. Because Hamada did not use a kick wheel—"he always used a Japanese wheel you'd turn by hand" —he asked Voulkos to kick the wheel for him. "I was right there," he remembers, "and had my head down with his, and he'd tell me to kick faster or slower, so I was just watching his hands.... How often do you get close to a living legend like he was?"[27]

And indeed, as art historian Patricia Failing wrote at the Bray's 50th Anniversary:

> The visit by the avatars of Japanist aesthetics has also nurtured a perception of the Bray in its early days as one of the main conduits of Asian aesthetics in the United States. 1952 included Alfred University, Black Mountain College, the Pueblo San Ildefonso in Santa Fe, the Choinard Institute in Los Angeles, and Frans and Marguerite Wildenhain's Pond Farm pottery in northern California.[28]

Reinforcing Clark's and Failing's perspectives is a famous 1953 letter from Leach to Archie Bray, in which he unequivocally stated his belief in the future of the Bray: "We felt that a start had been made [at the Bray] under Peter Voulkos that held greater promise than any other place we visited in America."[29]

Voulkos went on to Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles where he and a group of other artists blew apart the conventions of ceramic art in that era. Yet while Garth Clark pegs Otis as the place this clay movement flowered, he credits the Bray as the place where the movement took root. In discussing the Bray and its importance as an incubator for young ceramic talent and new directions in clay, Clark summarized this role eloquently:

> Revolutions simmer for a while before they boil over, and that initial process unquestionably took place in tranquil, bucolic Helena.[30]

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[27] Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto, "A Beautiful Spirit: History of the Archie Bray Foundation," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 29.
[28] Patricia Failing, "The Archie Bray Foundation: A Legacy Reframed" in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 42.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Garth Clark, "The Bray Incubator," in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

The Foundation after Archie

The future of the pottery and foundation looked promising as the year 1953 began. Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos were the first resident managers and although there were hints of future conflicts in the direction the artists were inclined to go, the artists' reputations were growing. Interest from the surrounding community was strong, with people interested to take classes, order pottery and buy work from the gallery. In fact, for just $10, people could purchase a lifetime membership to work in the pottery.[31]

However, things took a sad turn when Archie Bray was injured in a fall in the brickyard and following several weeks in the hospital, died. Memorials to him were heartfelt and the community realized it had lost a true patron and visionary in the art realm.

The Western Clay Manufacturing Company passed down to Archie's son, Archie Bray, Jr., a pilot who made a strong effort to take on the brickyard and to allow the pottery to continue. Meanwhile, the founding artists moved on—Voulkos in 1954 to Los Angeles, and Autio in 1957 to the University of Montana. Following their departure, Ken Ferguson was recruited following graduation from Alfred University to be the next resident director.

His timing could not have been more challenging, as the Western Clay brickyard that provided reliable support for the entire venture closed in 1961. The closure came in part as a result of a decision by Archie Bray, Jr. to update the facilities by adding a continually-fired tunnel kiln in a large warehouse in the southwest portion of the property, which he financed through obtaining a Small Business Administration loan. Unfortunately, the kiln proved to be the factor that sank the business as the first firings proved unsuccessful and the masonry market shifted rapidly toward cast concrete construction.

Through this rough time, Ferguson kept the pottery going through his throwing abilities and gained much national acclaim in a series of shows and exhibitions. As he remembered it, "My most positive achievement during those lean years was keeping the doors open."[32]

From 1961 to 1966 "the Bray Foundation lay in limbo." Ken Ferguson departed for Kansas City Art Institute and David Shaner, a colleague and fellow Alfred University graduate, took over as director. In 1966, the SBA foreclosed on the loan and the entire property was put up for auction. At the auction, the property ended up divided into three parcels – the brick and tile plant, purchased by Medicine Hat Brick and Tile in Alberta, Canada; the original Bray residence sold to a private party; and the pottery complex. With much community support, Shaner and the artists valiantly secured the funds needed to purchase and rescue the pottery.[33]

In the years that followed, Shaner expanded the horizons of the Bray, improving the finances through grants and other funds from such new entities as the National Endowment for the Arts. NEA grant funds enabled Shaner to broaden the residency program, and draw many of the most important emergent ceramic artists of the day. As well, workshops with ceramic heavy weights Warren MacKenzie and Daniel Rhodes added to the Bray's standing. Rhodes, during his visit, was reported to have said "that the Archie Bray Foundation makes more of a contribution to the field of pottery than any other institution he knows of."[34]

[31] Patricia Failing, "The Archie Bray Foundation: A Legacy Reframed" in *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence*, ed. Peter Held (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 48.
[32] Ken Ferguson, July 2, 1979, Interview with Martin Holt.
[33] Failing, 50-51.
[34] Failing, 52, quoting the Helena Independent Record.

Subsequent directors continued to attract ceramic talent, through their own reputations and the growing position of the Bray in the ceramic world. Kurt Weiser (a Ferguson protégé at Kansas City and Bray director from 1976–1988) particularly reached out to international, particularly Asian artists, including Kichizaemon Raku XV, the traditional Japanese Raku pottery master who came for a visiting workhop.[35]

Weiser and clay business manager Chip Clawson also led negotiations and fundraising to bring the brickyard back under the ownership of the ABF in 1984, providing space for new studios and the clay business that stabilized the Bray's business model. This also gave an enormous palette to residents like Robert Harrison and others who saw the brickyard as a wide open setting for site-specific installations.[36]

Director Josh DeWeese (1992–2006) built on all of this history as he took the Bray into the 21st century. During his tenure, the Bray galleries began to successfully market outside of the local and statewide network. DeWeese and his wife Rosalie Wynkoop gained wide recognition for their ceramic work, and with the board completed a capital campaign to build an impressive new resident artists' studio named for David and Ann Shaner. Most recently, current director Stephen Young Lee has continued to improve the facilities by installing state-of-the-art kilns in the resident studio and conduct a new campaign for a new education building to house the growing numbers of artists and youngsters from the surrounding community enrolled in classes and workshops.

Artist Richard Notkin, a former resident drawn back to in Helena to be close to the Bray summed up the feelings of many in the Bray orbit, who grew into their own as artists during their time at the Bray, that "the Bray will always be – a sanctuary for promise."[37]

Emergence of Art Ceramics in America

The history of the Bray fits within a context of the evolving nature of pottery production in the United States, growing out of the Arts & Crafts movement in England inspired by designer William Morris and the writings of social critic John Ruskin, and tracing an early 20th century lineage as craft schools were founded first in England and then in the United States that reinforced the artistry inherent in craft of all kinds.

Beginning in the 1860s, Morris' designs and then Ruskin's writings challenged the rise of industrialized society and celebrated the aesthetic of wares made at the hand of the artist. Morris and others were also socialists whose views on the topic were infused with utopian ideals of the role of the artist in uplifting society. These perspectives inspired the English Arts & Crafts movement, that by the beginning of the 20th century spread to other countries and given rise to masterful architecture and material culture that reflected a human element in its execution.

In Japan, this movement inspired the writings of philosopher, Soetsu Yanagi, who established the Mingei Movement, translated as *Art of the People*, in the late 1920s and 1930s. Yanagi celebrated beauty in the everyday, and valued art that was honest in its hand-crafted nature, functional and accessible to the average citizen. Meanwhile, in 1940s, Bernard Leach published a book that became a bible for all who worked in clay. The Potter's Book was instructive and a treatise on how to make functional ware that carried a quiet beauty into the lives of those who made and used it.[38]

[35] Failing, 55-56.
[36] See Dean and Reid, From State of the Arts to Estate for the Arts, for an indepth discussion of the sculptural landscape that evolved in the brickyard post-1984.
[37] Failing, 58-59.
[38] Yanagi Soetesu, entry in Wikipedia; Yanagi, Soetsu. *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty*. Tokyo, New York: Kodansha International, 1989; Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book* (London: Faber & Faber, 1940).

Thus, in Europe, Japan and America, the clay arts remained primarily vessel oriented, with an emphasis on the production of functional pottery. While rooted in the decorative arts, ceramics began to emerge as a field of serious artistic expression through a series of events, beginning in the late 1800s with the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia. A women's art group in Cincinnati made a showing of china painting, and while elegant Japanese and French ceramic wares garnered the most interest, the event gave inspiration to formation of the Cincinnati Pottery Club and in 1880, founding of Rookwood Pottery, which formed a close relationship with the Cincinnati School of Art and Design.[39]

China painting took hold as an expressive medium and during the 1890s several other potteries were opened which also embraced this decorative style. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago saw the return of the women of the Cincinnati Pottery Club, along with artist-potters from France and Holland who were taken with traditional Japanese and Chinese ware. The Newcomb Pottery of New Orleans, and the Lonhuda of Steubenville, Ohio took their place in the Arts and Crafts period, as did the Brockman and the William Grueby Pottery, which embraced matt finishes and more direct decorative work.[40]

In the south, the stand-out artist-potter was George E. Ohr, the "mad potter of Biloxi," whose radical vision and fluid approach to clay made him a maverick whose work remains timeless a century later. He may well have been the first American studio potter to radically break out of production mode and form expressive, artistic pieces.[41]

By the turn of the 20th century, American ceramics were being taken seriously at European shows and new aesthetics emerged with the influence of Artus Van Briggle and Louis Comfort Tiffany, who realized the potential for beauty inherent in the vessel, far more than in the decoration added to it.[42]

This naturalistic approach resonated with such artists as Charles F. Binns, who directed the NY School of Clayworking and Ceramics at Alfred, from its opening in 1900. In the Mid-West the Cranbrook Acadamy of Art followed in 1904 in Michigan, while the School of Ceramic Art opened in St. Louis in 1910. Further west, one of the first organized programs was the Oregon College of Art & Craft founded in 1907 in Portland, and the Arequipa Pottery in Marin County in 1911.[43]

Elsewhere, decorative tile took on more originality, with Henry Mercer's 1898 Moravian Pottery and Tileworks near Philadelphia, the Pewabic Pottery studio in Detroit in 1903, a leader and outlet for both pots and tile work, and the Batchelder Tileworks founded in 1909 in Pasadena, California among the most prominent.

During the 1920s, American artists began to explore the potential of figurative sculptural ceramics and such figures as Elie Nadelman and Isamu Noguchi were drawn to experiment with clay as a medium in the early modern era.[44]

Through this early 20th century period, the influences of European and Asian artists dominated as various artists embraced Arts and Crafts philosophies and ceramics continued to descend from craft taproots in those parts of the world. Many of the prominent artists of this era came directly to this country as accomplished artists: Rookwood's leading designer, Shirayamadani from Japan; Charles Binns and Sam

[39] Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present.* (New York: Cross River Press, 1987), 13-20.
[40] Ibid., 25-27.
[41] Ibid., 30-31.
[42] Ibid.
[43] D.K. Row, "The little craft school that discovered it could," *The Oregonian*, Sept. 21, 2007; Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present.* (New York: Cross River Press, 1987), 56.
[44] Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present.* (New York: Cross River Press, 1987), 73-74.

Haile from Britain; and American Henry Mercer, whose Moravian Tile directly copied many motifs from medieval English carving.[45]

By the 1940s, immigrant ceramicists brought Bauhaus teachings directly to American shores. Most influential were Franz and Marguerite Wildenhain and Maija Grotell who established potteries and teaching careers that carried the Bauhaus ideals to eager American artists.

This all set in motion an evolution from production ware to broaden into the realm of art ceramics. The seeds for this genesis took hold as potters expanded boundaries of their medium and more people came into the field through newly founded college programs, and in classes offered at art schools and local museums, as well as rather than through the traditional manner of apprenticeship to a master craftsman.[46]

This interest in turn led to college-level courses of study and as veterans returned from WWII they took advantage of the opportunity to study under the GI Bill, and for some, the fledgling classes in ceramics held much appeal. By the turn of the 21st century, there were over 180 degree-granting institutions offering courses in the craft arts in 47 states. The momentum continued as the American Craft Council formed, craft competitions were held and new publications that celebrated the hand of the artist in craft production all became important in the cultural milieu of the art world.[47]

As interest in the field of craft grew, the art schools and college programs became the breeding ground for new artists. In the 1930s interest in, and evolution of, craft in the nation was reflected in the WPA Index of American Design, an inventory of 200 years of craft represented by more than 1600 works. The first Ceramic National Exhibition in the United States took place in 1932, at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York, which launched its ceramics collection in 1916 with a major purchase of porcelain work by Adelaide Alsop Robineau. With each passing Ceramic National Exhibition, a body of work was seen that was gradually and more authentically a true American style.

A number of non-traditional programs were founded and began to offer workshops that gave artists the opportunity to learn from a range of established artists and teachers, a trend that took hold nationwide by the end of the 20th century. These included the Penland School (1929) and Black Mountain College (1933) in North Carolina, and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee (1945), Southwest Craft Center in San Antonio (1965), Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Colorado (1966), and others.[48]

Yet, none of these programs was quite like the Archie Bray Foundation. Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, for example, a craft facility contemporaneous to the Bray was founded in Maine in 1950, offering "intensive studio-based workshops in a variety of craft media including clay, glass, metals, paper, blacksmithing, weaving, and woodworking." The concept for Haystack, like the aforementioned craft programs, was as a craft school offering courses and workshops in a range of mediums, all set within a

[45] Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present.* (New York: Cross River Press, 1987), 42-43, 92-95.
[46] Lynn, Martha Drexler, *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 65.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "A Brief History," Black Mountain College, Museum + Arts Center, accessed August 9, 2017, http://www.blackmountaincollege.org/history/ ; "History," Penland School of Crafts, accessed August 5, 2017 http://penland.org/about/history.html ; "Arrowmont History," Arrowmont, School of Arts and Crafts, accessed August 8, 2017, http://www.arrowmont.org/about/history/ ; "Our History," Anderson Ranch Arts Center, accessed August 5, 2017, https://www.andersonranch.org/who-we-are/our-history/

quiet campus on the Maine seacoast.[49] By contrast the Archie Bray Foundation focused purely on ceramics and allowed artists to freely work as they chose.

Associations with Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio

Significance of the Archie Bray Foundation also rests in its association with two of the most respected ceramic artists of the 20th century, Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio, the founding artists of the Archie Bray.

Peter Voulkos took the ceramics world by storm in the early 1950s, with his physical mastery of clay and the production of large, expressive works on the wheel. During his tenure at The Pottery, he made large scale vessels influenced by Greek, Japanese and European traditions. The 1952 experience with Shoji Hamada in particular left its mark, as Voulkos began to work more intimately and directly with the clay itself. The seeds were planted in the independence and experimental freedom afforded during the years in Helena, and after a residency at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where artists were breaking all boundaries, he returned to Montana and then went on to California. The work that emerged from this formative time, was made by "slashing and tearing at the clay and ushering in an era of abstract expressionism in ceramics... [which] would really change the landscape of contemporary ceramics in the United States forever."[50]

At the time of Voulkos death in 2002, art critic for the New York Times Roberta Smith wrote:

> Few artists have changed a medium as markedly or as single-handedly as Mr. Voulkos, a large, muscular man with a charismatic personality and a voracious appetite for work, learning and experimentation. He emerged in the early 1950's, at a time when ceramics was searching out its roots in different craft traditions, especially Japanese, and when American painting and sculpture were expanding in all directions.
>
> He made the most of both situations. Firmly grounded as a craftsman, Mr. Voulkos went on to reinvent ceramics as a meeting ground for painting and sculpture; he became, in essence, an Abstract Expressionist ceramist.[51]

Rudy Autio, the partner to Voulkos in this vision, over his career became known as the "Matisse of Ceramics," a moniker he accepted as appropriate given the common interest in color, nude women and horses. Art critic Garth Clark recognized Rudy Autio's role in shaping the direction of American ceramics, and suggests that though quieter, his influence cannot be overlooked. "Although general acclaim has been slow in developing, Autio does enjoy the unqualified respect of his peers as one of the major forces and talents in defining an American aesthetic for the vessel."[52]

Always a man of great humility whose considerable talent did not keep him from staying grounded, Rudy "provided inspiration for all whom he encountered through hundreds of classrooms, workshops, lectures and world travels. He leaves behind a vast and cohesive body of work that has become a hallmark in

[49] Christi A. Mitchell, *Haystack Mountain School of Crafts* National Register nomination (listed December 23, 2005, NR# 05001469), Accessed August 5, 2107, https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=1a4e1e7b-72b1-46e4-bbeb-fc469b28d2a1. Interestingly, for Haystack, the most significant value described in its listing is the physical campus itself, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes in the late 1950s. Barnes' design is considered a masterwork of Modern Architecture, with 34 buildings that contribute to this historic district.

[50] Steven Young Lee, "A Brief History of the Archie Bray Foundations for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana" (TED Helena, Feb 2017).

[51] Roberta Smith, "Peter Voulkos, 78, A Master of Expressive Ceramics, Dies" *New York Times,* February 21, 2002.

[52] Garth Clark, *American Potters: The Work of Twenty Modern Masters* (New York: Watson Guptil Publications, 1981).

world ceramics." In the last interview during his lifetime, Rudy spoke with museum director Peter Held, and provided insight into his career. "Let's say I've always considered myself an artist with a special knowledge of ceramics."[53]

It was truly the combined result of both artists living, working and creating together at The Pottery founded by Archie Bray that gave contemporary ceramics the impulse that took it into the modern world. "Together, the two of them would really help to cross this divide between traditional craft and contemporary fine art."[54]

The Bray as Incubator

"The Bray's special role has long been to develop nascent ceramic talent." – Garth Clark[55]

The Archie Bray Foundation, perhaps by virtue of losing its patron so early on, remained a remote retreat for artists in residence. In fact, its residency program is noteworthy as it was the very first ceramics residency program in the United States and over time, this mission to provide resident ceramics artists an intensive setting in which to develop their artistic vision and technical abilities now sets it apart nationally and internationally, as it did in the past.[56]

With the imprint of Bauhaus teachings that inspired some of the early directors, it became a haven for self-directed artists to explore the medium of clay with no curriculum or requirements placed upon them.

It was this quality of space for self-directed artists to flourish and grow that most defines the Bray. Patricia Failing described "the Bray's evolution from small-town pottery to a center for ceramic art with an international constituency," and offered a nice comparison to other national prominent programs:

> The Bray was never an art school: there were no entrance requirements or required classes. It was not an organization established to nourish and preserve a local craft tradition, as were Penland School in North Carolina or Haystack Mountain in Maine. It was not a potters' guild like those established by Harvey Littleton in Ann Arbor, Michigan or Toledo, Ohio which were primarily professional cooperatives. Nor was it a retreat for established artists like New Hampshire's MacDowell Colony or California's Huntington Hartford Foundation. The Bray lefts its historical mark most of all because it turned out to be an institutional anomaly, a unique space between all the other places for both emerging and well-known artists.[57]

This differs from other institutions with a similar interest in cultivating crafts and ceramic arts. As Ken Ferguson, who left the Bray to be the longtime director of the ceramics department at Kansas City Art Institute noted of the Bray: "It's not a teaching institution. It's not like an undergraduate, and it's not really like a graduate school... there's really not any teaching being done as such. There're no projects,

[53] Peter Held, "Montana Connections: Rudy Autio,"accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.google.com/search?q=Peter+Held,+Montana+Connections+Autio.&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi0_uDN-tHVAhUhsFQKHbSICoEQBQgIKAA&biw=917&bih=875
[54] Steven Young Lee, "A Brief History of the Archie Bray Foundations for the Ceramic Arts in Helena, Montana" (TED Helena, Feb 2017).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Steven Young Lee, "Incubator: Revisited: Sixty Years at the Archie Bray Foundation," SOFA Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design, accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.sofaexpo.com/chicago/essays/2010/incubator-revisited-sixty-years-at-the-archie-bray-foundation.
[57] Failing, 48-49.

no grades, no pressures with that. But there is sort of a professional competence that goes on that people try to rise up to."[58]

The current resident director Steven Young Lee recently captured the essential qualities that have set the Archie Bray apart from other ceramic centers. "Since its inception, the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts has represented a unique opportunity for artists to work in an environment unlike any other in the United States. The freedom to explore new ideas in ceramics has been central to the Bray experience and maintaining a breadth and variety of resources available to residents is an integral part of that freedom."[59]

This is a quality of experience that has been with the Bray since it started, and in the words of the first resident director, Rudy Autio, it is a quality that is cherished by all who have had the good fortune to work in residence at the Archie Bray Foundation: "The Bray years were the most valuable developing years in my career. All of the experiences were relevant, vital. There wasn't anything impossible in ceramics after you had been at the Bray." [60]

Over the years, the Bray took on the role of incubator for resident artists in the early stages of their careers, many of them fresh from graduate school at Alfred, Kansas City Art Institute under Ken Ferguson or University of Montana where Rudy Autio taught from 1957 to 1984. Former resident artist Richard Notkin called the Bray network wide and deep, "a kind of ceramics trade route." Other ceramic resident programs have followed in the U.S., but Archie Bray was the first and established a renowned reputation across the world.

The list of Archie Bray directors is a roster that includes many illustrious artists who shaped the field of the clay arts. Today, many of the founding artists and past directors of the Archie Bray Foundation are represented in the Smithsonian Institute's Renwick Gallery of American Craft, and in many other national and international museum collections, underscoring the outstanding quality and influence of these artists in the emergence of expressionist ceramics. They are:

Rudy Autio, 1951–1957

Peter Voulkos, 1951–1954

Lillian Boschen, 1951–1952
Gene Bunker, 1957–1958

Ken Ferguson, 1958–1964

David Shaner, 1964–1970

Dave Cornell, 1970–1976

Kurt Weiser, 1976–1988

Carol Roorbach, 1989–1992

Josh DeWeese, 1992–2006

Steven Young Lee 2006-present[61]

[58]Ken Ferguson, July 2, 1979, Interview with Martin Holt.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Rudy Autio, Resident Director, 1951–56 – as quoted by Steve Lee, Director ABF in – "Incubator: Revisited: Sixty Years at the Archie Bray Foundation."
[61] "About Us," Archie Bray Foundation, Dedicated to the Enrichment of the Ceramic Arts, last updated August 11, 2017, accessed August 11, 2017, http://archiebray.org/about_us/abf_about-us.html .

Since 1951, there have been 675 resident artists from 46 states and 20 countries around the world. Hundreds more have stopped through to lead workshops or to take classes. Current director Steven Young Lee puts this in perspective: "The artists who come to the Bray are the future change makers of our field. They go on to exhibit their work worldwide and many of them become educators in colleges and universities throughout the country."[62]

In addition to the directors, prominent artists who have worked at the Bray over time include Tre Arenz, Victor Babu, Val Cushing, John and Andrea Gill, Wayne Higby, Clary Illian, Sarah Jaeger, Jun Kaneko, Eva Kwong, Kirk Mangus, Jim and Nan McKinnell, Ron Meyers, Richard Notkin, Robert Sperry, Chris Staley, Akio Takamori, Patty Warashina and Arnie Zimmerman.

And the legacy of the Bray also extends to the surrounding community as some 60 of those artists have remained or returned to Helena, and other communities in Montana. This was estimated in a 2013 impact study to have a 2.1 to 4.8 million dollar impact on the state's economy. The Archie Bray Foundation has also engendered other offshoots in Montana– Red Lodge Clay Center, Missoula Clay Studio, as well as inspired international clay programs – Medalta in Alberta Canada.

> "*It cannot be overlooked that this revolution in clay came at a time and place where the opportunity and environment first allowed for innovation to take place. The Bray, at its brick-lined core, became the battlefield where freedom from tradition was fought*."[63]

[62] Ibid.

[63] Steven Young Lee, "Incubator: Revisited: Sixty Years at the Archie Bray Foundation," SOFA Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design, accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.sofaexpo.com/chicago/essays/2010/incubator-revisited-sixty-years-at-the-archie-bray-foundation.

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10. Geographical Data

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

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B. Latitude: 46.616098	Longitude: -112.081693
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J. Latitude: 46.612231	Longitude: -112.083298
K. Latitude: 46.612428	Longitude: -112.083241
L. Latitude: 46.612518	Longitude: -112.083796

11. Form Prepared By

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city or town:___Helena_____ state: __MT_____ zip code:___59601__
e-mail_____chere@preservemontana.org___
telephone:___(406) 457-2822_____
date:_____

Photo Log

All Contemporary Photographs:

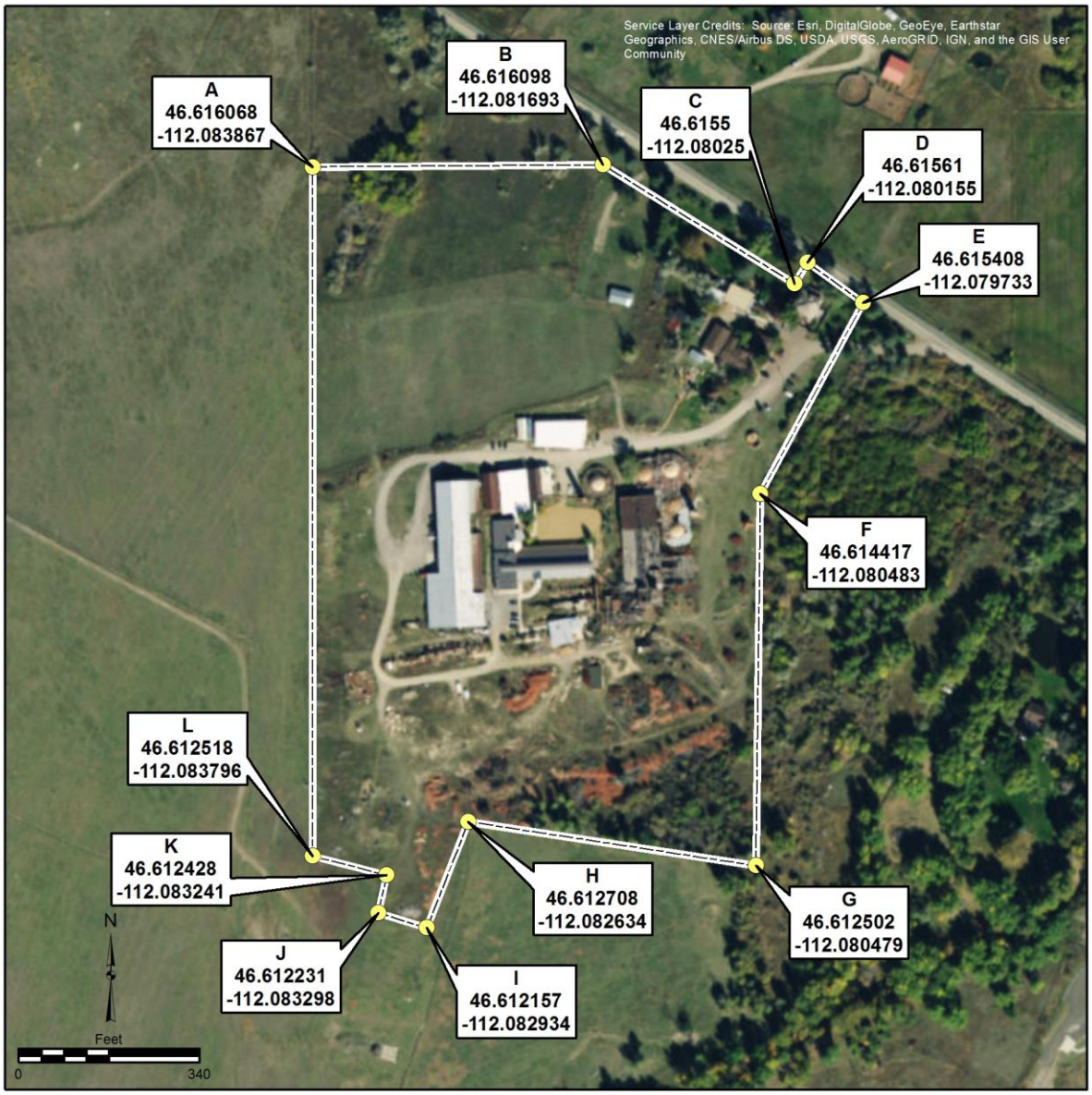
Name of Property: Archie Bray Foundation
City or Vicinity: Helena
County: Lewis & Clark County State: Montana
Photographer: Chere Jiusto
Date Photographed: August 9, 2017

See Continuation pages below

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.

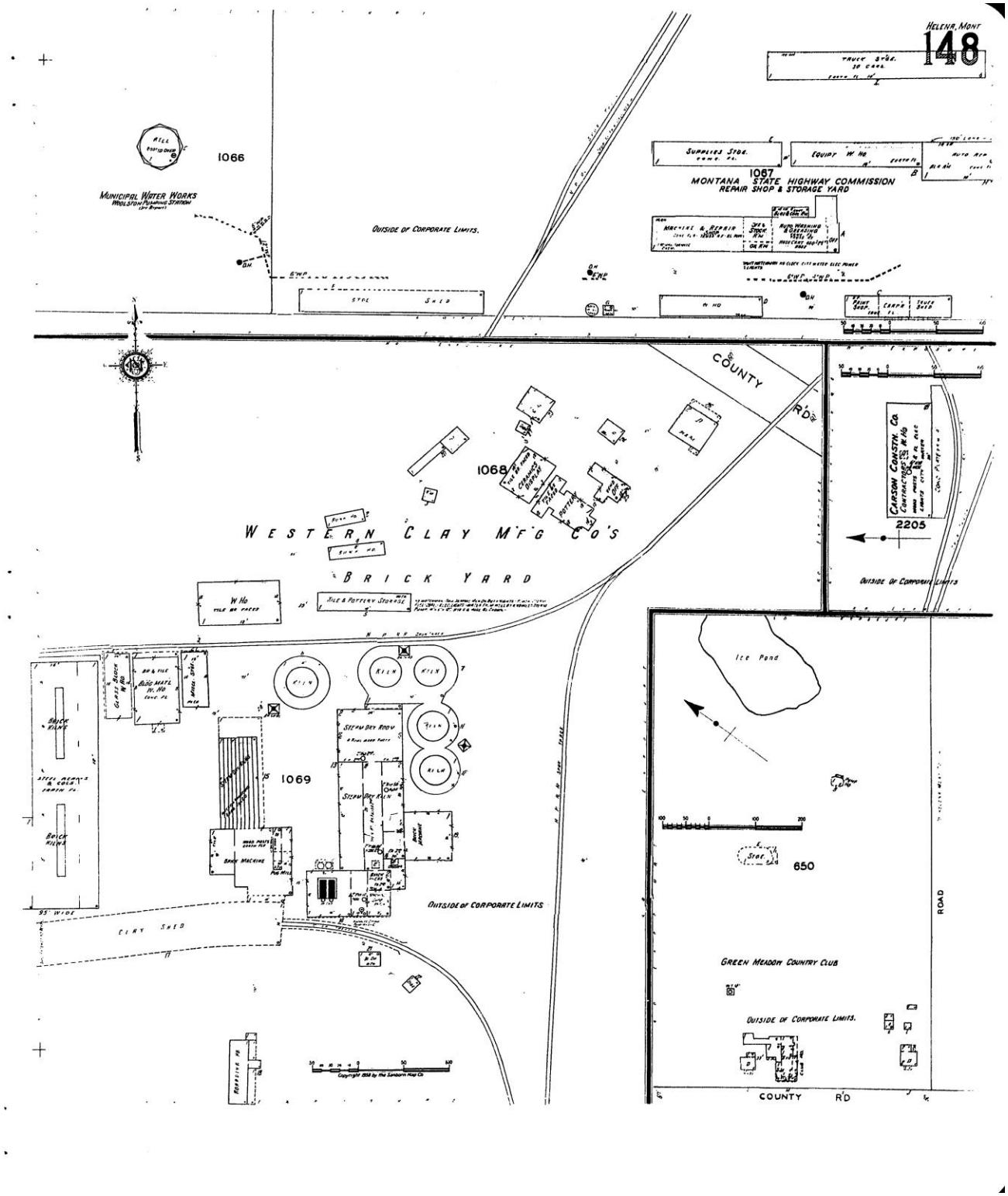
Additional Documentation: Maps

Topographic Map showing Western Clay Manufacturing Company boundary. Found on the Helena, MT (1985) 7.5' topographic map.



Aerial photograph showing Western Clay Manufacturing Company boundary and revised Latitudes and Longitudes.

Map showing resources of the Western Clay Manufacturing Company (additional documentation)



1930-1958 Sanborn Map showing Western Clay Manufacturing Company, Map 148.

Additional Documentation: Historic Photographs

Aerial View of Western Clay Manufacturing, with The Pottery, Inc at center, bottom. Photo by Archie Bray, Jr. 1956, courtesy of ABF Archives.

Archie Bray Brickyard, 1984

National Register Photographs

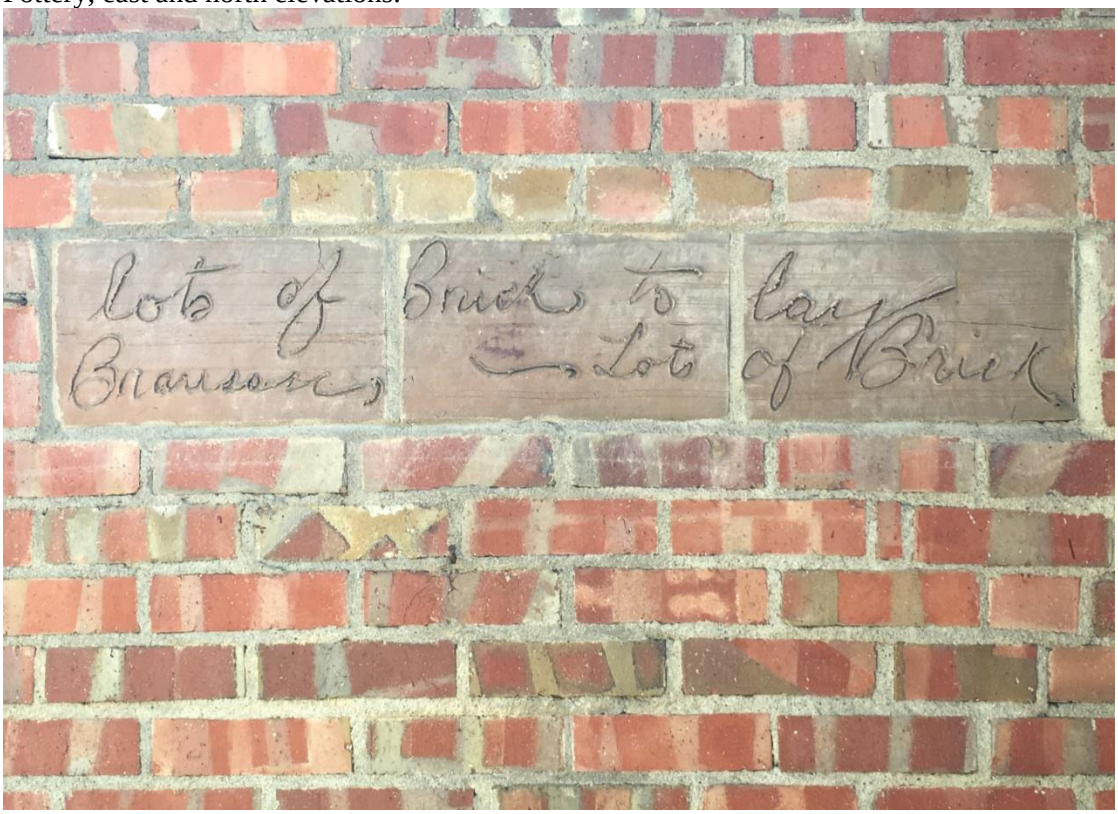
All Contemporary Photographs :

Name of Property: Archie Bray Foundation
City or Vicinity: Helena
County: Lewis & Clark County State: Montana
Photographer: Chere Jiusto
Date Photographed: August 9, 2017

MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0001, The Pottery, from the east.

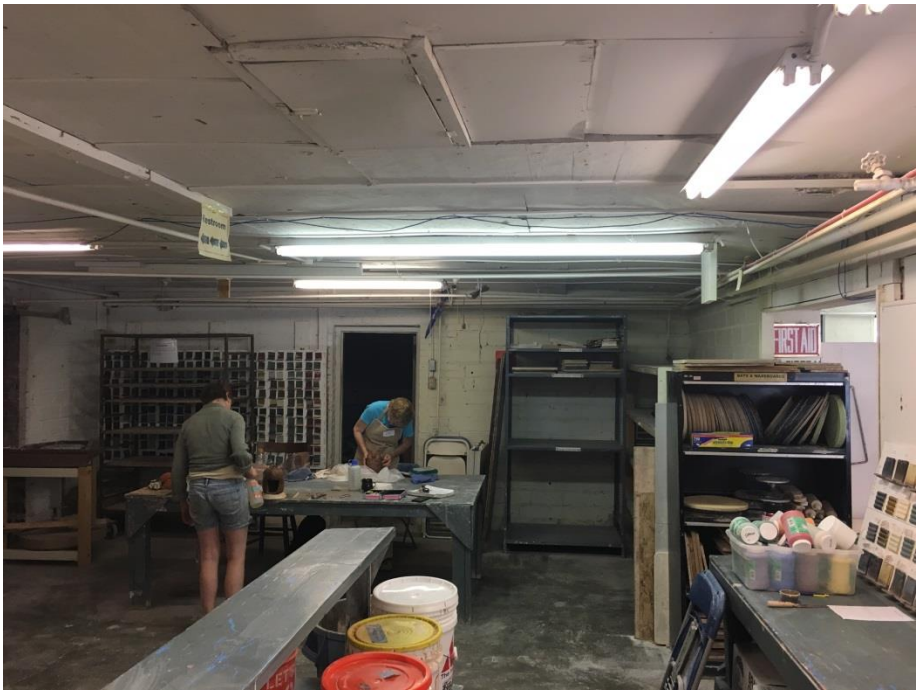
Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0002, The Pottery as seen from the south.
Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0003, The Pottery as seen from the west.

MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0004, Signature plaque in the walls of the Pottery, east and north elevations.

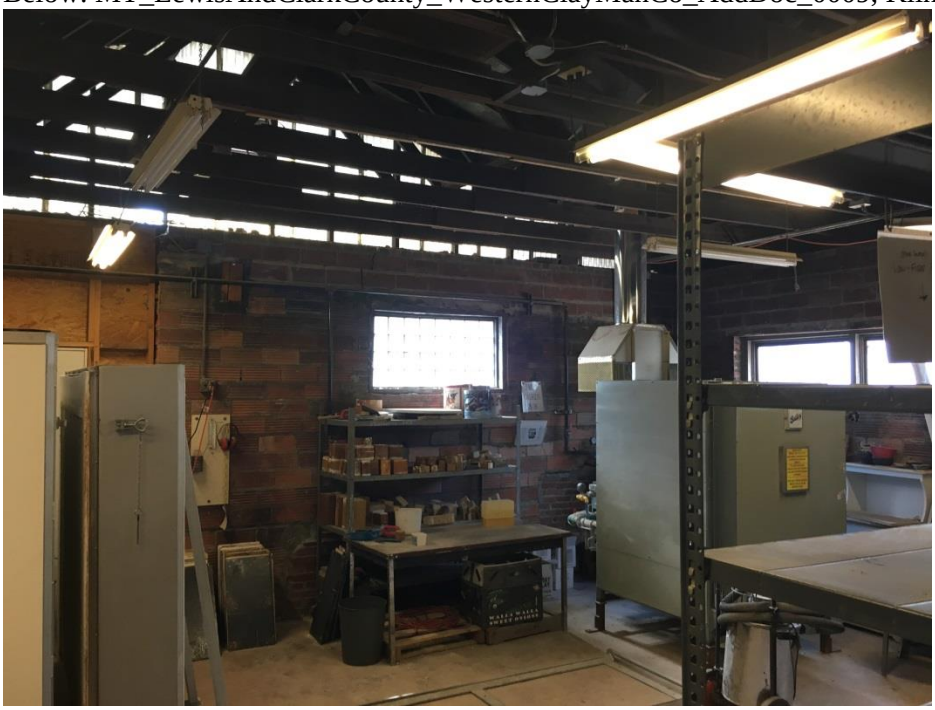


MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0005, Signature plaque in the walls of the Pottery, east and north elevations.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0006, Historic Gallery in The Pottery.
Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0007, Studio in The Pottery, with class in session.



Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0008, Glazing Room in The Pottery
Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0009, Kiln Room Annex



Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0010, The Office, from the east.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0011, The main room in the office.

MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0012, Western Clay Company Brickyard with beehive kilns (structures 16, 17, 18) and shared stack structure 19 in view. From the northeast.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0013, Rear entrance to kilnshed with Kiln 16 in view

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0014, Kiln 15, from the south

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0015, Kiln (structure 15) and Stack (structure14), from the south.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0016, The Resident Artist's House, from the east

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0017, The Resident Artist's House, from the northeast

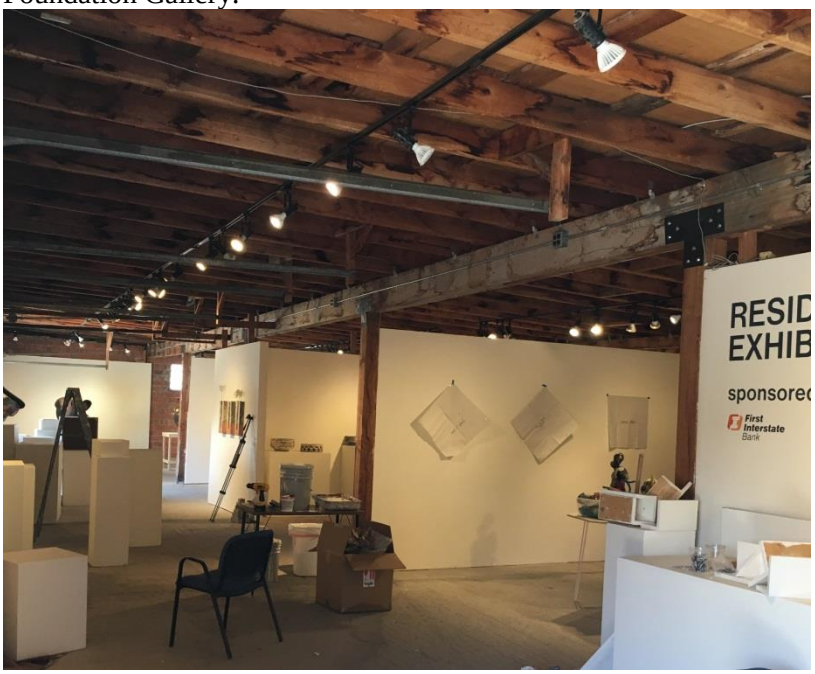
Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0018, The North Sales Gallery, from the east.
Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0019, Interior of the North Sales Gallery.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0020, Development Shed on east end of North Gallery, from the south.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0021, Clay Pipe Wall behind Pottery and Office, from the west.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0022, Archie Bray Foundation Gallery, from the south.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0023, Interior Archie Bray Foundation Gallery.

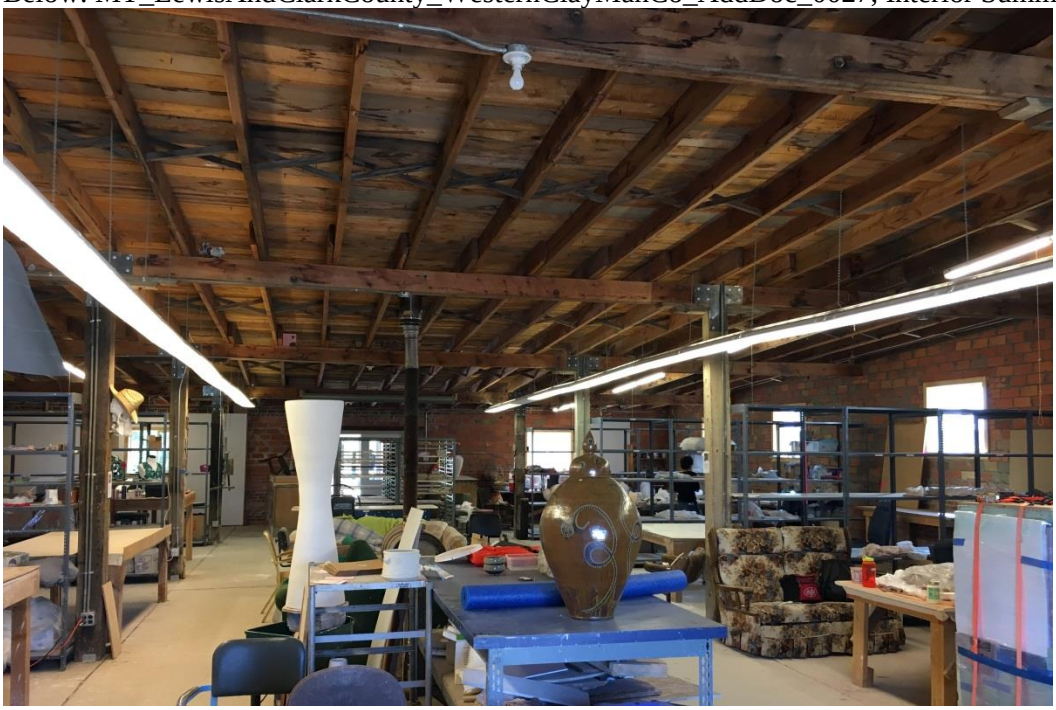


Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0024, Building 11: Scove Kiln converted to Kiln Shed, from the north.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0025, Building 13: Scove Kiln now used as storage shed, from the north

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0026, Building 12: Summer Studio in former warehouse, from the north.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0027, Interior Summer Studio.



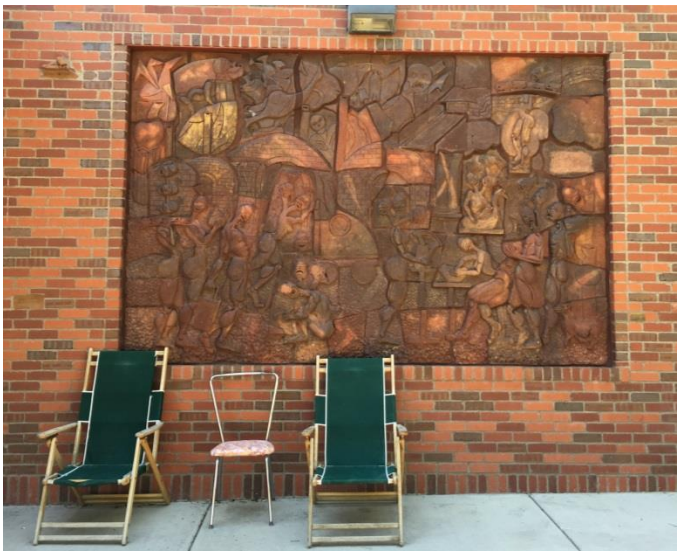
Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0028, Buildings 11-13 from the north.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0029, Gazebo from the east.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0030, Shaner Resident Studio from the north.
Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0031, Shaner Studio Plaque.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0032, Resident Studio Lecture room. View to the West.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0033, Bas Relief Artwork on exterior wall of lecture room. View to the West.

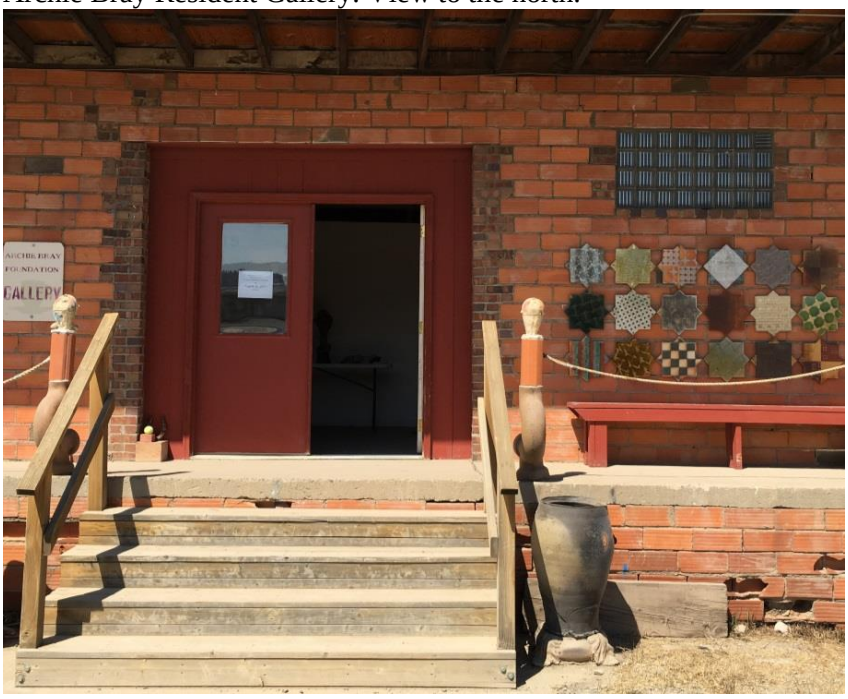


Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0034, The Potter's Shrine by Robert Harrison, from the north.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0035, The Potter's Shrine, interior.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0036, Tile-X installation by Robert Harrison, view to the south.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0037, The Pottery rendered in clay.

Above: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0038, Artwork at Entrance to the Archie Bray Resident Gallery. View to the west.

Below: MT_LewisAndClarkCounty_WesternClayManCo_AddDoc_0039, Artwork at Entrance to the Archie Bray Resident Gallery. View to the north.