### MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
Montana Historical Society  
PO Box 201202, 1301 E. Lockey  
Helena, MT  59620-1202

| Property Address: **711 West Broadway**  
| Historic Address (if applicable):  
| City/Town: **Butte**  
| Site Number: 24SB1054  
| (An historic district number may also apply.)  
| County: **Silver Bow**  
| Historic Name: **Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence**  
| Original Owner(s):  
| Current Ownership  
| X Private  
| □ Public  
| Current Property Name:  
| Owner(s): **CROWN DIAMOND LLC**  
| Owner Address:  
| **103 N CLARK ST**  
| **BUTTE, MT 59701-9110**  
| Phone:  
| Legal Location  
| PM:  
| Township: 3N  
| Range: 8W  
| ¼ ¼ **NW ¼** of Section: 13  
| Lot(s): 18  
| Block(s): 2  
| Addition: **Barnard Addition**  
| Year of Addition:  
| USGS Quad Name: **Butte North**  
| Year:  
| Historic Use: **DOMESTIC/single-family residence**  
| Current Use: **DOMESTIC/single-family residence**  
| Construction Date:  
| X 1915  
| X Estimated  
| □ Actual  
| X Original Location  
| □ Moved  
| Date Moved:  
| National Register of Historic Places  
| NRHP Listing Date: **7/4/1961**  
| Historic District: **Butte-Anaconda Historic District**  
| NRHP Eligible:  
| X Yes  
| □ No  
| Date of this document: **8/31/2016**  
| Form Prepared by: **Kate Hampton**  
| Address: **MT SHPO, 1301 E Lockey, Helena**  
| Daytime Phone: **(406) 444-7742**  
| MT SHPO USE ONLY  
| Eligible for NRHP:  
| X yes  
| □ no  
| Criteria:  
| X A  
| □ B  
| □ C  
| □ D  
| Date:  
| 8/31/2016  
| Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**  
| Comments: Property record form written as part of the  
| “Identifying Montana’s African American Heritage Places  
| Project.”

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### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date: 7/4/1961 (Butte NHL)
NRHP Eligibility: XYes □No □Individually X Contributing to Historic District □Noncontributing to Historic District
NRHP Criteria: XA □B X C □D
Area of Significance: Period of Significance:
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: **Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence**

Architectural Style: Folk Victorian  
If Other, specify:  
Property Type: **DOMESTIC**  
Specific Property Type: **single-family residence**  
Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

Architect:  
Architectural Firm/City/State:  
Builder/Contractor:  
Company/City/State:  
Source of Information:  

**Architectural Description:**

The Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence stands at 711 West Broadway in Butte. Constructed c. 1915, the Folk Victorian style house ornaments the West Side neighborhood and contributes to the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark. The house faces south onto West Broadway, within the southeast quadrant of the block bounded by West Broadway to the south, West Granite Street to the north, North Alabama Street to the west and North Clark Street to the east. Marked by historic single family homes, duplexes, and small apartment buildings constructed in close proximity to each other, the neighborhood lies west of the Central Business District and east of Montana Tech. The residence occupies the south half of the parcel, and a wood-frame gable-front garage appears at the north side of the lot, facing the alley. Low deciduous shrubs, including lilacs, appear in close proximity to both the house and the garage, and rear (north) yard between the two buildings is planted to grass. A historic wrought-iron hairpin-style fence set on a concrete curb defines the parcel’s south boundary, while a modern chain-link fence bounds the rear yard.

Designed in the Folk Victorian style, the wood-frame one and one-half story house stands on a concrete wall foundation and sports a steeply-pitched, front-clipped-gable roof. A flat-roofed one-story porch, open on the west side and enclosed to the east, crosses the south (front) elevation. A single stovepipe punctuates the roof high on the east slope. Its shallow eaves are boxed. Original horizontal droplap wood siding covers the exterior walls, except at the gable ends, where fishscale wood shingles appear. Across the west half of the north (rear) elevation, a one-story wood-frame front-gabled extension increased the original footprint of the house after 1951.

**South (front) elevation:**

The tidy house displays a partially enclosed porch across the south (front) elevation’s first story. A concrete sidewalk leads through a centered opening in the fence to a single-step concrete stoop centered on the porch’s south side. Wood boards cover comprise the porch deck, and a single square post, trimmed with wide dimensional lumber at the base and cap, supports the roof at the southwest corner. The south elevation’s west side contains a centered wood-frame two-light fixed window within an original trimmed opening and protected by an aluminum one-light storm. The east half of the porch is enclosed, and features a fixed, large, centered wood-frame one-light window centered on its south elevation. A deep, corrugated aluminum awning shelters the window. A single centered door protected by a modern, two-light, pressed metal storm permits entry the house from the enclosure’s west elevation. Above at the half-story level, a pair of original wood-frame one-over-one double-hungs appear centered in the gable end. On both the west and east edges of the gable end, single one-light fixed, wood-frame windows are set adjacent and parallel to the eaveline.

**East and west (side) elevations:**

The east elevation contains only three openings. Plywood now fills the original southernmost window opening, while a one-over-one wood-frame double hung fills the slightly smaller opening at the elevation’s north side. The north extension features a single centered, fixed one-light window on its east elevation. The west side’s fenestration is limited to a single one-over-one window on the far north side and another centered opening, this a single light fixed unit, on the north extension’s west elevation.

**North (rear) elevation:**

The north (rear) elevation contains the aforementioned small, one-story, front-gabled extension on its west side. This addition contains a single, one-light over three-panel wood door protected by a vintage aluminum storm. The door is set off-center the west, and accessed via a two-step concrete stoop. Above, centered in the gable end, a single, one-over-one double hung unit appears.
Garage:
A one-story, two-bay, wood-frame, front-gable automobile garage occupies the parcel’s north side. The roof displays a shallow pitch, exposed rafter tails, and deep eaves. Asphalt shingles cover the roof slopes. Facing north and abutting the alley, the garage’s two bays fill the north elevation. Each bay contains a 24-panel wood overhead door. Neither the east nor the west elevations contain fenestration. The south elevation features two single one-light fixed windows evenly spaced and set high in the wall.
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

History of the Property

Constructed after 1891 but before 1900, this lovely modest house witnessed the development of the neighborhood through the first half of the twentieth century. By 1902, William Rosen resided there, and as often occurred in the early twentieth century, Mr. Rosen supplemented his income as a teamster by taking in a boarder. That year, Lizzie Olson, a doctor’s clerk, rented a room. Just a nine years later, the house belonged to John and Armeta Duncan, members of a locally prominent African American family.

John W. Duncan

Dr. John W. Duncan was born in 1873, in Texas Indian territory.¹ There is little information about his formative years or his parents, other than they were both born in Texas as well. J.W. Duncan, as he was often referred to, arrived in Butte, Montana in early 1899.² The twenty-six year old Duncan began his professional life in the mining city as the manager and assistant editor of Butte’s only African-American newspaper, The Butte New Age.³ The paper closely resembled other publications that started during the early twentieth century, most notably The Colored Citizen, of Helena, edited by J.P. Ball, and later, The Montana Plaindealer, edited by Joseph Bass.⁴ J.W. Duncan had studied medicine as a young man, but was unable to finish his studies and become a doctor until later in life.

Beginning as early as 1904, J.W. Duncan worked as a barber from his home at 114 South Wyoming Street.⁵ An oral interview conducted in 1974 with his wife Armeta suggests that while John did not own the barbershop where he worked, he was placed in a managerial position over at least two other barbers.⁶ Working as a barber for the better part of two decades, Duncan remained an integral part of the African American community in Butte, even serving as the secretary of the African American Mining Company, a fraternal club that worked for the betterment of blacks in the mining city.⁷ It was also during this time that John Duncan met the twenty year old Armeta Elizabeth Smith. After a two year courtship, the two married on November 12, 1907.⁸ After the birth of their first son, Walter in 1909, and having rented several properties in uptown Butte, the Duncan’s bought a home at 711 West Broadway in 1913.⁹

By 1919, John Duncan, at the age of 46, decided to return to medicine. On October 9, Duncan traveled across the country to attend the University of Massachusetts school of Podiatry and Orthopedics at Emerson College.¹⁰ Thanks to his previous schooling, he completed the two year program in one year, and returned to Butte to start his own practice.¹¹ After receiving the necessary certifications to practice medicine in Montana, John Duncan opened his Chiropodist clinic located at 315 Phoenix Ave in 1923.¹² His business proved very successful, as Butte’s apparent lack of a foot specialist compelled him to pursue that field in the first place.¹³ By 1928, Duncan moved his growing family, two sons, Walter and John, and two daughters, Perdita and Mary, into the new, larger family home at 715 West Park.¹⁴

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¹ U.S. Census, 1920 and 1930, (Butte, Silver Bow, Montana.) Accessed online at ancestry.com.
⁵ R.L. Polk & Co., Polk’s 1904 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 237.
⁶ Armeta Duncan Interview.
⁸ “Marriage Certificate for John W. Duncan and Armeta E. Smith,” Nov. 12, 1907. Accessed online at ancestry.com
⁹ R.L. Polk & Co., Polk’s 1913 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 240.
¹¹ Armeta Duncan Interview.
¹² R.L. Polk & Co., Polk’s 1923 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 201.
¹³ Armeta Duncan Interview.
¹⁴ R.L. Polk & Co., Polk’s 1928 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 136.
home was located in Butte’s upper middle class neighborhood, and in the 1930 census, is listed as worth $6000, quite expensive at the time. Duncan would live at West Park until his death on February 23, 1958.

Armeta Elizabeth Duncan

Armeta Elizabeth Smith was born April 12, 1885, only fifteen miles from Appomattox, Virginia. She received an education during her early years, and even graduated from Ingleside Seminary, Virginia, in 1903. For the next year she taught school in Delaware, until beginning work for a couple as a domestic servant. The wife apparently traveled extensively. She and Armeta spent much of 1904 and 1905 traveling the West and Canada. It was in this way that Armeta Smith arrived in Butte in 1905. When the woman she worked for continued on her travels, the twenty year old Armeta decided to stay. Her reasoning centered firmly around the thirty-two year old John W. Duncan. Even though the single barber was purportedly not the “marrying type,” the young Ms. Smith was so confident he would marry her, she elected to stay in Butte.

For the next two years, Armeta Smith found steady work in clubs and restaurants as a waitress, all while continuing her relationship with John Duncan. The two married November 12, 1907 in the A.M.E. Church. They soon began a family with the birth of their son Walter in 1909, followed by a girl, Perdita, then John, and finally Mary. In 1928, the Duncans moved to 715 West Park, a mostly white middle-upper class neighborhood in Butte’s Westside neighborhood. While her husband, and eventually her son Walter, continued to operate a successful Chiropodist clinic from 1923 until the early 1960s, Armeta herself became a leading member of Butte’s African American community. She helped found, and was later the president of the Montana State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs. The MSFCWC, worked to promote education, the family, and the general enhancement of black women in the home and the community. This statewide organization had a significant impact on the lives of African Americans in Montana, as they fought to quell prejudice in the community, pushed for civil rights legislation in the Capitol, and helped dozens of black students pay for college.

Mrs. Duncan lived at 715 West Park into her nineties. In 1976, she moved back to 711 West Broadway, the home in which she and John first lived with their young family. The smaller house, only one block north of West Park was previously the home of her son Walter and his wife Alyce Driver, of Anaconda. Armeta Duncan died May 4, 1979, at the age 94. All four of her children went on to graduate college and work in their respective fields. Walter studied to become a podiatrist, and took over his father’s practice. John became a mechanical engineer, specializing in submarine technology. Mary worked for a time in Washington D.C. before returning to Butte, while Perdita was employed by the City of New York for nearly forty years in local government.

The Dr. Walter Duncan Family Returns to 711 West Broadway

John and Armeta Duncan’s eldest son, Walter, resided in the house at 711 West Broadway not only during his youth, but as an adult as well. After his family purchased and moved to the house at 715 West Park in 1928, the house at 711 West

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17 Armeta Duncan Interview.
18 Ibid.
20 U.S. Census, 1930, (Butte, Silver Bow, Montana; Roll: 1262; Page: 6B; Enumeration District: 0026; Image: 421.0; FHL microfilm: 2340997.) Accessed online at ancestry.com.
21 R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s 1928 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 136.
23 Ibid.
25 R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s 1940 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 100.
27 Armeta Duncan Interview.
28 Ibid.
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

Broadway was let to boarders. Though Walter was nearly an adult, aged 19 at the time, he spent the next decades based in parent’s Park home. He dreamed of being a musician, but could not get enough work to commit to it as a profession. A polio victim, his impairments prevented his working in a labor position, so he chose to follow in his father’s footsteps. He spent three years studying his profession at the First Institute of Podiatry in New York City, and then returned and built up his practice with his father.

When Walter married Alyce Marjorie Driver in 1938, and they began their life together living in a charming bungalow at 657 S. Dakota Street in Butte. By mid-1939, however, they had moved into the 711 West Broadway residence where they welcomed their new daughter, Joan Duncan, born September 8, 1939. Joan’s younger brother, Walter Jr., arrived just a year later, on August 11, 1940. Both children were born at the Catholic hospital in Butte. Dr. Walter Duncan (Sr.) enjoyed a prominent career as a podiatrist. Appointed by the Governor, Dr. Duncan was member of the State Board of Podiatrists (an organization Dr. John Duncan helped create), the National Podiatry Association, and participated in several organizations in the community. Though Walter was raised a Methodist, his wife Alyce was a devoted Catholic, and very active in St. Ann’s Parish in Butte. Their children were raised in the church and attended the local Catholic schools.

By the early 1970s, Walter and his wife had moved from the home at 711 West Broadway, but as noted above, it stayed in the family as home once again to his mother, Armeta, between 1976 and 1979.

**Alyce Marjorie Driver Duncan**

Mrs. Walter Duncan was born Alyce Marjorie Driver in Anaconda on April 16, 1917, the sixth of seven children born to Lee Pleasant and Pearl (Payne) Driver. Of her siblings only she and two of her brothers, Woodrow and Felix, married other members of the state’s small, close-knit black community. On August 14th, 1938, Alyce Driver married a young doctor from Butte named Walter Duncan, son of the mining city’s first black doctor, John Duncan. The two younger Driver boys both married daughters of Thaddeus and Frances Mundy of Helena.

During the 30s and 40s, Montana’s African Americans, though dwindling in numbers, continued to press for political and social reform. Black Mason lodges and other fraternal clubs did their part in such matters, but arguably, the driving force and center of Montana’s black community were its women’s organizations. Alyce Driver Duncan soon became active in such clubs. Her new mother in law, Armeta Duncan helped found, and was later the president of the Montana State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs. The MSFCWC, worked to promote education, the family, and the general enhancement of black women in the home and the community. This state-wide organization had a significant impact on the lives of African Americans in Montana, as they fought to quell prejudice in the community, pushed for civil rights legislation in the Capitol, and helped dozens of black students pay for college. Alyce also had a deep love for learning. She attended Montana Tech for two years while working at St. James Hospital, and graduated with a degree as an X-ray technician. She also received a degree from the University of Montana Western in Dillon in secondary education, served as principal of the Basin Elementary School for a time.

**Joan Duncan and Walter Duncan, Jr.**

The third generation of Duncans raised in the 711 West Broadway house included Joan Duncan, born in 1939, and her brother Walter Jr. born in 1940. The siblings spent their childhoods in both the Broadway house and with their grandparents, John and Armeta, at the Park Avenue house. By the time they arrived on the scene, the black community in Butte had dwindled considerably. Her father, Walter Sr. remembered there being around forty other black children in the

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29 R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directories. Multiple years: 1928-1940. The Broadway house hosted a variety of tenants, including: Theo Marshall, who worked as a janitor at the Montana Power Company, and his wife Vivian in 1928; Tim and Ellen Shea in 1934; and miner Bruce Mason and his wife Evelyn in 1937.

30 Dr. Walter E. Duncan Interview, 1974.

31 R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directories. Multiple years: 1928-1940.

32 Walter Duncan Interview, 1974; Joan Duncan interview, 2016.


community when he was a child during the early 1920s. But Joan recalls that "for most of my life, the only black face I saw was the face I saw in the mirror in the morning," she said. "But I have not suffered the kinds of prejudice as many of the other people I've known who have lived here. I'm not saying it wasn't here, I'm just saying it wasn't directed at me."37

She credited the fine reputation of her parents, and the good people of Butte for positive experiences growing up. She also learned from the women in her life, and remembers during her youth that the MT Federation of Negro Women was an active group statewide “When I was young I really learned a lot from those women. ‘Nana’ and other Montana Federation of Negro Women (MFNW) women were very astute—Taught me the importance as an individual to put my feet and nose in issues of citizenship.”

Joan yearned to join her aunts and uncles as an east coast scholar after her graduation from high school. After a year at Syracuse University, she “missed good old Montana” and returned to finish her degree at Carroll College in Helena. Putting the her grandmother’s teachings into action, Ms. Duncan held leadership positions in the Montana State Government, where she was Director of the Foster Grandparent Program, as well as a founding member and Bureau Chief of the Montana Women’s Bureau. She taught in the local high schools and hosted radio interview and local television programs. Joan also was a an elected member of the Helena City Commission during the early 1980s. She continues to be an active and highly admired member of the Helena community.

Her brother Walter Duncan Jr. also chose to go east for is education. He studied chemistry, and eventually settled in New England where he enjoyed a long and successful career. Joan notes that her brother always remained close with his Butte relatives and friends, however. He would return yearly, each time taking a rock back home with him. He used those rocks to assemble a surround for his fireplace to remind him of “home.” In September 2016, Walter Jr. plans move back to Montana and reunite with his sister in Helena.

Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

Information Sources/Bibliography


Duncan, Joan A. Interview by Thompson, Alan. “Ms. Joan Duncan, August 16, 2016.” On file at Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.


Newspapers


Statement of Significance

The Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence at 715 West Park is listed in the National Register as a contributing building within the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark District. It gains additional significance for its association with the history of the African American community in Butte and Montana, as well as its association with the Duncan Family. The Duncan home, located in a historically white, upper middle class neighborhood, stands as a testament to the perseverance and success of three generations of the Duncan family.

In addition to its contribution to the Butte Historic Landmark District, the Duncan home stands eligible for individual listing under Criterion A for its association with the African American community in the city. It is as one of a number of extant buildings across Butte that have been identified as retaining historical significance in regards to the history of African Americans during the late 1800s and early 1900s.
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Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

**Integrity** (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association)

The Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence at 711 West Broadway retains excellent integrity from the historic period. Indeed, no notable changes have occurred since the Duncan family’s tenure there through the majority of the 20th century. It remains in its original location, in its historic setting in the historic residential neighborhood. Its design, workmanship, and materials are intact. The house continues to serve as a single family residence, contributing to its integrity of feeling, and its associations with the historic period and the Duncan family, are clear.
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: **Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence**

Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

Photographs

Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to north, showing south (front) elevation. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.

Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to northeast, showing south (front) and west elevations. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.
Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to northwest, showing south (front) and east elevations. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.

Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to southwest, showing north (rear) and east elevations. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.
Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to southwest, showing garage’s north (front) and east elevations. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.

Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence, 711 West Broadway, Butte
View to northwest, showing garage’s south (rear) and east elevations. Photo by Mary McCormick, 2016.
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

Historic Maps/Site Map/Aerial Photo

Sanborn Map, Butte, 1900, Sheet 16, highlighting 711 W Broadway

Sanborn Map, Butte, 1957, Sheet 15, highlighting 711 W Broadway
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB1054

711 West Broadway, Butte
Latitude/Longitude (Decimal Degrees) 46.01336/-112.54645
Zone: 12  Easting: 380281  Northing: 5096686
Geocode: 01-1197-13-2-25-11-0000
Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: Walter and Alyce Duncan Residence

Topographic Map

711 West Broadway, Butte
Butte North Quadrangle
Latitude/Longitude (Decimal Degrees) 46.01336/-112.54645
Zone: 12 Easting: 380281 Northing: 5096686
Geocode: 01-1197-13-2-25-11-0000