

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **708 8th Avenue South**
Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Great Falls**

Site Number: **24CA1748**
(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Cascade**

Historic Name: **Taylor-Reed House**

Original Owner(s): **John A. A. Taylor**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Kathy Reed**

Owner Address: **708 8th Avenue South**
Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township:**20N** Range:**3E**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SW** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **12**

Lot(s): **3**
Block(s): **497**

Addition: **Great Falls Original Townsite**
Year of Addition:

USGS Quad Name: Year:

Historic Use: **Domestic**

Current Use: **Domestic**

Construction Date: **1915** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **477782** Northing: **5260357**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **7/2/2015**

Form Prepared by: **Anthony Wood**

Address: **1410 8th Avenue, Helena MT 59620-1202**

Daytime Phone: **406-444-7715**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: yes no

Criteria: A B C D

Date:

Evaluator:

Comments: Updated property record form written as part of the "Identifying Montana's African American Heritage Places Project."

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merge pages with this form

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: Yes No Individually Contributing to Historic District Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: A B C D

Area of Significance: **African American History** Period of Significance: **1915-1964**

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Property Name:

Smithsonian Number: 24CA1748

Architectural Style: **Other** If Other, specify: **National**
Property Type: **Domestic** Specific Property Type: **Single Family Residence**

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

Architectural Description:

Setting & Location

The Taylor-Reed house located at 708 8th Avenue South, sits on lot 3, on the northwest section of block 497, in the Southside neighborhood of Great Falls. The block is bounded by 8th Ave S to the north, 8th St S to the east, 9th Ave S to the south, and 7th St S to the west. The South Side neighborhood, defined by roughly ten square blocks, is bounded east to west by 2nd St.-10th St. South, and north to south by Central Avenue-10th Avenue South. The South Side neighborhood lies just off the east bank of the Missouri River, and just south of downtown Great Falls. Many of the houses on either side of 8th Ave S. are original to the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Two large Douglas fir trees dominate the front of the property, growing on either side of the cement path that leads from the sidewalk to the front steps which rise to the enclosed front porch. A chain-link metal fence runs around the property along the entire north (front) side, and along the east side of the house as well. The fence runs between the house and the driveway that provides access to the detached, single bay, garage/shed structure at the southeast corner of the property. The narrow space between the house and neighboring structure to the west is occupied by a wood and metal fence that runs between the northwest corner of 708 8th Ave, and the northeast corner of 706 8th Ave, a total distance of only about 6 feet. From the center of this fence, a chain-link metal fence extends to the north boundary, and connects with the fence that runs around the rest of the house. The rear of the house features a large grass lawn, bounded the elongated shed that runs from near the southeast corner of the house to the alley. Access from the alley is blocked by a large double hung metal gate.

Introduction

The Taylor-Reed house at 708 8th Ave S is a one-and-a-half story cross-gabled, rectangular house, built in the national style. It sits upon a concrete wall foundation. The exterior walls feature asbestos or possibly cedar shake wood shingle siding that is consistent throughout the entire exterior. The siding is painted blue-grey, while all the window surrounds, trimming, eaves, and fascia are painted a contrasting white. The front porch protrudes from the front of the house, extending along the entire north façade, and is covered by a hipped porch roof. The porch roof, as is the case with the main cross-gabled roof as well, is covered in asphalt shingles. The rear of the house features a wood ramp, beginning at the east edge of the house, rising a few feet to a landing at the west edge, where it meets the level of a back deck, which runs the length of the south (rear) elevation.



708 8th AVE SOUTH
GREAT FALLS, MT

North Façade

An enclosed front porch extends across the entire first story of the façade. The porch, which was originally open, featured a half-wall covered in the same shingles as the rest of the house, and three wood beam supports, one at each northern corner, and one on the east side of the porch entry. Sometime after 1929, the porch was enclosed. Window fixtures were added from the half-wall to the eaves of the hipped porch roof. The windows are set one-next-to-one, each being a three-over-one, four light, fixed pane window, with the three-light section located in the top third of the window opening. Five of these windows run from the east corner of the porch to the support beam on the east side of the porch door. Between the eastern support beam and the door opening, the space features two window fixtures, exactly the same as the others on the porch façade, except they feature a two-over-one setting. These two, smaller windows, are mirrored by the two window fixtures featured between the west side of the door opening, and the west corner of the porch. The trimming around the window fixtures are painted white, like those found on the rest of the building, but the wood window surrounds of the front porch are painted black. The glass and aluminum front screen door, located on the western side of the front porch façade, stands atop a flight of four concrete steps. Above the door and window fixtures, a white fascia runs below the eaves of the hipped porch roof. The top half story of the north façade features two one-over-one double-hung window fixtures. They are set several feet apart, and centered in the peak of the gable front. Both the wood window surrounds and trimming are painted white. The blue-grey asbestos or cedar shake wood siding covers the top half story of the façade, extending from the porch roof to the gable peak.

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East Elevation

The first story of the east elevation contains four windows. Centered in the cross-gable section, near the middle of the elevation, two identical one-over-one double-hung windows sit about four feet above the foundation wall. To the south of the two center windows, a smaller, one-over-one double-hung sits about six feet above the foundation wall beneath the intersection of southern slope of the east cross gable, and the main front gable section. To the north of the center windows, near the top of the elevation, a rectangular single-light window is located beneath the intersection of the northern slope of the east cross gable and the main front gable section. The top half story of the east elevation is entirely located within the cross gable end. A single one-over-one double-hung sits at the center of the cross gable end, directly above the two windows of the first story. All windows in the elevation have white wooden surrounds and trimming. A small, square, metal vent sits in the gable peak. Like the exterior walls of the rest of the house, the east elevation is shingled with either asbestos or cedar shake wood siding that extends from the foundation wall to eaves of the front gable on either end, and to the cross gable peak in the center.

West Elevation

The first story of the west elevation contains three windows. At the center of the west cross gable section, a one-over-one double-hung window sits about three feet above the foundation wall. South of the center window, an identical one-over-one double-hung sits beneath the intersection of the southern slope of the west cross gable, and the main gable front section. To the north of the center window, a square, single light, fixed pane window sits near the top of the first story exterior wall, near the northern corner of the elevation. Directly above the center window, in the top half story, two windows are centered within the cross gable end. The two windows are separated by a few feet, and both exhibit the same one-over-one double-hung style as the center window of the first story of the west elevation. All windows in the elevation have white wooden surrounds and trimming. Like the exterior walls of the rest of the house, the west elevation is shingled with either asbestos or cedar shake wood siding that extends from the foundation wall to eaves of the front gable on either end, and to the cross gable peak in the center.

Rear Elevation

The rear elevation features only three window fixtures and a sliding, double glass door. A square, one-over-one double-hung window sits just to the west of center on the first story of the rear elevation, and is the only window in the first story exterior. To the east of the window, a double sliding glass door opens on the far west side of the rear (south) elevation. Like the window, the door features white wooden surrounds. The rear of the house features a wood ramp, beginning at the east edge of the house, rising a few feet to a landing at the west edge, where it meets the level of a back deck, which runs the length of the south elevation. The top half story of the rear elevation features two window fixtures, centered below the gable peak. Both are one-over-one double-hung, with white wood surrounds. A small square metal vent sits at the top of the gable peak.

Detached Garage

The southeast corner of the property features a detached, single-story, single-bay garage. The wood frame exterior walls of the elongated rectangular structure stand beneath a gable front roof covered with asphalt shingles. The northern half of the garage is original to the general period of construction of the main house sometime in the 1920s. The rear southern half has been attached to the structure sometime after 1929, and is evident in a slight altering of the roof line, and an apparent change in siding materials. However, the rear section of the garage appears to be quite old as well, and therefore most likely was added during the period of historical significance in the first half of the twentieth century. Because of thick vegetation along the eastern and southern elevations of the garage, only the north and west elevations are visible.

The northern façade of the garage features the bay opening at the center. The large double doors, hinged near the east and west edges of the façade, swing out from the center to give access to the garage. The bay opening appears to be quite narrow, only six or seven feet wide, and therefore likely is no longer functional as a storage place for a modern car. However, the cement pad driveway leading to the structure does suggest that it was originally built for that purpose, at a time when automobiles were much smaller. Each door features white trimming around the edges, with a trim board running across the center. Above the doors, a single headboard runs the length of the bay opening, extending a few inches over either side. A weathered basketball backboard hangs above the headboard, within the gable front. Both the façade and the double bay doors appear to be the original horizontal wood board siding, painted to match the blue-grey color of the house.

The western elevation of the garage contains two windows, both in the original exterior walls on the north side, and an entry door on the newer, southern end of the elevation. Both windows appear to be single light, fixed pane windows with wood surrounds, set about five feet above ground level. The northernmost window is set very near the northwest corner of the garage, and the second window about three feet to the south of the first. Three or four feet to the south of the second window, it appears that the original garage structure ends, and the new addition begins. Though the siding, which is a vertical board, remains consistent throughout the elevation, it appears that the roof line and eaves drop several inches at the intersection of the new and old structures. However, overhanging branches from the trees growing on the eastern side of the garage make it difficult to distinguish exactly where the level of the roof

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changes. A wood door opens to the rear yard near the alley, on the far southern end of the west elevation. Like the wood surrounds of the windows on the northern side of the elevation, the door surrounds are not painted, or the paint has been worn away.

History of the Property

John A. Taylor

On November 10, 1867, Benjamin and Emma Taylor announced the birth of their son John.¹ Born in Gainesville, Virginia only two years after the end of the Civil War, John A. Taylor would travel thousands of miles before settling in the central Montana city of Great Falls in 1902.² Like many black men during the early twentieth century, John arrived via the Great Northern Railroad. After working the railroad for several years, John bought his own wagon and made a living as an express man in 1910.³ He would have several other jobs during his fifty years in Great Falls. Later in life, he worked as a porter for a various hotels, eventually becoming the head porter of the Rainbow until his failing health forced him to retire at the age of 67.⁴

It is unclear exactly how many times John Taylor married. By the time he arrived in Great Falls at the age of 35, he had already been married and divorced at least once. On August 8, 1904, John married the young Quincy Byrum Smith of Anaconda.⁵ Quincy had been married previously, but filed for divorce on the grounds of extreme cruelty earlier in the summer of 1904.⁶ Quincy and John began their lives in Great Falls's Southside neighborhood. While the 1880s were a time of great social progress in Great Falls, the 1890s and early 1900s were times of intense racial conflict and unabashed prejudice. Housing opportunities and residential neighborhoods were strictly segregated at the time of John and Quincy's marriage. Eighth Avenue south was within the Southside district where the black population was allowed to live and own property at the time. However, most African Americans lived several blocks north, nearer the Union Bethel A.M.E. church on Fifth Avenue. In 1915, when John moved from 611 8th Ave S where he and his wife owned a small home to the much larger house he built at 708 8th Ave S, the Taylors were among a small population of blacks living on the far southern side of the neighborhood, including the established Knott family across the street.⁷ The house, being naturally too large for a single middle-aged couple with no children, was most likely built by Taylor (or at the very least purchased) with a mind toward the financial benefits of taking on a number of boarders. This too was a common practice among African Americans in the early 1900s.

Quincy lived at the Taylor house at 708 8th Ave S for only three years before succumbing to illness on March 4, 1918, at the very young age of 39.⁸ John continued to work in Great Falls as a porter for the Rainbow Hotel at this time, and a little over a year later in October of 1919, he remarried Ms. Fanny Wilson, of Thermopolis, Wyoming.⁹ This marriage ended very quickly, most likely due to divorce, and in 1921, John remarried for (at least) the fourth time. On August 18, 1921, John married Gertrude Barber in the Union Bethel Church.¹⁰ The two would stay married for the rest of their lives. John passed away on Christmas Day 1952, and Gertrude would live twelve more years at the family home, until 1964.¹¹

¹ "U.S. Social Security Application and Claims Index," John A. Taylor, Accessed at ancestry.com

² Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

³ U.S. Census, 1910, (*Great Falls, Cascade, Montana*; Roll: T624_830; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 0030; FHL microfilm: 1374843) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁴ Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

⁵ "Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Quincy Byrum Smith," Aug 8, 1904. Accessed online at ancestry.com

⁶ Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

⁷ U.S. Census, 1910, (*Great Falls, Cascade, Montana*; Roll: T624_830; Page: 14A; Enumeration District: 0030; FHL microfilm: 1374843) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁸ Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

⁹ "Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Fanny Wilson," Oct 11, 1919. Accessed online at ancestry.com

¹⁰ "Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Gertrude Barber," Aug 18, 1921. Accessed online at ancestry.com

¹¹ Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

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Gertrude Taylor and the Reeds

During the 43 years that Gertrude lived at 708 8th Ave S, she worked most of them as a janitress for the Paris of Montana club.¹² She remained employed there until retiring due to health concerns in 1959, at the age of 78.¹³ However, to keep the house, Gertrude once again took on lodgers to help make ends meet. Six years after John's death, a couple moved into the Taylor home in 1958. Eddie Reed and his wife Eva had come to town to play the twilight of his professional baseball career for the Great Falls Electrics.¹⁴ Born in Straven, Alabama, in 1929, Eddie began playing professional baseball following a stint in the Army. He began in the popular Negro League, playing for the Birmingham Black Barons and Memphis Red Sox. Eventually he would also play for the Cleveland Indians and Los Angeles Dodgers organizations prior to coming out west. In his thirties, his career came to an end in Great Falls, after which he began working for the Paris of Montana, and eventually for Town and Ranch Furniture, where he remained employed until 1990.¹⁵

By the time that the Reeds moved into 708 8th Ave S in 1958, Gertrude's health was already slowly beginning to fail. In the six years the Reeds lived with the widow Taylor, the couple gave birth to their first child, Kathy, in 1963. When Gertrude passed away at the age 84 in 1964, the young family became the owners of the home on 8th Ave South.¹⁶ Eddie and Eva became important members of the African American community in Great Falls. Eddie remained active in the Union Bethel Church, was a member of the Black Mason lodge, and even tailored his expertise in baseball to coaching a community Little League team.¹⁷ After Kathy, the Reeds had five more children; Dexter, Mary, Mark, Monica, and John, while living in Great Falls.¹⁸ After Eddie's death in 2009, at the age of 79, his daughter Kathy continued to live at the family home on 8th Ave. Kathy still resides in Great Falls, and teaches Special Education in the Great Falls public schools.

¹² U.S. Census, 1930, (*Great Falls, Cascade, Montana*; Roll: 1253; Page: 19B; Enumeration District: 0011; Image: 635.0; FHL microfilm: 2340988) Accessed online at ancestry.com.; Kenneth Robinson, "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT."

¹³ Kenneth Robinson. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 29, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

¹⁴ "Eddie Reed Obituary" *The Great Falls Tribune*, Jan. 26, 2009. Accessed online at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/greatfallstribune/obituary.aspx?pid=123328840>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1923-1959 *Great Falls (Cascade County, Mont.) City Directory*.

¹⁷ "Eddie Reed Obituary" *The Great Falls Tribune*, Jan. 26, 2009. Accessed online at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/greatfallstribune/obituary.aspx?pid=123328840>

¹⁸ Ibid.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for John A. Taylor. Results included: Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Quincy Smith, 8-8-1904; Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Fanny Wilson, 10-11-1919; Marriage Certificate for John A. Taylor and Gertrude Barber, 8-18-1921; U.S. Census, 1910, 1930 and 1940; U.S. Social Security Application and Claims Index for John A. Taylor. Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov. Access to Historic Newspapers included: *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*. Accessed online at www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Great Falls (Cascade County, Mont.) City Directory*, Salt Lake City, UT: R.L. Polk & Co., 1904, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1919, 1921, 1958, and 1959.

Robinson, Kenneth. "Early Black American Settlers, Great Falls, MT." *Historical Black Americans in Northern Montana*, May 2, 2009, accessed July 9, 2015, online at <http://blackamericansmt.blogspot.com/2009/05/early-black-american-settlers-great.html>.

Eddie Reed Obituary. *The Great Falls Tribune*, Jan. 26, 2009. Accessed online at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/greatfallstribune/obituary.aspx?pid=123328840>.

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Statement of Significance

The Taylor-Reed house at 708 8th Avenue South exhibits great significance through its deep connections with the early and continued history of African Americans in Great Falls and Montana, as well as through association with the lives of the Taylor and Reed Families. Though the house may not be individually eligible at this time, it most certainly contributes to a possible South side historic district within Great Falls. This possible district, roughly ten square blocks in size, housed nearly every black citizen of Great Falls in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with well over 200 residents in 1930. Within the South side neighborhood, a total of 71 houses have been identified as having historical significance in the black community for the years of 1910 and 1930. These 71 houses do not include the homes still existing with significance from the 1910s and 20s, or any home associated with black history after 1930. However, out of those 71, the Taylor-Reed house is one of only 17 which remain standing today. In addition to this, as of 2015, the property has been owned by a member of Great Falls' African American community for a full century. For this reason, the house could be considered eligible under Criteria A.

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

The Taylor-Reed House at 708 8th Ave South retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical and architectural significance. Its location, feel and setting are still very much intact, as are its original design, materials, and workmanship. The only notable change to the exterior appear to be the enclosing of the front porch sometime after 1929, and the addition of the wheelchair accessible ramp to the rear of the building. However, both changes likely occurred within the period of significance from 1895-1961. The house also stands within the South side neighborhood of Great Falls, the historic district of African Americans in the city. Several of the adjacent houses also share historical significance to the black community, and are of the same general age and feeling.

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Photographs



Taylor-Reed House
Rear (south) Elevation, facing north
7/24/15
Photo by Anthony Wood

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Taylor-Reed House
(Partial) North façade and west elevation, facing southeast
7/24/15
Photo by Anthony Wood

Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name:

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Taylor-Reed House
North façade and east elevation, facing southwest
7/24/15
Photo by Anthony Wood

Montana Historic Property Record Form

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Detached Garage
North elevation, facing south
Taken from Google Earth
7/28/15

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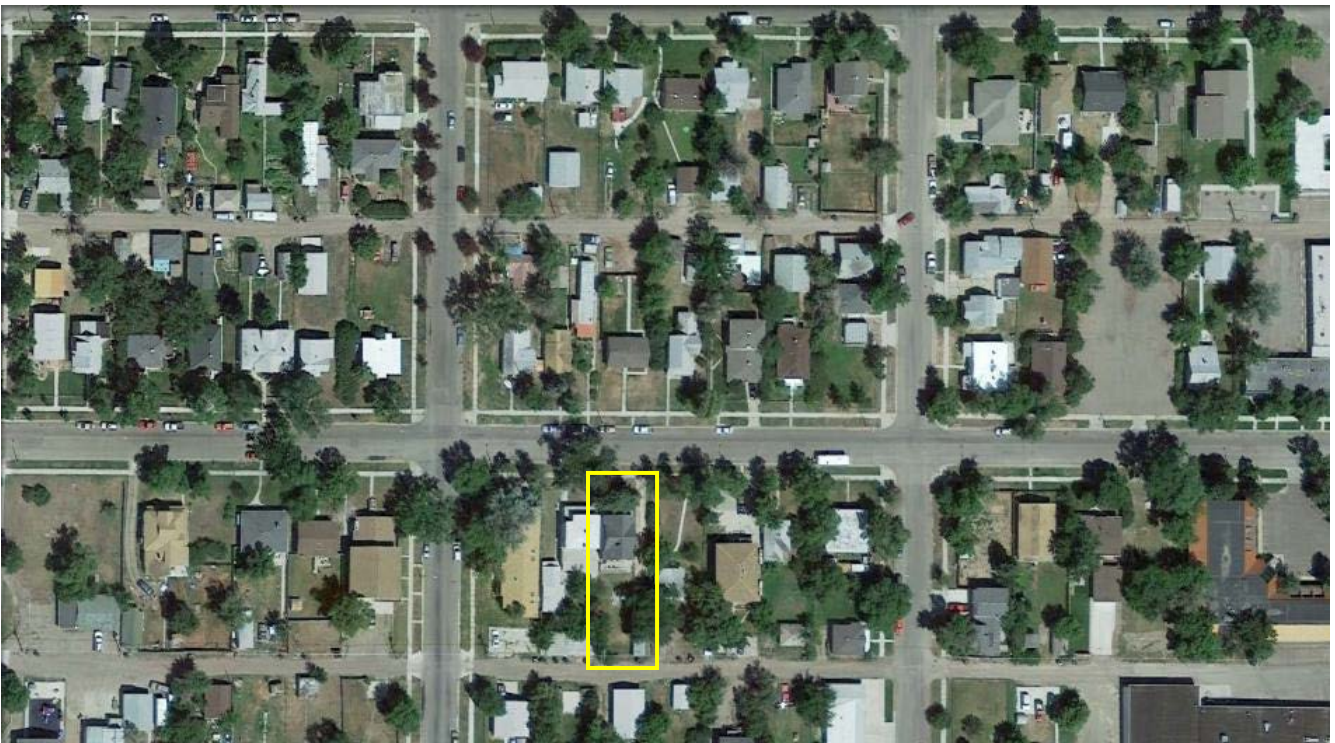
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Site Map/Aerial Photo



Taylor-Reed House
708 8th Ave South
Great Falls, MT
T20 N R03 E S12

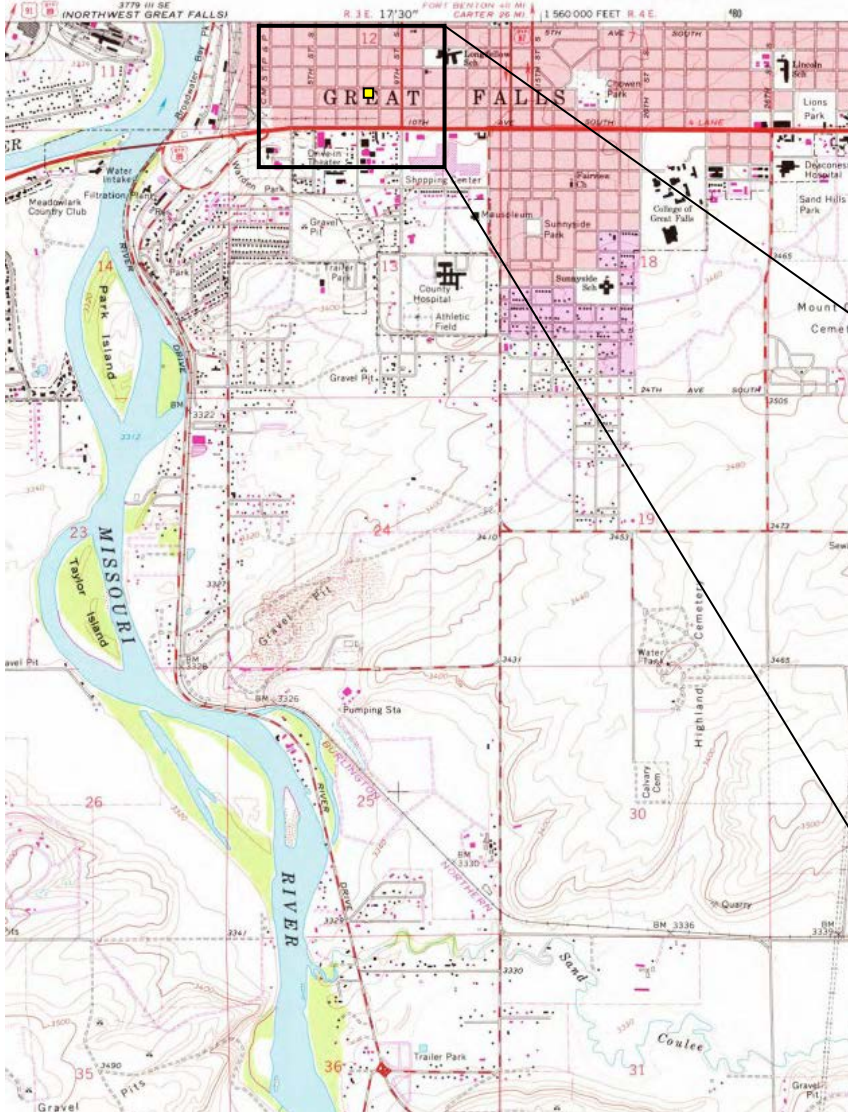


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Topographic Map



Taylor-Reed House
708 8th Ave South
Great Falls, MT
USGS Topographic Map 1:24K