

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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

Property Address: **1801 South 5th Street West**
Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Missoula**

Site Number: **24MO1682**
(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Missoula**

Historic Name: **William and Gertrude Johnson Residence**

Original Owner(s): **Unknown**

Current Ownership Private Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Cindy May Bex**

Owner Address: **1801 South 5th Street West**
Missoula, Mt, 59802

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **13 N** Range: **19W**

$\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ **SE** $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section: **20**

Lot(s): **1, 2, Frac of 3**

Block(s): **16**

Addition: **Low's** Year of Addition:

USGS Quad Name: Year:

Historic Use: **Domestic**

Current Use: **Domestic**

Construction Date: **1920** Estimated Actual

Original Location Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov

NAD 27 or NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **11** Easting: **726767** Northing: **5194443**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: Yes No

Date of this document: **8/1/2015**

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: 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: **1929-1969**

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Property Name: William and Gertrude Johnson Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24MO1682

Architectural Style: **Other** If Other, specify:
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 William and Gertrude Johnson Residence located at 1801 South 5th Street West sits on lots 1, 2, and fractions of 3 on the northwest corner of block 16, in the Low's addition, near the McCormick Historic District of Missoula. The block is bounded by South 5th Street West to the north, Garfield Street to the east, South 6th Street West to the south, and Grant Street to the west. The Low's addition (1890) is situated southwest of downtown Missoula, between the larger roadways of Russel Street to the east and Reserve Street to the West. The immediate neighborhood does not have a distinct historic period or feeling, as many houses were built much later in the mid-1900s, and even more homes, being larger houses of more affluent residents have obviously been continually remodeled and amended.

The north side of the property, facing South 5th street West, features six large deciduous trees on the edge of the front lawn against the sidewalk. The trees are spaced relatively equally, and run from the northwest to the northeast corners of the property. The east edge of the property, which faces Garfield Street, is bounded by a shrub hedge, running half the length of the property from the northeast corner to a side gate, which is level with the rear of the house. The southern half of the eastern boundary features a metal chain-link fence that extends from the end of the hedge to the southeast corner of the property. The west edge of the lot is bounded by a large drainage waterway, similar to a canal. The waterway runs to from south to north, with a slight turn to the west as it drains below South 5th Street West. This waterway prevents the rear alley from running through block 16, east to west. The rear edge of the property features a chain-link fence extending from the southeast corner to the drainage canal to the west.

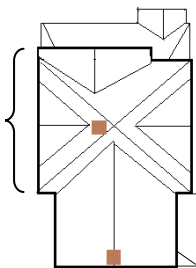


1801 S 5th St W.
Missoula, MT

Introduction

The Johnson Residence at 1801 S 5th St W is a one and a half story home built in the National style, with some Victorian influences. Its exterior walls, which are covered by horizontal white metal siding, sit upon a concrete wall foundation. The pyramid roof is greatly interrupted by three very large gabled dormers protruding from the east, west, and north slopes. The dormer featured on the north slope sits west of center, and protrudes slightly past the edge of the main house. A rear gable-front wing extends from the south slope of the main roof section, and protrudes well beyond the south edge of the main house. The home features two, single-story, open porches. A hipped porch roof with a gabled pedimented entry on the far eastern end covers the entirety of the north façade. A side porch also covered by a hipped roof runs from the rear, southeast corner of the structure to the southern edge of the main pyramidal roof section of the house. All roof sections are covered by dark green, metal sheeting.

Main section of the structure, featuring a pyramid roof, with gabled dormers



North Façade

Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: William and Gertrude Johnson Residence

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A single story, open front porch runs the length of the façade, east to west, covering the entire first story. Seven square stone columns support the hipped porch roof. Six of the columns support the pedimented entry that sits above the porch steps giving access to the home. A column supports the extension at both the northwest and northeast corner of the portico, as well as two columns supporting either side of the section where the gabled roof intersects with the main hipped porch roof. The seventh column supports the far northeast corner of the main porch. In line with the gabled portico entrance on the east side of the façade, the front door features a large single glass pane, with wood surrounds. To the west of the front door, and near the top of the exterior walls beneath the roof, a square, single light, fixed pane window is set within the brick veneer featured within the porch. Still beneath the porch roof, a large single light picture window sits to the west of the smaller square window. The north face of the gabled entry features a triangular pediment with wide trimming within the gable, evoking an almost classical style. The eaves of the porch exhibit a similar style, featuring wide cornices and frieze trimming.

The end of the gabled dormer, located on the western half of the building, dominates the second story of the façade. It is so large and protrudes just slightly past the main section of the house, that it could be considered a wing, though it extends from only partially up the northern slope of the pyramidal roof. The gable end, covered in white metal siding, contains a single one-over-one double-hung window at the center. The window fixture begins at the juncture of the hipped porch roof and the exterior wall, and extends to the top half of the gable end. Most of the northern slope of the pyramid roof is visible on the eastern end of the façade. Below the eaves of the roof on the east end, a small section of the main house is visible above the porch. This section of exterior wall, set back slightly from the gable end to the west, has no windows or features, and is covered by the same horizontal white metal siding. The northern slope of the east gabled dormer can also be seen from the north façade as well.

East Elevation

Two separate sections are distinguishable in the east elevation of the structure. To the south, the rear-side porch covers the first story of the rear wing, whose top half story rises above the hipped porch roof. The rear wing protrudes from the main section of the house that dominates the northern half of the east elevation. The first story of the main section contains two window fixtures. Near the southern end of the main section, a wide, one-over-one double-hung window sits below the southern edge of the gabled dormer. The northern end of the elevation features a small, rectangular single light fixed pane window that sits high in the wall of the first story. The window surrounds of both fixtures appear to be made of wood, and are painted white. The second story of the main section features the gable end of the large eastern dormer. Within the dormer end, two one-over-one double-hungs sit below the gable peak. Each window is set within its own fixture separated by about a foot of exterior siding. Like those of the first story, the second story windows have wooden surrounds that are painted white. The dark green metal sheeting of the eastern slope of the main pyramid roof is visible around the gabled dormer end.

On the southern end of the east façade, a flight of cement steps lead to the raised side porch, just north of center. At the top of the steps, a wooden beam supports the hipped porch roof on either side. A third wooden support beam extends from the southeast corner of the porch to the roof. Beneath the porch roof, the exterior wall is covered in the same horizontal white metal siding, and contains a window to the south, and the rear-side entrance door to the north. The window is one-over-one double-hung, featuring wooden surrounds and a wide white trim board. To the north, and in line with the steps and support beams, a wooden door with a decorative, rectangular glasswork panel at the center, provides access the south wing of the house. Above the hipped porch roof, covered with the same dark green metal sheeting that exists throughout the house, the eastern slope of the rear wing is also visible. A stone chimney rises from the peak of the rear wing on the far southern edge of the roof.

Rear Elevation

Though the southern slopes of the east and west dormers, as well as part of the southern slope of the main pyramid roof are visible, the gable end of the rear wing dominates the south elevation of the house. The first story of the gable end contains two separate window fixtures. Both are one-over-one double-hung, one sitting several feet east of center, and the other several feet west of center. The top half story, within the gable end, features a single, one-over-one double-hung window that is set within the exterior walls just to the west of center, near the gable peak. A small metal vent is located on the eastern side of the gable peak, tucked below the eaves of the eastern slope. At the top of the peak, the stone chimney is visible, centered on the roof line. To the east of the gable end, the southern slope of the hipped porch roof and support beams extend beneath the eaves. Visible through the porch, horizontal white metal siding covers the southern elevation of the main section of the house. The southern slopes of the east and west dormers, and main pyramidal roof are also visible from the rear elevation.

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History of the Property

William (Jr.) and Gertrude Johnson

William Johnson came to America from his birthplace of Jamaica in 1889, around the age of six. It is most likely that his family settled in South Carolina after their immigration, as that was where he listed his father living, as well as the place of his own birth on his marriage license in 1904¹. However, all census data indicates that he was born in Jamaica around 1883². Sometime between 1899, when William would have been 16, and 1902, he enlisted in the 24th Colored Infantry, better known as the Buffalo Soldiers. By 1903, William Johnson found himself stationed at Fort Missoula in Montana. Things moved very quickly for the young private in Missoula. On May 15, 1904, William Johnson married young Gertie Taylor, the daughter of Dick Taylor and Cora Dutton, who had moved to Montana from Minneapolis³. The two were married at Fort Missoula, where the ceremony was witnessed by Sergeant Howard Bivins, presumably William's company sergeant, and Dick Taylor. William was 21, and Gertie was only 16.⁴

(Section in quotations From the Northside Missoula Railroad HD Nomination form, section 8, pages 6, 7. Prepared for the National Register of Historic Places)

By the next year, 1905, William had been discharged from the 24th, and began working as a porter and janitor, living on the Northside of Missoula⁵. "The Northside District is unique in its social context in that it historically acted as a haven for minorities such as the Chinese, the Japanese and African-Americans. Many of the latter had come to Missoula as part of the "Buffalo Soldiers" brigade stationed at Fort Missoula. Perhaps the most significant of these soldiers and Northside residents was Ephram Dorsey. After his marriage in 1885, Ephram joined the army and was assigned to the 25th Infantry Regiment, Company H. He reenlisted at Fort Snelling, Minnesota September 6, 1887, and by the time of his second discharge, he was stationed at Fort Missoula as a musician. He resigned from the service August 6, 1894 in order to take up a trade of shoe-maker. Ephram also participated in the intervention of labor strikes with Federal forces. In 1892, Dorsey and his comrades travelled over to the Coeur d'Alene mining district to arrest striking union men who were battling non-union and company detectives. For a time, the black soldiers took up camp along the Northern Pacific tracks in Missoula. The Fort Missoula connection was strong within Missoula's Northside. Alexander Pillow, the post quartermaster who was stationed at the fort from 1894 to 1902 retired in Missoula where he spent the rest of his life. He worked as a yardman for the Northern Pacific Railroad. One of Ephram's comrades, Samuel Lundy, company H, retired from the service and took up residence next to the Dorseys at 231 North Second Street West."⁶

A year and a half later after leaving Fort Missoula, the very young couple gave birth to their first child, William Jr, in 1907. For the next few years, the Johnsons lived in various homes across Missoula. In 1910, they moved from the black enclave of Missoula's Northside, to the middle class, southwest neighborhood. The young couple and their son lived at 1906 South 5th Street West, only a block from the home where they would spend most of their lives⁷. In 1914, Gertrude gave birth to their second son, Charlie, followed four years later in 1918 by their first daughter, Cora. Four more Johnson children came every two years after that; Caesar in 1920, Robert in 1922, Gertrude in 1924, and Raymond in 1925.⁸ Five years after the birth of Raymond, the final Johnson child, Howard, came in 1932. During this period of family growth, William worked primarily as a janitor for various clubs and hotels, a common occupation for black men at the time, while Gertrude raised the children.⁹

In 1929, the Johnsons moved to a large home on the corner of South 5th St. West and Garfield Street. William bought the house, which was built sometime in the early 20s, for \$3000.¹⁰ At this time, he worked as a janitor for the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph Company, where he would remain employed for the next decade.¹¹ The Johnsons attended public schools and played many

¹ "Marriage Certificate for William Johnson and Gertrude Taylor," May 15, 1904. Accessed online at ancestry.com.

² U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, (Missoula, Missoula, Montana) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

³ "Marriage Certificate for William Johnson and Gertrude Taylor," May 15, 1904. Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1905 Missoula (Missoula County, Mont.) City Directory, 124.

⁶ Northside Missoula Railroad HD Nomination form, section 8, pages 6, 7. Prepared for the National Register of Historic Places

⁷ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1911 Missoula (Missoula County, Mont.) City Directory, 165.

⁸ U.S. Census, 1930, (Missoula, Missoula, Montana; Roll: 1259; Page: 10A; Enumeration District: 0012; Image: 309.0; FHL microfilm: 2340994) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

⁹ U.S. Census, 1940, (Missoula, Missoula, Montana; Roll: T627_2225; Page: 61A; Enumeration District: 32-12) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

¹⁰ U.S. Census, 1930, (Missoula, Missoula, Montana; Roll: 1259; Page: 10A; Enumeration District: 0012; Image: 309.0; FHL microfilm: 2340994) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

¹¹ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1929 Missoula (Missoula County, Mont.) City Directory, 145.

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sports as they grew up, remaining a pillar of the small black community during the 1930s, a time when most African Americans began to leave western Montana. Much like other communities in the west, famous black activists, musicians, and speakers came through Missoula. Raymond Johnson, in an interview with Dr. Quintard Taylor in 1974, recalls several black entertainers coming to town, including Duke Ellington, who stayed with the Johnsons at 1801 South Ave West in 1937.¹²

William died sometime around 1938, a few years shy of his sixtieth birthday¹³. After their father's death, Caesar and Robert worked as porters to help support their family. In time, the youngest sons would help support their mother as well. However, as was the trend with the black community in Missoula as a whole, the eight Johnson children all left Montana in search of better jobs and opportunities¹⁴. The second youngest Johnson son, Raymond enlisted in the Army at the very end of WWII. After returning from Germany and France in 1946, Raymond lived and worked for several years in Great Falls as a construction worker before returning to Missoula. The only Johnson child still in the city began working for the U.S. Forest Service, and in 1960, Raymond moved back to 1801 South Ave West to live with his 72 year old mother¹⁵. The two lived there until at least 1969. Though it is unclear when Gertrude passed away, state death indexes list several Gertrude Johnsons passing away in the early 1970s, putting Gertrude well into her eighties¹⁶. Raymond continued to live in the family home and work for the Forest Service for many years.

¹² Raymond Johnson, interview by Quintard Taylor, "Raymond Johnson." March 3, 1974. Spokane, Wash: Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, 2002. (Raymond Johnson Interview)

¹³ R.L. Polk & Co, Polk's 1938 Missoula (Missoula County, Mont.) City Directory, 142.

¹⁴ Raymond Johnson Interview.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Gertrude Johnson," Find-A-Grave Index, Accessed online at ancestry.com.

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Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for William Johnson and Gertrude Johnson. Results included: U.S. Find-A-Grave-Index; Marriage Certificate for William Johnson and Gertrude Taylor, 3-15-1904; U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940. Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

Johnson, Raymond. Interview by Taylor, Quintard. "Raymond Johnson, March 3, 1974." Spokane, Wash: Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, 2002.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Missoula (Missoula County, Mont.) City Directory*, Salt Lake City, UT: R.L. Polk & Co., 1905, 1910, 1929, and 1938.

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Statement of Significance

The William and Gertrude Johnson Residence at 1801 S 5th St W is significant to the history of African Americans in the Missoula during the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, its connection to William Johnson and the history of African American “Buffalo Soldiers” stationed at Fort Missoula makes the home a valuable cultural resource. It gains further significance as a family home to the eight Johnson children, whose experiences as African American children growing up in the West are centered largely at 1801 S 5th St W, and the surrounding neighborhood.

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

The structure at 1801 S 5th St W exhibits poor integrity, as much of the original materials, workmanship, feeling, and association have been compromised. Most notably, the roof, originally of asphalt shingles, has been replaced with newer, metal sheeting. Likewise, the original clapboard siding has been replaced with modern metal siding. The design of the house has remained original, with any and all additions being built during the period of significance. The setting and feeling of the home has been somewhat diminished by the continued development of the surrounding neighborhood. As such, the structure is not individually eligible, but certainly contributes the larger history of African Americans in Missoula and the West.

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Photographs



William & Gertrude Johnson Residence
North Façade, facing South
7/20/15, Photo by Leslie Schwab

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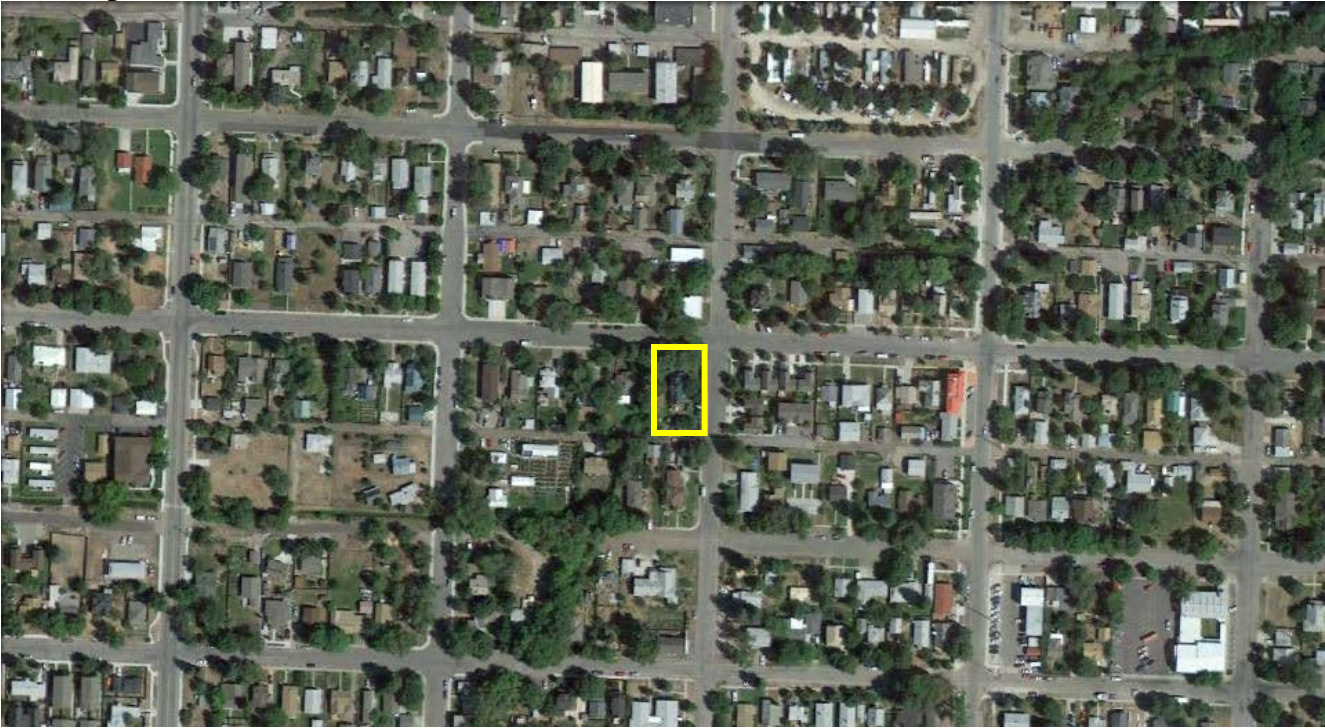
William & Gertrude Johnson Residence
East elevation, facing west
8/13/15, (Google Earth Photo)

Montana Historic Property Record Form

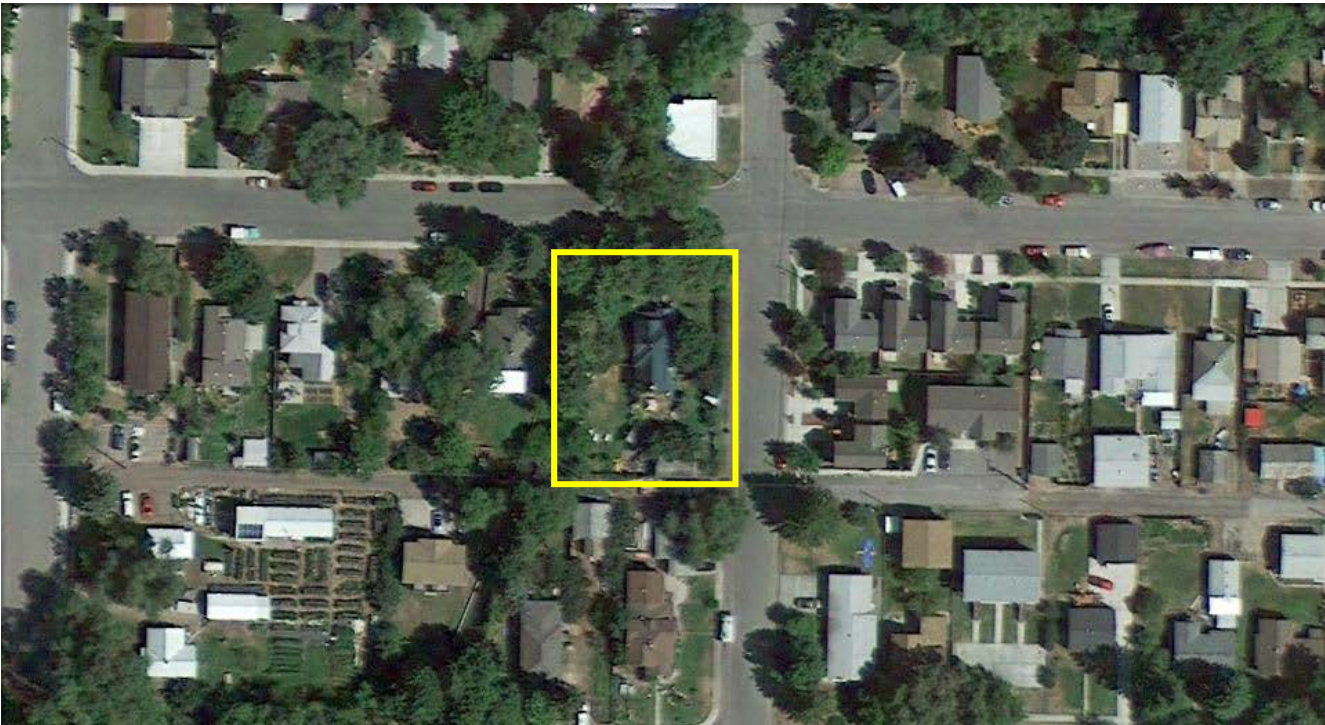
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Site Map/Aerial Photo



Johnson Residence
1801 S 5th St W,
Missoula, MT
T13 N R19 W S20
Google Earth Satellite Image 2015

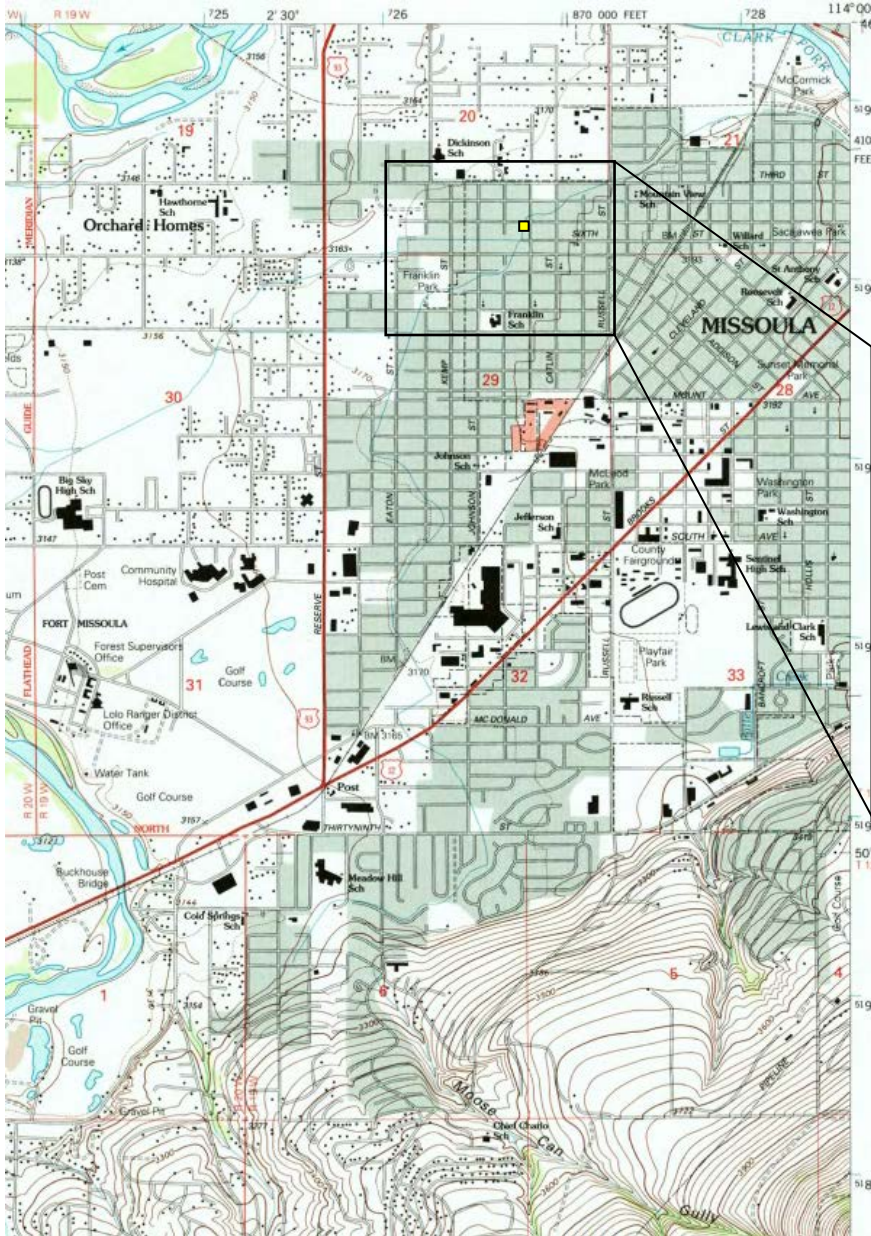


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Topographic Map



Johnson Residence
1801 S 5th St W,
Missoula, MT
T13 N R19 W S20
USGS Topographic Map 1:24K