

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

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

Property Address: **715 W. Park Street**

Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Butte**

Site Number: **24SB0990**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Silver Bow**

Historic Name: **John and Armeta Duncan Residence**

Original Owner(s): **Albert J. Seligman**

Current Ownership  Private  Public

Current Property Name:

Owner(s): **Kimberly Hyatt**

Owner Address: **5125 33rd Ave N., Saint Petersburg, FL, 33710**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **3N** Range: **8W**

$\frac{1}{4}$   $\frac{1}{4}$  **NW**  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section: **13**

Lot(s): **17**

Block(s): **3**

Addition: **Barnard** Year of Addition: **1889**

USGS Quad Name: **Butte North** Year: **1989**

Historic Use: **Domestic**

Current Use: **Domestic**

Construction Date: **1901**  Estimated  Actual

Original Location  Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference [www.nris.mt.gov](http://www.nris.mt.gov)

NAD 27 or  NAD 83(preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **380266** Northing: **5096603**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date: **7/4/1961**

Historic District: **Butte-Anaconda Historic District**

NRHP Eligible:  Yes  No

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

Form Prepared by: **Anthony Wood**

Address: **1410 8<sup>th</sup> 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."

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

merge pages with this form

SUBJECT	PAGE
ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION	3
HISTORY OF PROPERTY	5
INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	8
INTEGRITY (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association)	9
CURRENT PHOTOS (building exterior and key interior spaces)	10
SITE PLAN	12
USGS 7.5 MINUTE TOPO MAP	13

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date: **7/4/1961**

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

NRHP Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Area of Significance:                      Period of Significance:

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

Architectural Style: Other If Other, specify: **Folk Victorian**  
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 John and Armeta Duncan residence at 715 West Park Street is located on lot 17, in the southeast quadrant of block 3 in the Westside neighborhood of Butte. The block is bounded by West Park Street to the south, West Broadway to the north, North Alabama Street to the west, and North Clark Street to the east. West Park Street runs east to west from the heart of uptown Butte, beginning at Main Street, and ends at the statue of Marcus Daly at the entrance of Montana University of Technology. The 700 block of West Park Street lies nearly midway between Main Street and Montana Tech. 715 West Park is the fourth lot west of N. Clark Street, and the third house, as the corner lot is vacant. The homes on the 700 block West Park were all built in the first decade of the twentieth century for the middle upper and upper classes of Butte's early residents. All structures on the south side of block 3 and the north side of block 6 (south side of W. Park) are contributing buildings to the Butte-Anaconda National Historic Landmark District.

A brick veneer, one-and-a-half story, gable front and wing, Folk Victorian house, with an open porch stands directly to the east of 715 West Park. On the west side, a two-story brick home almost exactly mirrors the structure of the Duncan Residence, with the notable exception of its deck roof. The remainder of the block contains all two story structures, with the exception of the one-and-a-half story gable front home that stands at the far east side of the block. Across West Park, two three-story apartment buildings, both dating to the early 1900s, dominate the south side of the street. The west end of the south side of West Park is mostly smaller, traditional homes, with a larger two-story brick house, and a laundromat on the corner.

A stone retaining wall defines the south side of 715 West Park's small front lawn. A flight of four concrete steps lead from the sidewalk to a decorative metal gate. The gate connects to decorative metal fencing that runs along the top of the retaining stone wall. Behind the gate, a concrete path leads to a half-step at the front door of the home. Both buildings on either side of 715 West Park are extremely close in proximity to the house, therefore the sides of the home have little space and are mostly empty. The rear yard of the house contains a detached rectangular wood frame garage. A wooden privacy fence running from the southeast corner of the garage to the neighbor's garage to the east blocks any view of the rear yard.



#### *Introduction*

The John and Armeta Duncan Residence is a two story, rectangular Folk Victorian home. The brick veneer exterior walls stand upon a raised concrete wall foundation. The brick veneer is painted dark red, while the wood door and window surrounds are painted a contrasting white. The decorative bracing, fascia, and shingles are also white. The building's hipped deck roof with asphalt shingles features a cross gable roof at the west side of the south slope that covers a two-story, three-sided projecting window bay. The projecting bay features four decorative braces beneath the patterned wood shingled gable end. The east half of the front elevation contains a one-story gabled, enclosed porch.

#### *South Façade*

The two story projecting bay on the west side dominates the south façade of the building. The first floor features one window on each of the three elevations of the protruding bay. A one-light fixed pane window with a fixed transom above sits in the center. The southwest and southeast elevations of the bay each contain a one-over-one double hung window. Each of the three windows in the first story of the window bay sit atop a white, rough-faced stone sill. The east half of the façade contains a one-story, gabled, enclosed porch. The rectangular porch features fixed, one-light pane windows on both the west and east elevations. The front of the porch, facing south, contains a white paneled door in the center, flanked on each side by smaller, one-light pane windows. White paint coats the wood surrounds on both the door and windows. The porch, which was originally open, now features vertical wood-board siding

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

which has been painted to match the dark red brick walls. The siding ends in a broad, white fascia beneath the eaves of the gable. The front gable end of the porch features patterned wood shingled siding.

The ridge of the porch roof protrudes out directly beneath the only second story window on the east side of the façade. The one-light double hung pane window sits atop a concrete sill. On the west side of the south façade, the upper story of the bay contains three windows. A one-light fixed pane window with a fixed transom above sits in the center of the second story window bay. On either side, one-over-one double hung windows sit directly above those of the first floor southwest and southeast elevations, and mirror them size and placement. Each window sits atop a white concrete sill. The exterior wall of the south façade terminates in a broad, white fascia. Decorative wood bracing ornaments the underside of the gable-end's eave over the protruding window bay. Two bracings extend directly south from the far west and east sides of the window bay, and join with bracings running east-west across the front of the window bay's center fascia. The bracings join in a decorative wooden ball that hangs below the edge of the gable front eave.

### *Side Elevations*

The east elevation of the building features four windows, all of which sit north of center. The first story contains a single, slightly arched window opening. Above, two side by side windows, nearer the center of the elevation, also each sit within an arched lintel like that of the first story window. On the far north side of the east elevation, a smaller, nearly square fixed window sits very near the edge of the elevation. The top of the window lines up with the top of the other two second story windows. The brick veneer of the east side is consistent with that of the rest of the building, and is broken only by the four window openings. The top of the exterior wall terminates in the white fascia that runs under the eave.

The west elevation features an exterior brick chimney on the far south side, near the southwest elevation of the projecting window bay. It extends from the ground to about six feet above the eave, consistent in size and shape from top to bottom. The top of the chimney culminates in a metal stove pipe. The north side of the west elevation contains only one window, located on the second story. Like the windows of the east elevation, it sits within an arched lintel. Above the window, an interior brick chimney extends out of the west slope of the hipped roof and culminates in a metal stove pipe.

### *Rear Elevation*

The rear (north) elevation of the house features a covered exterior entry porch with a low pitched shed roof just west of center, flanked on either side by a one-over-one double hung window set within an arched lintel. Consistent with the rest of the building, the wood surrounds are painted white, and sit over white concrete sills. Vertical wood board siding, similar to the front porch walls, sheaths the porch. The off beige rear porch is the only part of the exterior that does not conform to the dark red color of the rest of the building. It appears to have a white, exterior screen door on the north elevation, and a fixed window set in the east elevation. The door and windows also feature white wood surrounds. The second story of the rear elevation contains only one window, sitting directly above the west-most window of the first story. Like the first story, a one-over-one double hung window sits within an arched lintel with white wood surrounds. The top of the brick exterior veneer terminates in the broad white fascia that runs beneath the eave.

### *Detached One-Bay Garage*

The Duncan Residence's rear yard features a detached one-and-a-half story, wood frame garage. It stands on a cement slab and is rectangular in shape. The structure has a medium pitched, front gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. Horizontal wood siding covers the building with the exception of two windows on the east elevation, a full-sized garage door on the north facade, and a small loft opening directly above the garage door.

The north façade of the garage contains a large rectangular single-bay door. The door covers most of the lower half of the structure. The gable front features a rectangular wooden loft door located directly above the bay door. Vertical boards comprise the white loft door, which matches the rest of the building in color. The east elevation contains two sets of windows. Four-light by one-light fixed pane windows sit north of center, while four-light by four-light fixed pane windows sits south of center. The west elevation contains no features other than the horizontal siding uniform to the rest of the building. The rear elevation (south) is not visible. There is most likely a single door in that elevation, as none other exist on the visible three sides.

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

### History of the Property

#### *John W. Duncan*

Dr. John W. Duncan was born in 1873, in Texas Indian territory.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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*.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> J.W. Duncan's association with this early black newspaper during its years of operation in 1902-1903 is evidence of at least some level of education.

Beginning as early as 1904, J.W. Duncan worked as a barber from his home at 114 South Wyoming Street.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

By 1919, John Duncan, at the age of 46, decided to pursue a new career. On October 9, Duncan traveled across the country to attend the University of Massachusetts school of Podiatry and Orthopedics at Emerson College.<sup>10</sup> He completed the two year program in one year, and returned to Butte to start his own practice.<sup>11</sup> After receiving the necessary certifications to practice medicine in Montana, John Duncan opened his Chiropodist clinic located at 315 Phoenix Ave in 1923.<sup>12</sup> His business proved very successful, as Butte's apparent lack of a foot specialist compelled him to pursue that field in the first place.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> The two story brick 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.<sup>15</sup> Duncan would live at West Park until his death on February 23, 1958.<sup>16</sup>

#### *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

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census, 1920 and 1930, (Butte, Silver Bow, Montana.) Accessed online at ancestry.com.

<sup>2</sup> Armeta Duncan, interview by Quintard Taylor, "Mrs. Armeta Duncan." April 4, 1974. Spokane, Wash: Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, 2002. (Armeta Duncan Interview)

<sup>3</sup> *The Butte New Age*, (Butte, Montana, 1902-1903,) Chronicling America. Accessed online at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census, 1900 and 1910, (Helena, Lewis and Clark, Montana.) Accessed online at <http://svcalt.mt.gov/research/AfricanAmerican/AfricanAmericanInMT.asp>; *The Montana Plaindealer*, (Helena, Montana, 1906-1911.) Chronicling America. Accessed online at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

<sup>5</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., Polk's 1904 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 237.

<sup>6</sup> Armeta Duncan Interview.

<sup>7</sup> *The Montana Plaindealer*, (Helena, Montana, Jan 11, 1907.) Chronicling America. Accessed online at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

<sup>8</sup> "Marriage Certificate for John W. Duncan and Armeta E. Smith," Nov. 12, 1907. Accessed online at ancestry.com

<sup>9</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., Polk's 1913 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 240.

<sup>10</sup> Armeta Duncan Interview.; *The Butte Daily Bulletin*, Butte, Montana, Oct. 8, 1919. Chronicling America. Accessed online at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.

<sup>11</sup> Armeta Duncan Interview.

<sup>12</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., Polk's 1923 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 201.

<sup>13</sup> Armeta Duncan Interview.

<sup>14</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., Polk's 1928 Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory, 136.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> "John W. Duncan Obituary" *Montana Standard*, Feb. 24, 1958, p. 15. Accessed online at ancestry.com

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

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.<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup> The two married November 12, 1907 in the A.M.E. Church.<sup>19</sup> They soon began a family with the birth of their son Walter in 1909, followed by a girl, Perdita, then John, and finally Mary.<sup>20</sup> In 1928, the Duncans moved to 715 West Park, a mostly white middle-upper class neighborhood in Butte’s Westside neighborhood.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> Armeta Duncan died May 4, 1979, at the age 94.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Armeta Duncan Interview.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “Marriage Certificate for John W. Duncan and Armeta E. Smith,” Nov. 12, 1907. Accessed online at ancestry.com.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s 1928 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 136.

<sup>22</sup> Christene Meyers, “Negro Women Talk Disbanding the Club,” *Billings Gazette*, June 18, 1972.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Betty Ann Raymond, “Mrs. Duncan’s Life Spent on People,” *Montana Standard*, May 9, 1976.

<sup>25</sup> R.L. Polk & Co, Polk’s 1940 Butte (*Silver Bow County, Mont.*) *City Directory*, 100.

<sup>26</sup> “Armeta Duncan,” Find-A-Grave Index, Accessed online at ancestry.com.

<sup>27</sup> “Armeta Duncan Interview.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

### Information Sources/Bibliography

Ancestry.com. Searches for John W. Duncan and Armeta Duncan. Results included: U.S. Find-A-Grave-Index; Marriage Certificate for John W. Duncan and Armeta E. Smith, 11-12-1907; U.S. Census, 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940. Accessed online at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov. Access to Historic Newspapers included: *The Butte New Age* (1902-1903); *The Butte Daily Bulletin* (1918-1921); *The Montana Plaindealer* (1906-1911). Accessed online at [www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov).

Duncan, Armeta. Interview by Taylor, Quintard. "Mrs. Armeta Duncan, April 4, 1974." Spokane, Wash: Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, 2002.

R.L. Polk & Co. *Polk's Butte (Silver Bow County, Mont.) City Directory*, Salt Lake City, UT: R.L. Polk & Co., 1904, 1913, 1923, and 1928.

### Newspapers

"Mrs. Duncan's Life Spent on People," *Montana Standard*, May 9, 1976.

"Negro Women Talk Disbanding the Club," *Billings Gazette*, June 18, 1972.

"Will Pursue Science at Boston University," *Butte Daily Bulletin*, October 8, 1919.

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

### Statement of Significance

The John and Armeta 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 John W. Duncan and his 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.



## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

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

The John and Armeta Duncan Residence at 715 West Park Street retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance. Its original location, setting and overall form are still very much intact, as are much of its original design, materials and workmanship. The only significant alterations to the façade and elevations is the covering of the front porch with vertical board siding, the addition of the front metal screen door, and the residing of the rear porch. It retains original decorative bracing on the south façade, while all windows, and wood surrounds appear to be original to the building as well. Located within the Butte-Anaconda Historic Landmark District, it and the houses in the vicinity are of the same general age, and their feeling and association remain intact.

## Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

### Photographs



John and Armeta Duncan Residence  
South Façade, Facing: N  
Google Earth, 2014

**Montana Historic Property Record Form**

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990



John and Armeta Duncan Residence  
Rear Elevation, Facing: S  
Anthony Wood, June 26, 2015

# Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

## Site Map/Aerial Photo



John and Armeta Duncan Residence  
715 W Park,  
Butte, Mt  
T03 N R08 W S13  
Google Earth Satellite Image 2015

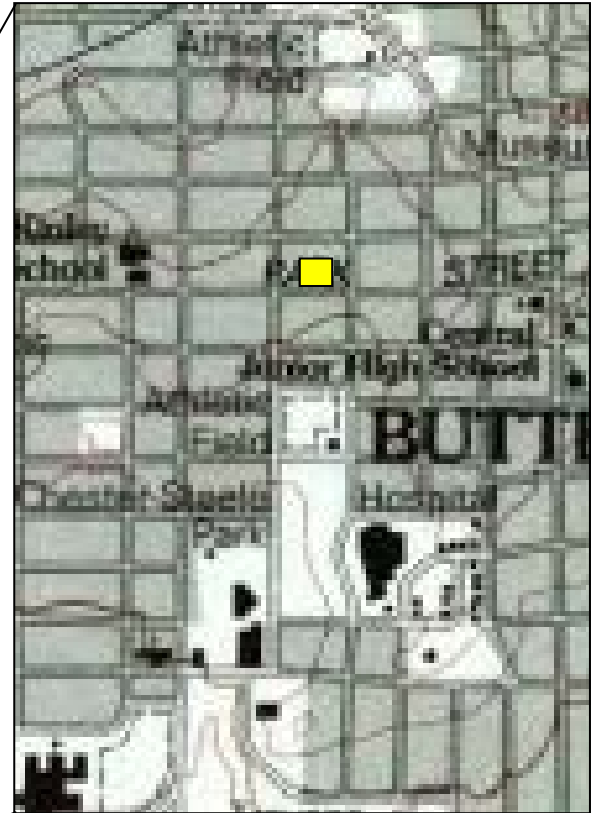
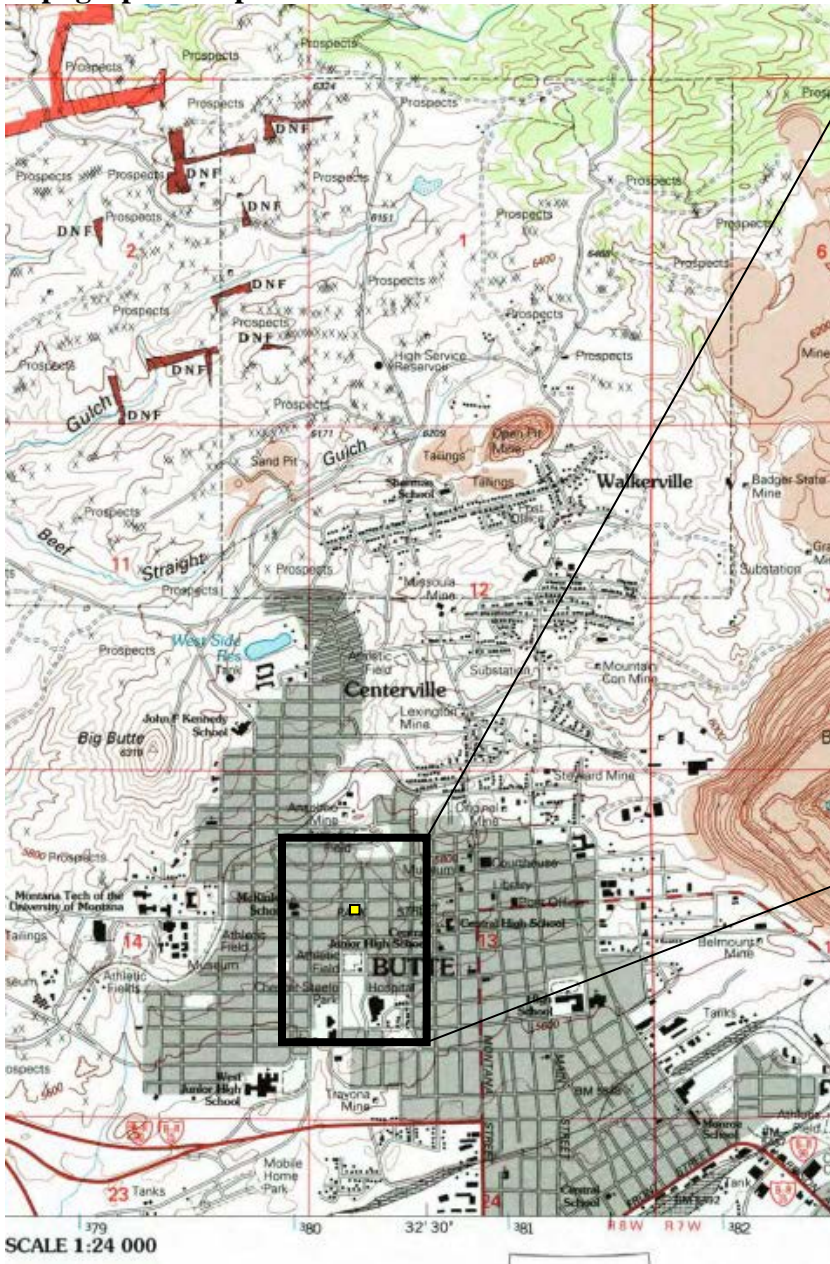


# Montana Historic Property Record Form

Property Name: John And Armeta Duncan Residence

Smithsonian Number: 24SB0990

## Topographic Map



John and Armeta Duncan Residence  
715 W Park,  
Butte, Mt  
T03 N R08 W S13  
USGS Topographic Map 1:24K