

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Lyman -Neel Residence

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
African American Heritage Places in Helena, MT

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 309 North Rodney Street

City or town: Helena State: MT County: Lewis and Clark

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

__x A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>2</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/ single dwelling

Domestic/ multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN /Queen Anne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, stone, brick, stucco, asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Lyman-Neel Residence faces west on North Rodney Street on a generous center lot in Block 49 in the original Helena Townsite. The historic and present address of the Lyman-Neel Residence is 309 North Rodney Street. Mature trees line the street, inviting passersby to recall the bustle of this historic neighborhood overlooking Last Chance Gulch. The historic commercial Rodney Street area is several blocks to the south. The neighborhood lies in the shelter of the Elkhorn Mountain foothills to the south and Mount Helena to the west. The Rodney Street neighborhood is bounded by Davis Street to the east, and Warren Street to the west and runs for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north-south from Acropolis Street to Lyndale Avenue. Older, well-seasoned homes line Rodney Street's residential sections. The residential area and the commercial area to the south between Sixth Avenue and Broadway provide a sense of the nineteenth century milieu in which the capital city grew and prospered. The home reflects the design and ambience of the late nineteenth century. Conversion from a single-family residence to multi-unit apartments did not impact its architecture, nor did its conversion back to a single-family home. The home's footprint remains nearly as it was in the 1870s when Lorenzo Branch Lyman had the home built. The residence, constructed between 1870 and 1874, was among the first in the neighborhood and reflects the direction of Helena's eventual growth and the optimism early residents held in the town's future.

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Narrative Description

Architectural description

EXTERIOR

The property remains today largely as constructed between 1870 and 1874; the early rear addition, built by Sam Neel, was in place before 1883. The building is a wood frame residence with a sturdy stone foundation. The front facade was remodeled circa 1901 and the original clapboard siding was covered in stucco, probably in the early 1900s, by homeowner/contractor Charles Stabern. The home includes 2,365 square feet of living space and displays the massing, bays, asymmetry, and complicated roofline frequently associated with the Late Victorian style. It is generally a two-story rectangular building with an early one-story rear addition. The house is visible on the 1875 bird's-eye map of Helena without the rear addition. Asphalt shingles cover the steeply pitched intersecting gable roof of the main (west) portion of the building. The large rear (east) addition, which appears on the 1883 birdseye view, is covered by a saltbox style roof, also topped with asphalt shingles. The intersecting gable roof covering the main two-story portion of the building features four gable ends, one at the rear, one on each side, and one on the front façade. The rear (east end) of the two-story gable portion of the main building displays a shed roof dormer on both north and south roof slopes. The two-story portion includes an attic that adds an unfinished third level, or half-story. A pyramidal roof on the west caps the attic story. There is also a large partially finished four-room daylight basement with a paneled recreation room and a laundry room. The home has six exterior doors and thirty windows, most of them one-over-one double hung. All widows are fitted with energy-efficient aluminum storm windows, some with mullions. Most of the interior window glass, however, is original. A gravel driveway north of the house leads from Rodney Street to a garage at the back of the property. The garage is accessible only on its west side. Vegetation and neighboring property lines do not allow further access.

West Elevation

The front façade of the residence faces west, toward Rodney Street. An open porch spans the façade. The porch rests on a stone foundation and features six Ionic columns. Two columns occur at the northwest corner, one to either side of the entry, and two more at the southwest corner; together, these columns support the nearly flat porch roof. A pair of double hung windows with transoms overlook the north-side of the porch.

A glass-enclosed bay-vestibule with first-floor main entry centered on the facade interrupts the porch. The vestibule has a twelve-light wood storm door surmounted by a three-light transom; three light/one panel sidelights flank each side of the entry and transom. Vestibule side windows are comprised of four-light fixed units. Within the vestibule, the entry door opening into the house is topped by a single-light transom and flanked on the south by a one-light/one panel sidelight. A pair of modified Tuscan columns support the portion of the porch roof nearest the vestibule entry.

The north side of the second story level displays a pair of double hung windows centered in the gable end. A second-story one-light door, slightly off center, interrupts the gable roofline and opens onto the porch roof that covers the main entry below.

On the south half of the façade, bay windows occur on both the first and second stories, protected by a modified pyramidal (hipped) roof with inset dormer. The first-floor bay holds a fixed picture window with an intricate leaded glass transom. The second story bay features a single-light fixed picture window flanked by sidelights. Double hung windows appear on the sidewalls of both the first story and second

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story of the central bay windows. Two Ionic columns, smaller than those on the first floor, support wide overhanging eaves. A modified pyramidal (hipped) roof caps this south portion of the front façade, below which occurs an attic. This modified pyramidal (hipped) roof displays an inset dormer with a door and louvred vent. Access to this area is from a pulldown ceiling staircase in the upstairs hallway.

South Elevation of Main House

The two-story south facade has an exterior brick chimney that serves as a living room fireplace. Immediately east of the chimney, within the south-facing gable, are paired double-hung windows, below which, on the ground floor, are another set of paired double-hung windows offset to the east from the pair above in the gable. A small shed-roofed dormer pierces the cross gable. It has a small double hung window and the side walls are wood shingled.

North Elevation of Main House

The two-story north façade features a north-facing cross gable that contains one small casement window; immediately to the east projects a shed-roofed dormer identical to the one on the south roof slope. A porch, constructed after 1892, projects around an original bay; originally constructed as an open-air porch, it was entirely enclosed at some point during the historic period. The interior of this enclosure retains the original clapboard siding. The porch one-light/one-panel wood door entry, accessed by open wooden stairs, faces east. A shallow hipped roof shelters the enclosed porch and a narrow post supports the small entry. Light into the enclosed porch occurs from a pair of original four-light storm windows with wood mullions on the north porch wall, and a double hung window on the west-facing wall. Immediately east of the enclosed porch, at the northeast corner of the two-story section of the main house, is a small enclosed shed-roofed addition, which serves as an exterior entry to the basement.

East Elevation of Main House

The rear elevation features the east gable end of the original two-story residence, and the slightly-later constructed one-story saltbox roof wing. The two-story gable holds a gable vent, and an off-center multi-light wood door opening to a small porch; the exterior wood staircase that once provided access to the porch and the entry no longer remains. A double-hung window on the northeast corner of the first floor provides light. An interior slope brick chimney pierces the roof and once served the kitchen.

One-Story Addition

The one-story rear addition, added by 1883, has a saltbox style roof with the ridge running east-west and the gable facing east.

The north wall contains three double-hung windows consisting of a small one-over-one at the far west end, a larger one-over-one just to the east, and a large two-over-two near the center of the elevation. Just offset to the east in the foundation below the small one-over-one window is a small daylight basement window.

The back, or east wall, reveals the gable end. A one-over-one double-hung window occupies the south half of the wall and a two-over-two double-hung is in the north half. A louvred vent is located immediately below the gable's peak.

The south wall of the addition contains two one-over-one double-hung windows in the east portion; a small open deck leading to an entry occurs off the west end of the addition, at the junction of the addition and the main block of the house. The deck is new, replacing an original open porch in the same location. The entry holds a four-light/one-panel wood door and paired one-over-one double-hung windows east of door.

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Garage

The garage/outbuilding, built in 1901, is wood frame covered in stucco. It has a slightly-sloped shed roof and three openings leading to three separate interior spaces. Two large openings intended to accommodate vehicles of the early 1900s occur in the north and in the center portions of the façade while the southern section of the façade holds a wooden mandoor-size entry. The north opening has paired wood eight-light/four-panel wood doors, painted white. The center opening is boarded-over with plywood. The east and south facades are inaccessible. The north wall contains no openings.

INTERIOR

The interior features ten rooms on the first floor and five on the second floor. Original bullseye moldings, and wide baseboards, typical of nineteenth-century Helena, are present throughout most of the interior spaces. The living room displays a large brick fireplace. From the entry, French doors lead to the interior spaces on the left and right, and another set leads from the dining room into the kitchen. The original stairway with finished treads and newel post lead to the second floor. The original hardwood flooring remains throughout much of the house, and the upper floor has a graceful curved wall in the hallway.

INTEGRITY

The residence retains fair to high integrity. Its location, feeling, and association remain strong. Integrity of setting has been compromised from its historical antecedents by some recent development and nearby building-use changes; however, these changes do not overly detract from overall setting of integrity.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship remains fair-to-good. The early period of construction of both the house and its addition continue to reflect much of the design intended by the architect. Although facing of the building with stucco by Charles Stabern has reduced integrity of materials and workmanship, it occurred over 100 years ago during the historic period, therefore reducing its negative impact. The same is true for the façade remodel that occurred the same time. The remodel, which entailed adding a bay on the south half, a second smaller bay on the upper story above it, a small vestibule, an open porch spanning the front, and enclosing the south-facing bay with a porch also occurred over a century ago, with the result that the changes have assumed integrity unto themselves. Stabern also built an auto garage at the rear in 1901. The original wood roof shingles have been replaced with asphalt to ensure structural integrity through weatherization and fire safety, a common alteration to historic houses. Although some interior design changes occurred when the single-family residence was converted into three apartments, interior changes commonly through the life of a residence or business.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1873-1968

Significant Dates

1873, 1875, 1883, 1898, 1901,
1927, 1930

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

African-American

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Lyman-Neel Residence

The Lyman-Neel Residence is contemporary with four other neighboring houses built in the 1870s: the Charles Rumley house at 305 North Rodney, the Robert and Elizabeth Fisk House at 319 North Rodney (National Register listed in 2007, NR #06001248), the Francis and Hannah Pope House at 327 North Rodney (National Register-listed in 2007, NR# 06001248), and the home of Territorial Governor Preston Leslie at 219 North Rodney (listed as part of the Helena Historic District Boundary Increase in 1993, NR# 93001001).¹

The Lyman-Neel Residence stands as an excellent example of the early wave of businessmen who settled in the potential territorial capital as the lure of Virginia City faded and Helena assumed the mantle as the financial, social and transportation hub of the territory. The home's long succession of occupants from 1870 to 1968 mirrors the economic, social, and political milieu in Montana's capital city and illustrates the changing character of the immediate North Rodney Street neighborhood from single-family dwellings to multi-family households. For these reasons, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A.

The Lyman-Neel Residence is also significant at a local level of significance as a residential and commercial property associated with the history of African American people in Helena, Montana. The Lyman-Neel Residence meets the Registration Requirements set forth in the *African American Heritage Places in Helena, MT, Multiple Property Document* under the context *The Heyday of Helena's African American Community, ca. 1877-1910*.² The period of significance identified for this property and its association with the African American community is 1898 to 1901 when Alice Palmer leased the property from its owner and operated an African American boarding house from the premises. While tenure of the boarding operation by Alice Palmer was only three years, the scarcity of extant African American-related buildings in Helena underscores the importance of recognizing the Lyman-Neel Residence's association with housing African Americans. In addition, the operation of the boarding house by Ms. Palmer reflects the economic times that necessitated many larger homes being converted to apartments, allowing the owners to retain these homes. The period of significance conforms to the MPD document.

Significant dates include 1873, the year the Lyman-Neel House was completed and Lyman and his family occupied it, and 1875, the year the Neel family acquired the residence and likely constructed the large one-story addition on the east end of the house. Despite the already commodious size of the residence, the Neels' growing family required more room. The large addition serves as a testament to Neel's success in his business pursuits and reflects the continued affluency of the neighborhood. The year 1883 recognizes the departure of Mrs. Lavinia Neel, recently widowed, for California thus beginning her

¹ The neighborhood represents Helena's first high-style neighborhood where the most prominent early residents settled. Robert Fisk was owner/editor of the *Helena Herald*; Francis Pope was an early-day pharmacist and served as a county commissioner; Charles Rumley was the first chief assayer at Helena's federal assay office, appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant; and Preston Leslie served as territorial governor 1887-1889. Other prominent nearby neighbors in the 1870s included attorney, and later US Senator, Wilbur Fisk Sanders, Territorial Governor Benjamin Potts, and wealthy cattle rancher William C. Child.

² *African American Heritage Places in Helena, MT Multiple Property Document* (documentation accepted April 4, 2017).

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long tenure as absentee landlord. The year 1898 recognizes the year when Alice Palmer, an African American, leased the house during a period in Helena history when occupation of a residence the size of 309 N. Rodney Street by a single family proved problematic. A decline in wealth in Helena at the time played out by many of the large grand homes being converted to apartments to help owners pay for upkeep and generate income; Ms. Palmer leased and operated a boarding business out of the Lyman-Neel residence. In 1901, the Staberns bought the house, ending its long-time ownership by Lavinia Park (formerly Mrs. Sam Neel). Under the ownership of Charles Stabern and his family, some of the exterior façade changes occurred, reflecting not only Charles Stabern's occupation as a contractor, but also the relatively stable economy of the time. After the Staberns' 20-plus years of ownership, the Klemmes moved into the house in 1927, for a short period of time. Despite the short-tenure in the house, however, Edwin Klemme played an important role establishing the Inter Mountain Union College, formed by a merger of two previously operating Protestant schools, as Helena assumed a position as a hub of educational, social, and health services. Under Klemme's ownership, the house resorted back to a single-family dwelling. The year 1930 marks beginning of ownership of 309 North Rodney Street by the Honorable Sam C. Ford, associate justice of the Montana Supreme Court, marking its occupation by the man (and his family) who would go on to serve as Governor of Montana, and reflecting the continued importance of the Lyman-Neel Residence and the neighborhood in housing individuals important to not only the history of Helena, but Montana.

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

EARLY HISTORY

Helena and the Rodney Street Neighborhood

Helena sprang from gold discovered on July 14, 1864, along a remote stream the discovery men called Last Chance. Montana Territory, created in May 1864, was only weeks old. Gold lured an eclectic population to the new mining camp and by 1870, Helena had as diverse a population as anywhere in the West with substantial Chinese, African-American, Jewish, and other ethnic groups represented. Helena settled into its role as the hub of the new Territory of Montana, acquiring population and attendant commerce from the designated territorial capital at Virginia City to the south. By the end of the 1860s, placer mining dwindled and other early gold camps began to decline. However, Helena, fortuitously located along the projected route of Northern Pacific Railroad, held its breath in the hope that the tracks would reach the community. The remoteness of Helena, and Montana in general, resulted in isolation, making the freighting of goods difficult, but critical. In addition, despite disastrous fires that resulted in the loss of large chunks of the early Helena commercial district, citizens demonstrated their confidence in their new community, rebuilding multiple times, and dotting new neighborhoods with fine homes.

Designation of Helena as the new territorial capital in 1875 brought further energy, encouraged building projects, and brought government offices and officials to settle in the community. Courthouse Square became the heart of territorial business and many officials, government workers, and those providing services to the busy district, located in the adjacent Rodney Street neighborhood.

The arrival of the Northern Pacific into Helena in 1883, not only drastically changed travel and carried new waves of residents, it also assured Helena's permanency. The numbers of new inhabitants arriving resulted in housing becoming tight and boarders becoming common in many households. After statehood in 1889, Courthouse Square continued to be the seat of state and county government. On

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the cusp of a bitter election to determine Anaconda or Helena as permanent state capital, construction ground to a halt and depression loomed with the Panic of 1893. The crash of the silver market devastated the local economy, and many wealthy Helenans, including Rodney Street neighbors William Chessman and W. C. Child, lost fortunes. Despite the economic crash and its resultant impacts on many of the moneyed in Helena, the town emerged victorious winning the capital election in 1894.

Even prior to the crash, many Helenans suffered hardship. To help combat these issues, churches and social service organizations stepped to the fore. Protestants began to counter Catholic services with non-denominational institutions into the 1890s. Catholic institutions in the 1890s included St. John's Hospital, St. Joseph's Children's Home, and the House of the Good Shepherd (serving wayward women wishing to reform). St. Peter's Episcopal Hospital, the Florence Crittenton Home, Methodist Wesleyan University, and the Montana Children's Home founded by Jewish matron Josephine Hepner, all emerged in the 1890s. These social service organizations—both Catholic and Protestant/non-denominational—ranked Helena as Montana's leading center for social and medical services.

Into the 1900s as the economy recovered, the state capitol moved from Courthouse Square to a new building east of town and projects across the state boosted employment. Although Helena never quite regained the momentum of the 1870s and 1880s, its earlier prosperity helped to foster a more stable economy, establishing a capital city that revolved around state government.

LYMAN-NEEL RESIDENCE

THE LYMAN-NEEL HOUSE UNDER THE LYMAN AND NEEL OWNERSHIP—PROSPERITY IN HELENA

Lorenzo Branch Lyman

Lorenzo Branch Lyman was the builder and first owner of the residence at 309 North Rodney. He was born in Lewis County, New York in 1828. As a youth he moved to Wisconsin and studied law, married in 1858, and arrived at Alder Gulch with the gold rush in 1864. He and his wife, Mary Hawkins Lyman, homesteaded in the Gallatin Valley and had their first child, Sylvia, in 1865, reputedly the first white girl born in Gallatin County.³ Lyman introduced and cultivated White Victoria and Red Bearded Mediterranean wheat on his Lyman Ranch, located three miles from the settlement of Bozeman along the Gallatin River, one of the earliest and most successful Gallatin wheat farms.⁴ Nearby Lyman Creek is named for Lorenzo Lyman.

Lyman continued to farm his Gallatin ranch, receiving his patent in 1871, but established his home in Helena. Lyman opened the first land tract in the Territory of Montana.⁵ With backing from his friends in Wisconsin, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Lyman the first register of the land office at Helena where he served as land register and practiced law. Soon after settling at Helena, in January 1870, however, Mary died of epilepsy leaving two children. The 1870 territorial census shows Lyman living in a single-family household with his son Herschel, 3, and daughter Sylvia, 5.

Lyman bought and sold real estate and in September 1870, following his wife's death, he bought lots in the Helena Townsite Block 49, the location of the eventual construction of the subject of this

³ Plains, MT, *Sanders County Signal*, August 14, 1914.

⁴ Virginia City, MT, *Montana Post*, Oct 19, 1867 and Nov 17, 1866.

⁵ Dillon, MT *Dillon Tribune*, Jan. 8, 1915.

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nomination.⁶ At some point between 1870 and 1874, and reflecting Lyman's success economically, Lyman built the house at 309 N. Rodney Street. The home was likely completed by April 1873.

In 1871, he married Francis "Fannie" A. Patterson. On May 1, 1873, the *Helena Weekly Herald* announced that Lyman had opened a partnership with W.W. DeLacy. Together, the partners processed patent applications, conducted surveys, and performed other land office business. In addition, Lyman continued to practice law, doing very well financially. A son, Rollin Arch Patterson Lyman, was born on June 11, 1873.

Lyman always stayed busy. He was civic minded, collecting clothing for children at the Blackfeet Agency. He dabbled in real estate, especially well-paying real estate like that in Helena's high class red-light Wood Street neighborhood, building several "cottages" there in 1874.⁷ He also built the Elite Saloon for \$2,800 after fire swept through the business district.

He was an avid outdoorsman, killing half a dozen buffalo on an annual hunt, and he was part of an early expedition to Yellowstone Park, the United States' first national park, created in 1872. He, along with neighbor Francis Pope, Dr. Cyrus S. Ingersoll, and others, took a month-long excursion to explore the park in the fall of 1874. The group of friends called themselves the "Pioneer Capital Exploring Expedition." The group's adventures in the Park proved noteworthy enough that a reporter followed their progress.⁸

In April 1873, the *Helena Weekly Herald* reported that Lyman was constructing the "most commodious" chicken house in the territory where he would breed the finest chickens. In the fall, Lyman's Houdan chickens took a first-place premium in the territorial fair. His neighbors, Charles Rumley and Francis Pope, also took prizes for their poultry. The next year in June of 1874, the paper reported that Lyman produced a fine, early crop of strawberries on his Rodney Street property.⁹ During the mid-1870s, the Lyman children, Sylvia and Herschel (known as "Branchie,") were frequently in the news for good grades and school presentations at the Rodney Street School.¹⁰

The house appears clearly on the 1875 Helena bird's-eye map.¹¹ In 1875, the Lymans decided to move to California and offered the property at 309 N. Rodney for sale at auction. The sale included the residence and grounds, all household furnishings, parlor ornaments, a nearly new buggy, pure-bred chickens, the family cow, and a "fine singer" canary. The high bid came from Samuel Neel who purchased the Lyman residence and grounds on June 4, 1875, for \$3,500. Lyman wished a quick sale and the price was a sacrifice, especially considering Neel's economic acumen and successful business ventures. Neel "improved the premises," to accommodate his growing family, totaling hundreds of dollars before he and his family moved in. According to the *Independent Record*, Neel made "necessary repairs and alterations" to the house and likely constructed the large rear addition at this time.¹²

⁶ Lewis and Clark County Clerk and Recorder, City-County Building, 316 N. Park Ave, Helena, MT. Deed Book K, page 374.

⁷ Helena, MT, *Helena Weekly Herald*, Dec. 31, 1874.

⁸ Helena, MT, *Helena Weekly Herald*, Feb. 5, August 13 and Sept. 17, 1875.

⁹ *Helena Weekly Herald*, April 17 and Oct. 9, 1873; June 18, 1874.

¹⁰ See for example *Helena Weekly Herald*, March 6 and April 3, 1873.

¹¹ Birds-eye view of Helena, Montana 1875. Glover, E. S. T, A.L. Bancroft & Company. Library of Congress American Memory Map Collection.

¹² Helena MT, *Helena Weekly Herald*, April 29, May 13, June 17, July 6 and 17, 1875; *Helena Independent Record*, May 13, 1875.

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Samuel and Lavinia Neel

Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1846, Samuel Neel was the son of a successful hardware merchant. Unfortunately, his father died when Neel was very young, and the estate was lost. The family moved to St. Louis in 1863 where Neel, at 17, joined the wholesale grocery firm of Tutt and Donnell. He came to Helena in 1866 as a bookkeeper for the firm. Donnell soon retired and Neel became a partner in Tutt, Murphy and Neel in 1870. After Tutt's retirement, and with only partner John T. Murphy remaining, the firm became Murphy, Neel and Co.¹³ It flourished with the hard work of its partners. The huge mercantile business carried groceries, dry goods, liquors, wines, cigars, and agricultural equipment and advertised that they were the proprietors of the "Montana Freight Line," working in connection with the Utah and Northern Railroad. The firm served as the agent for all sizes of Schuttler wagons and other agricultural implements. Based in Helena and Fort Benton, where goods were received at the docks on the Missouri River and freighted to various destinations, the firm had additional branch stores and other partners in Deer Lodge and Butte.¹⁴ The substantial National Register-listed Murphy-Neel warehouse still stands on Front Street in Fort Benton.

Samuel Neel and Lavinia A. Baker married in St. Louis on December 15, 1870. Lavinia was a childhood friend and schoolmate from Neel's home state of Virginia. Just as Neel was reaching the peak of his career, he died of an unspecified, work-related illness at age 36, leaving five children between the ages of 8 and 3 months.¹⁵ Neel's death came just a year before the arrival of the Northern Pacific to the region, changing the business of freighting forever, and spelling the demise of river transport. After Neel's death, John T. Murphy continued on, diversifying and becoming the leading grocer in the territory.¹⁶

THE LYMAN-NEEL HOUSE UNDER THE PROPRIETORSHIP OF LAVINIA NEEL—THE BEGINNING OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S SHIFTING ECONOMIC FORTUNES

The Lymans and the Neels are stellar representatives of the tenor of Helena's early formative years following the rush to Last Chance. Lorenzo Lyman's position with the land office was critical in establishing the earliest property ownership through surveying, patents, and titles. Samuel Neel built a huge trade network whose freighting business in the territory was essential in the days before railroads facilitated shipping of goods. Both men were financially successful, reflected in their choice of housing for themselves and their families.

After Samuel's passing, Lavinia Neel moved with her children and her mother to Oakland, California, in 1883, although she continued to own the residence at 309 N. Rodney. During the next twenty years, Lavinia acted as absentee landlord for 309 North Rodney. In 1887, she married Shubael Park in California.¹⁷ During the period of her ownership, the residence at 309 N. Rodney owned by Mrs. Park (formerly Mrs. Samuel Neel) hosted a variety of tenants, representing, and providing insight into the changing character of Helena as the twentieth century approached. The house received few changes to accommodate multi-family tenants.¹⁸

¹³ Fort Benton, MT, *Benton Weekly Record*, July 6, 1882.

¹⁴ Fort Benton, MT, *River Press*, Dec 28, 1881.

¹⁵ Helena, MT, *Helena Independent*, June 3, 1882 and July 2, 1882.

¹⁶ Helena, MT, *Helena Weekly Herald*, March 22, 1883.

¹⁷ Helena, MT, *Helena Weekly Herald*, Oct. 27, 1887.

¹⁸ Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps of Helena, MT, 1884, 1888, 1890, 1892.

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Upon statehood in 1889, the Lewis and Clark County courthouse, which previously served as the territorial capitol, continued to be the heart of the new state government and the state capitol into the later 1890s. During this transition period, numerous officials called the Rodney Street neighborhood home because of its close proximity. John W. Wade, of the firm Wade and Wheeler, rented Mrs. Park's house in 1890. Wade served as the US Deputy Mineral Surveyor with offices in the Lewis and Clark County courthouse. His government affiliation and office in the courthouse while a tenant in Mrs. Park's residence on Rodney Street, illustrates the sustained importance of the neighborhood's proximity to busy Courthouse Square. The home remained a single-family dwelling although the Wades, like most local families, including the Fisks and Rumleys next door to the north and south, and the Popes, took in boarders. In 1890, Roland Hilman, a relative of Mrs. Wade's, and bookkeeper Charles Osgood, became boarders living with the Wades at 309. Wade, who assisted in the right-of-way survey of the Northern Pacific Railroad across western Montana in 1872, was later, in 1903, appointed Montana's first state engineer.¹⁹

After Helena won the vitriolic election against Anaconda in 1894 and became Montana's permanent state capital, and as the new capitol building was under construction on the city's east side, the importance of Courthouse Square as the hub of state government waned as the physical location of the state capitol prepared to move a few miles away. The Lyman-Neel home reflects these changes as the opportunity to continue rental of the house as a single-family residence became more difficult, resulting in the necessity of its conversion to a boarding house that provided housing to multiple tenants.

The Rodney Street neighborhood, perhaps more than any other in Helena, reflects great diversity during the 1890s and into the early twentieth century. The 1890 Frist Presbyterian Church at 535 N. Ewing and the 1891 Jewish Temple Emanu El at 515 N. Ewing anchored the neighborhood's north end. Prominent Jewish families like the Ganses at 416 N. Ewing and the Silvermans at 412 N. Rodney made their homes in the neighborhood. The 1889 German Lutheran Church at 9th and Rodney, situated where a number of German families settled, also added to this eclectic mix. In this respect, the neighborhood may have provided a logical niche for Alice Palmer and her boarders.

African Americans in Helena

Black Montanans have sometimes lived lonely lives as small minorities; however, as their histories begin to unfold and a greater understanding of the hardships they endured emerges, their rich legacies begin to fill an important missing chapter in the history of our state and communities. African-American men and women arrived in Helena with the first waves of settlers. By 1870, seventy-one African Americans resided in Helena. Twenty years later, out of a total population of 13,834 people, 279 African-Americans called Helena home. By 1910, this number grew to 420 representing 3.4 percent of the city's population. The number of blacks living in the Helena area at the turn of the twentieth century reflected the solidarity of the prosperous and comfortable African-American community. Black citizens in Helena never lived in segregated neighborhoods, rather, their homes dotted many Helena streets. Here, as elsewhere in Montana, African Americans, such as James Crump, Walter Dorsey, Julian Anderson, Miles York, J. P. Ball, Joseph Bass, Mamie Bridgewater, and Alice Palmer left important legacies.

Despite successes, Helena's black population, as in most Montana communities, was in some respects invisible. A promotional pamphlet issued about Helena in 1908 makes no mention of its sizable black population. The publication praised Helena's churches, fraternal organizations, benevolent societies,

¹⁹ [Kendall, MT, Kendall Chronicle, March 24, 1903, and](#) Superior, MT, *Mineral Independent*, Nov. 9, 1922.

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civic improvement groups, and social clubs, but failed to mention that Helena's progressive African American population boasted similar institutions as well. Its active, civic-minded residents articulated and voiced their thoughts and concerns through Joseph Bass' *Plaindealer*, protesting acts of prejudice and discrimination. One political organization, the Colored Progressive League, counted 60 active members who pledged to expel black pimps, prostitutes, gamblers, and hustlers from their midst and to defend unjustly harassed local African Americans. Helena's vibrant black community also enjoyed recitals, plays, socials and formal debates staged by an active literary society. Despite their active role in Helena, African Americans in 1900 were not accepted by their white counterparts. Although Helena didn't use "whites only" signs, as in the South, blacks were not allowed in white businesses, such as restaurants and barbershops.²⁰

The socio-economic situation of African-Americans in Helena and Montana mirrored their counterparts in other parts of the country. Racial discrimination subjected most blacks to limited job opportunities and menial employment. In 1880, 57% of Montana's black males worked as laborers, cooks, servants, waiters, or porters in the larger urban areas. While most urban African Americans found employment in the service industry, others worked as dock hands at Fort Benton, teamsters, barbers, innkeepers and saloonkeepers, ranchers, farmers, and other skilled. African American women often found employment in similar fields, generally service-related; however, two women were noted as operating boarding houses.²¹

The need for housing posed an issue for many Helenans as a general population surge added to a housing shortage on the heels of the 1893 Silver Panic when construction all but ceased until after 1900. Further, as was typical of Helena, African American households were never concentrated in any one neighborhood. With the move of the capital away from the N. Rodney Street area, occupancy of 309 N. Rodney by a single family became less likely. Realizing the shifting demographics of the Rodney Street area from the move of the capital east, Mrs. Parks rented 309 N. Rodney to Alice Palmer, an enterprising African American woman who took advantage of the opportunities offered her.

Mrs. Palmer's boardinghouse demonstrates not only the evolving economic pressures and changes occurring in Helena but is also an expression related to the height of Helena's African-American population. The operation of 309 N. Rodney by Mrs. Palmer illustrates one type of employment generally available to this ethnic group.

Despite the general non-segregation of neighborhoods and given the racial tension that was always forced upon African Americans in Helena and elsewhere, the presence of Mrs. Palmer's exclusively black boardinghouse next to the socially prominent Fisk family raises the question concerning the Fisks' acceptance of these neighbors and Mrs. Park's motive as absentee landlord in renting her property to Alice Palmer.²²

²⁰ William L. Lang, "The Nearly Forgotten Blacks on Last Chance Gulch," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (1979) p. 50, 55 and 57.

²¹ Delia Hagen, *African-American Heritage Places in Helena, MT* MPD, 2016. State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

²² The socially-conscious Fisks were always careful in their associations, and in 1875, when Wilbur Sanders secured a teaching position at Central School for Helen Clarke—daughter of trader Malcolm Clarke and Cothocoma, a Blackfoot woman—Elizabeth Fisk withdrew her children from public school in protest. See Laura Ferguson, "Helen Piotopowaka Clarke and the Persistence of Prejudice" in *Beyond Schoolmarms and Madams* (Helena: MHS Press, 2016) p 171.

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Alice Palmer

Alice Palmer was born in Paris, Kentucky in 1853 to Julia Johnson who later married Henry Maxwell. The family moved west, presumably after the Emancipation. In 1871, the Maxwells' daughter Olivia was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. Although no record was found of Alice's marriage to William J. Palmer, by 1873 her son Arthur was born in St. Paul. By the time daughter Alice was born in 1876, the family had moved to North Dakota. In 1880, Alice lived with the Maxwells, her sister Olivia, and children Arthur and Alice Gertrude in North Dakota Territory at Bismarck. At that time, Alice is recorded as a widow working as a laundress.

William J. Palmer, who is the father on record of all five of Alice's children, also appears in the 1880 Bismarck census as married and living alone, working as a bartender. The family came to Helena in 1886 although records show Alice had two more children, daughters Julia in 1887, and Rebecca in 1889, who were both born in North Dakota.²³ Palmer, born in England, was a Caucasian, which could explain why the couple might never have married and never lived together. The Palmer children are generally recorded on marriage and census records as "mulatto," and occasionally recorded as "white."

In Helena, Alice Palmer settled at the north end of Joliet Street where she operated furnished rooms among the parlor houses and brothels that spread along Wood and Joliet streets. While she and William J. Palmer never lived at the same address, Arthur briefly lived with his father nearby at 118 South Warren Street in 1892.²⁴ That year, Alice's last child, daughter Pearl, was born in Helena. After 1896, William disappeared from the records. All documents consistently record Alice as a widow, even before her children were born.

Alice set herself up in business letting furnished rooms. Her first venture occurred on Joliet Street, followed in 1898 when she leased the residence at 309 North Rodney. Operating boarding houses served a vital need during the late 1890s as the tumultuous economy seemed to bear once recession after another, reducing the opportunity for many people to own or rent a residence for themselves or their family. The move to Rodney Street included all of Alice's children: son Arthur and daughters Alice, Julia, Rebecca, and Pearl. By 1901, Alice's mother, Julia Maxwell, also lived in her daughter's boardinghouse. Alice's nephew, James Johnson also found accommodations at 309 N. Rodney.²⁵ The remaining rooms let to her boarders typify young African American Helenans: her son Arthur worked as a bartender; Henry Williams served as a soldier; James Johnson was employed as a whitewasher; David Kenoly and August Mason worked as hotel porters; and James Howard was a club porter.

After leaving 309 N. Rodney, Alice and Author established a home at 199 Ralph Street in Helena around 1910 where they continued to take in boarders. Staying very active, Alice also homesteaded in the

²³ 1900 Federal Census, Helena; obituaries for Olivia Maxwell Fisher, *Independent Record*, May 10, 1950 and Alice Palmer, *Independent Record*, Dec. 9, 1936.

²⁴ Polk City Directory for Helena, MT, 1892.

²⁵ James Johnson's father Marion Johnson had abandoned James and his sibling, leaving them with his mother, Julia Maxwell. Marion assaulted his mother when she interfered with his abusive treatment of his children. A court case ended with Johnson fined \$10 and ordered to spend ten days in jail. Helena, MT, *Independent-Record*, Dec. 29, 1894. See <http://helenahistory.org/henry-maxwell-108-cutler-st.htm> for the Maxwell family history. Some information is conflicting. Further, daughter Julia was married at 17 to William King in 1905. She had only been married a few months when she and her husband, who both worked on the West Side at 702 Harrison for George L. Tracey, got into an argument. Julia shot her husband with a gun she took from her employer. The crime occurred in the homeowner's dining room. Julia was later acquitted of murder. Her plea of "hysteria" was the first time such a defense was used in Montana. See Butte, MT, *The Butte Miner*, Dec. 28, 1905; April 17, 1906; and *passim*.

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Lincoln area. Continuing along the path of providing lodging accommodations, she built 22 tourist cabins which she operated for 25 years. Alice Palmer died in 1936. After her death, son Arthur operated the Palmer Cabins until his death at the age of 78 in 1951.²⁶ The cabins later became the Palmer Subdivision.

Arthur Palmer never married, but worked as the steward at the Lamb's Club, an elite white men's social club. Several of Alice's daughters married into prominent African-American families in Helena and Great Falls. Alice Gertrude Palmer (Dickerson Owens Holland) Walker made her home in Great Falls with her fourth husband, Ray Walker where they operated the Walker Tea Room.

Pearl Palmer Rogers Moore married twice. Both husbands were Caucasian. Her second husband, Clair L. Moore, worked for the Great Northern Railway and was a chauffeur for Capital Laundry and Merchants Delivery. He was a WWI veteran of the 11th Machine Gun Battalion, 4th MT Div. and died at Fort Harrison in 1941. At the time of her death in 1961, Pearl worked as the custodian at the Nite Owl Lounge in Helena.

Rebecca Palmer Williams Green married George Williams in Missoula 1909, and soon after married William F. Green. The couple initially settled in Butte where William was a porter in a barbershop. The union resulted in the birth of three sons, one who died in 1917 at birth. By 1920, the family had moved in with Arthur at 199 Ralph in Helena. Rebecca worked as a cook and William as a custodian. Five years later, William became ill with tuberculosis, dying at Galen Sanitarium in 1925.²⁷ Following William's passing, Rebecca moved to Los Angeles, California, by 1930, where she cooked for a private family. Records indicate Rebecca moved alone, without any of her children. Descendants of the Greens continue to have ties with Helena.

Alice Palmer's Boarders

Henry Williams

A veteran of the U.S. Army who served in Indian campaigns in the Southwest, Henry Williams worked as a store janitor during his retirement. Williams may have been stationed at Fort Harrison or possibly another Montana fort for his last military assignment, often the case for many veteran buffalo soldiers. He was born in Massachusetts in 1843 and boarded with Alice Palmer at 309 North Rodney, then moved with her and Arthur in 1901. He was a longtime resident of the Palmer home at 199 Ralph where he lived until his death in 1923.

Augustus Mason

Augustus "Gus" Mason was born in Kansas in 1873. While boarding at Alice Palmer's, he worked as a hotel porter and at various clubs over the next several decades in Helena. African-American clubs, including the Autumn Leaf Club and the Manhattan Club, served as the African-American alternatives to the Montana Club and other white men's social clubs. Gus managed the Manhattan Club which advertised a library, café and buffet. Gus held a reputation as the life of the party, a wonderful entertainer/singer and a member of the Colored Band. In 1906, he and his friends, James Howard and Arthur Palmer, signed on with the Helena Giants, a newly formed black baseball club. Gus was elected its treasurer. The *Montana Plaindealer* noted in 1907 that Gus had dissolved his holding in the Manhattan Club and was headed for the West Coast. "We trust that he will have success wherever he

²⁶ Helena, MT, *Independent-Record*, Dec. 9, 1936 and July 19, 1951.

²⁷ Helena *Independent Record*, March 6, 1925.

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may go, and eventually return to dear old Helena.”²⁸ He did return, again boarded with the Palmers in 1910 at 199 Ralph, lived the single life, and was well-loved by Helena’s black community.

David Kenoly

Service at Fort Harrison likely brought David Kenoly to Montana. He was a buffalo soldier and veteran of the Spanish American War, serving with the 24th Infantry Company D, stationed at Fort Harrison. He was discharged with the rank of private and a “very good” service record in 1899. David worked as a hotel porter when boarding with Alice Palmer; he continued that work when he moved to Billings in 1908. David married in 1916, and died in in Billings in 1938.²⁹

James H. Howard

James H. Howard was born in Bismarck, North Dakota in 1874. It seems likely that his family knew the Palmers as they were in residence there at the same time. James, Gus Mason, and Arthur Palmer were the same age and their names are frequently linked in the columns of the *Montana Plaindealer*. James was employed as a hotel janitor in 1900. In 1901, he married Clarinda Crump, daughter of a premier pioneer Montana family. Arthur Palmer served as witness. Although Clarinda and James had three children, they soon divorced. Clarinda and the three children, Norman, Lawrence, and Naomi, lived with the Crumps. Daughter Naomi died at age 14 of mitral stenosis likely caused by rheumatic fever. In 1908, James married Ms. Marion Farlow, who was born in England and Caucasian. James was long employed as a janitor in the office of the copper smelter at Anaconda. James died in 1941. Arthur Palmer served as a pallbearer for his longtime friend.³⁰ The two Howard boys were second generation Helenans, and their fifth generation descendants continue the Howard name in Helena today.

James Johnson

James Johnson was Alice Palmer’s nephew, born in 1882 while the family was in Minneapolis/St. Paul. James was another longtime boarder with the Palmers, not only at 309 N. Rodney, but also later when they moved to 199 Ralph. While boarding at 309 N. Rodney, James was employed as a kalsominer, or whitewasher, at his step-grandfather Henry Maxwell’s whitewashing business at 108 Cutler. James never married. He also worked as a porter and shoe shiner at Maryan’s Barber Shop for many years. He died of cerebral hemorrhage due to opium addiction in 1939.³¹

In a larger context, the Palmer family and their turn of the 20th century boarders represent a microcosm of African-American society. Inter-racial relationships, many marriages, and general employment in the military, and as custodians and porters illustrate a slice of life during this period among Helena’s black population at a time when being black was not easy. They represent hard-working individuals who struggled to provide for their families. To accomplish this, they maintained close-knit relationships with friends and family. Following the succession of family members through time reveals a continuation of these patterns.

²⁸ *The Montana Plaindealer*, April 20, 1906; December 18, 1908; May 10, 1907.

²⁹ *U.S. Army, Register of Enlistments, 1798-1914* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007; *Billings Gazette*, July 3, 1938.

³⁰ *Helena Independent Record*, April 16, 1941.

³¹ *Helena Independent Record*, November 10, 1939; State of Montana Death Certificate, November 9, 1939, #263.

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1901—NEW OWNERSHIP FOR THE LYMAN-NEEL HOUSE

Charles Stabern

Lavinia Park found a niche for herself in California, and in 1901 cut ties with Helena by divesting herself of the property at 309 N. Rodney Street. Other homes in the neighborhood also passed out of longtime ownership. The Fisks, for example, moved to California in 1903; the Leslies had long before moved to 737 Broadway; Charles Rumley died in 1897, and by 1900, several families occupied the former Rumley home.

As building again gained momentum following the depression of the 1890s, Charles and Bertha Stabern purchased the property at 309 N. Rodney. Stabern, a prominent and successful contractor, well-represents contractors associated with the building boom that followed the decade-long period of little activity. Not only did Stabern's public buildings impact Montana communities, but the changes he made to the house also reflect the building surge Helena experienced in the early 1900s.

Charles Stabern emigrated from Scotland as a young man in 1876 and in 1889 formed a partnership with John A. Sanden, a well-known Helena contractor.³² His contract work wasn't limited to Helena as in 1900, Stabern served as the building contractor for the Ravalli County Courthouse in Hamilton, designed by A.J. Gibson. He also built the Beaverhead County Free High School in Dillon in 1902. In 1905, Stabern received a contract of more than \$110,000 for structural and headwork of the Lower Yellowstone Glendive-Buford irrigation project.³³

From the late 1890s to 1922, the Staberns owned and operated the forty-two-room Sunrise Terrace apartments at the corner of Davis and Sixth Avenue in Helena. Norwegian-born Bertha Stabern served as landlady. While the Staberns and their three children maintained their household on the first floor at 309 N. Rodney, Bertha took in boarders for the unoccupied rooms. In 1910, she had eight boarders. Although the state business that once dominated the area around Courthouse Square waned, residents of the Rodney Street neighborhood continued to reflect the importance of government business and services to Montana's capital city and county seat. Boarders in 1910 for example included the state engineer, a Forest Service civil engineer, a law office stenographer, and a bank clerk.

Charles Stabern likely remodeled the home's front façade in the early 1900s, adding a bay on the south half and a second, smaller bay on the upper story above it, a small vestibule, and an open porch spanning the front. Stabern also enclosed the south-facing bay with a porch and built an auto garage at the rear in 1901. It is highly-likely that the stucco was applied to the exterior of the house at this time.³⁴ The interior and the basic footprint of the home, however, remain nearly original.

³² Sanden brought a lawsuit against Stabern in 1903 dissolving the partnership. See Butte-Anaconda, MT, *The Anaconda Standard*, Sept. 16, 1903.

³³ Butte-Anaconda, MT, *Anaconda Standard*, Jan. 27, 1900; Missoula, MT, *Missoulian*, Jan. 17, 1902 and June 15, 1905.

³⁴ The use of stucco represents one of Helena's design trends in the 1920s through late 1940s of updating older buildings. During this period, a movement to remodel many of the residential and commercial Victorian-era buildings in more contemporary architectural styles occurred; stucco proved to be one of the most popular means of achieving the desired updated look. The widespread use of stucco coincides with Andrew Jackson Downing's 1850 publication *The Architecture of Country House*. According to Downing, stucco "was cheaper, warmer and drier, and could be 'agreeably' tinted" compared to stone or brick. (Paul Putz, National Register nomination for the *Gilpatrick/Root House* (listed August 10, 2005, NR # 05000883), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT). Anne Grimmer elaborated that with the introduction of numerous revival styles of architecture around 1900, along with the improvement and availability of Portland cement, popularity for the use of stucco in the United States began around 1890 and accelerated into the 1930s and 1940s. (Anne Grimmer, *Preservation Brief 22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco* (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior,

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THE LYMAN-NEEL HOUSE, 1927 TO 1972—STABILITY DESPITE ECONOMIC SWINGS

The state's purchase of the nearby Chessman Mansion at 304 North Ewing in 1913 for use as the official executive residence brought new prestige and continued government presence to the neighborhood. After the Staberns moved to California in 1922, several others briefly owned the property including Leonard Q. Skelton, examiner and superintendent of state banks, whose office was at the State Capitol.

Edwin J. Klemme

In 1927, the Edwin J. Klemme family moved into the home, returning it to a single-family residence again. Although the Klemmes' two-year residency was brief, the family's occupation of 309 N. Rodney illustrates the role of the building in housing locally-important people who played oversized roles in the town as Helena assumed a position as a hub of educational, social, and health services, of which Reverend Klemme played a significant part.

Near this time, Montana Wesleyan College, a Methodist university founded at Helena in 1890, proposed to merge with the Presbyterian College of Montana at Deer Lodge. Classes at the Deer Lodge college had been suspended since 1916 and the college at Helena was financially struggling. Both schools had been founded as protestant alternatives to the widespread Catholic educational services in Montana, including St. Vincent's Academy, St. Helena Cathedral School, and St. Charles College in Helena. Under the name Inter Mountain Union College, the plan set forth by the Boards of Trustees for the merger specified that the first president be Methodist. Dr. Edwin J. Klemme assumed that role, arriving in 1924 from Bellingham Washington. Reverend Klemme was a well-known lecturer, writer, and educator. During his tenure as president, he greatly improved the fledgling 11th Avenue campus (where the Capitol Hill Mall presently stands) with the addition of a gymnasium and extensive landscaping. He also established a summer school. He resigned in 1929 to return to his home at Bellingham, Washington.³⁵

Honorable Sam C. and Mary Ford

The home at 309 North Rodney continued serving its role as a single-family home under the next owners. The Honorable Sam C. Ford, associate justice of the Montana Supreme Court, moved his family to the residence in 1930, despite the economic turmoil that gripped the United States at the time. The Fords maintained the home for a number of years, watching as their four daughters grew to adulthood in the home during the next decade.

Sam Ford was born in Kentucky and moved to Kansas with his family at a young age. He graduated from law school at the University of Kansas in 1906 and came to Montana to practice law. In 1910, he married Mary Shobe. His practice led him to serving as Montana's attorney general from 1917 to 1921, and as a Supreme Court Justice from 1929 to 1933.

Mary Shobe was the granddaughter of Preston Leslie, a former governor of Kentucky and Montana's territorial governor from 1887 to 1889. When the Fords moved to 309 North Rodney in 1929, it was happenstance that Mary Ford's grandparents had resided two doors down at 219 N. Rodney during the time that Leslie served as territorial governor.

1990), p. 2.). Its low cost and general ease of application proved popular in Helena. (Paul Putz, National Register nomination for the *Gilpatrick/Root House* (listed August 10, 2005, NR # 05000883), on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT).

³⁵Edward Laird Mills, *Plains, Peaks and Pioneers* (Portland: Metropolitan Press, 1947) p. 161-162. The school was destroyed in the 1935 earthquakes but survives in Billings as Rocky Mountain College.)

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In 1940, Sam was Montana's governor elect when the Fords celebrated their 30th anniversary. Their four daughters gave them a reception and invited seventy-five close friends. According to the Helena independent, "yellow and white chrysanthemums were used to decorate the downstairs rooms and the tea table which was centered with a low bowl of flowers flanked by yellow tapers."³⁶ This occasion marked the last gathering before the family moved one block away to the executive residence at 304 North Ewing. Mrs. Ford's mother, Isabel Leslie Shobe, also moved at the time with the family into the executive mansion.

The Fords continued to own the house at 309 North Rodney during the family's stay in the executive residence. During the next decade, as World War II began and ended, and Governor Ford served the state, the house at 309 North Rodney reverted back to use as a multi-family dwelling consistently housing three tenants who rented the apartments. It may be at this time that the upstairs was slightly reconfigured to accommodate renters, dividing the rented rooms into apartments. Although the floorplan remains the same, a bedroom was converted to a kitchen and a second bathroom likely added at this time. Renters often remained associated with state government and included Lela Bryant, a single woman who was chief clerk for the Livestock Commission; Harold Dean, secretary to the State Highway Commissioner and his wife Lucille; and retired Spanish American War veteran William F. Wilford, his wife Mary, and their teenage daughter.

Governor Ford served two terms as governor, which included the years of WWII. In 1948 he was defeated by John W. Bonner. During his decade of service to the state, Governor Ford was known for his conservatism and fairness in state appointments. He balanced the state budget and reduced state bureaucracy. In 1944, he launched the Missouri River development project which harnessed the Missouri River to provide affordable electricity for industry and water for farmers.³⁷

In 1949, Governor Ford retired from politics and the Fords returned to their former home at 309 N. Rodney. Their children grown, they maintained their residence on the first floor and continued to rent out two apartments. Governor Ford practiced law for another decade but suffered from atherosclerosis and during the last years of his life was confined to the home. He died in 1961 and his wife, along with widowed tenants Mrs. Mary Mulvaney and Mrs. Mary Wilford, continued to occupy the residence until it passed out of the Ford family in 1972.

309 NORTH RODNEY AFTER 1972

Under several subsequent tenants and owners from 1970 to 1982, the home served as a group facility for delinquent and troubled teens. In 1982, current owners Bill and Donna Wallace purchased the property, restored it once again to its original single-family status, and continue to carefully maintain its historic integrity.

CONCLUSION

The Lyman-Neel Residence and its succession of owners and lodgers well-represents the changing character of the North Rodney Street neighborhood. Situated next to Courthouse Square, the hub of territorial government, the neighborhood attracted businesses, government workers, and the wealthy to its streets. The social, political, and economic peaks and valleys of Helena and the North Rodney Street neighborhood are retained within the walls of the Lyman-Neel Residence.

³⁶ Helena, MT, *Helena Independent*, Nov. 24, 1940.

³⁷Thomas Fisher, Sam C. Ford biography at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/14948104>

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Built and first occupied by Lorenzo Lyman and his family, they represented the affluence of the new Helena community. The acquisition of the house by Samuel and Lavinia Neel continued to reflect the character of the neighborhood by people of means; indeed, despite the already large size of the house, a large addition was constructed off the east wall. After the passing of Samuel, Lavinia Neel remarried (Park) but retained ownership for several decades. She rented the property to several families over the years, some which took in additional lodgers. In 1898, Alice Palmer, an African American business woman, leased and operated a boarding house out of the Lyman-Neel Residence. Ms. Palmer's three-year operation reflected the economic times that began a few years prior, that required additional lodgers to allow owners the ability to retain their large houses. Ownership of the Lyman-Neel Residence by Charles Stabern, a contractor, occupied through a period of relative-stability and resulted in some of exterior façade changes. In 1927, Edwin Klemme moved into the house, with it resorting to a single-family dwelling once again. The Honorable Sam C. Ford, associate justice of the Montana Supreme Court purchased the house in 1930. Ford and his family's occupancy was only punctuated by his election as Governor of Montana when he moved a block away to reside in the Governor's mansion; at that time, the Lyman-Neel Residence once again took in renters while the family lived in the Governor's Mansion. After his service, Ford and his family returned to the Lyman-Neel Residence where the Ford family lived until 1972.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The north 12 feet of Lot 2, Lot 3, the south 31 feet of Lot 4, the south 41 feet of Lot 7, the south 41 feet and west 27 feet of Lot 8, the north 42 feet and west 34 feet of Lot 15, and the north 42 feet of Lot 16 in Block Forty-nine of the 1869 Helena Original Townsite.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is drawn, based on legally recorded boundary lines, to include the land surrounding the building that has been historically associated with the property and conveys the property's historic setting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:

Ellen Baumler Ph.D.

organization: Independent Historian

street & number: 729 11 Avenue

city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59601

e-mail mbaumler@aol.com

telephone: 406-449-3062

date: October 31, 2018

Additional Documentation

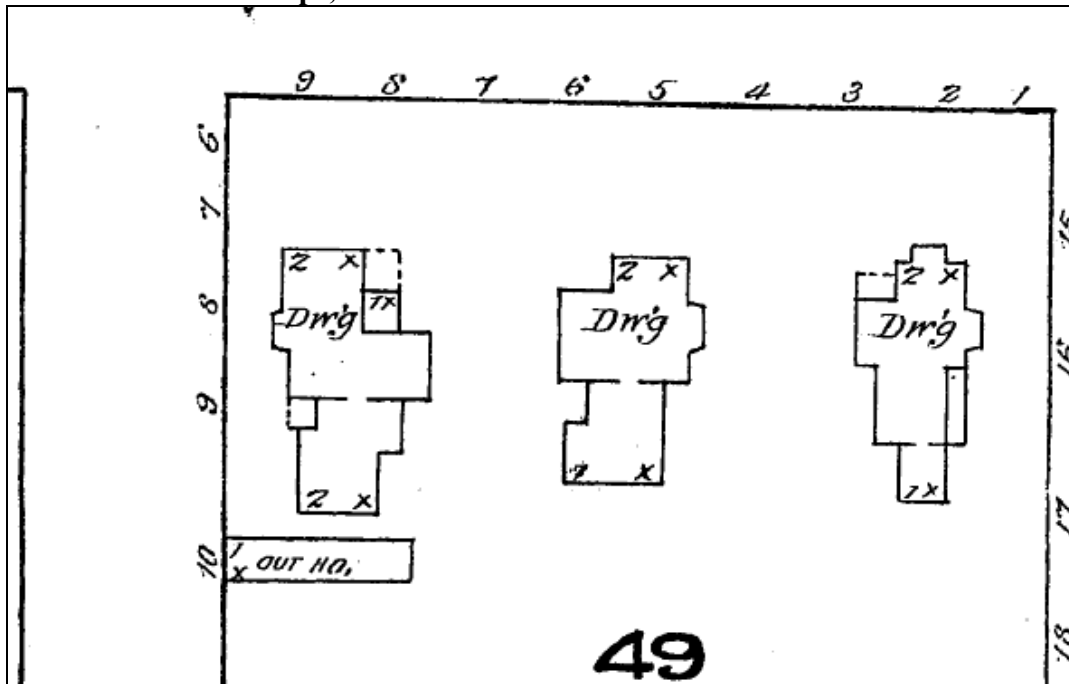
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Additional maps, Sanborns

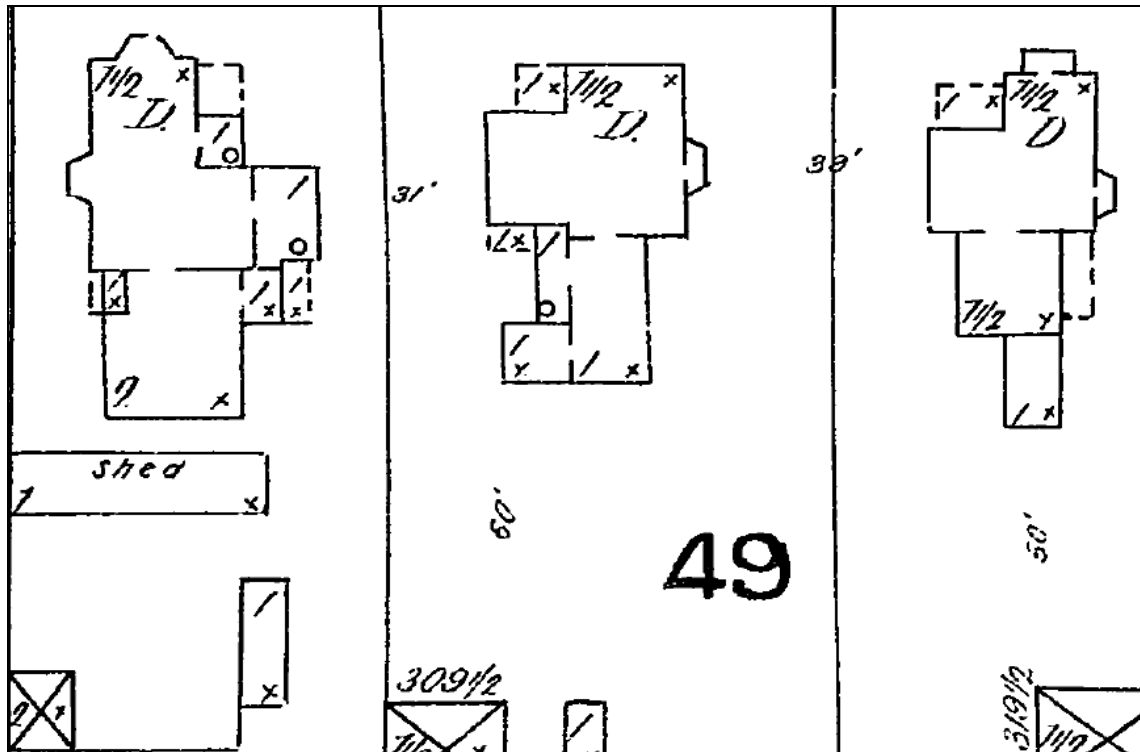


Sanborn Map of Helena, 1884. Lyman-Neel House, center.

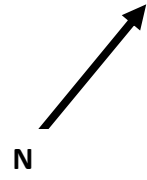


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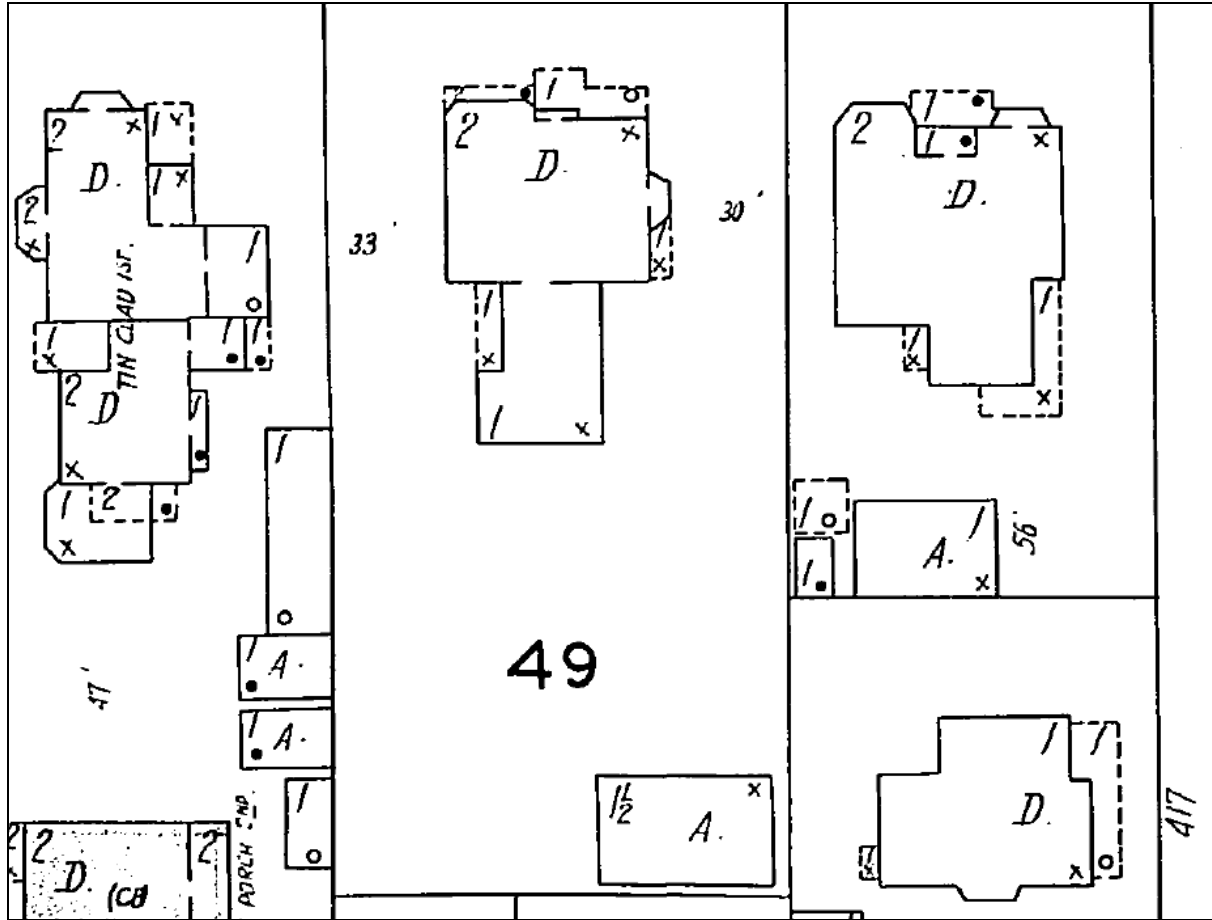


Sanborn Map of Helena, 1892. Lyman-Neel Residence, center.



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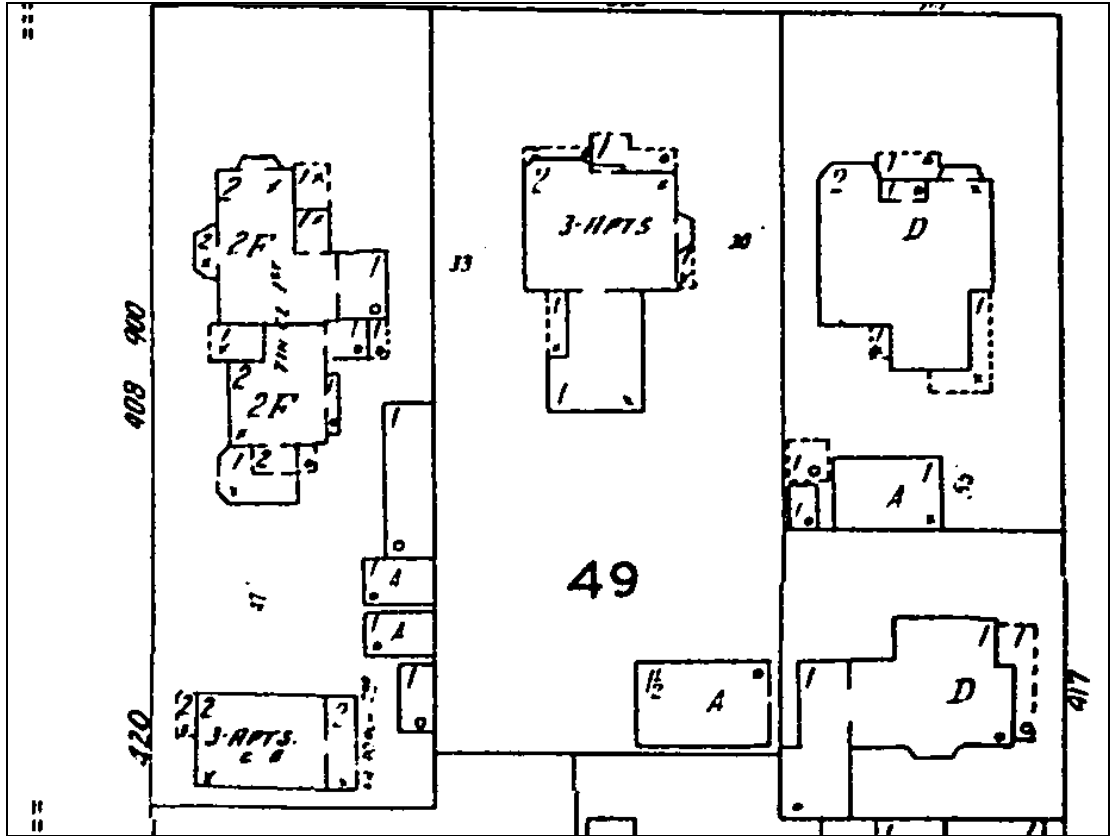


Sanborn Map of Helena, 1930. Lyman-Neel Residence center.

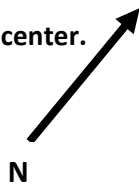


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Sanborn Map of Helena, 1958. Lyman-Neel Residence center.



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Additional maps, “Birds-eye view of Helena”



“Birds-eye view of Helena, Montana 1875.” Library of Congress.



“1883 bird's eye view of Helena, Montana. The capitol of Montana and county seat of Lewis and Clarke Co.” Library of Congress.

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National Register Photographs

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

All Photographs

Name of Property: Lyman-Neel Residence

City or Vicinity: Helena

County: Lewis and Clark

State: Montana

Photographer: Ellen Baumler

Date Photographed: October 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0001: Lyman-Neel Residence. West Elevation looking east

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0002: Lyman-Neel Residence. West Elevation looking east. Main entry

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0003: Lyman-Neel Residence. West Elevation NW corner, looking SE. Ionic column detail.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0004: Lyman-Neel Residence. West Elevation looking east, second story bay

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0005: Lyman-Neel Residence. West Elevation looking east, attic story porch.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0006: Lyman-Neel Residence. Two-Story South Elevation, looking northeast.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0007: Lyman-Neel Residence. Two-Story Portion, North Elevation, looking southeast.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0008: Lyman-Neel Residence. Two-Story Portion, North Elevation looking SE.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0009: Lyman-Neel Residence. Two-Story Portion, East Elevation looking west.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0010: Lyman-Neel Residence. One-Story Addition, East Elevation, looking west.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0011: Lyman-Neel Residence. One-Story Addition, North Elevation, looking south.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0012: Lyman-Neel Residence. One-Story Addition, South Elevation, looking NW

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0013: Lyman-Neel Residence. One Story Addition, South Elevation deck looking north.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0014: Lyman-Neel Residence. Garage West Elevation, looking east from upper floor.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0015: Lyman-Neel Residence. Interior Living room fireplace.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0016: Lyman-Neel Residence. Stairway from main entry.

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0017: Lyman-Neel Residence. Interior French doors from dining room leading into kitchen.

Lyman-Neel Residence

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MT_LewisAndClark_Lyman-NeelResidence_0018: Lyman-Neel Residence. Detail of second floor rounded wall.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.