

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 PropertyHistoric name: Edwards & McLellan Block

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
NA

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 101 S. 1st St. EastCity or town: Malta State: MT County: PhillipsNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**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 X C ___ D

MT State Historic Preservation Officer January 21, 2022

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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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

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

1

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store, professional

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

DOMESTIC: hotel

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Western Commercial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK

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 Edwards & McLellan Block stands on the southeast corner of S. 1st St. E. and S. 1st Ave. E in Malta, in northeast Montana. Highway 2, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks (formerly the Great Northern), and the Milk River all lie within 1000 feet to the north of the building. The town sits in what is categorized as the glaciated plains surrounded by the upland prairie. The Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge is about seven miles to the east. The Edwards & McLellan Block is a two-part commercial block brick building designed by Chinook, Montana, architect M. Montgomery. The building predominately displays Western Commercial styling. The building retains very good integrity, with few changes since its construction in 1910.

Narrative Description

The Edwards & McLellan Block, built in 1910, is a two-part commercial block on the corner of a major intersection in Malta, Montana. The two-story brick building is oriented north-south. Due to its construction on a corner, it presents two facades, the shorter primary facade faces S. 1st St. E. and the second, longer facade faces 1st. Ave E.¹ Single-story brick buildings stand immediately to the east and south.

Exterior Description

Light tan brick in a running bond pattern comprises the exterior walls of the Edwards & McLellan Block. Full-height pilasters provide the north facade with two bays while the west

¹ S. 1st St. E. and S. 1st. Ave E. were changed at some time from their original monikers of Front and 5th Ave, respectively.

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façade displays five bays, by virtue of pilasters limited to the upper story. The pilasters sport a centered small single cross of brick. A brick belt course demarks the upper and lower stories of the building on the west and north walls.

A flat or slightly slopped roof covers the building and a metal-clad embossed cornice painted green wraps both primary elevations. A parapet constructed of light tan brick also displaying a running bond pattern projects above the roof; the west elevation parapet exhibits a single step down to the south. Recessed rectangular panels that continue the running bond motif grace the length of the parapet on both the north and west elevations. The top of the parapet is capped by a single row of running brick above a single row of header brick, which extend slightly beyond the vertical face of the wall. The east elevation lacks the cornice but displays a stepped-parapet that decreases in height from north to south.

The exterior walls retain all of the original openings and the vast majority of their light arrangements. The upper story windows on both the north and west elevations are recessed within individual bays and display recessed surrounds of tan brick to the sides and below. Immediately above the window openings appear flat arches sporting two tiers of slightly angled soldier coursing. The bottom of each window features a prominent concrete sill. All the upper story windows display the historic three-over-five light arrangement, with three smaller lights above a large, centered light, flanked by two smaller double-hung units. The arrangement reflects the Chicago style of window with the addition of a transom. Historically accurate units replaced the original windows in 2021.

The building stands on a concrete basement foundation. A concrete sidewalk provides separation of the building from the streets.

North Elevation

The north elevation features two bays. It serves as the primary façade and faces toward the rail line and Highway 2. An open, recessed, diagonal entry holds a single-light door on the northwest corner of the building; a steel post situated immediately below the corner of the overhang provides support to the upper story corner. The door is flanked by single, large, fixed, plate glass windows that parallel the nearby streets; these windows extend to the outer edge of the building toward S. 1st St. E. and S. 1st Ave. E. and serve as side-lights to the building's two store front entry displays that parallel the north and west oriented streets. The primary lights of the displays within the entry ensemble (that parallel the two streets) consist of large fixed single lights. Paired fixed lights are positioned above all the larger store display glass, including the doorway. Immediately to the east within the adjoining north wall bay is another store display that consists of paired large, fixed lights; historically, these windows were topped by a ribbon of four smaller fixed windows, presently covered with plywood. Historic images indicate that two-over-two windows (possibly single or double-hung) occupied the space immediately below the plate glass windows and allowed light to the full basement; paneled plywood presently covers these areas.

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West Elevation

The upper story, visually separated from the lower story by a brick belt course, displays five bays with each bay containing the previously described fenestration. The lower story of the west wall features tan bricks that exhibit a running bond pattern punctuated by a single row of stretcher bricks recessed every seven to eight rows. The south end of the wall holds two person door entries, one containing a recent solid panel wood door and the other a modern single light door. A ribbon of four rectangular fixed lights grace the area above the wood panel door and the area above the single-light door holds an air-conditioning unit; immediately above both door openings appear flat arches sporting two tiers of slightly angled soldier coursing that match that over the windows.

South Elevation

The entire lower story of the south wall is obscured by the neighboring building. The visible upper story of the south elevation features a common bond brick pattern, painted white, a departure from the west and north walls. The wall holds two large segmental arch window openings, one narrow and one much wider. Both openings are now infilled with wood paneling; the narrow opening holds a two-light fixed window and the larger opening sports paired casement windows.

East Elevation

Similar to the south elevation, only the upper story of the east wall is visible due to the single-story construction of the adjoining building. The east wall displays the stepped parapet also visible on the west wall. Brick work emulates that found on the north and west elevations. The wall holds two large segmental arch window openings, one narrow and one wide. Both openings are partially infilled with wood paneling and contain smaller windows than the originals. The smaller opening holds a casement window and the double entry holds paired casements.

Interior

Historically, the Edwards & McLellan Block presented an interior arrangement of individual office space confined to the upper floor with the lower story dedicated to the operation of the mercantile. A similar strategy exists today, though instead of individual offices occupying the upper story, the rooms have been converted to lodging, with nearly all retaining their historic space and dimensions. The lower open space remains to serve larger businesses and is still accessed by same entries as 100 years ago. A number of interior supports run the length of the building supporting the upper floor. In addition, a significant amount of the historic cabinetry and shelving remains.

Integrity

The Edwards & McLellan Block retains very good integrity, presenting much as it did when originally constructed. Only minor alterations detract from integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, which remain strong. These alterations include covering the lights above and below the large paired fixed windows in the east bay of the north façade, covering the lower windows below the single fixed window in the west bay of the north façade, and the replacement of the original side doors in the west elevation. Non-original windows installed in the 1970s

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now occupy the openings in the south and east walls; while the windows are smaller than the originals due to some infilling, the openings themselves remain intact and the replacement windows continue to serve their historic function, albeit, in a reduced capacity. The frame of a marque sign projects from the northwest wall; although not original to the building, it likely dates to the 1950s or 1960s when the building still operated as a mercantile. Integrity of location remains unchanged. Integrity of setting, association, and feeling is also strong as the majority of the buildings constructed in the early years of the town remain, although a few display compromised integrity. Across the street to the north lies a park and open space. Historically, the open space provided a buffer between the Edwards & McLellan Block and the railroad tracks. This open space continues to impart the historic setting and feeling by allowing one to gaze across the street to the tracks—the same view one experienced when the building after construction of the building.

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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.)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1910-1975

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

J. M. Montgomery (architect from Chinook, MT)

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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.)

The Edwards & McLellan Block is eligible for listing in the National Register under criteria A and C at a local level of significance. Under Criterion A, the building represents one of the earliest and most successful men's clothing and hardware business in the community. For decades, the lower story welcomed thousands of people through its doors to purchase an assortment of goods, from food items to clothing. The upper story held office space for a variety of businesses. Under Criterion C, the Edwards & McLellan Block stands as a fine two-story example of the Western Commercial style in the small town of Malta. The building displays restrained decorative elements that includes flat arches, small crosses centered in the second story pilasters, recessed panels, and metal cornice.

The period of significance begins in 1910 with the construction of the building and ends in 1975, when the business was sold and purchased by somebody outside of either the Edwards or McLellan families. After the sale of the business and building in 1975, the sobriquet of Edwards & McLellan was retired from use.

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

History of Malta

Like many towns across the stretch of Montana referred to as the "Hi-Line," Malta's existence stemmed from the construction of the Great Northern Railroad. Despite the lack of federal land grants to push the railroad west, James J. Hill remained undaunted and established Minot, North Dakota, as his jumping off point. Construction began April 2, 1887. Eight thousand men and 6600 horses toiled the miles away grading the route.² By mid-August construction reached the Milk River where a siding was built to allow engines to take on water. With the construction of this siding, the seeds of Malta were planted.³ Malta reportedly garnered its name, replacing the former appellation of "Siding 54, with the simple spin of a globe and the touch of a blindfolded railroad employee."⁴

By 1892, Malta assumed the appearance of a town as settlers began to move into the area, many "...from the Judith Gap and Snowy Mountain country."⁵ Around the same year, a school was

² Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History, Volume II* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), p. 303.

³ John Lauber and Jeffrey Hess, *Trafton Avenue Historic District National Register Nomination Draft*, Section 8 p. 3, August 1993, on file at the Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

⁴ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 2.; Kid Curry and his gang reputedly robbed the Great Northern Express Flyer five miles west of Malta in July of 1901. Montana Water Resource Board, *Water Resources Survey, Phillips County Montana, Part 1, History of Land and Water Use on Irrigated Lands*, p. 11, June 1968.

⁵ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 2.

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established with Mrs. Arthur Cowen presiding as the first teacher.⁶ The organization of School District Number 2 in Malta occurred with the creation of Valley County from a part of Dawson County in 1893. The earliest church services transpired in the home of Robert Trafton, credited as Malta's first permanent occupant.⁷ W.W. Van Orsdel, commonly known as Brother Van, reputedly visited Malta on several occasions and inspired a group of Malta women to raise funds for the construction of Malta's first church, the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸

By the early 1890s, Malta became a supply point for mining operations in the nearby Little Rockies. Daily stage runs of supplies and mail occurred between Malta and the town of Zortman.⁹

Much of the area's settlement began with ranchers who ran their herds over hundreds of square miles. Early cattlemen included John Survant, manager of the Circle Diamond with their main headquarters on Assiniboine Creek north of Malta,¹⁰ the Circle C Cattle Company that operated near the Little Rocky Mountains southwest of Malta, and the N Bar N east of town. Sheepmen operating in the Malta vicinity included B.D. Phillips, namesake of the county, Andrew Davidson, William Garland, Alex Elliot, and G.L. Partridge.¹¹ With the number and size of these operations, Malta became a shipping point for the cattle and sheep.¹² Enthusiasm for ranching, however, took a blow with a hard winter in 1905-1906 that resulted in the loss of cattle across the prairies and the majority of the operations leaving the area.¹³

The loss of the large ranches depressed Malta economically in the short term as the number of livestock once shipped out of the town via the Great Northern plummeted. However, the loss of ranches opened up more available land to homesteaders, especially after passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, with the railroad heavily promoting the area.¹⁴

⁶ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 3.

⁷ John Lauber and Jeffrey Hess, *Trafton Avenue Historic District National Register Nomination Draft*, Section 8 p. 1, August 1993, on file at the Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT; "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 3.

⁸ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 3.

⁹ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 4.

¹⁰ "Find A Grave," John Survant, found at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/145977903/john-survant>, accessed 30 June 2021. John Survant was elected three terms as senator from Phillips County and as senate pro-tem served several times as acting governor when the chief executive was out of state. His other credits include starting Malta's first newspaper and helping establish Northern Montana College; "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, pp. 3, 4; The company was also noted in the press as the Bloom Cattle Company, "Malta, Its Past and Present; Its Future Prospects," *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*, Part 4, 28 June 1902; Montana Water Resource Board, *Water Resources Survey, Phillips County Montana, Part 1, History of Land and Water Use on Irrigated Lands*, p. 10, June 1968.

¹¹ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 4.

¹² Montana Water Resource Board, *Water Resources Survey, Phillips County Montana, Part 1, History of Land and Water Use on Irrigated Lands*, p. 11, June 1968.

¹³ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 4.

¹⁴ "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 4.

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Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, Malta boasted a bank, a two-story brick schoolhouse, two hotels, a lodging house, and two restaurants; a cooperative irrigation canal company was also formed to reclaim 25,000 acres of parched land. These improvements occurred as Malta continued its role as a major shipping point for cattle and wool. From its origins to its present state in 1902, *The Great Falls Daily Tribune* sang its praises stating, “As to the future business prospects, there is no reason why Malta should not, in time, be a fair-sized city, for it has many facilities for becoming one.”¹⁵

Economic stability increased with the inception of the Milk River Irrigation Project that unfolded due to the increased water needs of the area and lack of an adequate facilities to store early spring runoff. The project eventually comprised a series of diversion dams, reservoirs and canals constructed over a 165-mile stretch in the northeast part of the state.¹⁶ The complexity of the project was illustrated by the diversion of St. Mary River into the Milk River, which required a water-rights agreement with Canada. Conditional approval of the project occurred in 1903 with the initial step of the St. Mary Storage Unit authorization in March of 1905. Fresno Dam was then constructed under the National Industrial Recovery Act, pursuant to the acts of 1910 and 1924. The last leg of the project was the Dodson Pumping Station, approved in 1944 under the Water Conservation Act of 1939.¹⁷ Despite the slow progress and evolution of the decades-long project, its importance to the long-term prosperity of Malta is undisputed.

The ability to grow and raise crops successfully in the harsh environment around Malta, however, proved challenging for those without access to irrigation. Around the mid-1920s, the “Malta Plan” developed to ease the financial and agricultural burdens associated with raising crops in this difficult area. The plan included the federal purchase of submarginal land to gather scattered ranchers to centralized locations and enhance conservation. The plan included the government appropriating either options to buy or purchase outright land from farmers and ranchers who faced continued struggles from drought and erosion. Those participating in the plan had the option to resettle in the Milk River Valley.¹⁸

By 1910, Malta boasted a population of 433 individuals.¹⁹ The continued migration of people to the area boosted both the population and economy of the town itself. The southside business district and residential area expanded rapidly.²⁰ As Malta’s autonomy grew, a push grew to create a new county with Malta as its county seat:

¹⁵ “Malta, Its Past and Present; Its Future Prospects,” *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*, Part 4, 28 June 1902.

¹⁶ John Lauber and Jeffrey Hess, *Trafton Avenue Historic District National Register Nomination Draft*, Section 8 p. 6, August 1993, on file at the Montana Historical Society, Helena, MT.

¹⁷ Bureau of Reclamation, Projects and Facilities, “Milk River Project,” found at <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=352>, accessed 1 July 2021.

¹⁸ Carroll Van West, “New Deal Transformations: A Hot Springs in Phillips County, Montana,” *Montana’s Historic Landscapes*, posted 13 June 2014, found at <https://montanahistoriclandscape.com/tag/phillips-county-montana/>, accessed 1 July 2021.

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of Incorporated Places in Montana, 1890 to 2000*.

²⁰ “Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as ‘Siding 54,’” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 5.

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There is no town in the Milk river valley that is better situated and that has better advantages as a county seat than has Malta. It will be about centrally located in the new county of Phillips, with established stage roads running north and south and long distance telephone communication to all important points in the county. It may also be truthfully said that Malta has most abundant supply of clear water in the great valley, and as for irrigated lands Malta is in the geographical center of the great Milk river system. The town will have ample school facilities and there is no better hotel accommodation for the public in all this large valley, the streets are being all graded up and the cement blocks laid with care and consideration of the future. The town will have a good fire protection and fine lighting system, and for the most part of the business section is built of brick and concrete, making an old very substantial city that we are proud of....²¹

In 1915, Phillips County was created from the east end of Valley County and a portion of Blaine County, which had previously split off from the older Chouteau County.²² The same year Malta incorporated.²³

The continued gain in population and the increased stability of the town sparked the construction of more durable buildings endorsing the town's bright future.

The Edwards & McLellan Block

The Players

Lee Edwards and William McLellan are the two men responsible for the construction of the Edwards & McLellan Block and the successful mercantile operation that catered to not only the local Malta population, but also to much of northeastern Montana. Both Edwards and McLellan arrived during the infancy of Malta, and both left their imprint on the town. McLellan's wife, Nettie, also assumed part-ownership of the business by 1916; interestingly, little newspaper coverage occurred regarding her ownership. In 1918, A.W. Winkler bought into the business, though his association ended in 1933.

Lee C. Edwards

One of Malta's most prominent businessmen, Lee C. Edwards was born September 26, 1872, in Marshall, Minnesota. Edwards arrived in Malta in 1893 after working for the Great Northern Railroad as an agent in Hinsdale prior to assuming the same position in his adopted town. He married Rose Watson in 1901. Edwards' interest in the area extended beyond his mercantile

²¹ "Malta as a County Seat," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 17 September 1914, p. 1; a much later article in *The Billings Gazette* that discussed the creation of Phillips County noted, *The Enterprise* failed to comment on the number of saloons that existed in the town at the time, Gladys Costello, "Ever in on a Splitting Bee?" *The Billings Gazette*, Sunday Magazine, 28 February 1965, p. 1.

²² "Malta Had Its Beginning in 1887 as 'Siding 54,'" *The Great Falls Tribune*, 10 June 1962, p. 5; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana* (Mountain Press Publishing Company: Missoula, revised 1984), pp. 207-208.

²³ The Montana Historical Society, "Facts: Counties, Cities, Towns," found at <http://mthistory.pbworks.com/w/page/100321869/Facts%20and%20Information%3A%20Counties%2C%20Cities%2C%20and%20Towns>, accessed 1 July 2021.

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partnership. He was one of the earliest landowners in the area who advocated for crop irrigation and was active in the Milk River Water User's Association. His role in this endeavor continued with the formation of the Malta irrigation district; he represented the district at Washington several times and for years championed the construction of irrigation projects in the area. Edwards owned an "irrigated" farm north of town that he sold shortly before his demise.²⁴

One of Edwards' early business ventures occurred with William McLellan and John Survant. Together they established the Malta Mercantile Company. A few years later, McLellan and Edwards sold their interests in the company and organized the Edwards & McLellan Company, a business Edwards remained associated with until his death.²⁵ Edwards and McLellan's partnership supplied much of Malta and the vicinity with a variety of goods and merchandise for decades.

Edwards stayed active in the community. He was a Mason, a member of the first council of Malta, engaged in school concerns, and an important member of the Malta Commercial Club. His early taste for politics occurred in 1909 when elected as an alderman for the First Ward at the first ever election of municipal candidates for Malta.²⁶ Edwards passed on August 4, 1937, outliving both his wife and his business partner. The town paid its respect to Edwards upon his death when all businesses closed for his funeral.²⁷

William McLellan

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland on June 5, 1870, William, "Mack" McLellan moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia at the age of nine.²⁸ From Halifax he moved to Boston and then to Montana by his 20th birthday.²⁹ At the age of 24, he married Nettie Landis of Minnesota.³⁰

McLellan "...was associated with the life and growth of Malta and Northern Montana." Together with Lee Edwards, the two operated the firm of Edwards & McLellan, considered one of the largest mercantiles in northern Montana.³¹ Prior to teaming with and then opening the Edwards & McLellan store with Lee Edwards, the two formed a partnership with John Survant, acquiring experience in their quest to operate their own business: "Among the prosperous business men of Malta are L. C. Edwards, Wm. McLellan and John Survant, who own the Malta Mercantile Co. All have commenced on a small scale, gradually working their way up until now they are doing a large business in dry goods, groceries, farming utensils and machinery and

²⁴ "Old Timer Is Buried In Phillips," *Great Falls Tribune*, 5 August 1937, p. 14.

²⁵ "Old Timer Is Buried In Phillips," *Great Falls Tribune*, 5 August 1937, p. 14.

²⁶ "Citizens Ticket Is named For The City Of Malta," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 1 September 1909, p. 1.

²⁷ "Old Timer Is Buried In Phillips," *Great Falls Tribune*, 5 August 1937, p. 14.

²⁸ The 1900 Federal Census states he immigrated to the United States in 1875, at the age of five. 1900 United States Census.

²⁹ "Prominent Malta Business Man Passes Away Monday," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 February 1916, p. 1.

³⁰ Minnesota Marriage Index, 1849-1950, Nettie Landis, found at <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/552301:2561?ssrc=pt&tid=112264821&pid=272007131911>, accessed 2 July 2021.

³¹ "Prominent Malta Business Man Passes Away Monday," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 February 1916, p. 1.

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lumber.”³² McLellan’s career in the business sector dated back to at least 1900 when he reported his occupation as a salesman of general merchandise.³³ The 1910 census reports McLellan continued to refer to his occupation as a merchant.³⁴ During his years in Malta, McLellan stayed very active as a Mason (like his friend Edwards), a Shriner, and member of the Eastern Star.³⁵

McLellan died unexpectedly at the age of 46 on February 7, 1916. He passed in his home immediately after standing up following viewing old photographs with his wife.³⁶ McLellan was considered “quiet, modest and unpretentious.” One obituary dedicated to McClellan proved effusive about the man.³⁷ The affection felt for McLellan was evidenced by the closure of every business in town during his funeral and the preparation of a resolution that addressed his importance to the community.³⁸ After McLellan’s passing, his wife, Nettie, assumed his position with the business.

Nettie McLellan

Born Nettie Landis in Hayward, Minnesota, in 1871, Ms. McLellan arrived in Malta in 1892 travelling with her aunt. Two years later, in 1894, she married William McLellan. She was a charter member of the Malta Woman’s Club and participated in it until her passing. As a driving force in the club she helped establish the Phillips County Library. She was also a member of the Pioneer Club. Other organizational membership included the Eastern Star Lodge, the Eastern Star Auxiliary, the Community Church Aid, and the cemetery association. Upon the passing of her husband, Ms. McLellan assumed her husband’s role in the business of Edwards & McLellan. She retained that active interest until her passing in the spring of 1937.³⁹ She is buried in the Malta Cemetery beside her husband.

A.W. Winkler

In 1916, A.F. (or A. W., depending on the source) Winkler, a Minnesotan, assumed the position as the manager of the gentlemen’s furnishing department in the Edwards & McLellan store after he and his family relocated to Malta from Havre.⁴⁰ Once established in Malta, Winkler helped organize the local rifle club, with potential members instructed to contact Winkler at the store.⁴¹ In August of 1918, Winkler bought an interest in the Edwards & McLellan business. Winkler,

³² “Malta, Its Past and Present; Its Future Prospects,” *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*, Part 4, 28 June 1902.

³³ 1900 United States Federal Census.

³⁴ 1910 United States Federal Census.

³⁵ “Prominent Malta Business Man Passes Away Monday,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 February 1916, p. 1.

³⁶ “Prominent Malta Business Man Passes Away Monday,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 February 1916, p. 1.

³⁷ Notably, and regrettably, the author of the obituary appears to have been so impressed with his own prose and use of adjective to sing the praises of Mr. McLellan that very little space was dedicated to McLellan’s actual life.

³⁸ “Pioneer Laid Away At Malta,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, p. 3, 14 February 1916; “Resolution,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 17 February 1916, p. 1.

³⁹ “Malta Woman Pioneer Laid To Last Rest,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 6 May 1937, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *The Enterprise* (Malta), p. 5, 13 April 1916; 1930 United States Federal Census.

⁴¹ “Rifle Club About Formed,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 27 July 1916, p. 1.

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like Edwards and McLellan, had a background in business.⁴² Also like his partners, Winkler belonged to the Masonic Lodge.⁴³ Winkler's association with the store, however, ended in 1933, when he filed articles of incorporation for a new company he began in Malta that "will deal in merchandise."⁴⁴

Building the Edwards & McLellan Block

The first press regarding the construction of the Edwards & McLellan Block appeared in a February 1910 notice that Edwards and McLellan let the contract for the construction of their namesake building to M. Montgomery of Chinook, Montana.⁴⁵ Construction of the building was slated to begin as soon as the building that occupied the site, Miss Peck's millinery store, was moved to a new location.⁴⁶ By March of 1910, groundbreaking occurred, and excavation proceeded at a good clip.⁴⁷

Simultaneous to raising the Edwards & McLellan Block, another brick building was also under construction directly across the street. With the two large downtown buildings rising concurrently, the newspaper extolled the town's growth: "Malta is experiencing a real, live, big boom and whoever says it is not true is a growler, a knocker, a pessimist, or a disgruntled has-been.... 1910 marks a new epoch in the history of Malta."⁴⁸

The Great Falls Tribune echoed many of the sentiments of the Malta newspaper but also remarked upon the large number of workers used to construct both buildings. The article further noted that the different colored bricks used in the construction of the two buildings will "...present a pleasing contrast in color and style of architecture." Both buildings were estimated to cost around \$40,000.⁴⁹

The April 20, 1910 edition of *The Enterprise* provided the first true insight regarding the appearance of the soon-to-be completed Edwards & McLellan Block. The article stated, "the building will be strictly modern, contain a plate glass front and be heated by steam." In addition to the first and second floors, the building would also boast "...an immense basement..." Plans for the building included its use to sell men's clothing and hardware and the newspaper noted, the business "will gain recognition as 'The Peer of All Clothing and Hardware House.'" ⁵⁰

⁴² "Buys Interest In Store," *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*, p. 7, 19 August 1918; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 13 April 1916, p. 5.

⁴³ "New Officers Elected at Malta by Masons and Order of Eastern Stars," *The Great Falls Daily Tribune*, 1 January 1921, p. 4.

⁴⁴ "New Malta Company," *The Great Falls Tribune*, 8 February 1933, p. 3.

⁴⁵ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 2 February 1910, p. 8.

⁴⁶ "Local News," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 1 December 1909, p. 8.

⁴⁷ "Local Matter And Otherwise," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 16 March 1910, p. 1; "Newsy Items Of Interest," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 13 April 1910, p. 1.

⁴⁸ "Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1.

⁴⁹ "Many New Buildings Now Under Construction at the Milk River Valley Town," *The Great Falls Tribune*, 24 June 1910, p. 2.

⁵⁰ "Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1.

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The first floor was to be dedicated to "...a salesroom and office..." supplying "one of the largest and most complete stocks of merchandise... ever brought to northern Montana."⁵¹ Plans for the second story included "...up-to-date office rooms..." with one already slated for use by the Moore Telephone Company.⁵²

By July, the Edwards & McLellan Block neared completion and a railroad car of hardware waited to be unloaded. Additional construction details included the ground floor boasting 43 feet of plate glass in the display windows, and counters and shelving made of oak featuring a "mission style." The upper floor was divided into 10 offices that ranged in size from 10 feet by 12 feet to 12 feet by 16 feet. The offices would be heated with steam, well furnished, and contain large windows. Five offices were rented prior to completion of the building.⁵³

The local newspaper succinctly articulated success of the enterprise as a foregone conclusion: "Both proprietors are well and popularly known and the mercantile business with them is not an experiment for each has earned commercial distinction and been wonderfully successful in a business way. Their career could be studied with profit by the boys of Malta and vicinity."⁵⁴

The Great Falls Tribune ventured an altruistic twist to the construction of the Edwards & McLellan Block and the block across the street: "The town is composed largely of progressive citizens who work for the up-building of the town more than for purely personal interests...." The article continued that the new construction flurry went hand-in-hand with the "residents (who) are up to date and fast assuming 'city-airs,' noting that six resident now own automobiles."⁵⁵

The Opening

Prior to the physical opening of the new store, consignments of men's clothing and hardware were delivered. Staff busied itself unpacking, marking, arranging, and displaying the newly arrived goods in the store. "A. E. Pervaince of Weil, Dobell & Com., of St. Paul "... assisted the Edwards & McLellan store for a few days in arranging and displaying their line of men's clothing and furnishing goods."⁵⁶ The anticipated opening occurred September 5, 1910. The layout of the merchandise proved pleasing, "The interior of the store as well as the new goods, so artistically displayed, was a revelation to some of our citizens who had not kept in touch with the progress of the building or the plans of the enterprising proprietors."⁵⁷

⁵¹ "Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1.

⁵² "Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1.

⁵³ "Splendid Structures Nearing Completion, Edwards-McLellan And Cavanaugh Blocks About Finished," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 14 July 1910, p. 1.

⁵⁴ "Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1.

⁵⁵ "Many New Buildings Now Under Construction at the Milk River Valley Town, *The Great Falls Tribune*, 24 June 1910, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1.

⁵⁷ "Handsome Brick Structure Completed- - Opened Monday," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1.

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The store opening allowed for a full interior description:

The walls and ceiling have been artistically finished and decorated and form an appropriate setting for the handsome oak furniture and fixtures which have been placed therein. The right side or half of the store contains a complete stock of hardware and the shelving and counters are finished in golden oak, while the left half of the store fixtures, cabinets and wardrobes containing the clothing and furnishing goods has been finished in flemish (*sic*) oak, and this affords a pleasing contrast for the two different lines of goods. Nobby neckwear and fine cutlery are attractively displayed in the plate glass showcases. Cutlery and hardware are displayed and arranged in drop front shelves, with inner cabinets where wares are classified, and cunning labor-saving devices have been introduced in the drawers containing the smaller lines of hardware.

Three large plate glass mirrors in the clothing department show the fastidious customer “how he looks” and how to wear the new and up-to-date clothing.⁵⁸

The store offered services as well as goods. The basement held a tin repair shop, plumbing shop, and storage for “heavy hardware.”

Those attending the opening of the store received long stemmed asters, and “the housewives received a souvenir in the shape of a brush with the inscription in gold letters—‘Edwards & McLellan, Malta, Mont., Clothing and Hardware.’”⁵⁹

The building and business received a warm welcome from the press: “the size of the building, its substantial construction, steam heating apparatus, maple floors, plate glass windows, fine finish of both exterior and interior, make it a valuable addition to the substantial business houses of Malta.”⁶⁰ *The Enterprise* voiced certainty in Edwards and McLellan’s ability for success: “They have confidence in Malta and the surrounding country to warrant them in the erection of this handsome building and the launching of their large business upon its commercial sea.”⁶¹

The Edwards & McLellan Block, More Than A Mercantile

The well-lit, finely finished rooms with their high ceilings and up-to-date appointments “would do credit to Great Falls or Helena” exclaimed the *The Enterprise*: “Messrs. Edwards & McLellan should be commended in providing Malta with such desirable office rooms.”⁶² Such accolades made it no surprise that many of the rooms were let prior to the building’s completion. The month the building opened saw Cosner & Tressler move into their “new suite of handsome office rooms.” Leasing space early allowed Mr. Tressler to option one of the most desirable rooms for

⁵⁸ “Handsome Brick Structure Completed- - Opened Monday,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *The Enterprise*, p. 1, 8 September 1910.

⁶⁰ “Handsome Brick Structure Completed- - Opened Monday,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1.

⁶¹ “Handsome Brick Structure Completed- - Opened Monday,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1.

⁶² “Into New Law Offices,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 1 September 1910, p. 1.

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his personal office, that which overlooked both Fifth Avenue and Front Street. Soon after, Tressler began advertising his services out of the Edwards & McLellan Block.⁶³

Other early renters of space in the building included dentists R.E. Devney, with appointments for service made either by mail or calling.⁶⁴ Dr. George Clark also operated a dental practice out of the Edwards & McLellan Block, though it is uncertain if he operated independently of Dr. Devney.⁶⁵ Dr. William Morrow, another dentist, opened his practice in the building in 1929. Dr. Morrow gains recognition as the longest tenured dentist in the building, providing services until 1960.⁶⁶ A.S. Hanscom Engineering and Surveying who offered to “run your land lines, lay out your irrigation system, and do all engineering work,” also rented space.⁶⁷ The Moore Telephone Company’s occupancy lasted until 1915 when the gaining popularity of telephones necessitated a move from the building to a location of greater size to accommodate the burgeoning technology.⁶⁸ The Phillips County Investment Company located in the Edwards & McLellan Block offered “unlimited money to loan with “the best rates.” They made “a specialty of Farm Loans” and provided “the money upon execution of paper.”⁶⁹ By 1915, another attorney, H.L. Wolfe, Jr., hung his shingle at the Edwards & McLellan Block; his advertisement, however, left something to be desired in terms of instilling confidence in his skills to provide legal advice, “Speicalty (sic) made of U.S. Land Office cases.”⁷⁰ The opening of nearby Bowdoin Lake to duck hunting necessitated the establishment of boundaries and fencing, work that required “a staff of biological survey men,” who set up their operations in the Edwards & McLellan Block.⁷¹ An office dedicated to the county superintendent was reportedly also established after the creation of Phillips County in 1915.⁷²

Merchandise

With the doors to the business open, Edwards & McLellan wasted little time in promoting their wares. The store stocked a veritable plethora of products with both name brand and non-name brand items available. Clothing included Florsheim shoes, Regal hats, North Star shoes, Kingsbury hats, Sincerity Suits and Overcoats, all wool suits, and easter bonnets.⁷³ Non clothing items counted Keen Kutter Tools and Cutlery, guns, ammunition, sundries, store fixtures, wallpaper, paints, oils, garden rakes, hoes, shovels, spades, horse clippers, and seasonal

⁶³ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 12 January 1911, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Advertisement, *The Enterprise* (Malta), 28 September 1911, p. 7.

⁶⁵ “Passes State Examination,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 18 July 1912, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Gina Simanton, personal communication to John Boughton, 29 September 2021.

⁶⁷ Advertisement, *The Enterprise* (Malta), 28 August 1913, p. 7.

⁶⁸ Notice, *The Glasgow Courier*, 26 February 1915, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Advertisement, *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1916, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 1 July 1915, p. 3.

⁷¹ “Part of Bowdoin Lake Is Open for Hunting, Is Word,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 7 November 1935, p. 8.

⁷² Gladys Costello, “Ever in on a Splitting Bee?” *The Billings Gazette*, Sunday Magazine, p. 9, 28 February 1965.

⁷³ *The Enterprise* (Malta), p. 1, 8 September 1910; *The Enterprise* (Malta), p. 1, 11 August 1910; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 September 1910, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 15 September 1910, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 12 April 1912, p. 1.

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hardware.⁷⁴ Goods extended beyond human demands as livestock feed, including oats and feed wheat, could also be purchased.⁷⁵ Many items promoted in the same advertisement often resulted in odd juxtaposition, such as Majestic ranges, “famous for their good quality,” appearing alongside, “see our line of neckware.”⁷⁶ Services offered by the store also found their way to the pages of local advertising.⁷⁷

Edwards & McLellan expanded their list of goods in a big way in 1914:

Edwards & McLellan have received their first shipment of Studebaker cars for this season, and they are some car. Electric lights and electric starter. In the first shipment the two members of the firm each take one, and Mr. Koke the other one. Everything points to an exceptionally good year in the automobile business at this place, and there is no question but that the Studebaker will come in for their share of the business.⁷⁸

Edwards & McLellan erected a large sign on the roof of the building in June of 1914 for the rare customer who didn't know the exact location of the store. The prodigious size of the sign was aptly described as “loom(ing) in fine shape.” The sign appears in many historic images of the building.⁷⁹

Through the decades, inventory offered by Edwards & McLellan included kitchen appliances and cabinets. In 1941, the store distributed Frigidaire refrigerators with models, “Packed with Features,” and offering “Fully-Fitted Value,” and “Brilliant New Design.” Prices varied from \$134.75 to \$159.75.⁸⁰ By 1949, the store offered Youngstown Kitchens, “white-enameled steel...units that are just right for your home.”⁸¹ A visit to Edwards & McLellan would, “Let your Youngstown dealer show you how easy it is to own a dream kitchen like this!” General Electric refrigerators were offered by Edwards & McLellan in 1951, an association that lasted until at least 1962.⁸² It remains unknown if stocking General Electric products came at the expense of Frigidaire. With television coming of age, Edwards & McLellan soon stocked and sold RCA Victor televisions, “New for the action crowd,” by 1965.⁸³

⁷⁴ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 11 August 1910, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 16 March 1911, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 4 April 1912, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Harlem), 23 March 1911, p. 1.

⁷⁵ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 18 August 1910, p. 1; *The Enterprise* (Malta), 4 April 1912, p. 1.

⁷⁶ “Additional Local News,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 8 September 1910, p. 8.

⁷⁷ *The Enterprise* (Harlem), 23 March 1911, p. 1.

⁷⁸ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 5 March 1914, p. 8.

⁷⁹ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 18 June 1914, p. 7.

⁸⁰ “3 Giant-Sized Frigidaire Bargains,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 2 April 1941, p. 3.

⁸¹ “Dream kitchens with wished-for price tags,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 26 June 1949, p. 7.

⁸² “Ask Your Neighbors,” *The Great Falls Tribune*, 26 April 1951, p.2.

⁸³ “RCA Victor, The Pick of the Portables,” *The Billings Gazette*, 25 April 1965, p. 35.

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The last Edwards & McLellan advertisement identified ran in the Great Falls newspaper on May 15, 1972. Most newspaper coverage for the business and the building since 1926 appeared in the Great Falls newspaper due to the local newspaper, *The Enterprise*, folding.

Extra-curricular activities

With the location of the Edwards & McLellan's store well-known, the building often served as a hub for variety events. These included political-related activities, such as when Edwards provided notice in the paper that the "books will be open for the registration of the qualified electors of district No. 1...each day at my office in Edwards & McLellan Store..." in 1910.⁸⁴ The large storefront with its oversized main story windows easily permitted the display of information important to the community at large; in April of 1913, the store placed a rendering of the yet-to-be constructed stone church in the windows, which allowed the townspeople their first glimpse of how the church would appear when completed.⁸⁵ The store assisted the local library in recovering past-due materials when it accepted the return of books for credit in January of 1915.⁸⁶ Official city business conducted in Edwards' office in the store in 1915 included signing the contract for the construction of a new Malta school building.⁸⁷ In 1928, Edwards & McLellan's store participated in a Malta shopping tour that included the participation of Mr. Winkler who discussed foot ailments and their causes to a gathering of women engage in the event.⁸⁸

Crime and (usually no) Punishment

In 1912, the Edwards & McLellan Block witnessed the arrest of Luigi Nudo, a section hand who attempted to kill the Assistant Superintendent of the Great Northern Railway in Havre. Nudo apparently believed, erroneously, that travelling to Malta and chatting with one of the store's employees would pass unnoticed. Alas, Nudo overstayed his welcome and was arrested in the basement of the store.⁸⁹

With its stores of merchandise, the Edwards & McLellan Block proved irresistible through the years to some intent on the acquisition of goods without the inconvenience of paying for them. In November of 1918, burglars, "...looted the Edwards & McLellan hardware and clothing store at this place and carried off more than \$1,000 worth of merchandise."⁹⁰ The thieves ingenious entrance into the store occurred by removing a sidewalk grate on Front Street then removing the basement windows. Purloined items included rifles, shotguns, revolvers, men's clothing, overcoats, suitcases, and clothing. Thieves again hit the business in 1921, though escaping with far less, about \$300 in cash and goods.⁹¹

⁸⁴ "Registration Notice," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 13 October 1910, p. 8.

⁸⁵ "Episcopal Church," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 17 April 1913, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *The Enterprise* (Malta), 15 January 1914, p. 8.

⁸⁷ "Malta Will Have New School House," *The Enterprise*, 10 June 1915, p. 1.

⁸⁸ "Shopping Tour Conducted in Malta Stores," *The Great Falls Tribune*, 25 September 1928, p. 5.

⁸⁹ "Italian Arrested Here," *The Enterprise* (Malta), 4 April 1912, p. 1.

⁹⁰ "Burglars Loot Store At Malta," *The Great Falls Tribune*, 14 November 1918, p.4.

⁹¹ Notice, *The Glasgow Courier*, 4 November 1921, p. 5.

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The previous business losses suffered through burglary proved quaint compared to those incurred in November of 1926. A burglary that month spirited away over \$4000 of clothing, rifles, shotguns, and ammunition.⁹² After breaching the front doors, the burglars apparently loaded a truck bound for Canada leaving an inept Hansel and Gretelish tell-tale trail of occasional pieces of clothing and other articles along the road. The merchandise was recovered a few days later "...from a shack eight miles north of town on the Canadian trail."⁹³

Subsequent Ownership and the End of Edwards & McLellan

Nettie McLellan assumed her husband's ownership and operation of the business after William's passing in 1916. With Nettie's passing in the spring of 1937, soon followed by the death of Lee Edwards in the summer of the same year, ownership of the building and the business remained with the Edwards family. Harold Leib, only 23 at the time and the husband of Rosa Lee Leib (nee Edwards, a daughter of Lee Edwards) then assumed the operation of the business until it sold in 1975, effectively ending any control of the business by family of the original partners. After this date, the business no longer operated under the Edwards & McLellan moniker.⁹⁴

Subsequent owners included Rodney and Vicki Rhoads who purchased the building and the business in 1985, followed by the acquisition of the building and business in 1989 by James and Nancy Carney whose nephew, Michael J. Carney, ran the store. Eleven years later, in 1998, Michael purchased the building and store. By October of 2005, Denny and Dorothy McCrudden bought the building and rented the main floor to Candee Soennichson who operated a gift store and coffee shop. Ms. Soennichson later sold her business to Darla Neibur who subsequently sold it to April Ritchey. In 2017, Ms. Ritchey purchased the building and continued to run the gift shop and coffee shop until 2020 when Giovanna (Gina) and Scott Simanton purchased the building, renting the lower level out as a business and operating the upper level as lodging. Through the Simanton's efforts, the building retains the vast majority of its architectural details, both inside and out.

Conclusion

From its heralded beginnings in 1910 into the 1970s, Edwards & McLellan served the people of Malta and the surrounding area. Its operation for over 60 years by the founding partners and/or their relatives formed a bond between the town and the business. Merchandise of almost every kind was available from the store, as was a variety of services. While the Edwards & McLellan store no longer operates, the building itself continues to grace the intersection of S. First Street E. and S. 1st Avenue E looking very much like it did during its 50-plus years of operation. The top floor now lodges visitors to the town, a function not terribly removed from its historic role serving individual businesses. With a nod toward its historical antecedents, countless interior touches remain and guests are welcomed by short biographies of the original owners and other persons of note who operated businesses out of the building, helping tell the story of the Edwards & McLellan Block.

⁹² "Burglars Escape With Clothing Loot," *The Havre Daily News*, 17 November 1926, p. 1.

⁹³ Snow Hampers Posse Search," *The Billing Gazette*, 21 November 1926.

⁹⁴ Barbara Ludwig, personal communication to Gina Simanton, 20 October 2021.

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Architectural Significance

The Edwards & McLellan Block represents a two-part Western Commercial style building near the north-center section of downtown Malta. Newspapers praised the building not just for its business objective, but also for its architecture.

Two-part commercial blocks exemplify one of the most common forms for small to moderate sized commercial buildings in the United States. They display a rectangular floorplan, often of great length, feature one to four stories, and can be free-standing or attached. The exterior's horizontal separation allows discerning differences in interior use. Multi-story buildings generally housed stores in the lower floor with the upper stories dedicated to office space, lodging accommodations, or meeting rooms, a model illustrated by the Edwards & McLellan Block. The construction of two-part commercial blocks often utilized durable materials including concrete, limestone, or brick.

The Western Commercial Style proved popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and is commonly found in most western commercial districts, appearing in large and small towns alike. The style displays a simple storefront presentation and symmetrical upper façade with a variety of ornamental details. Parapets or pediments often hide gently sloped or flat roofs and cornices are often present, both features of the Edwards & McLellan Block. Brick construction, also found on the Edwards & McLellan Block, was common, though other materials could also be employed.

The front entry usually occurs in the narrow façade that faces the street. Entries were often recessed and flanked by large plate glass windows. In the case of the Edwards & McLellan Block, the building's location on the corner of a major intersection allowed entry placement on a diagonal permitting ready access from both thoroughfares; this diagonal entry greatly amplified the amount of store front the business could use to display their merchandise. Transom lights across the entrance and display windows enhances interior lighting. Upper story elements often included a variety of openings that may display flat, round, or segmental arches, the latter being the style that appears in the Edwards & McLellan Block. Symmetrical window openings dominate the upper façade walls, often integrating details that accentuate the openings and highlight the horizontal pattern; the Edwards & McLellan Block exhibits such symmetry and repetition. Interestingly, the Edwards & McLellan Block hold Chicago Style windows, a hallmark of the actual Chicago School Commercial Style developed in the late nineteenth century with the advent of new technologies that permitted greater height.⁹⁵ The architect's inclusion of this window style suggests a knowledge of architectural trends popular in the larger cities at this time.

James Maurice Montgomery,

⁹⁵ "Chicago School Commerical Style," *Buffalo as an Architectural Museum*, found at <https://buffaloah.com/a/archsty/chicago/chi.html>, accessed 2 November 2021.

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James Maurice Montgomery, commonly referred to by his middle name, was born in Fannettsburg, Pennsylvania in 1858.⁹⁶ He married Jessie Marian Parker in 1886. In 1890, Maurice lived in the San Diego area, Escondido, and listed himself in the United States census as a “carpenter.”⁹⁷ By 1900, he, Jessie, and their children moved to Montana and made the nearby town of Chinook their home. That Maurice continued along his path in the building profession is attested to in the 1907 R. L. Polk & Company’s directory that lists him as a general contractor.⁹⁸ He was a man of many hats, often referred to not only as a contractor, but also as an architect, and appraiser.⁹⁹ In March of 1907, the Chouteau County Commissioners appointed him drainage commissioner, an unsalaried position that entailed the collection of fees from the owners of properties affected by drainage systems.¹⁰⁰ He was involved with many construction projects in the Malta area including, but not limited to, Malta’s new high school at the time, the construction of the building adjoining the Great Northern Hotel, the new building constructed by Edwards and McLellan a few years after the erection of the Edwards & McLellan Block, and the Varney Block.¹⁰¹ Maurice passed away in December of 1929 of “apoplexy immediate” at the age of seventy-one.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ 1920 United States Federal Census.

⁹⁷ 1890 United States Federal Census.

⁹⁸ R. L. Polk & Company City Directory for Chinook, Montana, 1907.

⁹⁹ “Watch Malta Grow, A Real Building Boom Is On,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 20 April 1910, p. 1; “Commissioners Proceedings,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 15 April 1915, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ “Spray of the Falls,” *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, p. 10, 10 March 1907.

¹⁰¹ “Malta Will Have New School House,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 10 June 1915, p. 1; “New Buildings To Be Erected,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 6 March 1913, p. 1; “Local News,” *The Enterprise* (Malta), 25 February 1915, p. 8;

¹⁰² State of Montana, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death for James Maurice Montgomery, 13 December 1929.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places) [derived from Google Earth]

1. NW corner, Latitude: 48.359583 Longitude: -107.872052
2. NE corner, Latitude: 48.359577 Longitude: -107.871918
3. SE corner, Latitude: 48.359374 Longitude: -107.871922
4. SW corner, Latitude: 48.359375 Longitude: -107.872059

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

The Edwards & McLellan Block is located in the NE1/4 of Section 18, Township 30N Range 30E. The building's legal location, per the Montana Cadastral is, "Malta Original Townsite,

Edwards & McLellan Block

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S18, T30N, R30E, Block 003, Tract F of Plat 10A And That Portion of Tract G of Plat 10A.”

It stands on the southeast corner of S. 1st Street E. and S 1st Avenue E. in Malta, Montana.

The building is found on the Malta East USGS 7.5’ Quadrangle map. See attached aerial map Section 9 page 34; reference to that aerial confirms that boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property encompasses the historic building conforming to the legal boundary description originally associated with the Edwards & McLellan Block. The boundary only includes the Edwards & McLellan Block.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Boughton

organization: Montana State Historic Preservation Office

street & number: 1301 E. Lockey, P.O. Box 201202

city or town: Helena

state: MT

zip code: 59602

e-mail jboughton@mt.gov

telephone: (406) 444-3647

date: November 2021

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.)

Edwards & McLellan Block

Name of Property

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Photographs

Photo Log

All Photographs

Name of Property: Edwards & McLellan Block

City or Vicinity: Malta

County: Phillips

State: MT

Photographer: Lynne Brewer and Gina Simanton

Date Photographed: September 2021

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0001. Edwards & McLellan Block, north and west elevations, view to the southeast.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0002. Edwards & McLellan Block, north elevation, view to the south.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0003. Edwards & McLellan Block, west elevation, view to the east.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0004. Edwards & McLellan Block, south elevation, view to the northwest.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0005. Edwards & McLellan Block, east elevation, view to the north-northwest.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0006. Edwards & McLellan Block, north elevation, upper story detail, view to the south.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0007. Edwards & McLellan Block, cornice detail.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0008. Edwards & McLellan Block, street view, view to the southwest.

MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0009. Edwards & McLellan Block, street view, view to the west.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

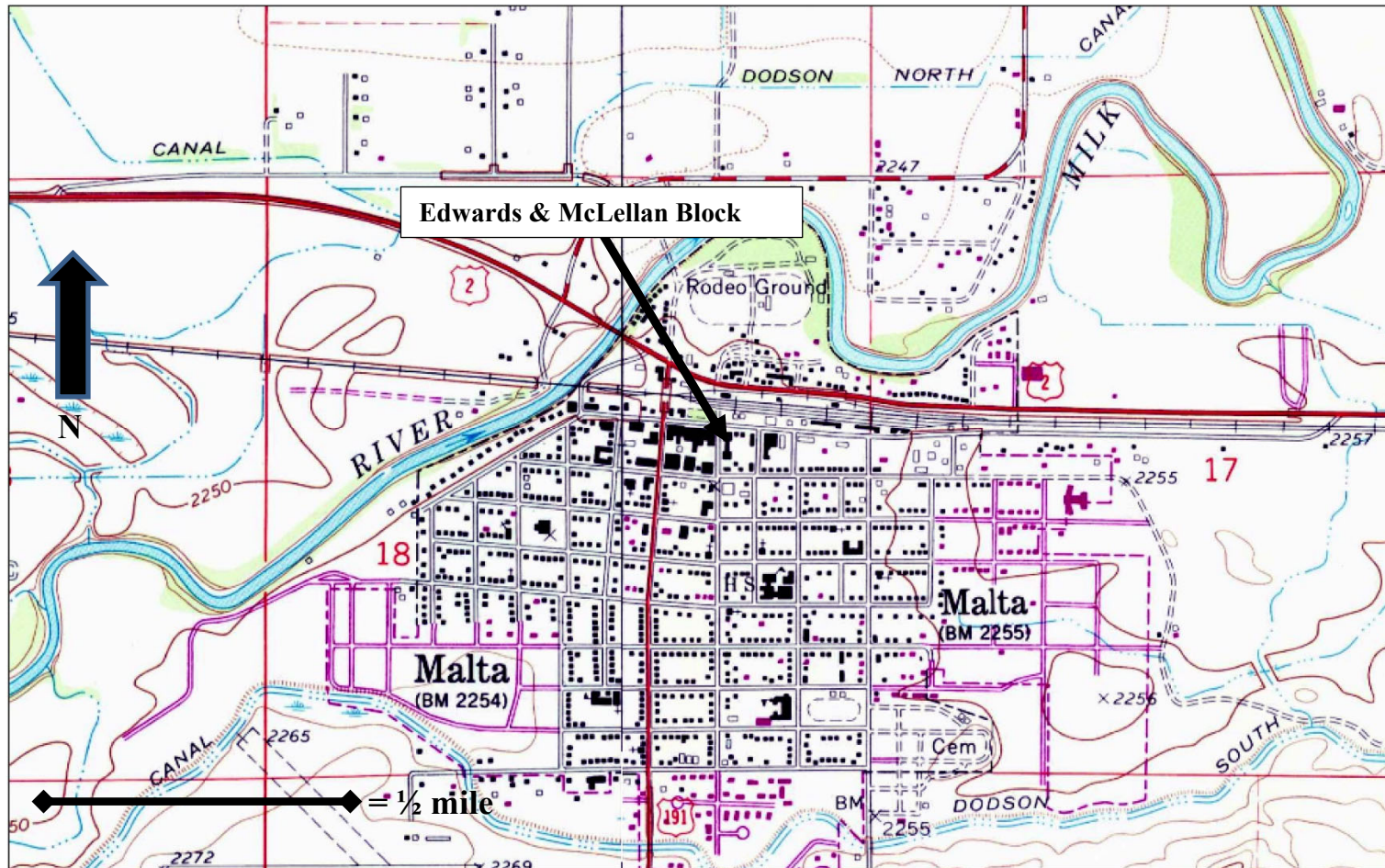
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Location of Edwards & McLellan Block. Found on the Malta East USGS 7.5' topographic map. NE1/4 of Section 18, Township 30N Range 30E. NW corner, Latitude 48.359581 Longitude -107.872048; NE corner, Latitude 48.359577 Longitude -107.871923; SE corner, Latitude 48.359372 Longitude -107.871923; SW corner, Latitude 48.359374 Longitude -107.872056

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Location of Edwards & McLellan Block. Found on the Malta East USGS 7.5' topographic map. NE1/4 of Section 18, Township 30N Range 30E. NW corner, Latitude 48.359581 Longitude -107.872048; NE corner, Latitude 48.359577 Longitude -107.871923; SE corner, Latitude 48.359372 Longitude -107.871923; SW corner, Latitude 48.359374 Longitude -107.872056

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Edwards & McLellan Block shown in blue. NE1/4 of Section 18, Township 30N Range 30E. NW corner, Latitude 48.359581 Longitude -107.872048; NE corner, Latitude 48.359577 Longitude -107.871923; SE corner, Latitude 48.359372 Longitude -107.871923; SW corner, Latitude 48.359374 Longitude -107.872056

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1910 Sanborn map showing future location of Edwards & McLellan Block (in pink, corner of Front and 5th Ave.)

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1920 Sanborn map showing location of Edwards & McLellan Block (in pink, NW corner of map, corner of Front and 5th Ave.)

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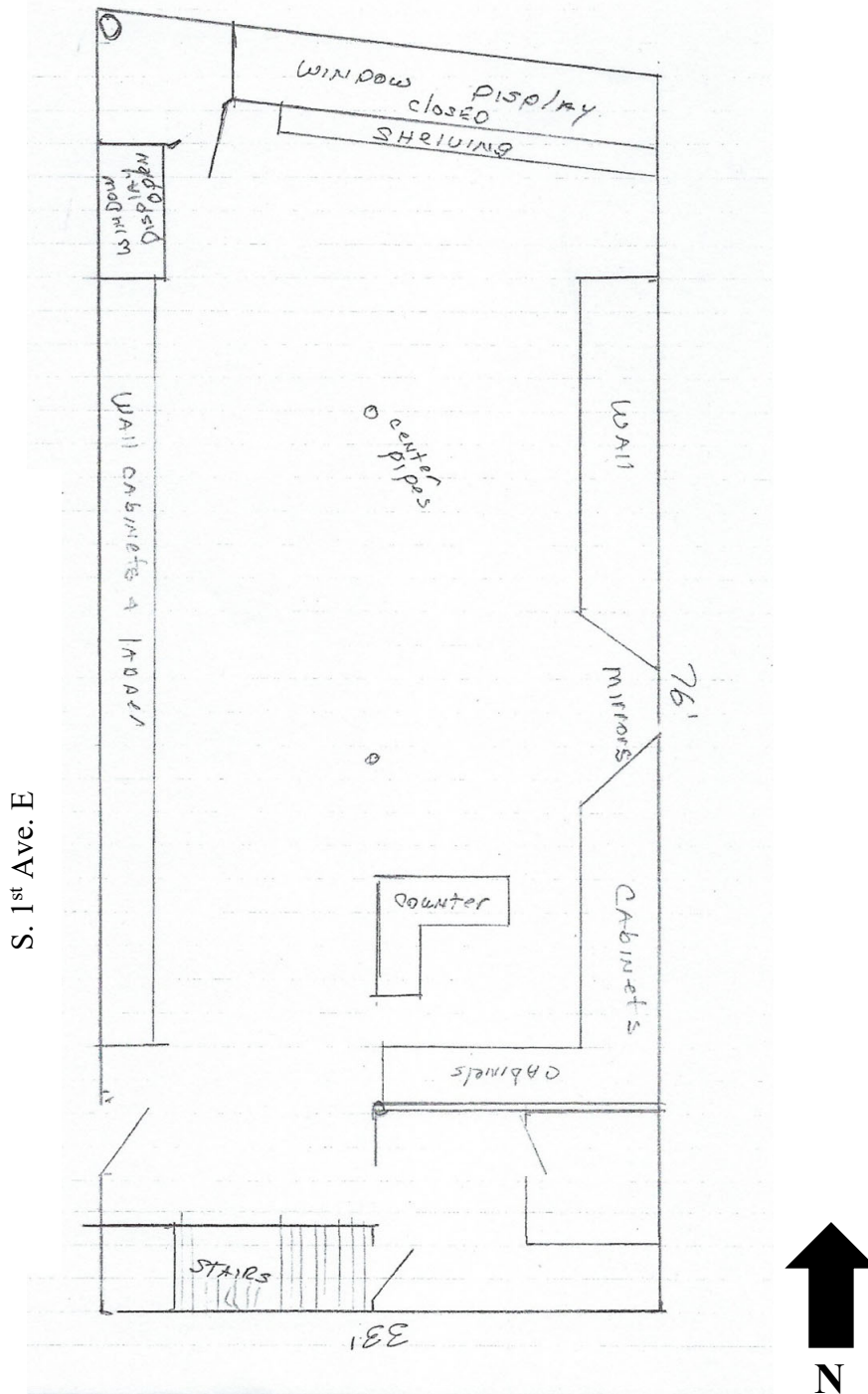
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S. 1st St. E.



Interior Floorplan of Ground Floor

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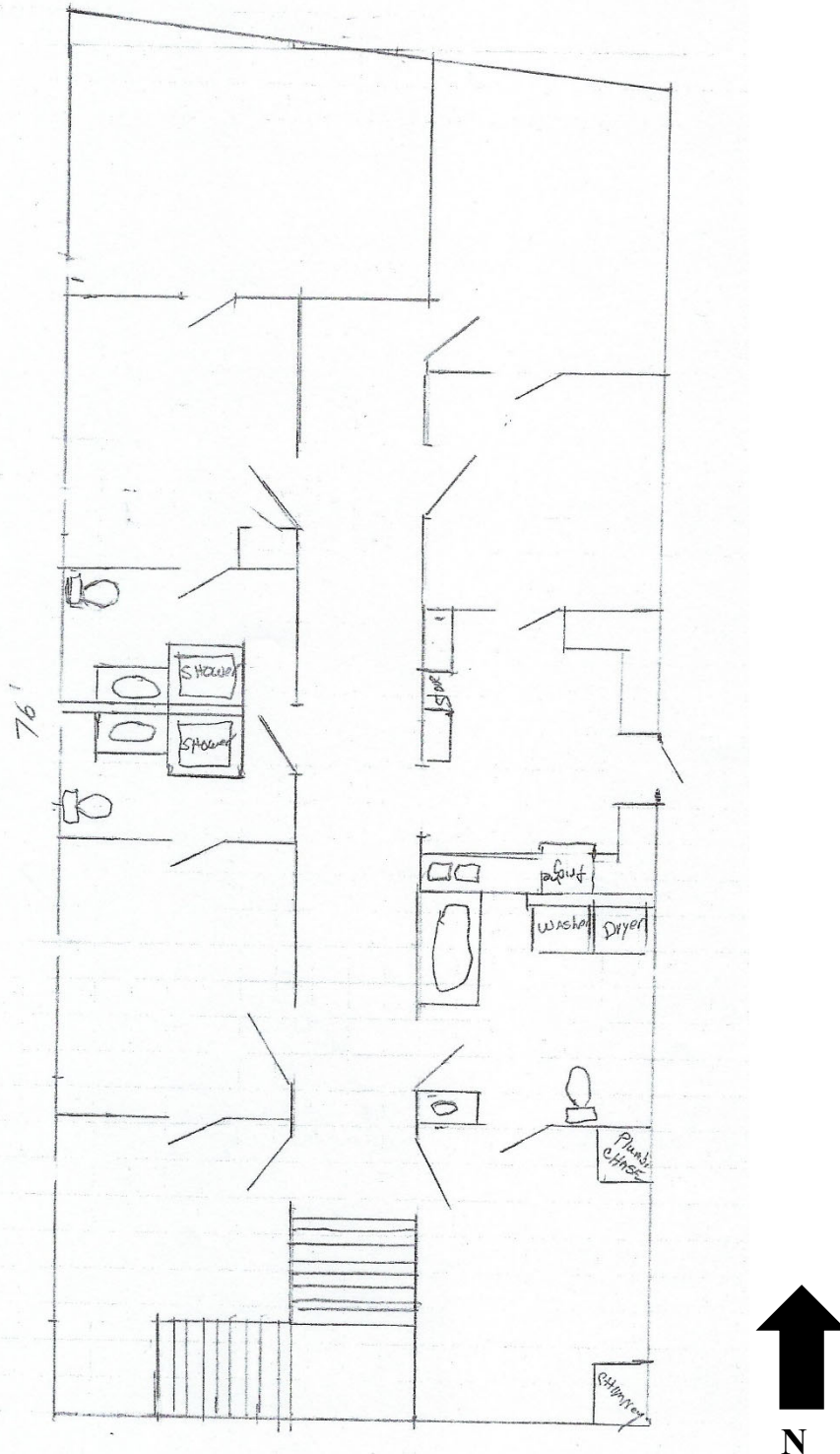
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Interior Floor Plan of Second Story

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Edwards & McLellan Block, 1910. Image from *The Enterprise*, 5 September 1910.

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5th Avenue Looking South, circa 1915. Edwards & McLellan Block on left of image. Image from the Phillips County Museum.

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Looking southeast across S. 1st St. East, circa 2010. Edwards & McLellan Block on right of image. Image courtesy of www.bigskyfishing.com.

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Looking east-southeast across S. 1st St. East, circa 2010. Edwards & McLellan Block on right of image. Image courtesy of www.bigskyfishing.com.

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William McLellan. From Image from the Phillips County Museum.

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Lee C. Edwards. From *Phillips County News*, 15 July 1987.

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Edwards & McLellan Block, West wall, ground floor.

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Edwards & McLellan Block, ground floor.

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Edwards & McLellan Block, north wall, ground floor.

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Edwards & McLellan Block, original second floor office entry

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Edwards & McLellan Block, second story, "BLM suite".

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Edwards & McLellan Block, second story, "Tressler Dining Room".

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Edwards & McLellan Block, second story, "Cosner Den".

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Edwards & McLellan Block, second story, hallway and water fountain.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0001. Edwards & McLellan Block, north and west elevations, view to the southeast.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0002. Edwards & McLellan Block, north elevation, view to the south.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0003. Edwards & McLellan Block, west elevation, view to the east.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0004. Edwards & McLellan Block, south elevation, view to the northwest.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0005. Edwards & McLellan Block, east elevation, view to the north-northwest.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0006. Edwards & McLellan Block, north elevation, upper story detail, view to the south.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0007. Edwards & McLellan Block, cornice detail.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0008. Edwards & McLellan Block, street view, view to the southwest.

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MT_PhillipsCounty_Edwards&McLellanBlock_0009. Edwards & McLellan Block, street view, view to the west.