

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: Regis Grocery

Other names/site number: Old Town Grocery, Regis Café

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 501 South Word Ave

City or town: Red Lodge State: MT County: Carbon

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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:

A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ 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 | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | _____ | buildings |
| <u>1</u> | _____ | 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.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store (grocery)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: restaurant

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

STREAMLINE MODERNE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, Stucco

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 Regis Grocery (now a café), built in 1942, is a distinctive corner grocery store building within the town of Red Lodge in southcentral Montana.¹ It is located on the southwest corner of South Word Avenue and 16th Street in the southwest section of Red Lodge. The Regis Grocery sits within an historic working class neighborhood that has not yet experienced the gentrification rapidly occurring in Red Lodge. The Regis Grocery served this neighborhood for 57 years during which time Joe Regis owned and operated the grocery from its opening in 1942 to his death in 1989. After his death, his wife Viola kept the grocery open until her death in 1999.

The Regis Grocery displays distinctive characteristics of the Streamline Moderne Architectural style, a style with a limited presence in Montana. It exhibits a smooth stuccoed surface with no ornamentation, curved corners, and a curved horizontal overhang over a horizontal band of windows. The neon sign “Regis Grocery” adds to the historic appearance and character of the building.

Narrative Description

The Regis Grocery is located in the town of Red Lodge in southcentral Montana. Red Lodge is situated within the Rock Creek Valley where Rock Creek flows out of the Beartooth Mountains from the south. The town sits on the west bank of Rock Creek, confined between the East Bench and West Bench, which defines the Rock Creek Valley. These benches held the coal deposits that led to the development of Red Lodge.

¹ Regis is pronounced “regis” as in “register.” Reportedly Joe Regis used to correct people when they mispronounced the name.

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Regis Grocery (one contributing building)

The Regis Grocery sits at the corner of South Word Avenue and 16th Street. It is a one-story, rectangular, wood frame building clad with light yellow stucco. All corners are slightly curved. A parapet that is stepped at its southeast and southwest corners and curves above the canted/angled entrance dominates and accentuates the front facades. The roof has a slight pitch and is covered with asphalt shingles. A small solar array (installed in early 2000s) stands on the western portion of the roof.²

The north and east walls both exhibit two horizontal elements: a band of metal fixed windows on each wall and a flat continuous overhang extending approximately two feet over the windows and following the curve of the building over the canted/angled entrance. The overhang soffit is covered with aluminum its entire length and appears as an unintended simple ornamental detail.

North elevation

The north wall runs parallel to 16th Street and measures 48 feet in length. The wall displays its original metal window framing with a band of fixed single light metal window units divided by seven mullions. The wall is unadorned. At the west end of the wall, a single metal pedestrian door sits within a now-infilled original delivery door opening.

East elevation

The east wall runs parallel to South Word Avenue and measures 20 feet in length. At the south end of the wall rises a two-stepped parapet. Similar to the north wall, the east wall displays a band of fixed metal single light window units divided by four mullions. The wall also is unadorned with the exception of a small wood framed announcement board.

Storefront elevation

The Regis Grocery entry is canted/angled bordered by the east and north walls that face the intersection of South Word Avenue and 16th Street (basically northeast). The entrance is approached by a curved concrete stoop that corresponds to the building curvature. The entrance wall measures approximately 7 feet across and appears symmetrical consisting of a centered glass double door flanked on each side by one-over-one double-hung window units. A very narrow divided light transom tops the double door. Above the door appears the metal address numbers of "501." On the curved parapet above the entrance is a neon sign (installed in 1950) with a black background that reads, "REGIS GROCERY."

South Wall

The south wall extends approximately 71 feet and exhibits several openings along its length. Directly below open eaves are three small rectangular three-light wood frame awning windows. Two glass patio double doors (installed in the early 2000s) appear between two of the awning windows. A carriage light appears over each double door.

² Only the top portion of the solar array metal framing is visible from any street view.

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Beyond the westernmost double door protrudes a small (2-foot by 1.5-foot) exterior eave-wall stuccoed clad chimney. Immediately west of the chimney is an original opening holding a replacement metal door.

West Wall

Similar to the east wall, the two-stepped parapet rises from the southwest corner of the west wall. The west wall is partially hidden by a modern 16-foot by 9-foot steel cooler accessed from the kitchen.

Interior

The interior of the Regis Grocery consists of a restaurant open plan with interior seating for 60 on both high and low tables. From the entrance door, you pass through a small alcove (introduced in the early 2000s) before entering the dining area through a glass metal framed door. The dining area has pine flooring and acoustic ceiling tiles with non-historic globe lights for lighting. At the west interior dining room wall is a small recessed workstation and counter to the south and a partition wall to the north. Behind the counter is a wall dividing the dining area from the kitchen with an opening to allow movement between kitchen and dining room. An opening at the north end of the partition wall enters a narrow hall that accesses two bathrooms and the kitchen beyond. A full kitchen fills the rear of the building. A small partial basement accessed from the kitchen is used for storage. The door to the cooler is on the north side of the west rear wall.

Open Area (one contributing site)

To the south of the building is a patio constructed from concrete pavers (installed in the early 2000s). From the patio, five stone steps access an open grassy area that at one time contained a vegetable garden that provided some produce for the grocery. Although the garden no longer remains, the area remains open space as it did historically.

Integrity

The Regis Grocery is an exceptional small corner grocery store building that retains good integrity. It sits in its original location since its construction in 1942.³ The Regis remains situated in a basically unchanged working-class neighborhood, except to the north where the Northern Pacific right-of-way ended directly opposite the Regis across 16th Street. Gradually, this open space filled in with the Red Lodge Veteran's Memorial Civic Center (1950), the Mountain View Elementary School (1952), and the Red Lodge High School (now middle school) (1961). However, the construction of these buildings occurred within the period of significance and provided the Regis with a new clientele of young school children coming in for candy and older high school students coming in for cigarettes.

The Regis retains strong integrity in design, materials, and workmanship. It reflects its original shape, roof configuration, much of its original fenestration, interior window shelf ledges, original pine flooring, ceiling tiles, and awning windows. The primary business entry holds the original

³ The Regis Grocery stands near the footprint of the earlier Old Town Grocery that occupied the same general location.

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double door. While some changes to the building have occurred over time, none merit a significant drop in overall integrity. Most of the alterations discussed below occurred during the 2001 renovation. The windows on the north and east walls were replaced with tempered (thermapane) glass within the original metal framing. The original delivery bay on the west end of the north wall was infilled and a small entry introduced in its place. The two patio double doors on the south wall are not visible from the street facades and do not adversely affect the building's character. The positioning of the solar array low and close to the building's roof yields little conspicuous impact and is often not noticeable depending on one's view of the building.⁴

After the death of Viola Regis in 1999, a group of local women purchased the property for a café and community center. After renovations in 2001, the Regis Grocery opened as the Regis Café and is still in operation today. Remaining historic interior features include the pine flooring and ceiling. Judy Favero believes the shelves, counters, and even the candy bins from the grocery are scattered throughout Red Lodge.⁵ The historically open space behind the Regis is landscaped with a concrete patio and grassy area beyond.

The Regis Grocery holds a strong feeling and association with the Red Lodge community. The Regis is part of the often-neglected legacy of Red Lodge's small businesses, outside the primary business district, that served local neighborhoods. The Regis Grocery retains a good level of integrity strongly conveying its historic appearance and character. The Regis Grocery is integral to the historic fabric of the town of Red Lodge and the current owners pride themselves on continuing to serve the Red Lodge community.

⁴ Martha Young provided much of information about the modifications, Martha Young, phone interview with Joan L. Brownell, June 18, 2024, Nederland, CO.

⁵ Judy Favero, phone interview with Joan L. Brownell, July 27, 2024, Billings, MT.

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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.)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1942-1974

Significant Dates

1942

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

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.)

The Regis Grocery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A. The Regis Grocery is representative of once ubiquitous corner grocery stores that are now a vanishing resource within neighborhood landscapes. This cultural phenomenon helped to maintain the vitality of small neighborhoods by its easy “walkability” as well as serving as a vital source of information for the neighborhood. Walking to the grocery was “something that occurred either every day or every couple of days; beyond being a necessary shopping trip, it connected individuals to their neighbors and community.”⁶

Often such small unpretentious businesses are ignored for their historic and cultural values compared to the more substantial commercial buildings along main streets. The Regis Grocery was separated from the primary commercial center of Red Lodge and situated within a historically ethnically diverse working-class neighborhood.

The Regis Grocery, opened in 1942, was a corner grocery store owned and operated by Joe and Viola Regis for over 57 years. The Regis Grocery has been a constant within the changing cultural landscape of its diverse working-class neighborhood providing goods and services to accommodate the neighborhood’s needs.

When Joe Regis opened his new corner grocery at the corner of 16th Street and South Word Avenue in 1942, the population of Red Lodge was slightly below 3000. The Regis Grocery neighborhood was and is composed of simple, single family residences with small yards and minimal landscaping. Originally miners primarily occupied these homes but after the Red Lodge coal mines closed by 1930, Red Lodge experienced decades of decline where the neighborhood struggled as the town shifted from being based on an extractive to an amenity-based economy. The population dropped to below 2000 by the early 1970s. These circumstances alone emphasize the importance of the Regis corner grocery in that it remained open to continue to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.⁷

The Regis Grocery gains additional significance at the local level of significance under Criterion C. It is an excellent representation of the Streamline Moderne Architectural style that has a limited presence in Montana, and especially in Red Lodge. The Regis Grocery exhibits character-defining elements of the Streamline Moderne style with its curved corners, band of windows and unadorned surfaces. Built in 1942, the Regis Grocery strongly reflects its historic appearance and character in its residential setting in the town of Red Lodge.

⁶Rachel Parris. National Register of Historic Places nomination, “Stranges Grocery,” May 2012, on file, Colorado Historic Preservation Office, Denver, CO, 6.

⁷For a detailed discussion on the changing economic and cultural landscape of Red Lodge, see Meredith Nelson Wiltsie, “Land Use and Landscape Evolution in the West: A Case Study of Red Lodge, Montana 1884-1995,” Master’s Thesis, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, January 1998.

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The period of significance begins in 1942 with the Regis Grocery's grand opening and closes in 1974, the end of the historic period; the grocery remained open until Viola Regis's death in 1999. Significant dates include 1942, the date of the building's opening.

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

History

The following history is taken from Jon Axline's National Register Nomination for the Yodeler Motel, Red Lodge, MT (listed March 26, 2014, NR #14000078)

Red Lodge and Area History

The Rock Creek Valley of south-central Montana is part of the aboriginal territory of the Apsaalooke (Crow) Indians. Arapooish, an Apsaalooke chief described Crow Country as "a good country because the Great Spirit had put it in exactly the right place." The Mountain Crow division of the Apsaalooke came to live in northern Wyoming and southeastern Montana over 500 years ago, possibly earlier. The Mountain Crow ranged as far east as the Powder River and as far west as the Yellowstone River and depended on the availability of game and edible plants. The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty designated Crow Territory to encompass all lands south of the Musselshell River between the headwaters of the Yellowstone River to the west, the headwaters of the Powder River to the east and the main ridge of the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming as its south boundary. After the discovery of gold in southwestern Montana in the early 1860s, continuous pressures by non-Indians resulted in several reductions to the original Crow Indian Reservation boundaries. The second Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 reduced Crow Territory by removing all lands in Wyoming and north of the Yellowstone River and making the eastern boundary the divide between the Big Horn and Rosebud rivers, restricting the Crow to approximately eight million acres. An 1880 agreement ratified in 1882 eliminated all Crow lands west of the Boulder River. In this same agreement, the Crow ceded a wide strip of land that extended from the Boulder to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone encompassing the Rock Creek valley. The 1882 agreement allowed for the development of coal deposits located within the ceded strip. Pressure placed on the Crow Indians by mining, railroad and cattle interests resulted in Congress removing the area east of the Boulder River to the present Crow Indian Reservation's western boundary in 1893.⁸

⁸ Little Big Horn College, "Apsaalooke Writing Tribal Histories Project," obtained at <http://lib.lbhc.cc.mt.us/history>; Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties 2 vols.*, 2 (Washington, DC, 1904), 594-596. Crow treaties and agreements are available at <http://www.digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/>. For a discussion of reductions to the Crow Reservation, see William M. Brooke, "A Contest over Land: Nineteenth Century Crow-White Relations," *Montana Vistas: Selected Historical Essays* ed. Robert Swartout, Jr., (Washington, DC, 1981), 1-24 and Burton M. Smith, "Politics and the Crow Indian Land Cessions, 1851-1904," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 36 (Autumn 1986), 24-37; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 122-123).

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James “Yankee Jim” George discovered extensive coal deposits in the upper Rock Creek drainage in 1866. Its remoteness, lack of a market for the product, and location within the Crow Reservation, delayed its exploitation for over two decades. In 1887, a cartel of Bozeman and Helena businessmen formed the Rocky Fork Coal Company to mine the fossil fuel at the site of a tiny stage stop settlement on the Meteteetsee Trail called Red Lodge. By late 1887, the company’s owners made an arrangement with the Northern Pacific Railway (NPRR) to construct a branch line from Laurel, 44 miles south to Red Lodge and the coal mines. Completed in April 1889, the Rocky Fork & Cooke City Railway sparked an expansion of coal mining in the region, especially after the line was acquired by the NPRR the following year. The boom was further augmented in 1892 when the Crow Tribe formally ceded the region from its reservation, thereby opening up the territory surrounding Red Lodge to agricultural development. Much of the coal mined at Red Lodge was utilized by the NPRR and, later, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM).⁹

Red Lodge originated as a stage stop on the Meteteetsee Trail in 1884. The establishment of the Rocky Fork Coal Company mines on the east and west benches bracketing Rock Creek along with the arrival of the railroad sparked a boom in the settlement by 1888. The railroad brought hundreds of immigrants and their families to the remote community to mine coal, thereby creating a working class, cosmopolitan town rich in its ethnic diversity. By 1900, Red Lodge boasted a population of 2,152 Americans, English, Irish, Germans, Italians, Slavs, and Finns, the largest ethnic group in the community. The different groups lived in separate neighborhoods, but the men worked together underground in the coal mines. The expansion of NPRR and ACM operations in the early twentieth century resulted in the continued growth of Red Lodge as the increasing demand for coal maintained the city’s boom economic conditions. By 1910, the population of Red Lodge more than doubled to 4,860 people. The demand for Red Lodge coal steadily increased until 1919, when a series of strikes, coupled with an economic depression, initiated a decline in the demand for Red Lodge coal.

Beginning in 1923, the Northern Pacific Railway obtained much of its coal from strip mines in southeastern Montana. The Rocky Fork Coal Company’s West Side Mine closed in 1924. The East Side Mine shut down six years later in 1930. The closure of the coal mines on the east and west benches in Red Lodge during the 1920s caused a sharp economic downturn in the formerly prosperous community. Many of the miners went to work in the nearby Bear Creek coal field or began working on road construction projects in the area. The most notable of these was the Beartooth Highway, constructed from 1931 to 1936. Red Lodge, however, remained an important rail shipping point and trading center for area farmers and ranchers and for the nearby coal mines in the Bear Creek drainage.¹⁰

⁹ Jon Axline, Cultural Resource Inventory and Evaluation: Bearcreek – East & West [S-RS 308-1(1)8], Montana Department of Highways, 1991, 4-5; Shirley Zupan and Harry J. Owens, *Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area*, (Red Lodge: Carbon County Historical Society, 1979), 9-10, 20, 22, 38-39, 47-49; Albert L. Babcock, *An Illustrated History of the Yellowstone Valley*, (Spokane: Western Historical Publishing, 1907), 234-235; Jon Axline, “Something of a Nuisance Value: the Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad, 1905 – 1953,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 40:4, (Winter 1999), 51; *Red Lodge Picket*, February 1907.

¹⁰ *Montana Place Names From Alzada to Zortman: A Montana Historical Society Guide*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2009), 221-22; US Census Records, 1900-1920; Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1999), 349-50, 380-81; Zupan and Owens, *Red*

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Red Lodge's economy began to change in the 1930s. Once located at the end of the highway and the railroad branch line, the city acquired an outlet in 1936 with the completion of the Red Lodge-Cooke City (Beartooth) Highway (24CB1964/24PA1255/48PA2310). The highway, one of the most scenic in the United States, provided a spectacular journey across the Beartooth Plateau to Cooke City and the northeast entrance to Yellowstone National Park. The opening of the highway made Red Lodge an important tourism center as motorists from all over the country flocked to the area to experience the highway. Red Lodge's ethnic diversity remained intact even as the economy transformed from one based on coal to one based more on agriculture and tourism. That diversity was celebrated in the establishment of the Festival of Nations in 1952, an important tourist draw to the area. The economy was further augmented by the establishment of the Red Lodge ski hill in 1960. Today, Red Lodge is the county seat of Carbon County and has a solid economy based on agriculture, recreation, and tourism.¹¹

Evolution of Regis Grocery

The Regis Grocery is located on 16th Street in the area known as Old Town, the original mining camp before the town of Red Lodge was platted in 1889 (north of 16th Street). Similar to western mining camps, Old Town grew in an unorganized, haphazard, nearly chaotic manner, consisting of crude buildings of log or frame, with sod roofs and dirt floors. Sixteenth Street served as the town's center with businesses including a bakery, meat market, restaurants, shoe store, and laundry, plus numerous saloons and ladies' boarding houses.¹²

Most of Old Town was within the homestead of Alonzo P. Edick, one of the earliest settlers in the Rock Creek Valley. W. E. Hymer acquired much of Edick's land in 1895 south of 16th Street and platted his Hymer's Addition. By this time, many businesses had already moved toward the rapidly growing Red Lodge business district near the newly constructed (1893) Spofford (now Pollard) Hotel.¹³

However, regardless of the exodus, smaller businesses remained in the Old Town area, now Hymer's Addition, to serve the miners living in the ethnically diverse neighborhoods. It was one of these businesses that Dominick Curto purchased in July 1916:

Dominick Curto, formerly in the employ of John Julio, last Saturday purchased the stock and fixtures of George W. Lyons' grocery store in Sixteenth Street in old town. Mr. Curto entered into possession of the property last Monday and on that day removed with his family from their former residence in South Platt Avenue to their new home in the rear of the grocery store.¹⁴

Lodge, 30-39, 169-70; Malone, et al, *Montana*, 339; Bill and Jan Taylor, *The Northern Pacific's Rails to Gold and Silver: Lines to Montana's Mining Camps*, vol. II (Missoula: Pictorial Histories Co., Inc., 2008), 28-29.

¹¹ Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 351-52; Zupan and Owens, *Red Lodge*, 171, 226, 276-77.

¹² 1891 Sanborn map, <http://sanborn.com>, accessed June 18, 2024.

¹³ United States Department of the Interior, General Land Office Records, T7S R20E, <http://glorerecords.blm.gov>, accessed June 24, 2024.

¹⁴ *The Picket-Journal*, July 28, 1916, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed July 23, 2024; Curto received his deed in 1918 for Lot 1 from the Red Lodge Townsite Company and in 1922 acquired Lots 2 and 3, Deed Books, Carbon

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The Picket-Journal, the local newspaper, announced in January 1925 that Joe Regis purchased Curto's grocery store. Joe Regis Sr. emigrated to the United States in 1905 from the Piemonte Region in northern Italy. He arrived with his family to Red Lodge around 1910. Both the 1910 and 1920 Census list Joe Regis Sr. as a coal miner. Like many other Italian miners, Joe Sr. and his family lived near the West Side (Sunset) Mine where he was likely employed. The West Side Mine closed in 1924 and forced Italian miners like Joe Sr. to find new employment or move over to Bear Creek to the mines operating there.¹⁵

Joe Regis Sr. opted to stay in Red Lodge and go into business for himself; he purchased the Old Town Grocery in 1925 near his own neighborhood. Prior to this, the 1920 Census identified his son, Joe Regis Jr., age 15, already involved in the grocery business as a "salesman" in a grocery, presumably for Curto at the Old Town Grocery.¹⁶

Joe Regis Jr. presumably worked with his father operating the Old Town Grocery together until his parents moved to California in the early 1930s.¹⁷ After his father left, it must have been a surprise to Joe Regis when he decided to construct a new grocery building and discovered his father never received a deed for the property. Luckily, Curto, now in Chicago managing a large mercantile, gave him a quick claim deed in June 1941, so Joe could proceed with his plans.¹⁸

Joe Regis proceeded to tear down the original Old Town Grocery after receiving the deed. An historic photograph shows the location of this wood frame building perpendicular to 16th Street as compared to Joe's new building constructed parallel to 16th Street and directly on the corner.¹⁹

In February 1942, Joe Regis of Old Town Grocery obtained a state board of Health license to "conduct" a Meat Market. That same month, he also received his store license for the Old Town Grocery from the State Board of Equalization.²⁰

In March 1942, Joe and Viola Regis held a grand store opening:

County Clerk and Recorder Office, Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, MT. For a detailed review of early land transactions and disputes pertaining to early Red Lodge, see Steve Robbins, *Voicing the Dead: A Poetic History of Early Days Carbon County, Montana*, (Red Lodge, MT: Rocky Fork Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Joe Regis Sr., <http://ancestry.com>, accessed June-July 2024.

¹⁶ 1920 United States Census, <http://ancestry.com>, accessed June-July 2024.

¹⁷ Hereinafter referred to as Joe Regis.

¹⁸ Deed Books, Clerk and Recorder Office, Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, MT. Curto hailed from the same Piemonte region as Joe Sr.

¹⁹ Undated photograph courtesy of Gary Ferguson. The extant Favero house (on the southeast corner of South Word and 16th Street) is visible in the background of this photograph confirming the Old Town Grocery location.

²⁰ Both of these licenses are hanging on the wall in the Regis Café.

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You are Cordially Invited to Attend
THE
GRAND OPENING
OF THE
New Old Town Grocery
SATURDAY, MARCH 21st
FREE
Flowers for the Ladies
Cigaretts for the Men

Also Folger's Coffee and Purity Bakery
Doughnuts will be Served all Day
JOE REGIS, prop.²¹

In April 1942, the *Great Falls Tribune* announced:

New Store Replaces Old

The Old Town Grocery building, constructed in the early nineties, when Red Lodge was undergoing a townsite location dispute, has been torn down and replaced with a new grocery of the same name. The Old Town has been a grocery store without interruption for 50 years. Joe Regis is manager of the store.²²

Viola demanded from the contractor that the front door be canted/angled and the building present a curved façade to protect the entry from the wind and snow. The contractor rebuffed Viola's efforts by stating buildings weren't constructed with a curve. Viola won the argument.²³

When Joe Regis opened his new grocery in 1942, Red Lodge counted at least 12 other food stores.²⁴ The number of groceries fluctuated over the years, but the Regis Grocery never faltered, a good indication of Joe's success as a merchant and the store's importance to the neighborhood. Two other small groceries operated down the block, but neither sustained the longevity of the Regis.

²¹ This advertisement is hanging on the wall of the Regis Café. No references to the groceries construction or opening were discovered in local newspapers both by using Newspapers.com and the hard copies available at the Carbon County Historical Society and Museum in Red Lodge. However, during the search, the *Carbon County News* reported on a robbery attempt when a man blew up the front door of the grocery with nitroglycerine. *Carbon County News*, August 14, 1942.

²² *Great Falls Tribune*, April 5, 1942, <http://newspapers.com> accessed April 29, 2024.

²³ Kathy Favero, phone interview with Joan L. Brownell, June 24, 2024, Billings, MT

²⁴ *Picket-Journal*, November 10, 1942, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed April 29, 2024.

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Joe Regis retained “Old Town Grocery” as the name of his store until the late 1940s when it was simply called the “Joe Regis Grocery” and then the “Regis Grocery” when he erected a neon sign over his front entry reading, REGIS GROCERY.

“ . . . the new neon lighting around Regis’ grocery make the section look like a small city. The Regis neon is visible from the north end of town.”²⁵

Joe Regis operated the Regis Grocery until his death in 1989. He advertised intermittently in the local newspaper suggesting sufficient business existed from the local neighborhood clientele. He supported local events, participated in local sports, and served on the board of the Montana Bank of Red Lodge. His wife Viola worked alongside him and continued to operate the grocery until her death in 1999.²⁶

From its opening in 1942, the Regis Grocery persevered and stayed true to its origins as other grocery stores expanded to self-service and larger stores. Joe Regis’ demonstrated his dedication to his diverse neighborhood by providing the goods and services to accommodate their needs. People called with their order and Joe delivered groceries in his Ford Victorian equipped with its Ford-O-Matic that “made deliveries a cinch.”²⁷

Joe Regis was welcoming to all and women who could not speak English undoubtedly felt comfortable coming to the grocery where they could merely point to the items they needed. Others enjoyed shopping at the store as it allowed them to speak Italian when they visited, where no language barrier existed.²⁸

While it remains unclear exactly what Joe Regis stocked, the Regis apparently always remained solely a grocery store, selling meats, cheeses, breads, condiments, vegetables, and fruits. On the wall of the Regis Café today hang wood crate labels for various kinds of fruits like peaches from Washington, melons, pears, and oranges from California, grapefruit from Arizona, and cherries from Idaho.²⁹ Joe’s merchandise apparently came from a variety of sources including local bread companies, meat companies, and other stores like when he purchased the entire stock of Raymond W. Gebo grocery store.³⁰

Kathy Favero remembers the Regis Grocery sold canned goods, local breads and had a meat counter. She also remembers they sold vegetables grown by Viola Regis. Viola cultivated a large garden on site and another at their Two Mile Bridge farm north of town so fresh produce could be

²⁵ *Carbon County News*, August 17, 1950, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed July 23, 2024.

²⁶ “Joe Regis” November 26, 1989, and “Viola Regis” October 7, 1999, *The Billings Gazette*, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed April 5, 2024.

²⁷ *Carbon County News*, February 1, 1951, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed June 20, 2024,

²⁸ Lillian Jarussi, interview with Shirley Zupan, oral history 1487, June 8, 1991, Red Lodge, MT; Pat Jurkovich, interview with Joan L. Brownell, June 14, 2024, Red Lodge, MT.

²⁹ These boxes were found in the Regis Grocery crawlspace.

³⁰ *Carbon County News*, June 13, 1957, accessed July 29, 2024; *Carbon County News*, various dates 1941-1999, <http://newspapers.com>, accessed June-July 2024.

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sold in the store. One of Viola's specialties was cabbages delivered all over Red Lodge to make sauerkraut.³¹

The interior rendering of the Regis Grocery (see Continuation Sheets at end of nomination) and an historic interior photograph provides a window into the grocery, revealing that Joe Regis filled his small space to the ceiling with goods of all kinds. Shelves covered the south wall and portions of the east and west walls as well as behind the meat counter with its meat slicer and scale. Joe placed the curved glass candy bin in front of the two low parallel counters in the middle of the room. A vegetable and fruit stand stood at the front and a bench sat under the east side window.³²

Barbara Thormalen, who lives across the street from the Regis, remembers the Regis Grocery was her family's choice for groceries. She remembers Joe Regis was nice to the kids where everyone would buy penny candy.³³ Most locals who grew up in Red Lodge all speak of the Regis Grocery with fondness and everyone remembers getting penny candy at the grocery. The Regis Grocery allows many of us to reflect to a simpler, more innocent time where you could run to the corner grocery for milk and a special treat.

Remembrances of a Corner Store

The author Eudora Welty wrote a remembrance of her own childhood corner store. Reading the story helps us visualize the sights, smells and wonders of a small neighborhood corner grocery store like the Regis Grocery. And yes, the author of the nomination grew up with a corner grocery up the street.³⁴

The Corner Store By Eudora Welty

*Eudora Welty (1909-2001) was born in the southern town of Jackson, Mississippi, where she lived most of her life and she died in 2001. One of the most honored writers of the twentieth century, she is most often remembered as a master of the short story. The following selection is taken from her book *Collected Essays and Memoirs*.*

Our Little Store rose right up from the sidewalk; standing in a street of family houses, it alone hadn't any yard in front, any tree or flowerbed. It was a plain frame building covered over with brick. Above the door, a little railed porch ran across on an upstairs level and four windows with shades were looking out. But I didn't catch on to those.

³¹ Kathy Favero, phone interview with Joan L. Brownell, June 24, 2024, Billings, MT; Gary Ferguson, undated announcement.

³² The Regis Grocery interior rendering is from the courtesy of Cindy and Kathy Favero. Cindy Favero drew the sketch based on the recollections of her mother Kathy Favero, Viola Regis's niece.

³³ *Barbara Thormalen, Interview with Judy Christensen, March 20, 2024, Red Lodge, MT.*

³⁴ *Eudora Welty is a Pulitzer Prize winning author. Eudora Welty, "The Corner Store," Esquire, December 1975, <https://classic.esquire.com>, accessed July 30, 2024.*

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Running in out of the sun, you met what seemed total obscurity inside. There were almost tangible smells - licorice recently sucked in a child's cheek, dill-pickle brine that had leaked through a paper sack in a fresh trail across the wooden floor, ammonia-loaded ice that had been hoisted from wet crocker sacks and slammed into the icebox with its sweet butter at the door, and perhaps the smell of still-untrapped mice.

Then through the motes of cracker dust, cornmeal dust, the Gold Dust of the Gold Dust Twins that the floor had been swept out with, the realities emerged. Shelves climbed to high reach all the way around, set out with not too much of any one thing but a lot of things - lard, molasses, vinegar, starch, matches, kerosene, Octagon soap (about a year's worth of octagon-shaped coupons cut out and saved brought a signet ring addressed to you in the mail. Furthermore, when the postman arrived at your door, he blew a whistle). It was up to you to remember what you came for, while your eye traveled from cans of sardines to ice cream salt to harmonicas to flypaper (over your head, batting around on a thread beneath the blades of the ceiling fan, stuck with its testimonial catch).

Its confusion may have been in the eye of its beholder. Enchantment is cast upon you by all those things you weren't supposed to have need for, it lures you close to wooden tops you'd outgrown, boy's marbles and agates in little net pouches, small rubber balls that wouldn't bounce straight, frazzly kite-string, clay bubble-pipes that would snap off in your teeth, the stiffest scissors. You could contemplate those long narrow boxes of sparklers gathering dust while you waited for it to be the Fourth of July or Christmas, and noisemakers in the shape of tin frogs for somebody's birthday party you hadn't been invited to yet, and see that they were all marvelous.

You might not have even looked for Mr. Sessions when he came around his store cheese (as big as a doll's house) and in front of the counter looking for you. When you'd finally asked him for, and received from him in its paper bag, whatever single thing it was that you had been sent for, the nickel that was left over was yours to spend.

Down at a child's eye level, inside those glass jars with mouths in their sides through which the grocer could run his scoop or a child's hand might be invited to reach for a choice, were wineballs, all-day suckers, gumdrops, peppermints. Making a row under the glass of a counter were the Tootsie Rolls, Hershey Bars, Goo-Goo Clusters, Baby Ruths. And whatever was the name of those pastilles that came stacked in a cardboard cylinder with a cardboard lid? They were thin and dry, about the size of tiddlywinks, and in the shape of twisted rosettes. A kind of chocolate dust came out with them when you shook them out in your hand. Were they chocolate? I'd say rather they were brown. They didn't taste of anything at all, unless it was wood. Their attraction was the number you got for a nickel.

Making up your mind, you circled the store around and around, around the pickle barrel, around the tower of Cracker Jack boxes; Mr. Sessions had built it for us himself on top of a packing case, like a house of cards.

If it seemed too hot for Cracker Jacks, I might get a cold drink. Mr. Sessions might have already stationed himself by the cold-drinks barrel, like a mind reader. Deep in ice water that looked black

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as ink, murky shapes that would come up as Coca-Colas, Orange Crushes, and various flavors of pop, were all swimming around together. When you gave the word, Mr. Sessions plunged his bare arm in to the elbow and fished out your choice, first try. I favored a locally bottled concoction called Lake's Celery. (What else could it be called? It was made by a Mr. Lake out of celery. It was a popular drink here for years but was not known universally, as I found out when I arrived in New York and ordered one in the Astor bar.) You drank on the premises, with feet set wide apart to miss the drip, and gave him back his bottle.

But he didn't hurry you off. A standing scale was by the door, with a 20 stack of iron weights and a brass slide on the balance arm that would weigh you up to three hundred pounds. Mr. Sessions, whose hands were gentle and smelled of carbolic, would lift you up and set your feet on the platform, hold your loaf of bread for you, and taking his time while you stood still for him, he would make certain of what you weighed today. He could even remember what you weighed last time, so you could subtract and announce how much you'd gained. That was good bye.

Streamline Moderne Architectural Style

Streamline Moderne or Art Moderne buildings are limited in number and scattered across the state of Montana. Montana's most notable Streamline Moderne examples include the Club Moderne Bar in Anaconda, the former Greyhound bus stations in Billings and Great Falls. Others include the Luhaven Bar and the Texaco gas station both in Glendive, a Ford car dealership in Whitehall, and even two houses in Hamilton.³⁵ No other Streamline Moderne buildings are known in Red Lodge.

Streamline Moderne grew out of the Art Deco movement, both being "part of the Modern Movement in architecture, a conscious break with traditional design in pursuit of a new aesthetic free from the styles and forms of the Past."³⁶ Whereas Art Deco displayed "stylized ornamentation" with a vertical emphasis, Streamline Moderne further developed into a streamlined, almost austere architectural style that evoked "a sense of movement." The name Streamline Moderne evokes this architectural style strongly influenced by the new industrial aerodynamic designs of ships, automobiles, trains and airplanes emerging in the 1930s. The "smooth surfaces, curved corners, and horizontal emphasis of the Streamline Moderne all give the feeling that airstreams could move smoothly over them."³⁷ Streamline Moderne became popular in the United States around the 1930s into the 1940s.

Identifiable characteristics of Streamline Moderne are smooth unadorned wall surfaces, (often stucco), flat roofs and parapets, curved corners or windows, horizontal banding of windows (often stainless steel), horizontal lines or rails, and asymmetrical facades, characteristic found on the Regis Grocery.

³⁵ Carol Van West, *Montana Historic Landscapes*, various issues 1915-1923, montanahistoriclandscapes.com; accessed July 20, 2024; Diana J. Painter, *Montana Post-World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory Historic Context and Survey Report*, Prepared for Montana State Historic Preservation Office, December 2010, 24.

³⁶ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, *Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide*, <http://phmc.state.pa.us>, accessed July 20, 2024.

³⁷ Virginia and Lee McAllister, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984:465-466.

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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): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Center point of Regis Grocery

Lat. 45.18181 Long. -109.24997

National Register Boundary corner latitudes and longitudes

- 1) Lat. 45.18185 Long. -109.25022,
- 2) Lat. 45.18186 Long. -109.24983,
- 3) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.24978,
- 4) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.25017

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

The Regis Grocery is located at 501 South Word Street in Lots 1-3, Block 38, Hymer's Addition to City of Red Lodge in T7S R20E Sec. 34 NW1/4. The property includes the footprint of the Regis Grocery plus the open area south of the building (latitudes/longitudes presented above). See attached map Section 9 pages 27 and 28; reference to these maps map confirm that boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property encompasses the Regis Grocery and the open area south of the building where a vegetable garden once stood.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Joan L. Brownell
organization: _____
street & number: P.O. Box 600
city or town: Fishtail state: MT zip code: 59028
e-mail _____
telephone: _____
date: July 2024

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.)

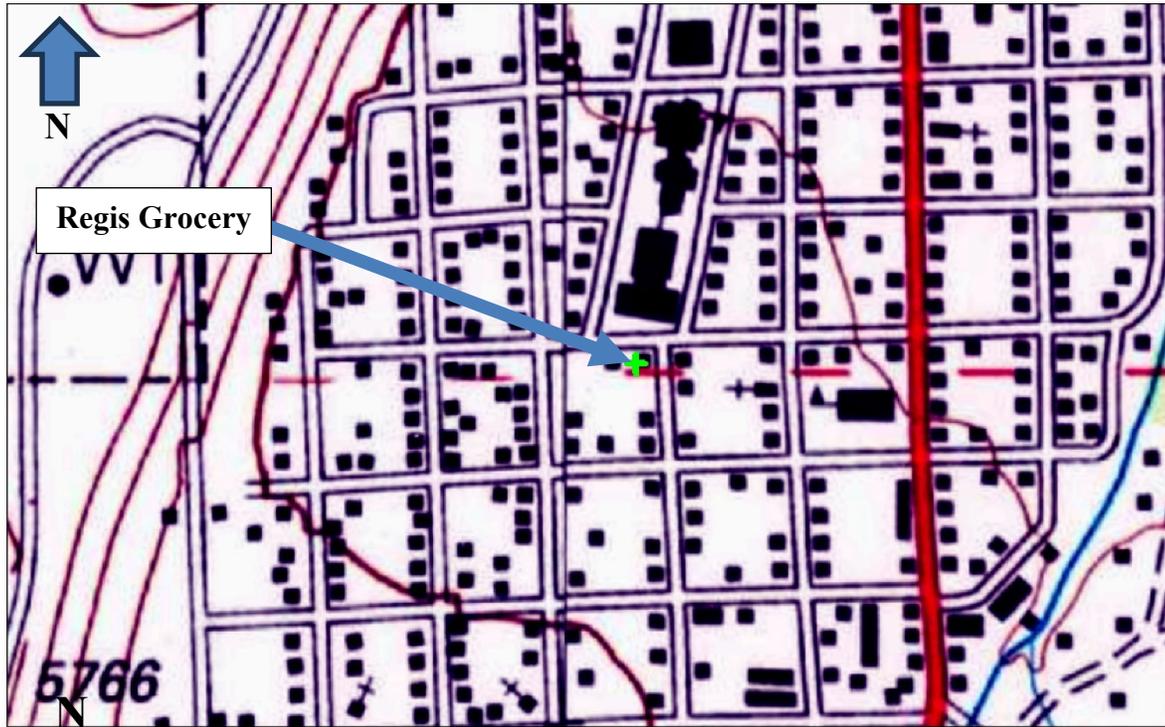
United States Department of the Interior
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Maps and Aerials



◆ = 200 ft.

Map created using the Digital Atlas July 22, 2024
<http://msl.mt.gov/GIS/Atlas>

Montana State Library - Digital Library
(406) 444-5354 | geoinfo@mt.gov | <http://msl.mt.gov>

Location of Regis Grocery. Found on the Red Lodge East 7.5' Quadrangle map. Section 34, Township 7 South Range 20E. Center of Regis Grocery building = Lat. 45.18181 Long. - 109.24997. See aerial image below for latitudes and longitudes of National Register boundary corners.

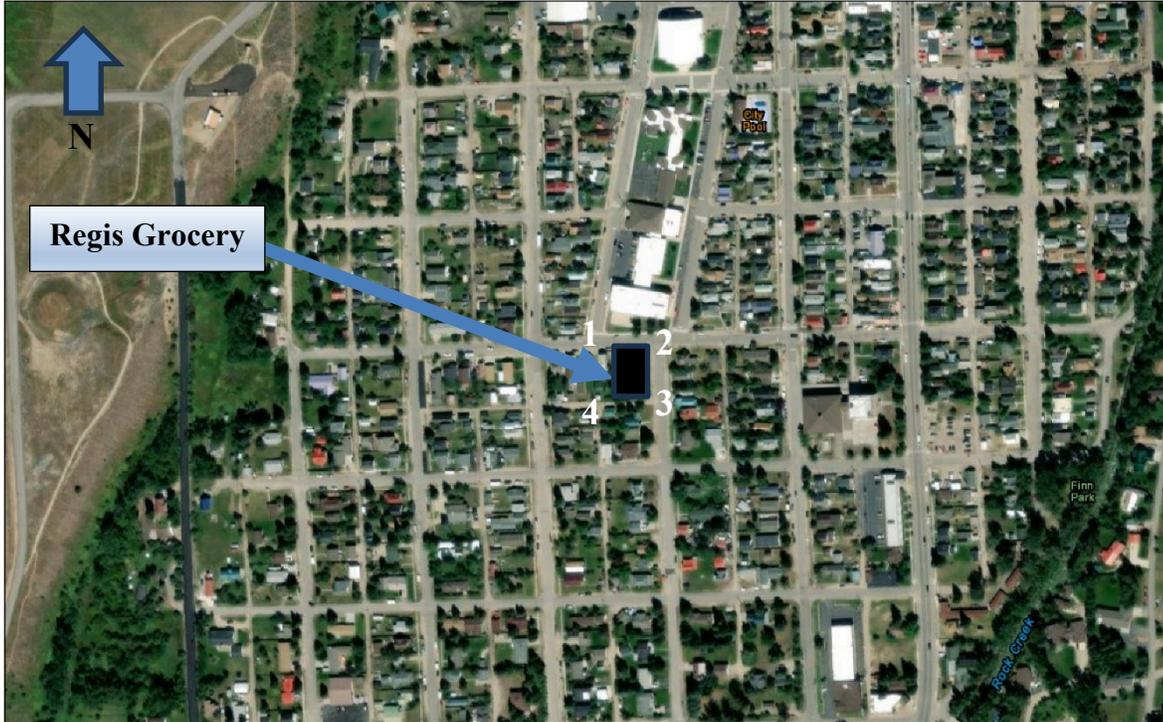
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◆ = 300 ft.

Map created using the Digital Atlas July 22, 2024
<http://msl.mt.gov/GIS/Atlas>

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Aerial view of location of Regis Grocery National Register boundary. Section 34, Township 7 South Range 20E. Center of Regis Grocery building = Lat. 45.18181 Long. -109.24997. National Register corner points = 1) Lat. 45.18185 Long. -109.25022, 2) Lat. 45.18186 Long. -109.24983, 3) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.24978, 4) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.25017

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Google Maps



Imagery ©2024 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2024 Google 50 ft



Aerial view of location of Regis Grocery. 1) Lat. 45.18185 Long. -109.25022, 2) Lat. 45.18186 Long. -109.24983, 3) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.24978, 4) Lat. 45.18149 Long. -109.25017

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Viola and Joe Regis seated in front of Regis Grocery circa 1953.

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Viola and Joe Regis in front of Regis Grocery, circa 1942.

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Viola and Joe Regis in Regis Grocery, 1971.

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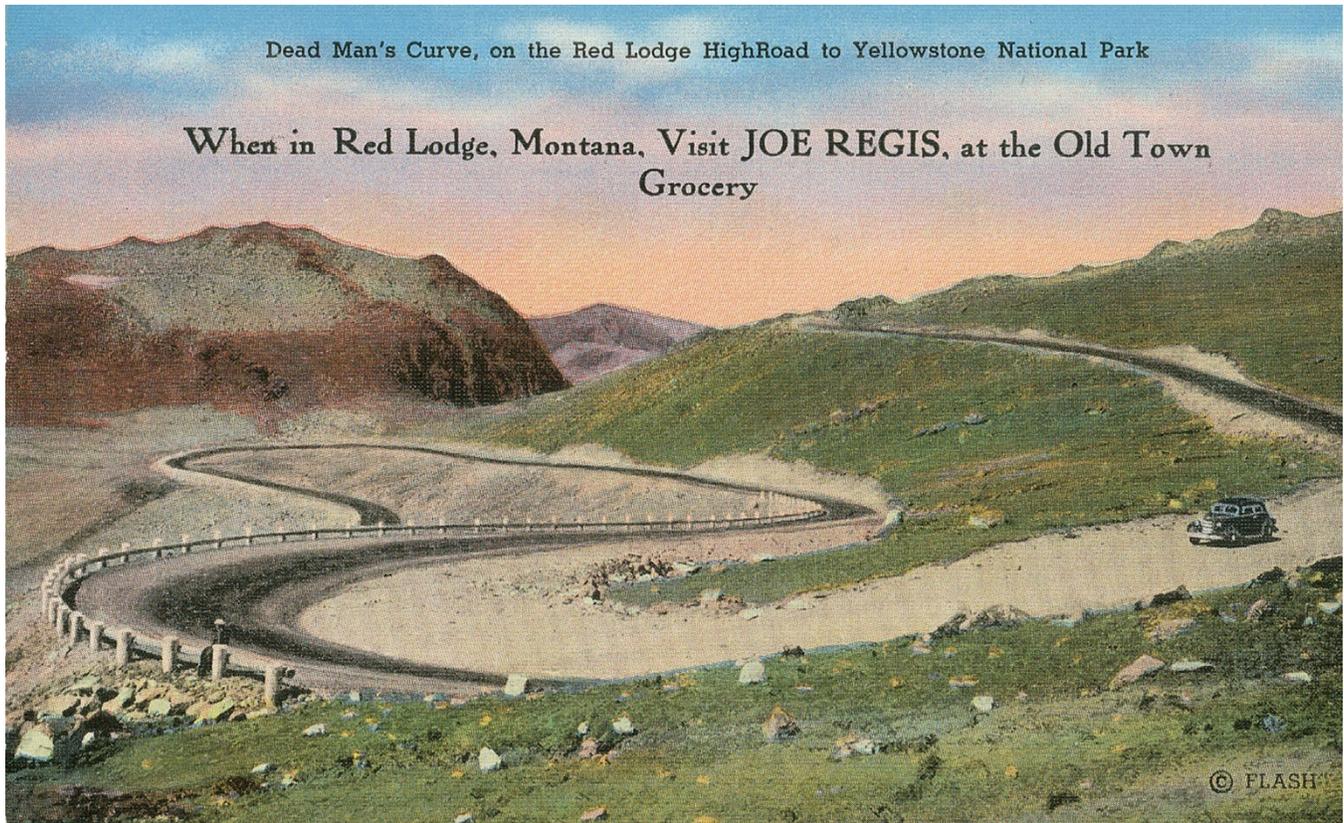
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Postcard for Old Town Grocery, prior to 1950 when renamed Regis Grocery.

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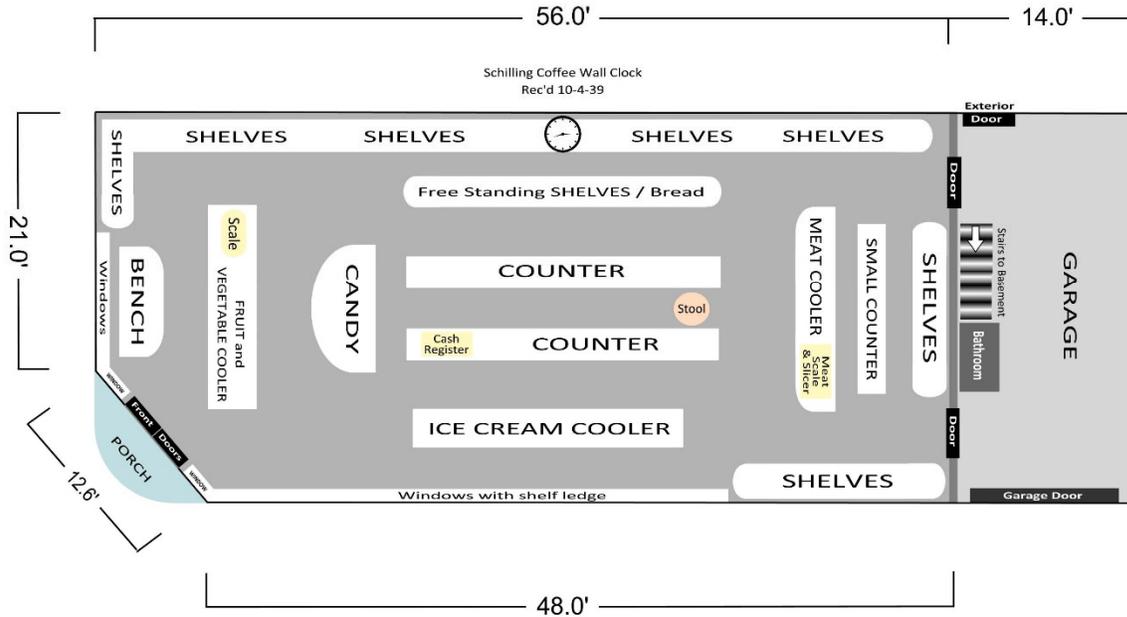
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REGIS GROCERY STORE FLOOR PLAN / LAYOUT

RED LODGE, MONTANA

(As remembered by Kathy Favero, the niece of Joe and Viola Regis)



NORTH
↓

Interior of Regis Grocery at time of operation, circa 1941-1974.

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National Register Photographs

All Photographs

Name of Property: Regis Grocery
City or Vicinity: Red Lodge
County: Carbon State: Montana
Photographer: Joan Brownell (unless otherwise noted)
Date Photographed: June-July 2024



MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0001: East and North Elevations, view to the southwest.

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0002: East and North Elevations, view to the southwest

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0003: Close up of Neon Sign, view to the southwest

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0004: North Elevation, view to the south

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0005: North and West Elevations, view to the southeast.

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0006: South Elevation, view to the west.

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0007: West Elevation, view to the east. Photo by Marv Keller.

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0008: Interior of Regis Café, view to the west. Photo by Marv Keller.

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MT_CarbonCounty_RegisGrocery_0009: Open space south of Regis Grocery building, view to the southwest. Photo by Marv Keller.