

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: Billings Communal MausoleumOther Names/Site Number: Mountview Mausoleum / Landmarks Mausoleum, 24YL2276Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A**2. Location**Street & Number: 1704 Central AvenueCity or Town: Billings State: MT County: YellowstoneNot 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 X Statewide X Local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

MT State Historic Preservation Officer

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

FUNERARY: cemetery (mausoleum)

Current Functions

FUNERARY: cemetery (mausoleum)

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH CENTURY & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS / Classical Revival

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

FOUNDATION: CONCRETE, METAL (Steel)

WALLS: CONCRETE, METAL (Steel)

ROOF: CONCRETE, CERAMIC TILE and METAL (Steel and Copper)

OTHER: CONCRETE, GLASS, METAL (Steel and Bronze)

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Billings Communal Mausoleum sits atop a high point on the western edge of Mountview Cemetery in Billings, Montana. Curbed lanes wind from the cemetery entrance through shade trees and mature landscaping to the gracefully imposing structure. The mausoleum faces onto a circular drive and the municipal cemetery grounds to the east. In the distance to the north are the sandstone rimrocks that flank the city of Billings. The vista to the south extends across the 65-acre cemetery and commercial neighborhoods of Billings to the Yellowstone River and the Pryor Mountains beyond. A 50-foot swath of lawn, lined with a chain-link fence, separates the back of the mausoleum from the city-owned golf course to the west.

The Billings Communal Mausoleum is one of only three known community mausoleums built in Montana during the early twentieth century. In 1920, the City of Billings authorized Arthur L. Rankin, president of the Montana Mausoleum Company, to build a \$100,000 community mausoleum on the western edge of Mountview Cemetery, the newly established municipal cemetery.¹ The Montana Mausoleum Company, a firm that held the patent rights on community mausoleums in the states of Montana and Wyoming, commissioned prominent Montana architect John Gustave Link to design the 330-crypt mausoleum, and local construction firm Gagnon and Company to build it.² Construction under the direction of Frank Hebb began in late 1920. Although the mausoleum wasn't formally dedicated until 1924, it was placed in operation in 1922, becoming Montana's first community mausoleum. Built of reinforced concrete with a Classical Revival design, the Billings Communal Mausoleum is representative of the national Community Mausoleum Movement and its distinctive funerary architecture.

¹ "City Acquires Desired Site for New Municipal Cemetery." *Billings Gazette*, September 23, 1920. Accessed April 17, 2015. Newspapers.com/image/60094312.

² "Billings Dedicates Enduring Structure; Presents Window." *Billings Gazette*, May 31, 1924. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409509615; "Monolith at New Municipal Cemetery to Be Beautiful and Enduring Structure." *Billings Gazette*, November 7, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415396769.

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Narrative Description

The Billings Communal Mausoleum (1922, one contributing building)

The mausoleum's Neoclassical design features a modified cruciform plan that measures 123.6 by 49.5 feet.³ On the front elevation, unfenestrated wings flank a barrel-vaulted portico that leads into an entrance hall and chapel. Designed around the concept of enduring and indestructible beauty, the entire structure was constructed of reinforced concrete with a marble-clad interior and bronze and copper detailing. The exterior walls are 15-inch reinforced concrete, 19 inches at the corners, atop a 30-inch foundation and 42-inch footings.⁴ The walls are finished with simple, geometric detailing and brush-hammered texturing painted white.⁵ Sets of three cathedral glass windows light the chapel and the ends of the corridors of the north and south wings. The east and west-facing walls are punctuated with small, louvered metal vents along the roofline and foundation. The roofline is marked by an unadorned cornice and low parapet. The flat roof consists of tile over reinforced concrete with copper sheeting encasing the vaulted rib. In keeping with the "indestructible" design of the building, the mausoleum lacks electricity, plumbing, and heating, and is illuminated by natural light filtering through the windows.

The east-facing portico incorporates Palladian architectural elements, including an arched pediment supported by two Doric columns. Set in the recessed tympanum above double bronze doors and an engraved panel with the word "PEACE" is a single, arched memorial window. A newspaper account of the window's unveiling on Memorial Day in 1924 noted, "The beautifully leaded art glass depicts Hebe, the goddess of youth, with upraised lamp shedding rays of kindness and mercy, coming over rugged fields to the foreground of tiny white crosses that mark the graves of 49 Yellowstone boys who perished 'over there.' In her left arm, Hebe bears a tablet with a single star upon it, in honor of Miss Agnes Talcott, Red Cross nurse, who gave her life in the World war."⁶

The 1924 *Billings Gazette* newspaper article also details the mausoleum's interior at the time of its dedication. "The interior is completely finished in a beautiful gray Alaskan marble, noted for its fineness of texture. All metal trimmings are bronze, including the vase racks and inscription plates on the door of each crypt. The whole interior, from the seven-inch terrazzo floor to the marble walls and ceiling, presents a sanitary and very cheerful aspect. The unique ventilating system keeps the walls, crypts and passage ways fresh, sweet and dry. The huge bronze doors, weighing over 400 pounds each, swing almost as easily and noiselessly on their ball bearing hinges as the shutter of a fine camera. The mellow stained-glass windows, the rich bronze fittings and other decorations give the interior a rich and distinctive atmosphere."⁷

³ Link & Haire Architects. *Billings Mausoleum Architectural Plans, Floor Plan*, c. 1920. Cemetery Plats, Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Billings, Montana.

⁴ Link & Haire Architects. *Billings Mausoleum Architectural Plans, Vertical Plan*, c. 1920. Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives, Montana State University Library, Bozeman, Montana.

⁵ "Costly Mausoleum near Municipal Cemetery to Be Completed This Fall." *Billings Gazette*, May 30, 1921. Accessed August 30, 2018. [Newspapers.com/image/410544277](https://www.newspapers.com/image/410544277).

⁶ "Billings Dedicates Enduring Structure; Presents Window." *Billings Gazette*, May 31, 1924. Accessed August 30, 2018. [Newspapers.com/image/409509615](https://www.newspapers.com/image/409509615).

⁷ Ibid.

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Rusticated, solid bronze doors have replaced the original bronze doors, which were more ornate with inset stained-glass panels.⁸ These heavy doors open into a gray, marble-clad entrance hall and chapel. The barrel-vaulted ceiling above is plastered and painted pale gray with a stenciled border of dark gray laurel leaves. The chapel, featuring an alcove with a raised floor and cathedral glass windows, originally contained a marble seat and altar for funeral services during inclement weather.⁹ Marble urns and pedestals adorn the entrance hall and chapel.

To each side of the chapel is a long corridor lined with five tiers of standard-sized crypts. These crypts measure 7 feet 6 inches long by 2 feet 8 inches wide and 2 feet high. Recessed in the corners of the chapel are the more expensive “deluxe” and pulpit crypts, and smaller, infant crypts frame the entrance. Four inches of reinforced concrete separate the crypts, the floors of which slope slightly toward a shallow gutter at the back to catch any fluids that may leak from the caskets. Wooden caskets can dry out and crack, breaking the seal, in the arid climate of southcentral Montana, so some families opted to inter their loved ones in metal caskets instead.¹⁰ Upon interment, the caskets were enclosed within the crypts by a vented, two-inch concrete slab and then hermetically sealed behind a marble faceplate.¹¹ Vents at the head of the crypts expel vapors to the outside through channels between the concrete and marble panels. There are similar vents at the foot of the crypts. The original casket lift is still in use today as the recently departed are laid to rest in the few yet unoccupied crypts.¹²

As the popularity of cremation grew, areas within and around the mausoleum were repurposed for cremains. The marble altar and bench were removed, and niches of cremains now line the alcove of the chapel. Bronze columbaria, banks of compartments for cremains, were installed in the entrance hall, and several of the smaller crypts intended for infants have instead become family vaults for cremains. A marble columbarium, a noncontributing structure, also stands at the center of the landscaped circular drive in front (east) of the mausoleum.

Restoration work on the mausoleum in 1980 included installing a waterproof membrane over the tile roof, mending cracks, repairing water damage, replacing the front doors, stabilizing windows and repainting.¹³

Wire mesh has been installed to protect the cathedral glass windows from breakage on the north, south, and west sides, and the memorial window is obscured at one corner by a mass of bees trapped between the inner and outer panes. The roof is currently in need of repair with leakage from the vaulted copper roof over the chapel resulting in some water stains on the ceiling. The exterior paint is also peeling in places.

⁸ Merryman, Kathleen. “Crypts in Ruin, Mausoleum Repairs Perused.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414822221.

⁹ “Mausoleum for Billings.” *Dillon Tribune*, October 15, 1920. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.com/lccn/sn85053040/1920-10-15/ed-1/seq-10.

¹⁰ Interview with Lee Stadtmiller, Superintendent of Mountview Cemetery, recorded by Kevin Kooistra on August 21, 2018.

¹¹ “Costly Mausoleum near Municipal Cemetery to Be Completed This Fall.” *Billings Gazette*, May 30, 1921. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410544277.

¹² Interview with Lee Stadtmiller, Superintendent of Mountview Cemetery, on August 21, 2018.

¹³ Interview with Lee Stadtmiller, Superintendent of Mountview Cemetery, on August 21, 2018; Merryman, Kathleen. “Crypts in Ruin, Mausoleum Repairs Perused.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414822221.

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Even though the mausoleum remains much as it was when built nearly a century ago, the landscape around it has changed. In the early 1920s, Mountview Cemetery, the new municipal cemetery, and the mausoleum were surrounded by farmlands well beyond the outskirts of town. In the years since then, the city has grown westward. Mountview Cemetery, once little more than an open field, is now a verdant oasis of manicured lawns and mature trees in midtown Billings. Today, the cemetery and the fairways of the neighboring golf course provide the tranquil setting of peaceful repose that the citizens of Billings long ago envisioned for their community mausoleum.

Columbarium (one noncontributing structure)

At the center of the mausoleum's circular drive stands the Landmark Columbarium. The cylindrical feature, faced in brown marble, measures approximately 5 feet in height and 10 feet in circumference. It sits atop a diamond-shaped concrete pad, each corner pointing toward a cardinal direction. Built circa 2001, the columbarium contains 80 niches, most of which remain empty. The oldest inurnment is that of LeAnna K. Sanders, who died on December 5, 2001.

Circulation (one contributing structure)

The mausoleum faces onto a circular drive that dates to roughly the same date as the mausoleum construction.¹⁴ Just beyond the drive is the municipal cemetery grounds to the east. The circular drive displays a 15-foot pavement width, measures 80 feet from exterior edge to exterior edge (east-west), exhibits a 44-foot interior diameter, occupied by the columbarium. The circular drive is approached from a north-south drive that parallels the western edge of the cemetery and a short east-west drive that originates off a circular drive to the east. Although undoubtedly repaved through the years, the circle occupies its original footprint and continues to serve the same purpose it did historically, providing access to the front entry of the mausoleum.

Integrity

The property retains a high level of aesthetic, architectural, and structural integrity. The mausoleum, situated within the serene setting of the municipal cemetery, is in excellent condition and continues to serve its historic function as a community mausoleum. Its architectural design and massing are unchanged, and the building has had very few alterations. The exterior alterations are primarily cosmetic, including replacement of the original art glass-paneled bronze doors with rusticated bronze doors, the installation of protective wire mesh over the stained-glass windows on three sides of the mausoleum and the addition of a modern marble columbarium at the center of the historic circular drive in front of the mausoleum. Alterations to the interior of the building are limited to the removal of the marble altar and bench from the chapel to make room for cremation niches and the installation of bronze columbaria in the entrance hall. Otherwise, the mausoleum remains largely unchanged since its construction in the early 1920s. A historic drive approaches the mausoleum, and a somewhat recent columbarium sits in the middle of the circular drive. The columbarium's smaller size does not significantly detract from the overall integrity, and instead compliments the larger mausoleum.

¹⁴ Lee Stadtmiller, former Mountview Cemetery Manager, personal communication with Kevin Kooistra.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ 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

- ☐ 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

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1922-1924

Significant Dates

1922, 1924

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Mausoleum Contractor: Arthur L. Rankin, Montana Mausoleum Company

Architect: John G. Link, Link & Haire Architects

Building Contractor: Frank Hebb, Gagnon & Company

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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 Billings Communal Mausoleum is significant at the state and local levels under criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the Billings Mausoleum represents a broad pattern of social history concerning the burial practices of the period, specifically the Community Mausoleum Movement, an early 20th century movement that sought to shift American funerary practices from traditional earthen burials to above-ground crypts within the permanent and protective walls of communal mausoleums. The community mausoleum concept took root in the fertile grounds of social change in late 19th and early 20th century America. The Victorian Age instilled a societal desire for memorializing the “good death” with increasingly ritualized mourning traditions and burials in landscaped public cemeteries, rather than in churchyards and private family graveyards. Developments in medical science in the late 1800s also brought attention to the issues of sanitation and hygiene to prevent the spread of contagious diseases, which spurred demand for embalming the dead and sanitary alternatives to earthen burials.¹⁵ The Community Mausoleum Movement gained traction in this context by providing mourning families with a “better way” to venerate their deceased loved ones in a more “dignified” and “healthful” manner.¹⁶ Billings became the first city in the state to fully embrace the community mausoleum concept, and the Billings Communal Mausoleum, dedicated for use in 1922, claimed its place in Montana history as the state’s first community mausoleum.

The Billings Mausoleum is also eligible for listing under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an example of distinctive funerary architecture. The mausoleum, which incorporates Palladian architecture into a patented communal mausoleum design, is one of three known early twentieth century community mausoleums in the state. The Montana Mausoleum Company constructed the Billings Mausoleum using the International Mausoleum Company’s patented community mausoleum design that incorporated a ventilated, concrete communal burial vault with a large hall for indoor funerals, and a deodorizing and disinfecting device to neutralize deleterious gases with formaldehyde. Local architect John G. Link designed the Billings Communal Mausoleum according to William I. Hood and John W. Chesrown’s patented specifications for a ventilated structure of steel-reinforced concrete construction. In addition to its patented design, the Billings Communal Mausoleum stands as a rare local expression of early twentieth century Neoclassical architecture featuring a Palladian motif. Other than the mausoleum and Laurel’s original public library, now part of City Hall, few examples exist in Yellowstone County of buildings with Palladian features, such as symmetrical cruciform massing, barrel-vaulted roofs, and columned porticos.

The Billings Communal Mausoleum meets Criteria Consideration D as a significant representative of distinctive funerary architecture. The building continues to convey its historic appearance and express its design values.

¹⁵ Ford, Emily. “Community Mausoleums, Part One: Early 20th Century,” Oak and Laurel Cemetery Preservation, LLC, March 10, 2019. Accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.oakandlaurel.com/blog/community-mausoleums-part-one-early-20th-century>.

¹⁶ Cecil E. Bryan, Inc. *Community Mausoleums* (Chicago, IL: Cecil E. Bryan, Inc., 1917). Accessed August 17, 2018, <http://beechermausoleum.org/wp-content/uploads/CommunityMausoleumsBrochure.pdf>; Jenkins, W. C. “Post Cineres Gloriam Venit.” *National Magazine*, Vol. XL, 1914, p. 637-647.

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The period of significance begins in 1922, with the initial use of the mausoleum and ends in 1924, with the mausoleum's dedication.

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

The Community Mausoleum Movement—A Short History

The turn of the century ushered in the Progressive Era with a groundswell of social, economic and political reforms. Early proponents of community mausoleums, such as William Hood and Cecil Bryan, tapped into the progressivist sentiments among the American populace for a more egalitarian, democratic and just society. Community mausoleums offered common folks the opportunity to honor their loved ones with “civilized” and “sanitary” crypt entombments, a privilege previously reserved for the wealthy and elite. Advances in engineering and construction materials also made perpetual care in attractively designed community mausoleums affordable to the masses.¹⁷

The first community mausoleum in the United States reportedly stands in Ganges, Ohio, built in 1907 by the National Mausoleum Company using the patented design of William Hood and John Chesrown.¹⁸ Interest quickly spread throughout the Midwest and beyond as competing mausoleum companies and designers, such as Sidney Lovell and Cecil Bryan, popularized the community mausoleum model across the country. By 1915, over 200 community mausoleums had been built.¹⁹ Communal mausoleums soon became markers of civic pride for communities large and small, while addressing the pressing demand for cemetery space in urban America.²⁰

The proliferation of community mausoleums was in some cases met with resistance. Monument companies mounted objections to mausoleum marketing campaigns in an effort to defend their own corner on the funerary market. Citizen groups raised concerns over potential financial exploitation by mausoleum companies of grieving families and investors. Their concerns amplified when crypt sales proved insufficient to fund final construction or ensure adequate endowments for perpetual maintenance.²¹ Despite this resistance, construction of community mausoleums advanced at a steady pace.

The Community Mausoleum Movement made inroads into Montana relatively late when the Montana Mausoleum Company incorporated in Great Falls with a capital investment of \$200,000 in 1916. Incorporators J. B. Anderson, P. B. Lyons, and O. U. Miracle (president of Two Miracle Concrete and Miracle Engineering) secured the Montana and Wyoming patent rights for a ventilated, reinforced

¹⁷ Cecil E. Bryan, Inc. *Community Mausoleums* (Chicago, IL: Cecil E. Bryan, Inc., 1917). Accessed August 17, 2018, <http://beechermausoleum.org/wp-content/uploads/CommunityMausoleumsBrochure.pdf>; Garner, Kurt West and Sandra Lee Thielman. “Beecher Mausoleum.” *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form*. Beecher Mausoleum Association, Beecher, Illinois. February 9, 2013.

¹⁸ Jenkins, W. C. “Post Cineres Gloriam Venit.” *National Magazine*, Vol. XL, 1914, p. 637-647; Bry, John and Kurt West Garner. “The Early Community Mausoleum Movement in Indiana.” *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form*. Partners in Preservation, Inc./Indiana Landmarks, Plymouth, Indiana, October 18, 2012.

¹⁹ Nonestied, Mark. Lecture entitled “A New and Useful Burial Crypt: The American Community Mausoleum,” presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology, Washington, D.C., 2016.

²⁰ Ford, Emily. “Community Mausoleums, Part One: Early 20th Century,” Oak and Laurel Cemetery Preservation, LLC, March 10, 2019. Accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.oakandlaurel.com/blog/community-mausoleums-part-one-early-20th-century>.

²¹ Ibid.

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concrete communal mausoleum design from the International Mausoleum Company of Chicago.²² In 1918, the Montana Mausoleum Company relocated its headquarters from Great Falls to Billings. In December of that year, stockholders elected their financial agent Arthur L. Ranking to serve as company president, a position he held until the company dissolved in 1954.

With Rankin at the helm, the Montana Mausoleum Company began an intense marketing campaign that targeted communities in central Montana. The company organized town hall meetings and published full-page advertisements that echoed the sentiments of the Community Mausoleum Movement as the “Better Way” to attract community buy-in and local investors.²³

The Montana Mausoleum Company’s intensive marketing campaign to promote the community mausoleum concept as a more civilized, scientific, and sanitary alternative to ground burials proved timely. City officials were fielding complaints from the community about the unkempt conditions of the privately owned Billings Cemetery, and they began exploring options for a new municipal cemetery. The City of Billings purchased the Billings Cemetery and an adjacent parcel of land in 1920, and deeded a one-acre tract to the Montana Mausoleum Company to build and maintain a 330-crypt community mausoleum. The Billings Communal Mausoleum was dedicated for use in 1922, claiming its place in Montana history as the state’s first community mausoleum.

Arthur Rankin and the Montana Mausoleum Company—“The Better Way”

Billings became the first city in the state to fully embrace the community mausoleum concept. Billings, named for railroad magnate Frederick Billings, was a thriving commercial and shipping center along the Northern Pacific Railway in the Yellowstone River Valley of southcentral Montana. The region was home to the Crow Indians for centuries and attracted large numbers of homesteaders from eastern states and Europe during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The influx of settlers and business enterprises, including a sugar beet refinery, a polytechnic institute, two hospitals, and Northwestern Oil company headquarters, fueled the community’s rapid growth from several residents at its founding in 1882 to more than 15,000 in 1920.²⁴ By this time, construction was underway on several new business blocks, and the Montana Refining Company sought investors to build in Billings the state’s first oil refinery.²⁵ In addition to new schools and parks, the city invested in other large-scale public works, such as paving streets, upgrading the municipal waterworks system, and installing sewer lines, streetlights and concrete sidewalks.²⁶

²² “Four Firms File.” *Independent Record*, November 26, 1916. Accessed July 21, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/524810701; “Billings Dedicates Enduring Structure; Presents Window.” *Billings Gazette*, May 31, 1924. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409509615.

²³ “Plan a Mausoleum Here.” *Roundup Record*, April 18, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.org/lcn/sn86075094/1919-04-18/ed-1/seq-5.

²⁴ *The Twentieth Anniversary Edition of the Billings Gazette for 1905*. Billings, MT: Billings Gazette Press, 1905; “The Billings Boom - Astonishing Prices for Real Estate in the Prospective City.” *Independent-Record*, May 30, 1882. Accessed July 22, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/524657007.

²⁵ “Contractors Speeding Up Work on Half Completed Structures.” *Billings Gazette*, January 7, 1920. Accessed July 22, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415382663; “Billings to Have Montana’s First Oil Refinery.” *Billings Gazette*, October 31, 1920. Accessed July 22, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415395171.

²⁶ “Financial Statement of the City of Billings.” *Billings Gazette*, September 16, 1918. Accessed July 22, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415398427; “\$394,500 Being Spent in City Improvement.” *Billings Gazette*, August 17, 1919. Accessed July 22, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415389115.

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In early 1919, Arthur L. Rankin, president of the Montana Mausoleum Company, began promoting the concept of communal mausoleums to the communities of central Montana, including Billings and Roundup, as “The Better Way” to honor loved ones.²⁷ Promotional materials claimed since the World War I restrictions against construction had been lifted, “great progress is expected to be made toward doing away with the old unsanitary form of burial.” They advertised that mausoleums of reinforced concrete “offered the greatest possible resistance to atmospheric disturbances and the wear and tear of age.”²⁸ They also marketed the communal mausoleum concept as an affordable alternative to earthen burials, selling crypts at prices ranging from \$270 to \$400, including an endowment fee.²⁹ By August 1919, the Montana Mausoleum Company had already sold over three-fourths of the individual crypts.³⁰

The company’s strategy included contracting with local governments for city-owned sites to build communal mausoleums. The company then presold the crypts before construction began with 35% of the subscription paid at the start of work on the foundation, 35% when construction began on the exterior walls, and 30% with the completion of the roof.³¹ The company held \$15 from the sale of each crypt in an endowment fund controlled by crypt owners to pay for the upkeep of the building and grounds.³²

According to a *Billings Weekly Gazette* article from August 7, 1919, titled “Sanitary Communal Mausoleum for Billings,” the proposed mausoleum was expected to cost between \$35,000 and \$45,000.³³ Touting its “architectural perfection” as a combination of beauty and indestructible construction, the article also explained that the communal mausoleum “will be permanently endowed with a fund to take care of all up-keep for the future, and the Montana Mausoleum company has already submitted a proposition to the city council of Billings, whereby the company proposes to turn over to the city as a permanent trustee, this endowment fund which will run into thousands of dollars, providing that this building shall be located within the proposed new municipal cemetery.”³⁴ By late 1920, the cost to build the mausoleum grew significantly above the earlier predicted amount to \$100,000.³⁵

²⁷ “Plan a Mausoleum Here.” *Roundup Record*, April 18, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn86075094/1919-04-18/ed-1/seq-5.

²⁸ “Plan a Mausoleum Here.” *Roundup Record*, April 18, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn86075094/1919-04-18/ed-1/seq-5.

²⁹ Certificate of Ownership #151133, Deed Book 79, Page 480, Montana Mausoleum Company to Jacob and Mrs. F. A. Bowers, dated July 25, 1921 and filed September 15, 1921; Certificate of Ownership #157861, Deed Book 80, Page 625, Montana Mausoleum Company to Alex McIntosh, dated October 18, 1921 and filed November 18, 1922.

³⁰ “Warning to the Public.” *Weekly Billings Gazette*, August 7, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Newspapers.com/clip/21037845/the_billings_weekly_gazette.

³¹ “Warning to the Public.” *Weekly Billings Gazette*, August 7, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Newspapers.com/clip/21037845/the_billings_weekly_gazette.

³² “Plan a Mausoleum Here.” *Roundup Record*, April 18, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn86075094/1919-04-18/ed-1/seq-5.

³³ “Sanitary Communal Mausoleum for Billings.” *The Billings Weekly Gazette*, August 7, 1919. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409248903

³⁴ “Sanitary Communal Mausoleum for Billings.” *The Billings Weekly Gazette*, August 7, 1919. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409248903

³⁵ “Historic Boot Hill Cemetery May Become City Burying Ground.” *Billings Gazette*, September 11, 1920. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415384827.

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Cemetery Acquisition, Museum Construction and Early Use

At that time, the City of Billings considered options to establish a new municipal cemetery or buy the existing graveyard, the privately owned Billings Cemetery. Ed O'Donnell had owned and operated the Billings Cemetery since the 1880s. After Ed's death in 1916, his wife, Mary, and their son, James, took over its management. Although an 1894 illustrated edition of the *Billings Weekly Gazette* spoke glowingly of the O'Donnell family's cemetery, Ed O'Donnell offered to sell the cemetery in 1908.³⁶ He claimed the costs to manage to excessive and proposed that the City of Billings or a local corporation could better maintain the final resting place of the city's most respected citizens.³⁷

City officials fielded concerns for years that the O'Donnell family was negligent in caring for the Billings Cemetery and had allowed the burial ground to "deteriorate into a wilderness of weeds and unsightly mounds."³⁸ In March 1920, the City proposed a three-mill levy to purchase and maintain a new municipal cemetery and to manage and make improvements to the old cemetery, including landscaping, graveling driveways, and installing an irrigation system.³⁹

Among the strongest supporters for the municipal cemetery was Mayor W. Lee Mains, who had been elected on a platform that endorsed the idea. A *Billings Gazette* article quoted him as saying, "A cemetery should be one of the beauty spots of any city, as in many municipalities over the country. Our cemetery falls far short of being a beauty spot. It might not be inappropriate to term it a disgrace, as it has been termed more than once, and not without reason. I heartily favor the municipal cemetery idea and I believe the people of Billings will back the movement with their ballots at the April 5 election."⁴⁰

Despite Mains' positive outlook, the April cemetery mill levy failed but was put to a new vote in July 1920, with the clarification that the mill levy's assessment was for only one year and the city did not intend to abandon the old cemetery. Mayor Mains assured the public that the funds generated by the mill levy would be used to beautify the old cemetery and buy unsold lots there as well as adjacent land for a new cemetery. He also clarified that the Montana Mausoleum Company would begin construction as soon as the mill levy passed and that the company would donate to the city as trustee "an endowment fund of \$4,900 and a Crypt sealing fund of \$3,300."⁴¹ The mill levy passed.

The City of Billings then began negotiating the purchase of 43 acres of land adjoining the Billings Cemetery, privately owned by Mary O'Donnell, to establish the new municipal cemetery. O'Donnell offered to sell the old cemetery and adjacent land for \$50,000.⁴² The city council considered the asking

³⁶ "God's Acre." *The Billings Gazette: Illustrated Edition*, July 1, 1894. Accessed September 16, 2018. [Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053069/1894-07-01/ed-1/seq-15](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053069/1894-07-01/ed-1/seq-15).

³⁷ "Billings Cemetery for Sale." *Billings Gazette*, December 13, 1908.

³⁸ "Municipal Cemetery Endorsed by Many Prominent Residents." *Billings Gazette*, March 19, 1920. Accessed April 17, 2015. Newspapers.com/image/60083177.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "Proposed 3-Mill Cemetery Levy Will Be Assessed Only One Year." *Billings Gazette*, July 11, 1920. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415399421.

⁴² "City Will Co-Operate in Laying Sugar Road." *Billings Gazette*, August 24, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415383169.

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price too high and countered with an offer of \$25,000 for the old cemetery and 30 adjoining acres plus \$5,000 for 13 additional acres already platted for burial lots.⁴³ Mary O'Donnell rejected the City's offer and negotiations stalled.⁴⁴

The City waffled between selecting Boothill Cemetery and land adjacent to the Billings Cemetery as the new cemetery site until the Montana Mausoleum Company threatened to withdraw from the \$100,000 project in mid-September if site procurement was delayed any longer. The city council tentatively voted to purchase an 80-acre tract surrounding Boothill Cemetery; days later however, they voted instead to purchase property adjoining the old Billings Cemetery and moved to procure it by condemning the land for public use.⁴⁵

Renewed negotiations between the City of Billings and Mary O'Donnell ensued. On September 22, 1920, the city council successfully negotiated the purchase of the 53.84-acre tract, including the old cemetery, for \$30,000 and took action to dismiss the condemnation proceedings.⁴⁶ The terms of the sale included a \$25,000 disbursement paid through the municipal cemetery tax levy and the \$5,000 balance paid with interest by December 31, 1921. As a condition of the sale, Mary O'Donnell retained title to the old cemetery but conferred possession of its gravesites to the City to manage in trust on her behalf until the debt was paid in full.⁴⁷ Mary O'Donnell officially transferred ownership of the land to the City of Billings on December 30, 1920.⁴⁸

Mayor Mains established and appointed a commission to administer the municipal cemetery, and the City engaged landscape architect E. E. Widner to design the cemetery. Plans for the municipal cemetery also included installing drainage and pump irrigation systems and hiring a groundskeeper.⁴⁹

The city council also authorized the conveyance of one acre to the Montana Mausoleum Company on which to build the mausoleum once the filing of the cemetery deed occurred.⁵⁰ Both parties subsequently

⁴³ "City Offers \$25,000 for Municipal Cemetery Site." *Billings Gazette*, September 15, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415385346.

⁴⁴ "Negotiations to Buy Site for City Cemetery Blow Up." *Billings Gazette*, September 16, 1920. Accessed April 17, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415385491.

⁴⁵ "City Will Condemn Site for Municipal Cemetery." *Billings Gazette*, September 13, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415385188.

⁴⁶ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #142884, Deed Book 78, Pages 114-115, Mary O'Donnell to City of Billings, dated December 30, 1920, filed December 31, 1920; "City Acquires Desired Site for New Municipal Cemetery." *Billings Gazette*, September 23, 1920. Accessed April 17, 2015. Newspapers.com/image/60094312.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #142884, Deed Book 78, Pages 114-115, Mary O'Donnell to City of Billings, dated December 30, 1920, filed December 31, 1920. In addition to the land in Section 7, T1S, R26E, the deed included the Billings Cemetery and the West Addition to the Billings Cemetery. Yellowstone County vacated the West Addition plat on November 29, 1921, so that the City could replat the land according to the proposed layout for the new municipal cemetery. In 1952, the city secured land to the south and west for cemetery expansion.

⁴⁹ "New Cemetery Board Perfects Organization." *Billings Gazette*, December 1, 1920. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415382256; "Cemetery Expert Engaged." *Billings Gazette*, July 7, 1921. Accessed July 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/409968339.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

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entered into a contract dated September 23, 1920, that outlined the terms of the conveyance. In exchange for the acre of cemetery land, the Montana Mausoleum Company agreed to pay the city a dollar as well as \$15 for the sale of each crypt, paid within 60 days of completion of the building, and the balance of \$10 upon the sealing of each of the 330 crypts, after subtracting the cost of disinfectants for maintenance. These monies were to be placed in an endowment fund and “the earnings from the fund used for perpetual care.”⁵¹ This contract allowed the Montana Mausoleum Company to proceed with construction plans and purchasing materials.

Construction began immediately even though city officials did not file a warranty deed for the property transfer until March 28, 1921.⁵² Rankin hired local building contractor Gagnon and Company to erect the 330-crypt mausoleum according to architect John G. Link’s design specifications. The construction crew, under the direction of Frank Hebb, broke ground and began laying the foundation on October 1, 1920.⁵³ *The Billings Gazette* reported on November 7, 1920 that the foundation was set and work “proceeding rapidly on the beautiful monolith in the new Billings municipal cemetery.”⁵⁴

Arthur L. Rankin anticipated completion of the mausoleum by the summer of 1921, but construction took longer than expected.⁵⁵ He announced in May 1921, the completion of the walls.⁵⁶ The roof was completed in November, and the Montana Mausoleum Company published a notice to crypt subscribers that the third and final payment was due.⁵⁷ By the end of the year, the company spent \$75,000 of the anticipated \$100,000 investment on construction.⁵⁸ Installation of marble and other finish work continued into the next year.⁵⁹

On February 9, 1922, Arthur L. Rankin filed a Quit Claim Deed transferring ownership of the mausoleum and grounds from the Montana Mausoleum Company to the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, a corporation that consisted of the mausoleum crypt owners with Rankin serving as the

⁵¹ Mayor Cagey on Cemetery.” *Billings Gazette*, December 9, 1960. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410727938; “Council Launches Action to Clear Issue Involving Mausoleum Funds.” *Billings Gazette*, July 17, 1957. Accessed on August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410775403.

⁵² “Notice to Crypt Subscribers.” *Billings Gazette*, September 25, 1920. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415387388; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #145878, Deed Book 78, Pages 516-517, City of Billings to Montana Mausoleum Company, dated March 23, 1921, filed March 28, 1921.

⁵³ “Work on Mausoleum in City Cemetery Started.” *Billings Gazette*, October 2, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415388454.

⁵⁴ “Monolith at New Municipal Cemetery to Be Beautiful and Enduring Structure.” *Billings Gazette*, November 7, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415396769.

⁵⁵ “Work on Mausoleum in City Cemetery Started.” *Billings Gazette*, October 2, 1920. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/415388454.

⁵⁶ “Notice to All Crypt Subscribers in the Billings Mausoleum.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1921. Accessed July 17, 2019. Newspapers.com/images/410540648.

⁵⁷ “Notice to All Crypt Subscribers in the Billings Mausoleum.” *Billings Gazette*, November 6, 1921. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/images/410701041.

⁵⁸ “More Than Million Dollars Spent on Improvement in 1921.” *Billings Gazette*, January 8, 1922. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410703329.

⁵⁹ “Building Projects for the Coming Months Represent Huge Sum.” *Billings Gazette*, July 12, 1922. Accessed July 19, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410706471.

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association's chairman.⁶⁰ The Montana Mausoleum Company, however, reserved an easement to finish the mausoleum, which remained under construction. The easement further allowed for the construction of an addition to the mausoleum as well as additional mausoleum buildings on the grounds. The Montana Mausoleum Company also reserved unlimited access to the building and grounds and retained full equity in the crypts that had not yet been sold or fully paid off.⁶¹

Although work at the mausoleum site continued, Rankin filed a Certificate of Dedication on February 17, 1922, officially dedicating the mausoleum site for use for entombment and sepulcher purposes.⁶² Unfortunately, cemetery records for the mausoleum are incomplete, lacking registry of entombments and a log of crypt ownership. However, research suggests the earliest entombments may be pioneer Paul McCormick, also known as the "Grand Old Man of Montana," his daughter-in-law Mary McCormick, and Walter Earnest, proprietor of the Olive Hotel.⁶³ All three were temporarily interred in the Zimmerman family vault in the Billings Cemetery until completion of the mausoleum.

Entombments soon followed for Fannie Wright, former mayor W. Lee Mains, Eva Hansen, and Harry Wilson, a prominent attorney and former gubernatorial candidate who died aboard a train bound for Billings.⁶⁴ Other notable figures interred in the mausoleum include cattle baron Frank Heinrich, sheep baron and entrepreneur Charles Bair, brothel madam Ollie Warren (aka Olive McDaniels), William Mulvaney, a civic leader and the president of the Mulvaney Motor Company, and prominent Sarpy Creek homesteader, Elizabeth Clark.⁶⁵

After completion of the mausoleum, some families chose to disinter loved ones already buried in the cemetery to lay them to rest in the mausoleum. These included railroad engineer George Vaupel and Frank Reynolds, an associate justice of the Montana Supreme Court and, notably, the first burial in the

⁶⁰ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Quit Claim Deed #156646, Deed Book 80, Pages 486-487, Montana Mausoleum Company to Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, dated February 7, 1922, filed February 9, 1922.

⁶¹ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Quit Claim Deed #156646, Deed Book 80, Pages 486-487, Montana Mausoleum Company to Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, dated February 7, 1922, filed February 9, 1922. In 1925, the City of Billings granted an easement to the Montana Mausoleum Company to extend its concrete driveway thirteen feet onto the cemetery grounds.

⁶² Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Plat of Billings Communal Mausoleum Site, Document #157037, dated February 17, 1922, filed February 17, 1922.

⁶³ "City Pays Tribute to Memory of 'Uncle Paul.'" *Billings Gazette*, January 30, 1921. Accessed July 17, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415391090; "Many Honor Memory of Mrs. M'Cormick." *Billings Gazette*, December 31, 1920. Accessed July 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415385568; "Hold Funeral Services for Walter W. Earnest." *Billings Gazette*, October 13, 1920. Accessed July 17, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/415390632.

⁶⁴ Fannie Wright's Funeral Announcement. *Billings Gazette*, November 15, 1922. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410720016; "Mains' Funeral at 11 O'Clock." *Billings Gazette*, November 27, 1922. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410725382; "Interesting News Notes of Montana." *The Mountaineer*, December 7, 1922. Accessed March 11, 2019. Montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn84036072/1922-12-07/ed-1/seq-2; Eva Hansen's Funeral Announcement. *Billings Gazette*, December 30, 1922. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410739209; "Harry Wilson Dies Suddenly in Train Berth." *Anaconda Standard*, January 23, 1923. Accessed April 25, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁶⁵ "She Lived in the 'Wild West' Mrs. Clark Recalls Life as a Bride 62 Years Ago in Sarpy Creek Area." *Billings Gazette*, February 14, 1960. Accessed July 19, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410205500.

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new municipal cemetery on May 21, 1922.⁶⁶ Eventually, Arthur L. Rankin, mausoleum architect John Gustave Link, building contractor Frank Hebb and their wives would take their final repose in the mausoleum.

Even though initial use of the mausoleum began in 1922, its public dedication didn't occur for another two years. On May 30, 1924, Reverend Raymond Walker led the official dedication of the mausoleum during a Memorial Day ceremony. Reverend J. H. Spencer offered the invocation and benediction, and the Babcock Orchestra performed the music for the dedication ceremony, an event reportedly attended by several thousand people.⁶⁷ Mayor William Beers also unveiled a commemorative window that honored the soldiers from Yellowstone County who failed to return from war and formally presented it to the local American Legion post.⁶⁸

Reverend Walker's dedication address encapsulated the concepts embraced by the Communal Mausoleum Movement and promoted by Arthur Rankin of the Montana Mausoleum Company:

"Memorial day, originally a tribute to the sleeping heroes of one war, has enlarged itself to an occasion for memory of all who have fought on the field of battle, offering their lives In America's righteous wars," said Mr. Walker. "More than this, it has become a day when Americans give peculiar thought to their dead, tenderly caring for the graves, not only of the heroes of war, but of all who have been loved 'and lost awhile.' On such a day it is fitting that we gather here for the dedication of the Billings community mausoleum."

"Every structure articulates a vision; the mind has seen it before it has been shaped in mortar and stone. Let us pause in the presence of the ideal visualized by this stately temple of marble. Ours is a scientific age, constantly revealing new comforts and new culture. This mausoleum represents the modern, scientific method of caring for the bodies of the beloved dead. The idea of entombment is not new; it is very ancient indeed. The old idea utilized by modern science has given us this new mode of burial."

"Our city takes rank with the progressive communities of America in adopting the mausoleum idea. This splendid edifice is a tribute to the spirit of progress so dominant in Billings."

"Gladstone once said, 'Show me the manner in which a nation, or a community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathy of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.' How often we, too, have judged a community by the condition of its cemetery. Proper fencing, trees, shrubs, flowers and tender care for 'God's acre' are ever a testimony of thoughtful, progressive citizens. The

⁶⁶ "Geo. W. Vaupel Dies, Was B. M. C. Engineer." *Billings Weekly Gazette*, June 8, 1922. Accessed April 25, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/409258025; "Comes to Plan for Cemetery." *Billings Gazette*, May 23, 1922. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410712198; Yellowstone County Gravesite Lookup, Record Number 7323. Accessed March 6, 2019. Co.yellowstone.mt.gov/cemetery/ygl.asp; "Frank Reynolds Montana Jurist Dies in Helena." *Anaconda Standard*, May 19, 1922. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁶⁷ "Billings Dedicates Enduring Structure; Presents Window." *Billings Gazette*, May 31, 1924. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409509615.

⁶⁸ "Will Dedicate New Mausoleum." *Billings Gazette*, March 6, 1924. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409540319.

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ancients cared for the resting place of their dead in the faith that somehow the happiness of the departed was related to the care of the cast-off body. The world has outgrown that superstition.”

“The spirits passed beyond are not concerned with what happens to the body; but we who remain are concerned. We want the couch of death to be simple yet beautiful, sanitary and permanent. We love to think of death as a sleep, our loved ones at rest.”

“So, I say, this structure actualizes in marble an ideal: Scientific progress, beauty, culture, noble sentiment. The mausoleum itself is the most permanent structure in our city. Here is a notable example of the builder's art. It is erected not for a generation, nor a century, but for the ages. When other buildings of our community, in which we take just pride, have yielded to the ravages of fire, flood and the deterioration of time and have suffered the inevitable replacement, this quiet home of the dead will, here on the hillside, endure.”

“We are here to dedicate this structure. Already it has been made sacred by the presence of more than a score of bodies at rest within its walls. Already it has been consecrated by the tears of those who mourn. Here shall keep the bodies of those who toiled, who loved, who gave of life's treasures in making the community a happier place. None who come to weep, to pray, or to place floral tribute will think of their loved ones as here. Only the cast-off garment of the soul is here; laid away in a chest of abiding beauty and cherished because it was worn by a loved personality. That personality survives the experience of death and awakening from sleep has passed on to higher realms.”

“Let these walls of abiding beauty ever speak of the immortality of the soul as words of Christian hope are uttered in this place; the words of our living Lord, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me shall never die.' Let the silence of these corridors ever speak peace to heavy hearts. Let the names engraved here on tablets of bronze ever be an inspiration to the living to emulate the virtues of the dead. Let the fragrance of the flowers bring sweet memories. Let this clean marble be ever a comfort as stricken men and women think of the couch of their dead.”

“Because ‘Life is ever Lord of Death, and Love can never lose its own,’ this temple shall be a house of love and those who come here in mourning shall comfort their hearts with the glorious assurances of the Master and from here go in peace, for ‘God is Love.’”⁶⁹

Beautiful but Fraught with Legal Entanglements

The mausoleum became a stately monument of civic pride, but its history has been fraught with controversy. Conflicts arose over issues of jurisdiction and fiscal responsibility between the three parties involved: the City of Billings, the Montana Mausoleum Company, and the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, a corporation of crypt holders that received legal ownership of the private mausoleum site within the municipal cemetery in 1922.

Rankin continued to manage the mausoleum site through the Montana Mausoleum Company, but the company's investment failed to meet the expected financial returns. Marketing materials proclaimed that

⁶⁹ “Billings Dedicates Enduring Structure; Presents Window.” *Billings Gazette*, May 31, 1924. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/409509615.

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construction of the mausoleum would begin after subscription of all crypts occurred, however, a significant number of crypts remained available for purchase decades afterward. In fact, Rankin continued to advertise unsold infant and pulpit crypts into the 1950s.⁷⁰ Adding to this inventory were crypts that Rankin repossessed for non-payment as well as those that individual crypt owners resold to the company when they moved elsewhere during the difficult years of the Great Depression.

Third party crypt sales further complicated the matter, and the mausoleum company published a notice in *The Billings Gazette* in 1948 that it would “not assume liability or guarantee title to crypts not purchased” directly through the mausoleum company.⁷¹ Without clear title, crypts went unoccupied, and the mausoleum company lost anticipated sealing fees, which, in turn, reduced the funds available for the mausoleum’s maintenance.

On March 18, 1954, the Montana Mausoleum Company filed notice of dissolution, claiming the business ceased operations and held no assets.⁷² Three days later, the corporation transferred title of all unsold infant and pulpit crypts to the Consolidated Mausoleum Company, which operated the mausoleum in Red Lodge.⁷³

In January 1955, the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, represented by Rankin, petitioned the city council to assume care of the mausoleum. This request led to years of hostility between Rankin and council members. As early as 1921, city officials questioned the sufficiency of the mausoleum’s endowment to cover perpetual care expenses, expressing concern that the city would be held accountable for financial deficits even though, as a privately owned property, the city held no provision for oversight.⁷⁴

At a council meeting in February 1955, Rankin clarified that the mausoleum association only asked the city to assume responsibility, not for maintenance and operation of the building, but for mowing and watering the lawn and clearing snow from the sidewalks around the mausoleum. In return, the association offered to pay the city \$3,651 from its endowment fund from crypt sales. City Attorney George Hutton countered that according to the 1920 contract with the city, the Billings Mausoleum Company agreed to pay the city \$15 from the sale of each of the 330 crypts and asserted that the city had yet to receive the funds. Rankin explained that some of the endowment funds had been expended on watering the mausoleum grounds and maintaining the road. He offered to provide the city with an accounting of expenses. Alderman John Newman inquired about the condition of the building, hearing reports of cracks in the cement, to which Rankin responded that the “building is in good condition” and remains under the

⁷⁰ “The Better Way.” *Billings Gazette*, January 10, 1954. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/411574290.

⁷¹ “Crypt for Sale.” *Billings Gazette*, March 10, 1935. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/411147283; “Notice.” *Billings Gazette*, March 5, 1948. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/images/413425625.

⁷² “Mayor Cagey on Cemetery.” *Billings Gazette*, December 9, 1960. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410727938.

⁷³ “Real Estate Transfers.” *Billings Gazette*, March 21, 1954. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/411396637.

⁷⁴ “Rankin Says City Council Welcome to Visit Mausoleum.” *Billings Gazette*, August 3, 1921. Accessed April 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/409975996.

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management of the mausoleum company. The matter was referred to the cemetery commission.⁷⁵ On March 16, the city council denied Rankin's request but offered to reconsider if he presented the proposal in writing.⁷⁶

Rankin renewed the request for grounds maintenance in January 1956.⁷⁷ On April 4, the city council reached a preliminary agreement with the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association. According to the arrangement, the city agreed to maintain the lawn and shrubbery around the mausoleum and remove snow from the steps and driveway in exchange for \$1,160 in cash and a strip of land, conveyed by deed from the mausoleum association to the city. Alderman Newman again raised the issue about money due the city from the endowment fund per the 1920 contract; Alderman Stewart North suggested that pursuit of those funds was a "dead issue" if the city acted negligently in collecting the money owed.⁷⁸

Over a year later, on July 3, 1957, Alderman Newman again raised the issue of nonpayment for the sale of crypts. He contended that the mausoleum company owed the city \$16,340, given the terms of the agreement signed on September 23, 1920. Alderman Robert Scarborough noted that although the city was due the unpaid funds, the statute of limitations prevented collection on the 30-year-old debt. With the issue again raised, the mayor called for an investigation into the matter.⁷⁹

The following week, Aldermen Newman and Clavadetscher reported to the council the terms agreed upon years earlier by the city and the Montana Mausoleum Company, which included that the city ceded an acre of land to the Montana Mausoleum Company to build the mausoleum in exchange for \$15 from each sale and \$10 from each crypt sealing for placement in an endowment fund for perpetual care. Clavadetscher claimed that crypt sealing occurred as recently as 1956 yet the city hadn't received the funds. He asserted that the Montana Mausoleum Company owed the city \$8,250. Clavadetscher suggested the council take action to recover the money as he believed the mausoleum was becoming a liability to the city, reporting cracking concrete and a leaking roof plagued the building, and insinuating that Rankin and the mausoleum company defrauded the city of the endowment funds.⁸⁰

On July 17, the city council took steps to "settle the issue involving funds allegedly due for the sale and sealing of crypts" at the mausoleum. Investigators asserted they found no evidence that any of the money due the city was ever paid. The city council demanded that Arthur Rankin, president of the Montana Mausoleum Company, produce documentary evidence confirming payment of the funds. Barring such confirmation, legal action against the company would ensue. Everett Lofgren, a representative appearing for Rankin, asserted that the Montana Mausoleum Company who would be the recipient of the lawsuit,

⁷⁵ "Mausoleum Bid to Be Studied." *Billings Gazette*, February 9, 1955. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/411570909.

⁷⁶ "Council Lets Two Contracts." *Billings Gazette*, March 16, 1955. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁷⁷ "Policeman Will Attend Academy." *Billings Gazette*, January 18, 1956. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁷⁸ "City Council Proposes Agreement with Billings Mausoleum Group." *Billings Gazette*, April 4, 1956. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁷⁹ "Consulting Engineers Make Report on Street Improvement Survey." *Billings Gazette*, July 3, 1957. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁸⁰ "Council Hears Mausoleum Report, Discussion on Treatment of Dogs." *Billings Gazette*, July 10, 1957. Accessed on March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

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dissolved years before. City Attorney James Battin countered that dissolution could not occur if any outstanding obligations existed. Lofgren clarified that the mausoleum had been built, the crypts sold, and the company dissolved. He emphasized that the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association consisted of the owners of the mausoleum crypts and the endowment fund, and the money reportedly due was in the bank. Clavandetcher noted that the mausoleum association failed to file a financial report.⁸¹

On September 18, 1957, City Attorney Battin explained to the city council that other than \$75 in crypt sealing fees the city could not collect any other unpaid funds owed prior to 1949 because of the eight-year statute of limitations. He requested Rankin provide whatever documentation possible to clarify the matter. Battin added that pursuit of the missing funds became even more difficult with the finding that the city had invalidated the contract with the mausoleum company in 1926 by "failing to grade and gravel thoroughfares and supply certain upkeep."⁸²

Tensions between the city council and Rankin flared again a few months later after the city engineer discovered an error while resurveying the cemetery and mausoleum grounds to annex Mountview Cemetery into the city limits.⁸³ He attributed it to an error in either the original survey or the legal description.⁸⁴ In any event, remediation of the situation required a land exchange between the city and the mausoleum association.

In January 1958, the city council discussed the proposed land swap in which the mausoleum association would trade 0.158-acres on the north and west side of the mausoleum for 0.18985-acres of city-owned tracts on the south and east sides of the building. Council members disagreed on the proposal. Clavadetscher, backed by Newman, insisted on an accounting of the disputed endowment payments before any decision made. He pointed out that the council asked Arthur Rankin to appear before the council regarding the matter but failed to do so. Alderman Robert Scarborough countered that the exchange would relieve the city of unusable land while it gained ownership of some of the property surrounding the mausoleum; Stewart North reiterated that the statute of limitations expired to claim any unpaid funds.⁸⁵

The council approved the land swap on a divided vote, but Mayor Earle Knight requested that Rankin appear before the council to settle the matter of the endowment fund.⁸⁶ Rankin's appearance before the

⁸¹ "Council Launches Action to Clear Issue Involving Mausoleum Funds." *Billings Gazette*, July 17, 1957. Accessed on August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410775403.

⁸² "Council Hears City Attorney's Report on Mausoleum Inquiry." *Billings Gazette*, September 18, 1957. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁸³ "Billings City Limits Expanded." *Billings Gazette*, October 9, 1957. Accessed on March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410861975; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Certificate of Survey #784, Document #592759, dated November 12, 1957, filed November 26, 1957; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Certificate of Survey #785, Document #592815, dated November 21, 1957, filed November 27, 1957.

⁸⁴ "Land Swap, Zone Classification Change Occupies Council's Time." *Billings Gazette*, January 15, 1958. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410916640.

⁸⁵ "Land Swap, Zone Classification Change Occupies Council's Time." *Billings Gazette*, January 15, 1958. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410916640.

⁸⁶ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #595232, Deed Book 625, Pages 380-382, City of Billings to Montana Mausoleum Company, dated December 20, 1957, filed January 16, 1958; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #595233, Deed Book 625, Pages 383-385, Billings Communal

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city council the following week erupted into a fiery exchange of accusations, character attacks, and threats of legal action.⁸⁷

In July 1960, the mausoleum association transferred a .07118-acre tract of land surrounding the mausoleum to Rankin. The agreement included Rankin establishing a private Masonic cemetery on the mausoleum grounds and conveying \$20,000 from lot sales to the mausoleum's escrow account for the building's upkeep.⁸⁸

December 1960 witnessed the mausoleum association presenting plans for the Masonic cemetery to the city council. The city council voted down the proposal, and Mayor Carl Clavendetcher, formerly a councilman, explained that the original contract between the city and the Montana Mausoleum Company dated September 23, 1920 clearly spelled out that "the city has jurisdiction of the mausoleum and the ground it is on." The mayor surmised that the city officials who entered into the contract with the mausoleum company hadn't intended provision for a competing private cemetery within the city cemetery. He also noted that the issue of the endowment fund was under litigation.⁸⁹ Rankin, unsuccessful in subsequent attempts to establish the Masonic cemetery, transferred the land back to the Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association in 1967.⁹⁰ The mausoleum association deeded it to the City of Billings later that year with the stipulation that the city assume maintenance of the mausoleum's front lawn, still owned by the mausoleum association.⁹¹

Bringing the Billings Mausoleum Back

By 1980, the mausoleum fell into disrepair and restoration efforts were underway.⁹² According to an article in *The Billings Gazette*, published on May 15, 1980, "The once palatial building now has peeling paint, a leaky copper roof, disintegrating stained glass windows and a weakened foundation. Since Rankin died in 1976 [1974] there has been no one to see to the maintenance of the building, which is slowly crumbling. ... The copper [bronze] doors, tarnished now and missing the stained-glass panels that once

Mausoleum Cemetery Association to City of Billings, dated December 20, 1957, filed January 16, 1958; "Land Swap, Zone Classification Change Occupies Council's Time." *Billings Gazette*, January 15, 1958. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410916640.

⁸⁷ "Dispute Over Mausoleum Funds Explodes at City Council Meeting." *Billings Gazette*, January 21, 1958. Accessed March 6, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

⁸⁸ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #645522, Deed Book 703, Pages 509-510, Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association to Arthur L. Rankin, dated January 25, 1958, filed July 21, 1960; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Plat for the Mausoleum Cemetery, Document #669567, dated November 2, 1960.

⁸⁹ "Mayor Cagey on Cemetery." *Billings Gazette*, December 9, 1960. Accessed August 23, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/410727938.

⁹⁰ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed 792362, Deed Book 852, Page 526, Arthur L. & Ione Rankin to Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, dated May 10, 1963, filed January 26, 1960; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Tract A of Certificate of Survey #845, Document #645464, dated July 1960, filed July 20, 1960.

⁹¹ Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Quit Claim Deed #869048, Deed Book 870, Page 51, Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association to City of Billings, dated October 24, 1967, filed November 7, 1967; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Tract A of Certificate of Survey #845 Amended, Document #645464, dated July, 1960, filed July 20, 1960.

⁹² "Decaying Mausoleum." *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414821989.

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bordered them, are usually kept locked to discourage the vandalism that has contributed to the decay of the old building. Above the doors, a stained-glass window sags, its lead rotting out from between the glass. ... Some crypts are not labeled, but no one knows if they are empty.”⁹³

According to LeRoy Stewart, superintendent of Mountview Cemetery at the time, records for sales of crypts were haphazardly documented, some even on matchbook covers, and presented to city officials in a shoebox. Some sales were missing so it proved difficult to determine ownership of the crypts. When Arthur L. Rankin died, the mausoleum’s maintenance contained only \$7,000, much less than the anticipated \$25,000 needed for the repairs. The mausoleum association offered to transfer ownership of the building to the city some years before, but Stewart said at that time the city didn’t possess the money for repairs and upkeep.⁹⁴

Landmark, Inc., (Landmark) a local preservation group chaired by Virginia Connelly, grew concerned with the mausoleum’s deterioration and spearheaded an effort to restore and maintain the building. Since the heirs of those interred in the mausoleum owned the building, Landmark proposed tracing the heirs to help fund the restoration and then create a “perpetual care fund” for the mausoleum, worth an estimated \$5 million to \$6 million replacement value before presenting it to the city.⁹⁵

By May 27, 1980, Landmark reported that the preservation group raised enough funds to start roof repairs.⁹⁶ Restoration efforts continued for two years and Landmark presented the mausoleum and a \$19,000 perpetual care fund to the City of Billings on May 30, 1982.⁹⁷

In the years since the city’s acquisition of the mausoleum, the cemetery has raised funds for the building’s maintenance by selling space for cremains in the chapel, entrance hall, and a columbarium built at the center of the circular drive. The crypts in the entry hall, originally intended for infants and children, are being used instead as family vaults for interment of cremains.⁹⁸

⁹³ Merryman, Kathleen. “Crypts in Ruin, Mausoleum Repairs Perused.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414822221.

⁹⁴ Merryman, Kathleen. “Crypts in Ruin, Mausoleum Repairs Perused.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414822221.

⁹⁵ Connelly, Virginia. “Article Draws Help.” *Billings Gazette*, May 27, 1980. Accessed on August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414430435; Wright, Kathleen. “... and the Dead Were Buried on Ranch Land.” *Billings Gazette*, June 25, 1982. Accessed on August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/413190415; Merryman, Kathleen. “Crypts in Ruin, Mausoleum Repairs Perused.” *Billings Gazette*, May 15, 1980. Accessed August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414822221.

⁹⁶ Connelly, Virginia. “Article Draws Help.” *Billings Gazette*, May 27, 1980. Accessed on August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/414430435.

⁹⁷ Wright, Kathleen. “... and the Dead Were Buried on Ranch Land.” *Billings Gazette*, June 25, 1982. Accessed on August 22, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/413190415; Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Bargain & Sale Deed #1230167, Deed Book 1236, Pages 3176-3177, Billings Landmarks Mausoleum, Inc. f/k/a Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association to City of Billings, dated May 19, 1982, filed May 19, 1982.

⁹⁸ Interview with Lee Stadtmiller, Mountview Cemetery superintendent, recorded by Ann Kooistra-Manning on August 21, 2018.

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As of 2019, the mausoleum is not yet full, but according to former cemetery superintendent Lee Stadtmiller, all the crypts have been purchased.⁹⁹

Architectural Significance

The Billings Communal Mausoleum is architecturally significant as an example of distinctive funerary architecture. The mausoleum, which incorporates Palladian architecture into a patented communal mausoleum design, is one of three known early twentieth century community mausoleums in the state.

The Montana Mausoleum Company constructed the Billings mausoleum using the International Mausoleum Company's patented community mausoleum design, originally marketed by William I. Hood and John W. Chesrown of the National Mausoleum Company. Hood developed and patented the initial concept in 1907 for a ventilated, concrete communal burial vault with a large hall for indoor funerals (US Patent 858,070). The National Mausoleum Company registered improvements to its system in 1909, incorporating John W. Chesrown's refinements to the original design (US Patent 919,126), and a deodorizing and disinfecting device (US Patent 915,000) invented by Arthur G. Walter and B. M. Fremont to neutralize deleterious gases with formaldehyde.

The concept consisted of seamless concrete construction and tiers of vaults with a ventilation system that exhausted vapors from the crypts to the outside. Gases that built up within the crypts were expelled through valve-controlled ports into air channels between the vaults and the outer and inner walls and released through vents along the roofline.¹⁰⁰ The air circulating through the ventilation system, often touted as "scientific" and "sanitary," evaporated dampness and conducted offensive vapors out of the building to keep the mausoleum dry and odor-free while slowly desiccating remains. In 1909, the National Mausoleum Company restructured as the International Mausoleum Company and moved its headquarters from Ohio, to Chicago, Illinois.

Local architect John G. Link designed the Billings Communal Mausoleum according to Hood and Chesrown's patented specifications for a ventilated structure of steel-reinforced concrete construction. Reinforced concrete was a durable, non-flammable construction material and an economical alternative to cut stone, making crypt burials more affordable to those of ordinary means. It also accommodated any architectural style that a community desired.

In addition to its patented design, the Billings Communal Mausoleum is a rare local expression of early twentieth century Neoclassical architecture with a Palladian motif. Other than the mausoleum and Laurel's original public library (now part of City Hall), there are few examples in Yellowstone County of buildings with Palladian features, such as symmetrical cruciform massing, barrel-vaulted roofs, and columned porticos.

The Billings Communal Mausoleum is also the oldest of only three known community mausoleums built in Montana during the early twentieth century. A year after construction began on the Billings mausoleum, Arthur L. Rankin began erecting the Red Lodge Communal Mausoleum through the

⁹⁹ Interview with Lee Stadtmiller, Mountview Cemetery superintendent, recorded by Ann Kooistra-Manning on August 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Hood, William I. Burial-Crypt. US Patent 858,070, filed March 14, 1907, and issued June 25, 1907; Chesrown, John W. Burial-Vault. US Patent 919,126, filed November 16, 1907, and issued April 20, 1909; Walter, Arthur G. and B. M. Fremont. Deodorizing and Disinfecting Device. US Patent 915,000, filed March 11, 1908, and issued March 9, 1909.

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Consolidated Mausoleum Company in September 1921 and completed it in 1924.¹⁰¹ Bids to construct community mausoleums in Roundup and Livingston proved unsuccessful.¹⁰²

In 1928, Rankin secured a franchise for a 1000-crypt mausoleum in the Mountain View Cemetery in Butte.¹⁰³ When Rankin's project fell through, a group of local investors took up the cause, purchasing a parcel of land a short distance from the cemetery with plans to build a 920-crypt mausoleum.¹⁰⁴ Building contractor Carl J. Nepper began construction of the \$200,000 Silver Bow Community Mausoleum in September 1929.¹⁰⁵ Soon after, the company's shareholders became embroiled in a legal dispute over stocks and the mausoleum project was abandoned.¹⁰⁶

Also in 1929, Wade H. George, president of family-owned Great Falls Mausoleum, Inc. began construction of the Hall of Memories, a \$300,000 1,200-crypt mausoleum with 24 family rooms and a 900-niche columbarium in Great Falls.¹⁰⁷ The sprawling Italianate-style structure, designed by San Francisco architect Wallace H. Hubbert, was to include a crematorium, large chapel, reception and waiting rooms, restrooms, and greenhouse.¹⁰⁸ Local building contractor George Calvert completed the first phase of the project, the 420-crypt north wing of the mausoleum, with a more modest design in early 1931, and the Great Falls mausoleum took its place as the third early twentieth century communal mausoleum in the state of Montana. The Hall of Memories, with several additions, reorganized as a non-profit, perpetual care community memorial, the Hillcrest Lawn Memorial Association, in 1953.¹⁰⁹

Promotion of community mausoleums in Montana waned during the Great Depression and World War II, but mid-century witnessed renewed interest. In 1953, plans to erect a community mausoleum in Big

¹⁰¹ McCormick, Mary and Joan L. Brownell. "Red Lodge Communal Mausoleum." *National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form*. Carbon County Historical Society and Museum, Red Lodge, Montana. November 2010; "Last Marble Placed in New Mausoleum Built at Red Lodge." *Billings Gazette*, September 19, 1924. Accessed March 13, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/524917903.

¹⁰² "Plan a Mausoleum Here." *Roundup Record*, April 18, 1919. Accessed August 17, 2018. Montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn86075094/1919-04-18/ed-1/seq-5; "To Build Mausoleum for Livingston Dead." *Great Falls Tribune*, April 7, 1922. Accessed April 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/238041384.

¹⁰³ "Butte Will Have Large Mausoleum." *Anaconda Standard*, January 12, 1928. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/35463137.

¹⁰⁴ "Mausoleum Will Be Erected Here: Butte Men File Incorporation Papers." *Montana Standard*, April 18, 1929. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/354591954.

¹⁰⁵ "\$200,000 Mausoleum for Butte - Only One in the State." *Independent Record*, September 13, 1929. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/528339102.

¹⁰⁶ "Dougherty Sues Mausoleum Co." *Montana Standard*, November 2, 1929. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/354363644.

¹⁰⁷ "Now Accepting Reservations for Space in the Hall of Memories." *Great Falls Tribune*, July 21, 1929. Accessed August 30, 2018. Newspapers.com/image/238620859; "Office Building of Mausoleum Firm Finished." *Great Falls Tribune*, July 14, 1929. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/238619718.

¹⁰⁸ "Wonderful 'Hall of Memories' to Be Erected Here at Heavy Cost." *Great Falls Tribune*, May 26, 1929. Accessed March 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/238391975; "To Start Work on Mausoleum Construction." *Great Falls Tribune*, August 18, 1929. Accessed April 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/238657066.

¹⁰⁹ "Great Falls Mausoleum Reorganized as Non-profit Community Memorial." *Great Falls Tribune*, January 25, 1953. Accessed April 15, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/238752660.

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Timber were floated but never came to fruition.¹¹⁰ In Billings, privately owned cemeteries launched marketing campaigns for two large mausoleums with chapels, but the projects took decades to materialize. An indoor-outdoor mausoleum with crypts and cremation niches, originally proposed in 1960, was completed in 1997 at Sunset Memorial Gardens, a privately owned cemetery on Central Avenue across the street from Mountview Cemetery.¹¹¹ In 1963, full-page advertisements promoted a 250-crypt mausoleum, Shadowood Interment Chapel, in Terrace Gardens Cemetery at 34th Street West.¹¹² Ultimately, a 72-crypt garden mausoleum was built instead.

Late-century garden mausoleums and indoor-outdoor mausoleums with cremation niches began appearing in cemeteries across the state. Montana's newest communal mausoleum, the Holy Cross Mausoleum, opened in Butte's Resurrection Cemetery in 2000 and offers 432 crypts and 144 cremation niches.¹¹³

John G. (Gustave) Link

Renowned Montana architect John G. Link was born in Germany. Prior to his arrival in the United States in 1877, Link attended the Royal Academy in Lindau in 1887. Subsequent to further study in St. Louis, Link was hired as a draftsman in Denver. He later returned to St. Louis and opened his own business after he won a design contest for the Minnesota State Capitol. Three years later and after his marriage to Martha Wellington, Link arrived in Montana and opened an architectural practice in Butte. His architectural reach included several branch offices in Helena, Missoula, Billings, Miles City, and Lewistown.¹¹⁴ In 1900, Link and C.S. Haire joined forces forming the prestigious firm of Link and Haire in Billings. Four years later, Link permanently relocated to Billings. Together, Link and Haire became one of the leading and foremost architectural firms of early 1900s in the state. Architectural designs credited individually to Link, Link and Haire, and later J.G. Link and Company in Billings include the St. Patrick's Church (St. Patrick's Co-Cathedral), the Billings Brewery Building, the Parmly Billings Library (Western Heritage Center), Billings City Hall, the Northern Hotel, the Hart-Albin Building, the Masonic Building, St. Vincent's Hospital, the Greyhound Depot, the Electric Building (also referred to as the Montana Power Building), several of the West Side neighborhood's prominent residences, and numerous schools and churches. Statewide, his individual collaborative efforts include several county courthouses and the 1909 additions to Montana's State Capitol building. Regional accomplishments include buildings in North Dakota, Kansas, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho consisting of banks, courthouses, schools and hospitals.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ "Plan Mausoleum in Big Timber." *Big Timber Pioneer*, September 24, 1953. Accessed August 24, 2018. montanaewspapers.org/lccn/sn84036123/1953-09-24/ed-1/seq-8.

¹¹¹ "Sunset Memorial Gardens." *Billings Gazette*, February 27, 1960. Accessed March 10, 2019. Newspaperarchive.com.

¹¹² "Shadowood Interment Chapel." *Billings Gazette*, May 12, 1963. Accessed April 14, 2019. Newspapers.com/image/410650316.

¹¹³ "Holy Cross Opens Mausoleum." *Montana Standard*, February 12, 2000. Accessed April 16, 2019. Mtstandard.com.

¹¹⁴ "J.G. Link, the Architect of Billings," Billings Public Library Document Center, found at <https://billingslibrary.org/DocumentCenter/View/4548/LinkJG>, accessed 1 May 2020; "Pioneer Billings Architect Dies," *the Billings Gazette*, 6 January 1954.

¹¹⁵ "J.G. Link, the Architect of Billings," found at <https://billingslibrary.org/DocumentCenter/View/4548/LinkJG>, accessed 1 May 2020; "Pioneer Billings Architect Dies," *the Billings Gazette*, 6 January 1954. Link maintained an office in the individually NR-listed Electric/Montana Power Building, listed 1 March 2002, NR #02000105.

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Billings Communal Mausoleum

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County and State

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Billings Communal Mausoleum

Yellowstone Co., Montana

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Billings Communal Mausoleum

Yellowstone Co., Montana

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County and State

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Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Quit Claim Deed #156646, Deed Book 80, Pages 486-487, Montana Mausoleum Company to Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association, dated February 7, 1922, filed February 9, 1922.

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Billings Communal Mausoleum

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Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder, Warranty Deed #595233, Deed Book 625, Pages 383-385, Billings Communal Mausoleum Cemetery Association to City of Billings, dated December 20, 1957, filed January 16, 1958.

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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: Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre (0.2988 acres)
Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

1. Latitude: 45.767970 Longitude: -108.561360
2. Latitude: 45.767960 Longitude: -108.561020

Billings Communal Mausoleum

Yellowstone Co., Montana

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- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 3. Latitude: 45.767900 | Longitude: -108.561020 |
| 4. Latitude: 45.767890 | Longitude: -108.560900 |
| 5. Latitude: 45.767670 | Longitude: -108.560890 |
| 6. Latitude: 45.767670 | Longitude: -108.561020 |
| 7. Latitude: 45.767600 | Longitude: -108.561020 |
| 8. Latitude: 45.767600 | Longitude: -108.561360 |

Verbal Boundary Description

The proposed NRHP boundary for the Billings Communal Mausoleum includes Tract B of CS 845 in S07, T01S, R26E. The boundary encapsulates the front lawn of the mausoleum, the nearby Landmark Columbarium to the east and the circular drive that runs between the mausoleum and columbarium that provides access and parking for both. The boundary excludes any of the nearby grave plots. See attached map Section 9 page 41; reference to the aerial view map confirms that boundary.

Boundary Justification

Tract B of CS 845 includes the mausoleum, front lawn, circular drive with columbarium and a 3-foot strip of lawn along the north, west and south sides of the mausoleum's periphery, conforming to Certificate of Survey No. 845 on record at the Yellowstone County Courthouse in Billings, Montana. The larger Tract A, in the middle of which Tract B sits, was excluded as it contains other resources outside the period of significance of the mausoleum, including a pump house, graves/burials, and a cremation cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Ann Kooistra-Manning, consultant
Organization: Western Heritage Center
Street & Number: 2822 Montana Avenue
City or Town: Billings State: Montana Zip Code: 59101
E-Mail:
Telephone: (406) 256-6809
Date: January 20, 2019-January 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.)

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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Photographs

See below

Additional Documentation

See below

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.

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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Maps and Plans

TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP

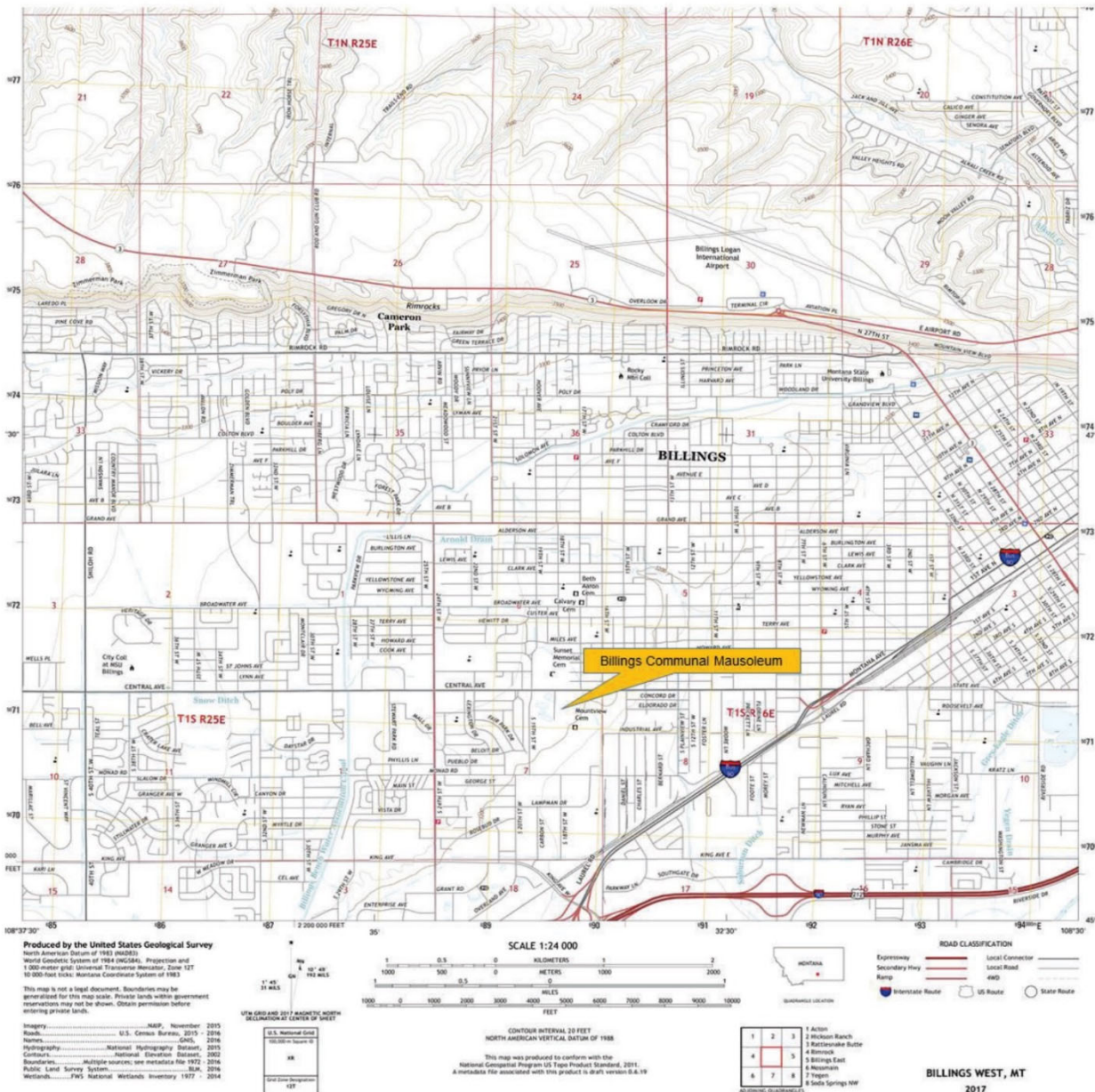
Billings West, Montana (2017) T1S, R26E, Section 7



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

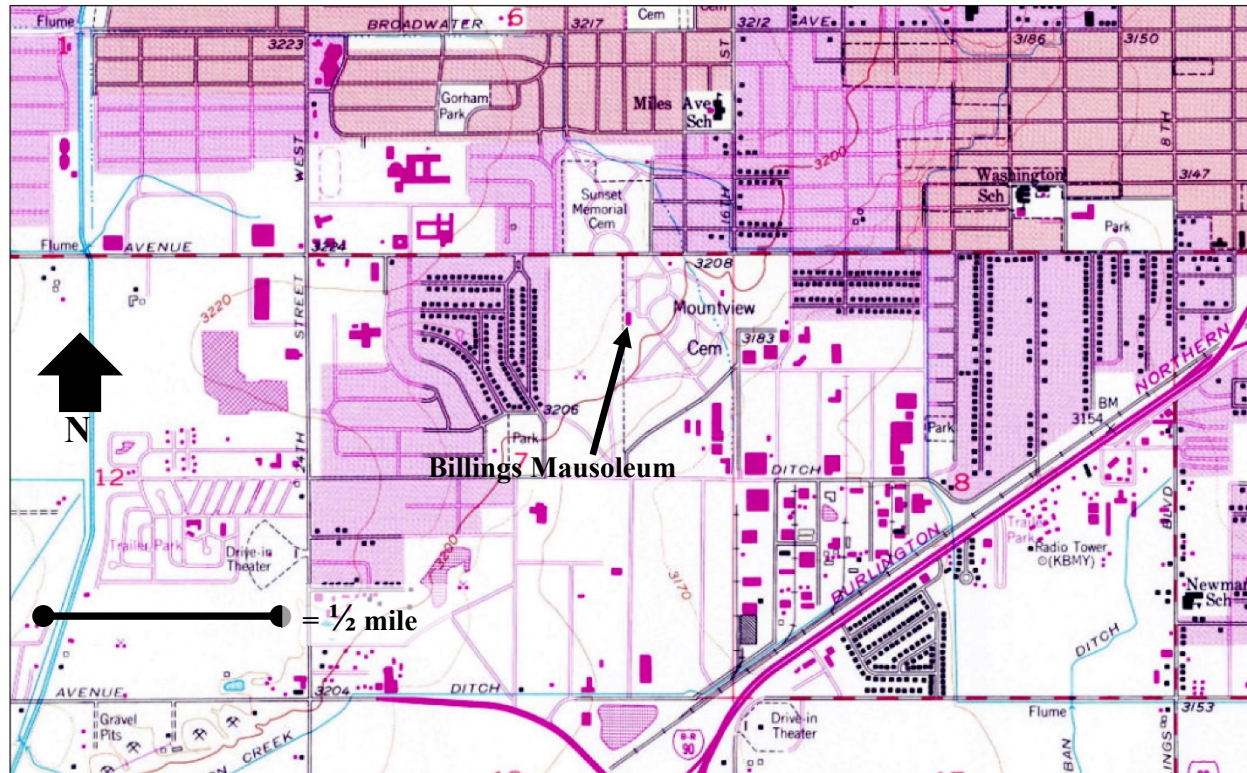


BILLINGS WEST QUADRANGLE
MONTANA-YELLOWSTONE CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES



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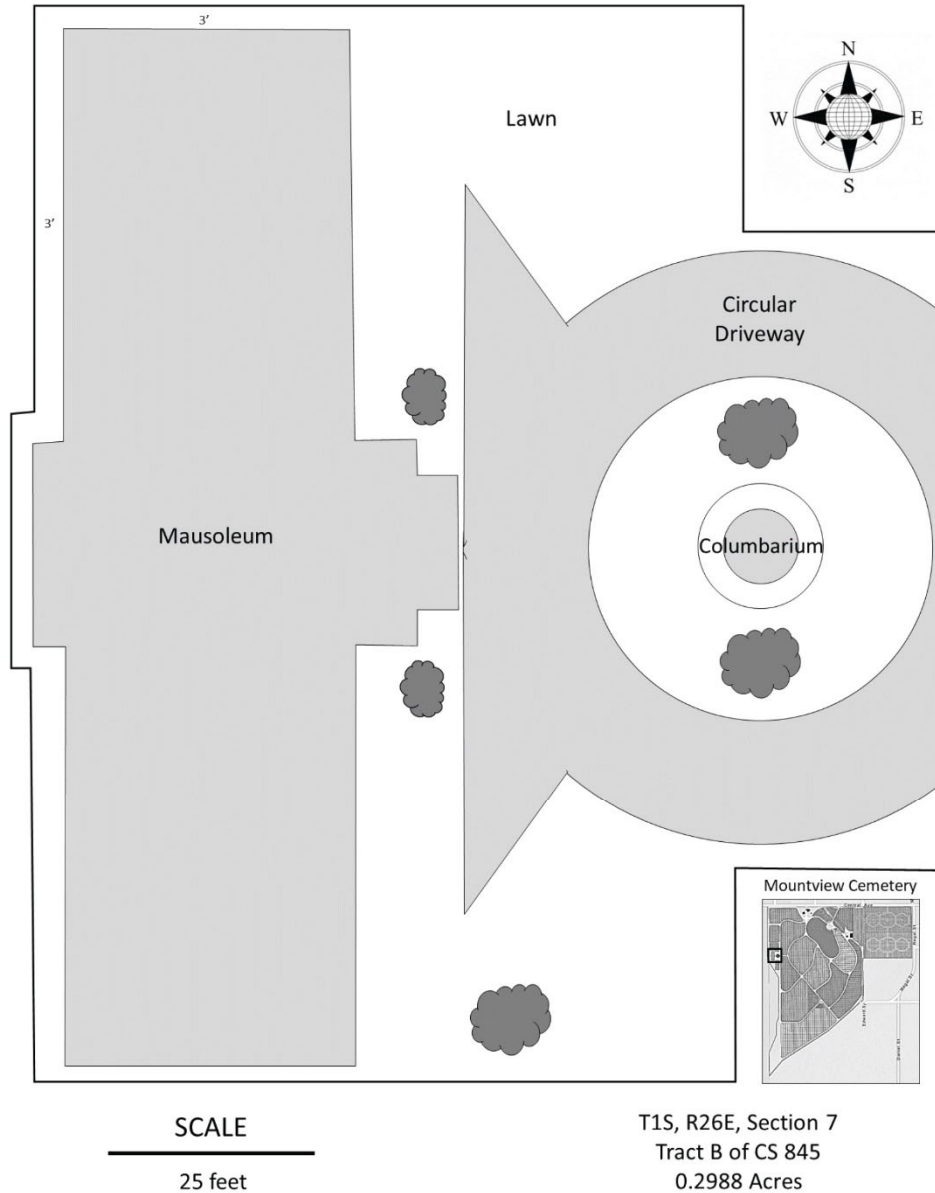
Montana State Library - Digital Library
(406) 444-5354 | geoinfo@mt.gov | <http://msl.mt.gov>

Location of the Billings Mausoleum. Found on the Billings West, 7.5' quadrangle map.

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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Billings Communal Mausoleum



Sketch Map of Billings Communal Mausoleum, Tract B of CS 845 in T1S R26E S.7.

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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CERTIFICATE OF SURVEY NO. 845

SITUATED IN THE NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SECTION 7, T 15 S, R 26 E, M.P.M.
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA

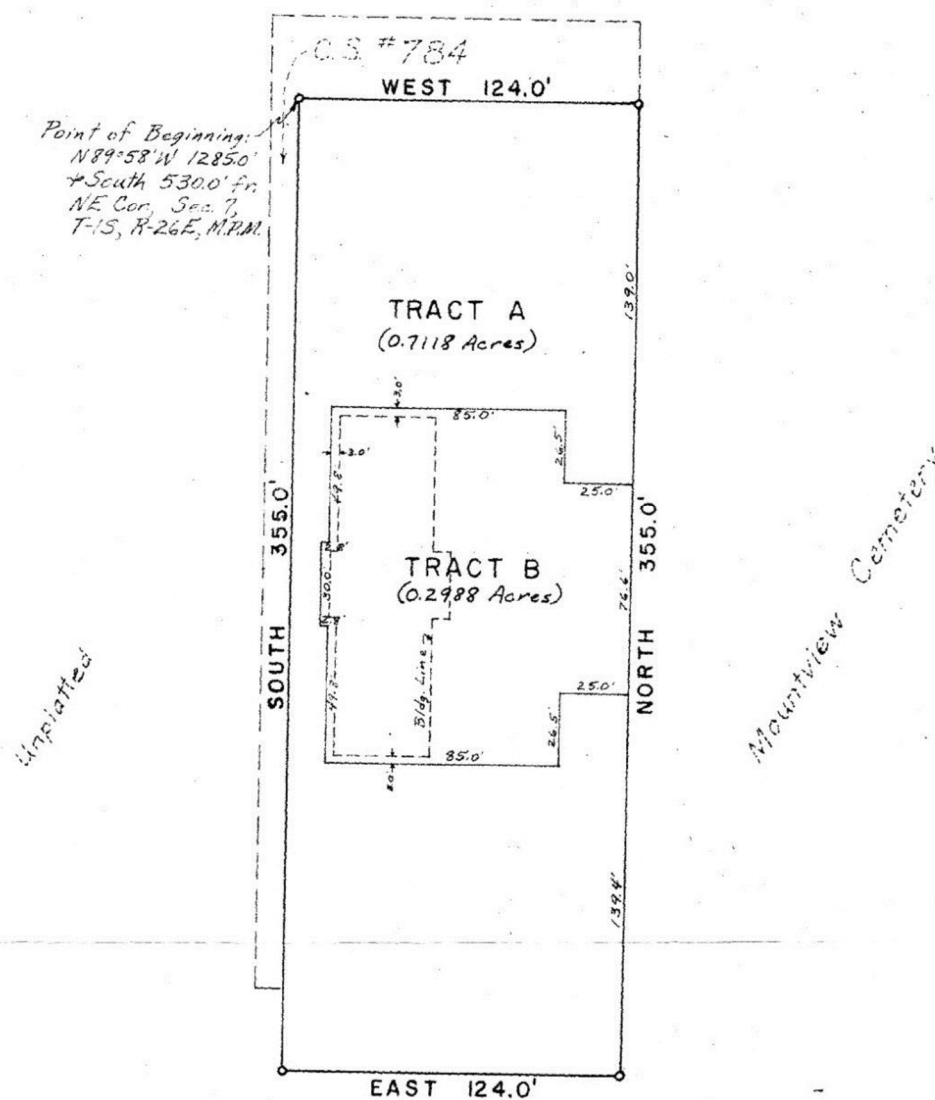
For: Jack-Mart Corporation

July, 1960

Plat & Survey By Sage Engineers & Land Planners, Inc.

Billings, Montana

SCALE: 1" = 40'



Location of Billings Communal Mausoleum within Tract B, Certificate of Survey 845, Billings, Yellowstone County, MT

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Google Maps Mountview Cemetery



Aerial View showing location of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, Tract B of CS 845 in T1S R26E S.7.

1. Latitude: 45.767970	Longitude: -108.561360
2. Latitude: 45.767960	Longitude: -108.561020
3. Latitude: 45.767900	Longitude: -108.561020
4. Latitude: 45.767890	Longitude: -108.560900
5. Latitude: 45.767670	Longitude: -108.560890
6. Latitude: 45.767670	Longitude: -108.561020
7. Latitude: 45.767600	Longitude: -108.561020
8. Latitude: 45.767600	Longitude: -108.561360

0

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Additional Documentation—Architectural Drawings

1	Description: Architectural drawing of front elevation of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT
2	Description: Architectural drawing of vertical crypt plan of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT
3	Description: Architectural drawing of crypt plan of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT
4	Description: Architectural drawing of floor plan of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT
5	Description: Ventilation system, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT
6	Description: Crypt plan of the east side of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT
7	Description: Crypt plan of the west side of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT

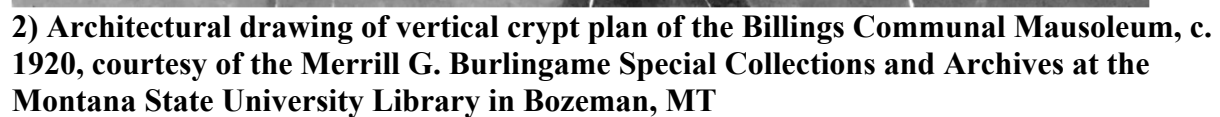
Billings Communal Mausoleum
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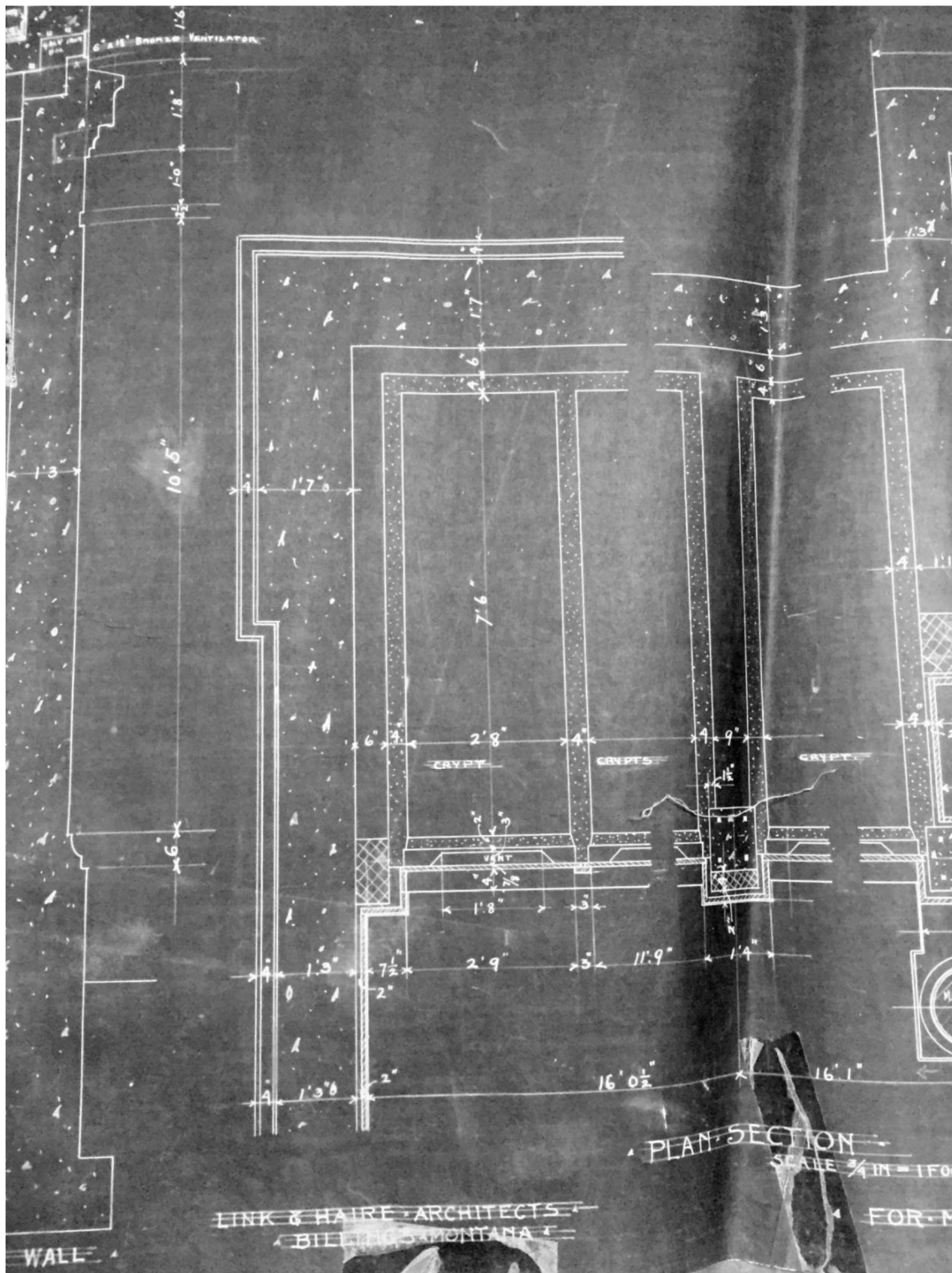
1) Architectural drawing of the façade of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT

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Billings Communal Mausoleum
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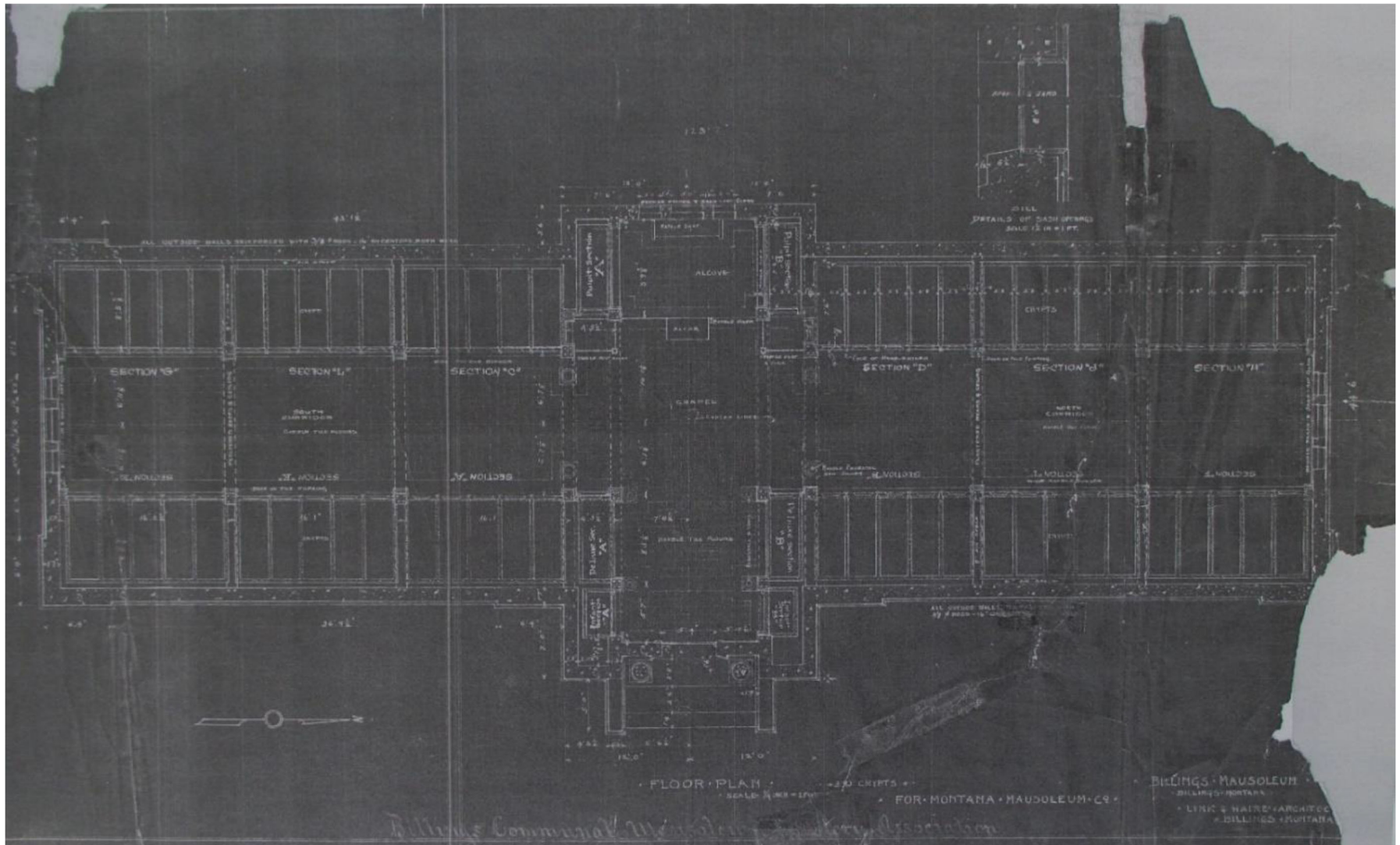
Yellowstone Co., Montana
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3) Architectural drawing of crypt plan of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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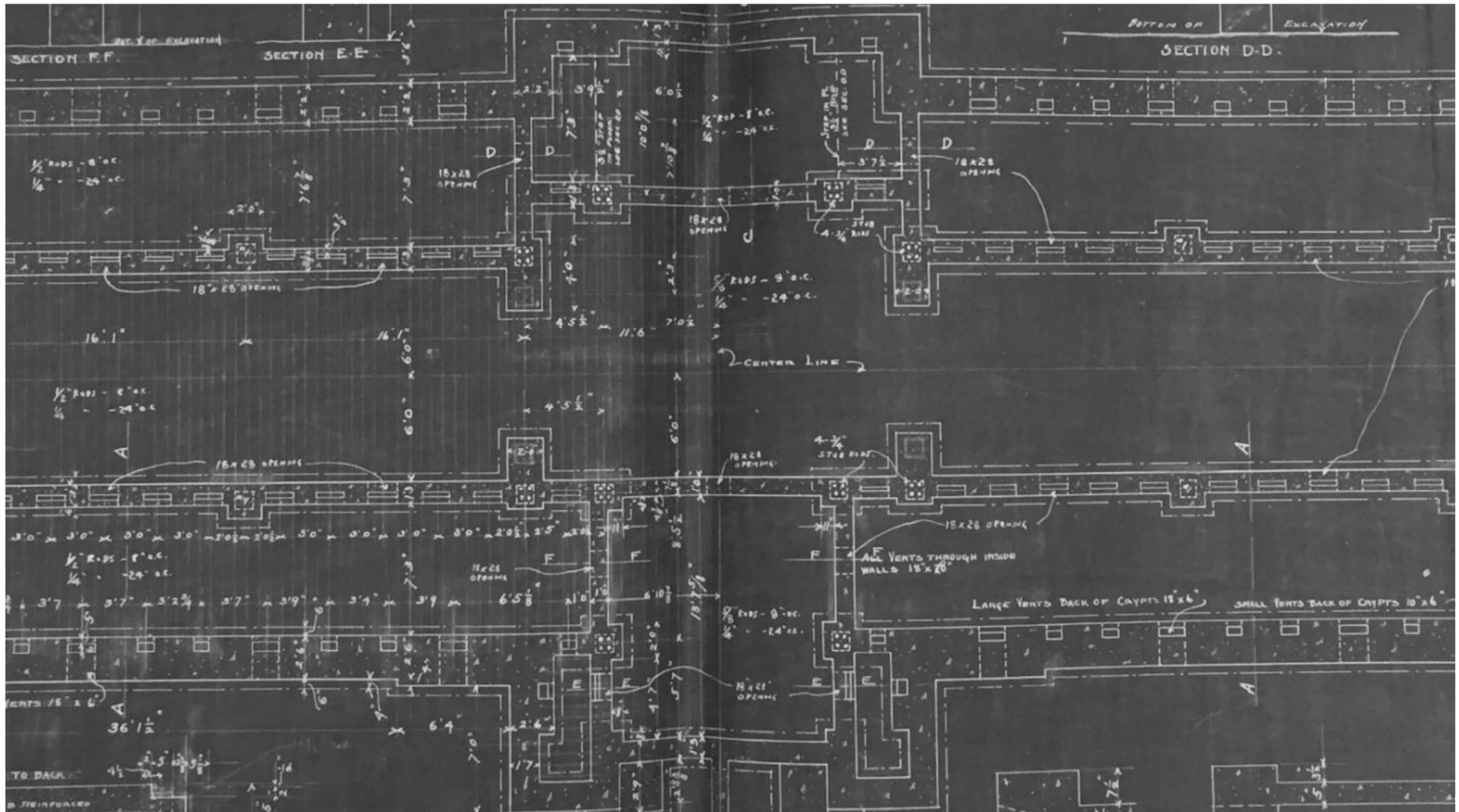
Yellowstone Co., Montana
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4) Architectural drawing of floor plan of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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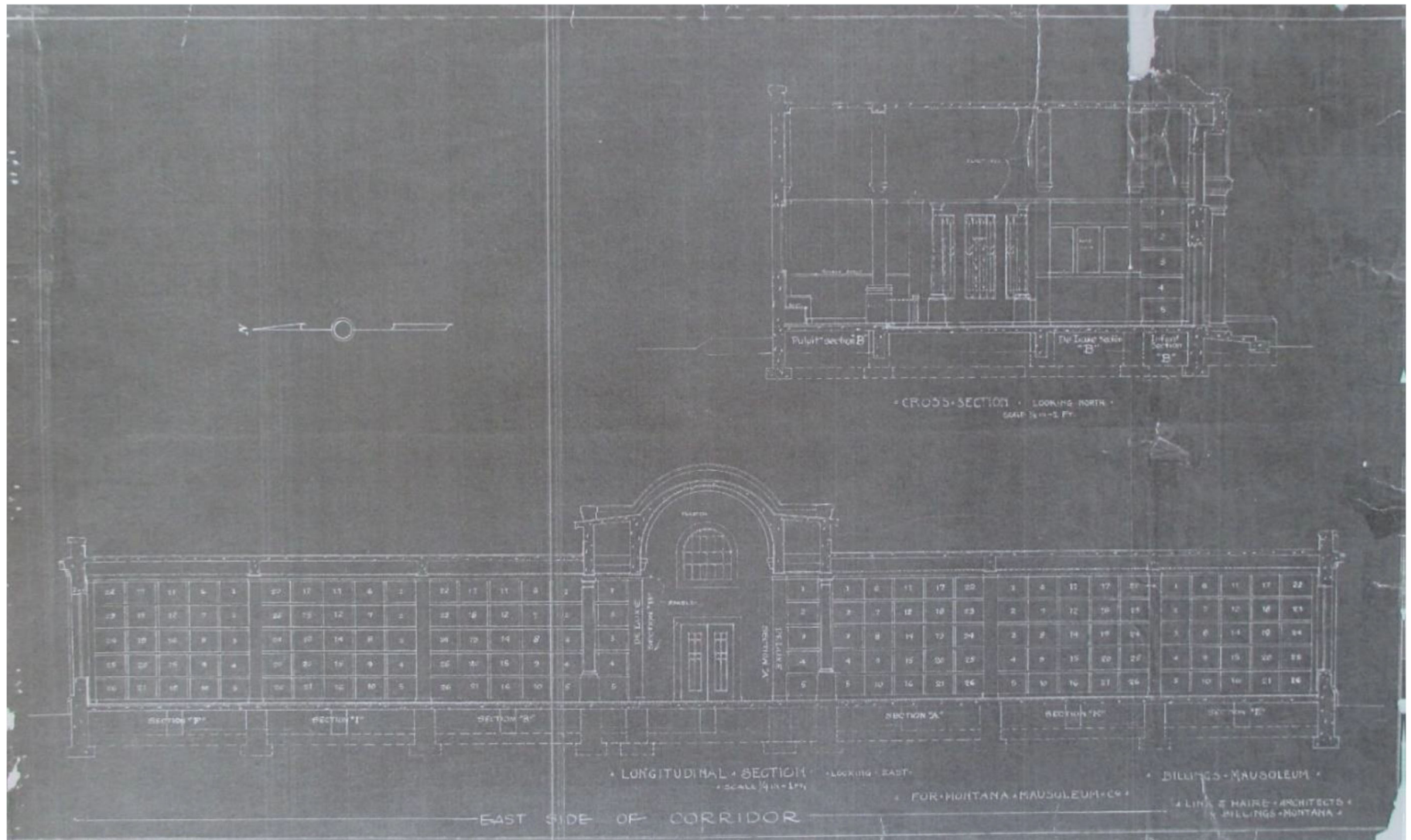
Yellowstone Co., Montana
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5) Ventilation system, c. 1920, courtesy of the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections and Archives at the Montana State University Library in Bozeman, MT

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

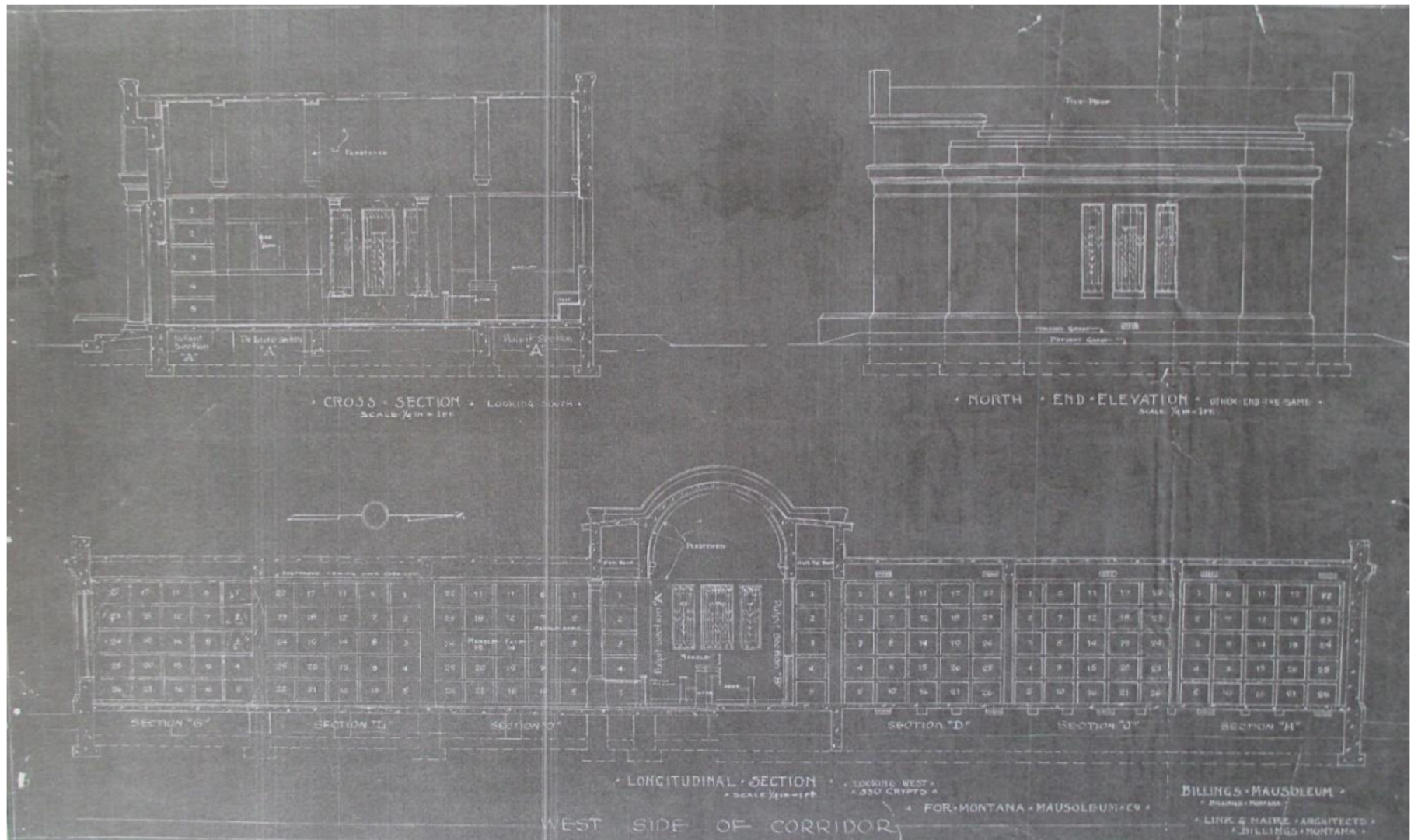
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6) Crypt plan of the east side of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT

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7) Crypt plan of the west side of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, c. 1920, courtesy of the Yellowstone County Clerk & Recorder, Billings, MT

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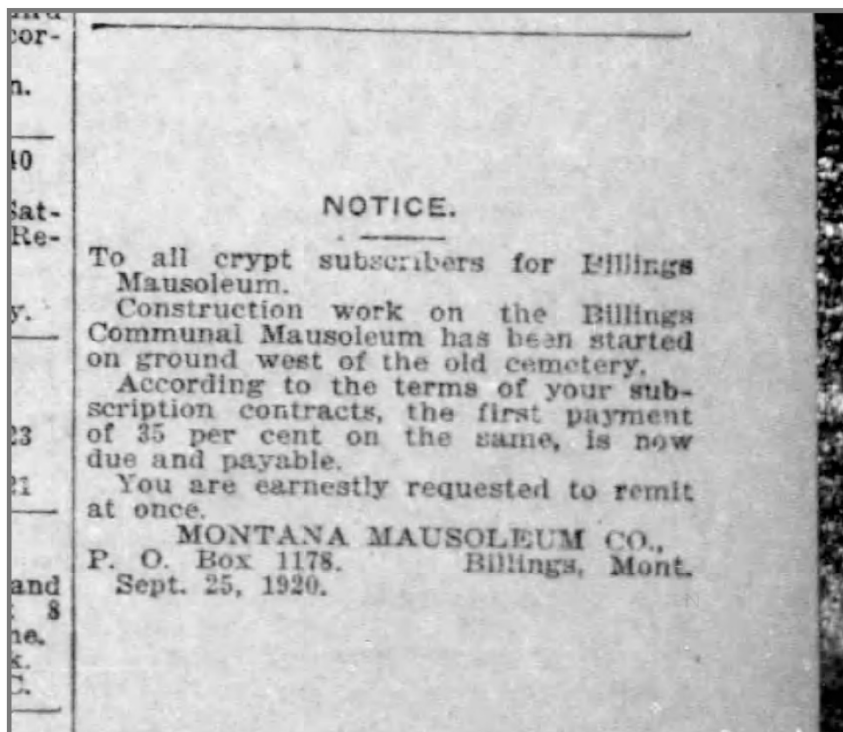
County and State

Additional Documentation—Historic Advertisements

News**papers**
by ancestry

The Billings Gazette (Billings, Montana) · 25 Sep 1920, Sat · Page 7

Printed on Dec 30, 2020



“Notice (to Subscribers),” *The Billings Gazette*, 25 May 1920, p. 7.

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The Billings Gazette (Billings, Montana) · 16 May 1921, Mon · Page 6

Printed on Dec 30, 2020

TOO LATE TO CANCEL IT.

34 FOR SALE—Poultry and Pet Stock.

PLYMOUTH ROCK AND ROSE COMB
Red eggs, 15 for \$1. Phone 2853.

LEGAL NOTICES.

NOTICE.
To All Crypt Subscribers in the Billings Mausoleum:
The second payment on all crypt subscriptions is now due and payable, the second condition of the crypt contracts, viz.: the starting of construction of the side walls, having been complied with by the company, and you are requested to make payment promptly.
Make all checks payable to the company and address all mail to P. O. Box 1178, Billings.
NOTICE. — The company's office has been moved to the fourth floor of the Securities Building. Respectfully,
MONTANA MAUSOLEUM CO.
May 15, 1921.

“Notice (to Subscribers),” *The Billings Gazette*, 16 May 1921, p. 6.

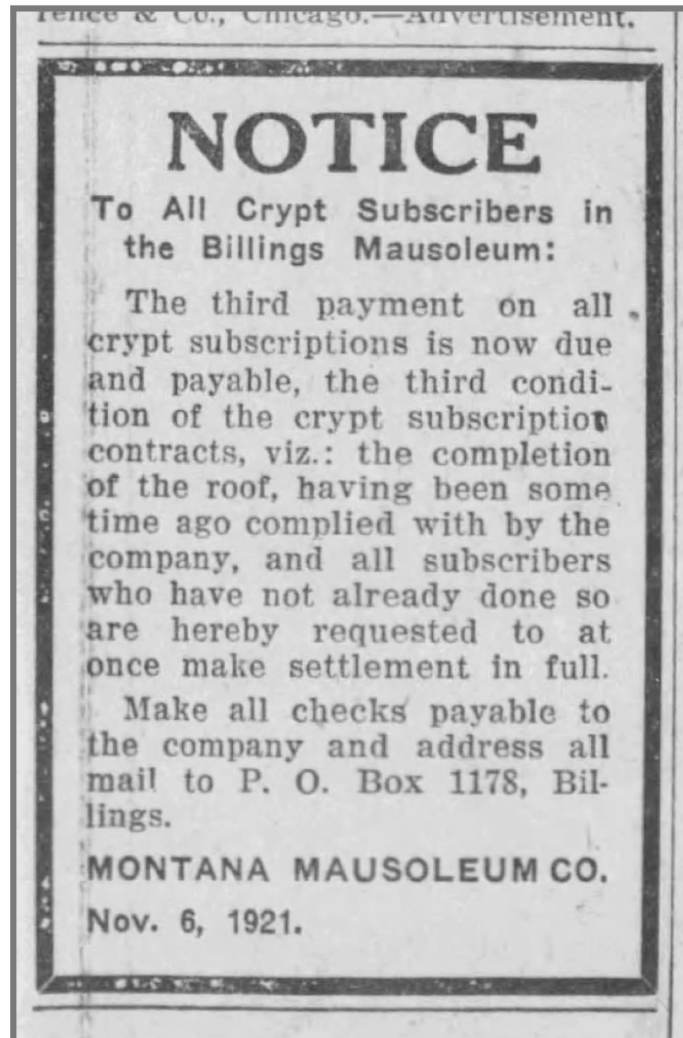
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The Billings Gazette (Billings, Montana) · 6 Nov 1921, Sun · Page 3

Printed on Dec 30, 2020



“Notice To All Crypt Subscribers in the Billings Mausoleum,” *The Billings Gazette*, 6 November 1921, p. 3.

Billings Communal Mausoleum
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Sunday, June 1, 1919. BILLINGS GAZETTE 3

If a Mansion in Heaven for the Soul, Why Not a Palace on Earth for the Body?
Modern Science Points the Way

BILLINGS COMMUNAL MAUSOLEUM

"The Better Way" ————— "The Better Way"

Since the Pyramids of Egypt no monument to the dead can excel it—classical architecture, imperishable exterior, polished marble interior, bronze doors, massive, indestructible.	Get Your Information First Hand We have a corps of gentlemen who are engaged solely to tell you all about it. That is their business; that is their pleasure and they know.	The cost is no greater than the ordinary ground burial. No decay, no putrefaction, no decomposition. Absolutely sanitary desiccation.
--	--	---

43 Clerk
Most Imposing Structure of its Kind in the State

Sacred Sentiment

—

Public Health

—

Private Economy

—

Civic Pride



Sanitary Sightly and Friendly

—

Protection for the living

—

Respect for the dead

—

Constructed to last for all time

Marble Corridor of Billings Mausoleum

Entombment is Sanctioned By All Biblical Teachings, Laws of Sanitation, Intellectual Thought and Sentiment of Heart

Gladstone said:

"Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals."

Living Without Worry

In the calm of health, consider and choose. Investigation must precede intelligence. Intelligence is essential to decision. We cannot afford to spend a moment in gloomy contemplation of death, but we can afford to devote a day to the discovery of *peaceful living* by preparedness.

If You Wait Until the Angel of Death Crosses Your Threshold It Will Be **TOO LATE---TOO LATE** The Revenge of Neglect is Merciless and Follows the Unprepared

INFORMATION COUPON For Full Information and Booklet Mail This Name _____ Address _____	Safeguarded in Every Way Against All Hazards of Investment. Strongly Endowed.	No Future Expenses for Upkeep. Permanently Endowed.	What Will Your Answer Be? Neglect? or Care?
--	---	---	---

Mail the Coupon Today NOW—DO IT—NOW	The Montana Mausoleum Co. 520-21-22-23 Securities Bldg. Telephone 1356 Billings, Montana C. M. Corkill, Sales Mgr.	Mail the Coupon Today NOW—DO IT—NOW
---	---	---

Billings Gazette, June 1, 1919

Newspaper advertisement promoting the Billings Communal Mausoleum in the *Billings Gazette*, dated June 1, 1919

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

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Additional Documentation—Historic Images



—Photo by Petek.
Scene at municipal mausoleum where committal services were held Monday afternoon, under the direction of Ashlar lodge, A. F. & A. M.

Newspaper photo of a funeral at the Billings Communal Mausoleum in the *Billings Gazette*, dated July 14, 1927

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



Historic photo of the 1930 Memorial Day service at Mountview Cemetery with mausoleum visible in the background, courtesy of the Western Heritage Center; view to northwest

Billings Communal Mausoleum

Yellowstone Co., Montana

Name of Property

County and State

National Register Photographs

Name of Property: Billings Communal Mausoleum

County and State: Yellowstone, Montana

Location of Digital Images: Western Heritage Center, Billings, Montana

1 of 12	Description: Façade of the Billings Communal Mausoleum in 2018 Facing: Southwest Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: August 17, 2018
2 of 12	Description: East Elevation with circular drive and columbarium in front, 2019 Facing: West Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: June 12, 2019
3 of 12	Description: West Elevation with view of barrel-vault roof, 2019 Facing: Southeast Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: June 12, 2019
4 of 12	Description: West Elevation, 2019 Facing: East Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: June 12, 2019
5 of 12	Description: North Elevation with pump house in the foreground, 2019 Facing: South Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: June 12, 2019
6 of 12	Description: South Elevation with view of golf course beyond chain link fence, 2019 Facing: North Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: June 12, 2019
7 of 12	Description: Entrance hall and World War One memorial window, 2014 Facing: East Photographer: Kevin Kooistra Date Photographed: October 7, 2014
8 of 12	Description: Chapel and pulpit crypts as viewed from the entrance hall, 2019 Facing: West Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: March 6, 2019
9 of 12	Description: South corridor window with original crypt lift on the left, 2019 Facing: South Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: March 6, 2019
10 of 12	Description: South corridor facing chapel and north corridor, 2019 Facing: North Photographer: Ann Kooistra-Manning Date Photographed: March 6, 2019

Billings Communal Mausoleum

Yellowstone Co., Montana

Name of Property

County and State

11 of 12 Description: Photo 11 of 12: Overview of the Landmark Columbarium and drive,
January 2021
Facing: Northwest
Photographer: Kevin Kooistra
Date Photographed: January 2021

12 of 12 Description: Photo 12 of 12: Close-up of the Landmark Columbarium, January 2021
Facing: West
Photographer: Kevin Kooistra
Date Photographed: January 2021



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0001 of 12: Façade of the Billings Communal Mausoleum, 2018, view to southwest

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0002 of 12: East elevation with circular drive and columbarium in front, 2019; view to west

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0003 of 12: West elevation with view of barrel-vault roof, 2019; view to southeast

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0004 of 12: West elevation, 2019; view to east

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0005 of 12: North elevation with pump house in the foreground, 2019; view to south

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0006 of 12: South elevation with view of golf course on the left beyond chain link fence, 2019; view to north

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0007 of 12: Entrance hall and World War One memorial window, 2014; view to east

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0008 of 12: Chapel and pulpit crypts as viewed from the entrance hall, 2019; view to west

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0009 of 12: South corridor window with original crypt lift on the left, 2019; view to south

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0010 of 12: South corridor facing chapel and north corridor, 2019; view to north

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0011 of 12: Overview of the Landmark Columbarium and drive, January 2021; view to northwest

Billings Communal Mausoleum
Name of Property

Yellowstone Co., Montana
County and State



MT_YellowstoneCounty_BillingsCommunalMausoleum_0012 of 12: Close-up of the Landmark Columbarium, January 2021; view to west