

Content Corner
Corner of Wallace and Jackson Streets
Virginia City, Madison County
Montana

HABS No. MON-2

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

APPENDIX
FOLLOWS

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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CONTENT CORNER

Virginia City, Madison County, Montana

LOCATION: Corner of Wallace and Jackson Streets
OWNER: Mr. Bob Gohn, Virginia City, Montana
USE: Tavern on main floor and apartments on second floor.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This is one of the earliest (1864) two story stone buildings built in Virginia City. The second floor was leased to serve as the Territorial Administrative Offices for the newly formed Territory of Montana when Virginia City was named the capitol by the Legislative Act of 1865.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: Abstract, dated November 11, 1864 (Book B, P. 559), recorded the sale of the structure by George P. Dorris to Solomon Content for \$4,000. Subsequent abstracts for sale or mortgaging of the property (and apparently also adjoining lots) to Joseph Fisher and Henry Wood, Dorris (again), Jules Bush, Content (whose name appears several times), Abraham Hanauer (sale by Content of the two story building and two adjoining frame buildings for \$5,000, September 2, 1868), Charles L. Dahler, Isaac Heidenheimer on January 12, 1869 - building occupied by Seigel & Company, sold back to Content on March 13, 1869 for \$5,000. Site known as Content Corner (recorded in Book R, P. 403), Jacob Feldberg on November 12, 1869

(Book R, p. 636) as recorded by James E. Owings, Notary Public (of interest is a statement that "the \$2.50 Internal Revenue stamp cancelled"), Heidenheimer (again), W. D. Armstrong and Henry and Mary Elling (Elling was a local banker) recorded August 31, 1876, Robert Bickers (present owner's grandfather; name has appeared as Vickers), Elling Estates and Company on December 19, 1909, Martha Stutenburg (present owner's aunt) on September 26, 1919. Present owner Bob Gohn purchased the building in 1944.

2. Date of Erection: Summer (or earlier) of 1864.
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Builder: George P. Dorris (or built for him by party unknown).
5. Original Plans: None known.
6. Notes on Alterations and Additions: The floor plan of second floor which was leased for Territorial offices, as shown on the drawings, is based on recollections of decendants of early pioneers. This space probably was used as office space after the capitol was moved to Helena, Montana, in 1876. The present owner remodeled the space into apartments. The main floor served many merchants over a period of years and the interior space of this floor probably changed many times. The one story stone room projecting to the rear of the structure was added after 1876. This supposition is based upon an early photograph that does not have the projecting room, but the front facade bears the firm name of Armstrong & Johnson. Armstrong and Elling (the silent partner) purchased the building on August 31, 1876.

In 1898 (approximately) the entire stone front with its pointed arch windows on the second floor and the pointed arch bay windows of the first floor were removed in favor of a brick veneer front that offered larger glass display windows. Also, the one similar pointed arch window on the east side of the structure adjacent to the front was replaced at this time. The decorative metal ceiling was reportedly installed at this time. The outside steps and porch leading to the second floor

have been replaced and/or remodeled many times. Earliest photograph available shows access by way of the stairs from the rear of the building (the highest point along the Jackson Street side). Later photographs (prior to 1900) show access from a front stairs as well as the rear stairs. Presently access to the second floor apartment is provided by a rear staircase in about the same location as the original stairs.

7. Important Old Views: A series of early exterior photographs is included in the Photo-Data Book, courtesy of the Historical Society of Montana. The photographs are not dated, but can be generally dated by the merchants that occupied the ground floor.

B. Historic Events Connected with the Structure:

1. Gold was discovered in Alder Gulch (site of Virginia City) in May, 1863.
2. This was one of the earliest stone buildings erected in Virginia City, date 1864.
3. The building served as the Territorial Administrative Offices for the newly formed Montana Territory, 1865.

C. References:

1. Leeson, M. A., History of Montana, 1739-1885, Chicago - Warner, Beers & Company, 1885.
2. Miller, Joaquin, An Illustrated History of the State of Montana, Chicago & New York - The Lewis Publishing Co., 1894.
3. Stout, Tom, Montana, Its Story and Biography, Chicago - American Historical Society, 1921, Vol. I.
4. Abbott, Newton Carl, Montana in the Making, Missoula - Gazette Printing Company, 1939.
5. Pace, Dick, Golden Gulch, Butte - McKee Printing Company, 1962.
6. Johnson, Dorothy M., "To the Centennial with Papa", Montana, Historical Society of Montana, Vol. II, No. 2, 1961, P. 15.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This is one of the earliest stone buildings erected in Virginia City. The majority of structures built to supply miners working in the gold mining camps of the west were of frame construction, one story in height, having a false front and obviously of a temporary nature.
2. Condition of Structure: Good; moderately well maintained.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: Frontal width 20'-6" with a storage unit beneath the upper floor porch of 6'-0". A rear width of 32'-10" that includes a wing projecting to the west. Length is 60'-7" with a one story stone storage room projecting to the south along Jackson Street 19'-9".
2. Foundation: Stone.
3. Wall Construction: Exterior walls are 20" thick of native field stone. Rear wall of the two story portion is 3'-1" thick. The walls of the one story stone addition are approximately 20".
4. Chimneys: Original one (s) have been removed. Present ones are of pumice block.
5. Openings: Only the upper floor exterior doorways are original in location. Doors are not original but the transom windows are original. The original doorways on the second floor east wall were repeated in size and shape for the second floor front (north) facade but were removed during remodeling. Lower floor display windows and doorway are not original. These replaced a pleasing repeat of the pointed arch openings of the second floor. The side-rear door, set below grade, from Jackson Street, is original in location but the door is a replacement.
6. Roof:
 - a. Present asphalt shingled roof covers the older roof

structure that probably had split wood shingles. The roof of the one story projection also is asphalt shingled today.

b. Framing cannot be seen because of room finish in the second floor apartments.

c. There is a boxed-in cornice having elaborate wood-carved knee braces. A number of these knee braces remain today. Earliest photograph shows these braces.

D. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor Plan: This is a simple "L" shaped two story structure with the wing projection to the west at the rear of the building. A one story storage shed extends to the rear of the building.

2. Stairway: There are external wood stairs and a porch running the length of the building along the Jackson Street elevation of soft wood and not original. No internal access exists between the first and second floors.

3. Flooring: The present floor of the tavern was installed in 1959 and the boards came from the old Canyon Lodge (Yellowstone National Park) dance floor.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Presently the exterior walls are plastered. Interior walls and ceiling of the second floor are sheetrock and not original. The decorative metal ceiling of the first floor was installed about 1898.

5. Doorways and Doors: There has been extensive remodeling. None are believed to be original.

6. Trim: Wood trim with mouldings.

7. Hardware: None original.

8. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.

E. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Building located at the

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corner of Wallace and Jackson Streets, facing north onto Wallace Street. Jackson Street rises upward from the Wallace Street intersection.

- 2. Outbuildings: None
- 3. Walks: Concrete

Prepared by,

John N. DeHaas, Jr.

John N. DeHaas, Jr., AIA
Architect

January 1964

APPROVED: *Charles S. Pope*

DATE: *April 1964*

Charles S. Pope, AIA
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service

Addendum to:
Content Corner
Wallace and Jackson Streets, Southwest corner
Virginia City
Madison County
Montana

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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