

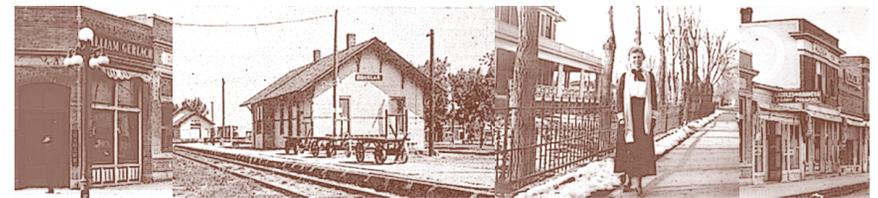


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— A WALKING TOUR —

Despite the fact that, on Tuesday last, the townsite presented an unbroken surface of sagebrush, it today has all the appearance of a large and thriving town. And such a town! One “can hardly hear himself think” for the din of saw, hammer and plane! Buildings in every stage of construction; a hundred wagons loaded with lumber on roads passing and repassing; bustle, stir and activity on every side. We counted, last evening, fifty-eight buildings underway, most of them business houses, and there are dozens of business men who had not begun to build yet.

Bill Barlow's Budget
September 9, 1886



This brochure was financed in part with funds granted to the Douglas Historic Preservation Commission from the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office administers these federal funds as part of Wyoming's Certified Local Government program. This program received Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Dept. of the Interior. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U. S. Dept. of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN DOUGLAS

DOWNTOWN DOUGLAS, WYOMING is a historic artifact. Now well over a century old, its history is a slice of late-19th and early-20th century Americana. The historic buildings it comprises are a reflection of choices made by individuals striving for commercial, political, and spiritual goals in the face of economic and social conditions that characterized the world they inhabited. Railways, the cattle and sheep industries, agriculture, the automotive industry, religious organizations, local and national government and—above all the rest, retailing entrepreneurs—were instrumental in when, where, and why the downtown district, the basic core of the city, developed as it did.* As such, the district remains a living testament to the aspirations and achievements of the earliest Douglas ancestors—of those who came to settle Wyoming during the often precarious, rough-and-tumble days of the Old West.

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF DOUGLAS

Before Douglas, before the State of Wyoming itself, there was Fort Fetterman—a military outpost established by the U.S. Government in 1867, on the edge of the Western frontier. For fifteen years, Fetterman troops afforded protection to local settlers and to emigrants traveling westward along the Bozeman and Oregon trails.

By 1882, as emigrant traffic waned and civil order was more or less established across the region, the Fort housed a population of only 200 people; these included a small garrison of troops, and a number of enterprising civilians who provided supplies and various forms of entertainment and refreshment to cattle ranchers within the region.

At the Fort, long-standing rumors of an impending railway route intensified during the early 1880's, and the hearsay attracted a steady stream of new, opportunistic pioneers. The Fort's population soon doubled, and finally more than quintupled when, by 1886, the rumors had turned to fact: from Chadron, Nebraska—a little cattle town 150 miles due-east of Fetterman—the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad was laying rail, due-west.

In those days, railway companies laid out not only ties and rails, but whole towns as well—commercial centers that functioned as distribution points for both freight and passengers. Thus, although it was to be situated in the wilds of the Wyoming Territory, the town of Douglas was first conceived as 24 rectangular plats on a drafting board in the Chicago offices of the FE&MV Railroad. The Railroad named their new town “Douglas,” in honor of former Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas (who, amongst other claims to fame, had been a vigorous exponent of westward expansion).

While Douglas was still on the drawing table, the settlers at Fetterman had determined that they were in the wrong place, even if at the right time: although the actual site of the town was not to be divulged by the railway company

* The origin of the term “downtown” is unknown; but it probably refers to the fact that cities and towns are commonly first established as centers of commerce along flat, low-lying areas, adjacent to water sources and protected from winds. As population increases, residential and secondary commercial structures are relegated to peripheral areas situated at higher elevations; and thus, when proceeding from the latter to the former, one is said to be going “down the town”—or downtown, for short.

Brochure prepared by **IntoPrint**, in consultation with **North Platte Archaeological Services**. Brochure design and text, and all contemporary photos, by Jeffrey Derks. All historic photos courtesy of Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum.

Thanks to the members of the **Douglas Historic Preservation Commission** and to the staff of the **Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum** for their invaluable help in the preparation of this document.

Overview photo at front:
Looking east along Center Street, ca. 1900

Overview photo at back:
Looking east along Center Street, ca. 1950

until the final hour, it was common knowledge that tracks could not be laid through a military reservation. Acting on their best hunch, then, the settlers soon evacuated the Fort and established a temporary tent town, called “Antelope,” a few miles south, on a delta of Antelope Creek and the North Platte River. “Close, but not quite” describes the accuracy of the collective hunch: eventually, from August 30 through September 2, 1886, the new town of Douglas was auctioned off, parcel by parcel, on the delta immediately south of the ragtag Antelope.

Construction began immediately, spearheaded by entrepreneurs eager to replace their flimsy Antelope tents with wood and masonry structures before the onset of winter. By December of 1886, there were, as one historian reports, “three newspapers, two banks, twelve general stores, twenty smaller stores, hotels, restaurants, lumber yards, drug and jewelry stores, two dance halls, and twenty-one saloons”—all catering to a population of 1,600 people.

The initial boom, however, immediately went bust: in October, a typhoid epidemic swept through the settlement, and was shortly followed by a disastrous winter that destroyed livestock and ranches on a major scale. Shortly thereafter, adding insult to injury, in 1888 the town lost its privileged status as the railway’s western terminus: the FE&MV was already proceeding further west, into Casper, and from thence on out to the base of the Rocky Mountains. By December 1888, the Douglas population had dwindled to a total of 300 lonely souls, and the continuing existence of the infant town was in serious doubt.

It was saved in 1889, when sheep were introduced to the region, and were found to thrive where cattle had not. On the strength of this new industry, the Douglas population more than doubled within the year, to a total of 734. Less than a decade later, in 1907, population was approaching the 2,000 mark, and the local press was crowing that it was “due largely to the sheep business that Douglas was resurrected from a ‘busted boomlet’ in 1888 to a wealthy, thriving, prosperous modern improved city.”

Another early impetus to growth was land irrigation—introduced in 1906 by the LaPrele Ditch and Reservoir Company—which enabled the formation of agricultural enterprises across the dry flats west of the North Platte River. And so by 1910, thanks to agriculture and sheep ranching, the Douglas population had burgeoned to a total of 2,246 people. Population remained roughly stable across the ensuing six decades, varying from a recorded low of 1,758 (in 1925), to a recorded high of 2,677 (in 1970).

In the late 1970’s, coal, oil, and uranium production began in earnest within the region, and by the latter half of the 1980’s the population had grown to around 6,500. By the end of the 1990’s, however, natural resource industries were experiencing lower levels of production, and population had declined to around 5,300.

WHY A WALKING TOUR?

Walking a cityscape—any cityscape—for the sole purpose of observation can be a fascinating exercise. You will notice a thousand interesting details that never attract the attention of an automobile driver or passenger, or a preoccupied pedestrian. Many of the things you see will have a startling, and occasionally profound, significance: for, in contrast to the natural world, no part of the built environment “had to be” the way it is; all of it is a creation, a human creation—and every single part of it is, therefore, *open to question*.

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WILLIAM GERLACH MEN'S CLOTHING



Currently - Slick's Sporting Goods
Location - 100 North 2nd Street
Constructed - 1902

Born and raised in Nebraska, William Gerlach came to Douglas in 1898 and worked for a few years in the clothing departments of local dry goods stores. In 1902, he established a store in his own name, specializing in ready-to-wear and custom-tailored men's

clothing. From the same location, he simultaneously ran a tobacco brokerage, supplying other local stores with the product at wholesale, as well as selling it over-the-counter.

In 1917, Gerlach expanded his store by a depth of 45 feet, out to the west edge of the property, and added boots and shoes to the inventory. The business flourished under Gerlach's management until his retirement in 1945.

An automobile enthusiast, Gerlach bought one of the first cars in Douglas—and, soon after his marriage in 1911, he was very nearly killed in an accident involving a four-horse team and wagon.

Gerlach's building was long, narrow and, while unassuming, not without a touch of quiet elegance. As with many other Douglas buildings, it has accommodated a variety of owners and tenants across the years, and in many respects today bears little resemblance to the original structure. At the exterior, the most notable modifications include the application of a broad band of stained wooden cladding over the original, ornamental brick parapet, and installation of a modern storefront at the east end of the building, within the canted main entrance.

While the building is, on the whole, esthetically unremarkable, it has become a veritable Douglas landmark across the decades, by virtue of its prominent siting at the intersection of 2nd and Center streets.



The original 2nd Street façade of the Gerlach store—behind a turn-of-the-century street lamp, and abutting the Converse County Bank.

In the case of Downtown Douglas, for example, what was the original purpose of that apparently nondescript, block-long structure along the east side of South 1st Street? Why is it so long, and why is it located where it is? There is a tiny building on the west side of North 3rd Street, looking incongruous amongst all the larger, obviously commercial structures; why does it have an almost “residential” character?—who lived there, and why? The Post Office appears elegant and was probably an expensive proposition; how much *did* it cost?—and why the stressed elegance? Then again, the Hotel looks equally refined—but what's that little building doing there, nestled into the middle of it? There's a sizeable decoration crowning the corner façade of a building at 3rd and Center; what is *it* supposed to signify? Who built the old mansion at the east end of Center Street? And why would a bar, such as the one on the east side of North 2nd Street, need *two floors*?—whatever was the original purpose of *that* building?

These and a thousand other questions will come to mind, when you examine Historic Downtown Douglas with a critical, appraising eye, on a leisurely stroll, as an end-in-itself.

Already, another springs to mind: Of what possible significance, really, is that ridiculously-simple little building located near the intersection of Center Street and Brownfield Road?...

We're glad you asked: for with this, the Tour is about to begin....

Directions: Start at the **FE&MV Depot**, located at the southeast corner of Brownfield Road and Center Street. (See AREA MAP at center of guidebook.)

Time Required: 1.5 to 3 hours

Route: For a suggested route, see tour map at center of guidebook.

Hours: Anytime (but during normal business hours, if you plan to visit interiors accessible to the general public).

Parking: At the FE&MV Depot; or on streets and public lots in the downtown district.

Restrooms: Available at the FE&MV Depot, and at Jackalope Square (3rd and Center).

In this guide, each building is identified by its original, historic name. But for the sake of orientation, the building name current as of this printing is also specified. Since, however, all such current names are subject to change at any time, street addresses are provided as an alternate and more reliable means of identification.

Architects are specified when known. In many cases, however, especially for smaller commercial structures, designs were probably based upon existing, standardized plans, or even devised extemporaneously by the builder, and no architect was appointed. (“Unknown” is specified for any building that is almost certainly attributable to an architect, but whose name remains unrecorded.)

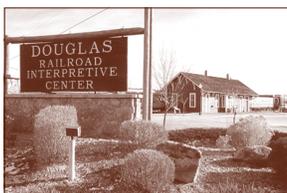
Construction dates specify the year of completion; if construction spanned from one year to another, the span is specified. Two different dates (such as “1910; 1918”) indicate either that the building was constructed in discrete stages during the specified years, or that the existing structure represents a partial or wholesale replacement of the original, with the later date indicating the date of replacement.

Original construction cost figures are converted into current prices by calculations based upon the Consumer Price Index; such conversions should be taken as only *very* rough approximations.

Buildings listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* are indicated by a circular (unofficial) “NRHP” symbol.



FE&MV RAILROAD PASSENGER DEPOT



Currently - Douglas Chamber of Commerce
Location - 121 Brownfield Road
Constructed - 1886

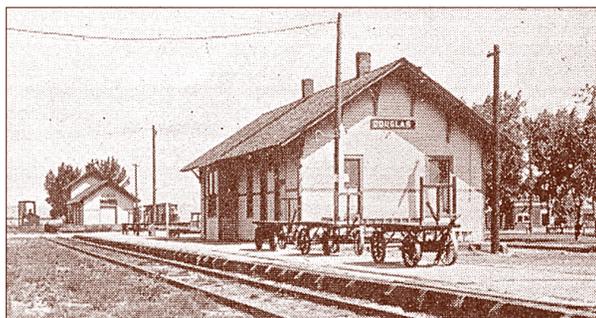
The passenger depot for the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad is, from every conceivable historic standpoint, the most important building in Douglas. For the city itself would never have been established—at least, not as and where it is today—had it not been for the construction of the FE&MV Railroad, which built the depot at the tiny town it had laid out across sage-covered flats along the east bank of the North Platte River.

To access the isolated mining sites and cattle ranches across central Wyoming, the new railroad was extended from the Nebraska-Wyoming border to reach, in May of 1905, the town of Lander, Wyoming, nestled in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. En route, the town of Douglas was conceived, its literal birth occurring on August 29, 1886, at two o'clock in the afternoon. Within four days, a total of 242 land parcels had been sold to area settlers, and the building began. On September 9th, a local reporter wrote:

Despite the fact that the townsite, on Tuesday last, presented an unbroken surface of sagebrush, it today has all the appearance of a large and thriving town. And such a town! One "can hardly hear himself think" for the din of saw, hammer and plane! Buildings in every stage of construction ... bustle, stir and activity on every side. We counted, last evening, fifty-eight buildings underway, most of them business houses, and there are dozens of business men who had not begun to build yet.

The Depot, along with several other railway buildings, was erected by the railroad during this initial boom. Built to standardized plans, it was no different than hundreds of other small depots that dotted the 19th century American landscape, and offered the usual arrangement of the usual spaces: a waiting room, an office, two restrooms, and a freight room. Built with strict economy, there is scarcely a nail or a board extraneous to the functional purpose of the structure.

After being closed to passenger traffic in the 1950's, the building fell into a state of disrepair, but was meticulously restored in the 1990's. Now occupied by the local Chamber of Commerce, it serves visitors to the Douglas Railroad Interpretive Center, which showcases several historic train cars and a steam locomotive.



The FE&MV Depot, midwife to Douglas, stands in silent anticipation of the next round of passengers, probably around 1920.

CONVERSE COUNTY BANK

Currently - Wyoming Financial
Location - 102 North 2nd Street
Constructed - 1910; 1918



The County's oldest surviving financial institution, Converse County Bank, first opened for business in this location in 1918. That portion of the structure visible from the exterior—the front façade—was designed and built with extraordinary care; by itself, it lends the building a weighty and vaguely impenetrable air, thereby counterbalancing the building's relatively diminutive proportions. It looks, unto the present day, nothing so much as quite *like a bank*.

This was an effect deliberately sought by the bank's founders (amongst others, John M. Flynn and George H. Cross), who were faced with the task of converting an existing red-brick structure, built in 1910, which at the time was being used as a saloon.

Buff-colored brick integrated with intricate, ceramic ornamentation was chosen for the new façade, undoubtedly to establish a complete visual disassociation from the building's immediate past. To the same end, the entrance is bracketed by Classical-style pilasters crowned with scrolled capitals; pilasters of a similar character frame the two front windows. Finally, an elaborate, ornamental ceramic shield perches above the decorative cornice across the top of the façade. All in all, no visual trace remains to remind the potential customer of the building's former use.

By all accounts, the conversion proved a success: after one year in business, the new bank had attracted a total of \$127,000 in customer deposits (or about \$1,290,000 in today's dollars). Currently, over eight decades later, the financial institution is still in business, although it long ago outgrew these original quarters on North 2nd Street.



A building with a past: the Converse County Bank, probably around 1930, nestled between the William Gerlach and Harry Pollard stores.

BOZARTH HARNESS SHOP



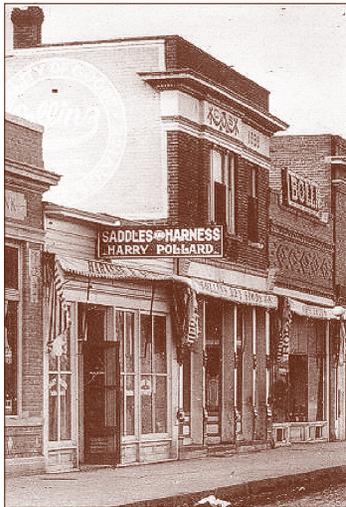
Currently - City Shoe and Saddle
Location - 104 North 2nd Street
Constructed - ca. 1920

This simple, one-story brick building is a successor to the original, almost equally nondescript, wood-frame Bozarth Harness Shop, which was founded by its namesake in the first decade of the 20th century.

Constructed around 1920, it is another instance of a business that has served Douglas customers from its original location, and in more or less the same capacity, for nearly a century, despite changes in ownership. (On the current tour, other business establishments sharing the same distinction include the **College Inn** and the **Steffen Drug Store**.) Once flanked by the **Converse County Bank** on the south, and by the **Bolln Dry Goods Store** on the north, the harness shop was conveniently situated to attract and hold a customer base sufficient to keep it thriving across much of the 20th century and into the present day.

Long-time owners Harry and Jennie Pollard acquired the business from its founder in 1917, replaced the original wood-frame building with the present structure, and offered leather goods, including saddles, from this location until about 1950.

The long tenure of this business, as a type, testifies to the importance of ranching in the Douglas economy throughout the city's history, and into the present day; as such, the existing building constitutes a venerable piece of the past, now being toted through the present, and into the future.



The original Bozarth building, shown here between the Bolln Dry Goods Store and the Converse County Bank, was replaced in 1917.

A. R. MERRITT BUILDING

Currently - Carr Building (Bridal Elegance, et al.)
Location - 203–211 Center Street
Constructed - 1900



The Merritt Building, although not constructed until 1900, had its remote origins in 1886, when the pharmacist Anderson Ralph Merritt brought his drug store to the town of Antelope in a horse-drawn freight wagon, bought a lot, and opened his tent for business. Shortly after, it was announced that the new town of Douglas would be established on a bank of the North Platte River, about 1.5 miles to the south. Mortgaging his Antelope property virtually on the spur of the moment, Merritt pulled his stakes and relocated to Douglas.

Across the following decade, he accumulated enough capital to construct his own two-story brick building, the A. R. Merritt General Merchandise and Drug Store, on the southeast corner of Center and 2nd Street.

Starkly utilitarian, the building was almost totally devoid of ornament or other stylistic niceties, and the architecture, such as it was, was conceived for a single-minded dual purpose: to stock goods, and to sell goods. Within a space 121 feet long by 25 feet wide, pharmacist Merritt proceeded to stock and sell: shoes, boots, caps, hats, hay, grain, flour, groceries, paints, wallpaper, carpets, furniture, wagons, buggies, and—pharmaceuticals. In a 1906 photograph, each of these items, and more, are spelt out in stark white letters ranging from one to two feet tall, painted against a dark background, all along the north and west façades of his building.

Sometime after Merritt's retirement in 1930, whatever remained of that advertising, and the original brick as well, was concealed beneath a layer of painted stucco. The building has since undergone many additional changes, including the removal of two ornamental, wood-frame entryways that once faced Center Street; these have been replaced by a modern glass storefront, above which is installed a decorative panel displaying, at each end, the silhouette of a bucking bronco.



Advertising the inventory: Merritt aimed to leave no doubt whatsoever about the nature and extent of the goods on offer.



Currently - Kirk's Alternator and Starter Rebuilding
Location - 115 South 2nd Street
Constructed - 1916-1920

It was in 1913, ten years after the founding of the Ford Motor Company, that John D. LeBar Sr. opened, at a small facility in Douglas, one of the first Ford dealerships in the state of Wyoming. Seven years and three stages of construction later, LeBar had completed the block-long structure that occupies the site today. The three separate phases of construction are clearly reflected in the west façade, despite the close similarities among the conjoined units.

That such expansion was possible in so short a period of time attests to the speed and vigor with which the automobile industry as a whole expanded, in early 20th century America. Already by 1920, there were six commercial automobile garages in Douglas (including the **Morsch Garage**)—a city whose total population at the time was less than 2,300.

In the sparsely-populated state of Wyoming as a whole, with cities few and far between, the automobile was received with particular eagerness. At Douglas, for example, auto enthusiasts established the “Good Roads Club,” which aggressively promoted construction of an automobile route from Cheyenne to Yellowstone Park—by way, naturally, of Douglas’s own 4th and Center Streets.

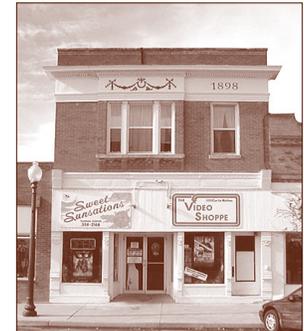
While located virtually on the south shoulder of the new Yellowstone Highway, LeBar Motors offered the latest Ford models, in addition to service, parts, and accessories. The garage remained a Highway landmark until the LeBar family sold the business, around 1960—after which, the enterprise was known as Messick Sales and Service.

Today, and for the foreseeable future, different routes are traveled, and a Ford is but one choice amongst many. And the LeBar complex, although still in use, appears to be basking alone, in the quiet of a hard-earned rest.



The LeBar Motor Company complex in 1958: by now, it was well after the days of the Model T—and very near closing time.

Currently - Sweet Sunations & The Video Shoppe
Location - 106 North 2nd Street
Constructed - 1898



The successful German immigrant grocer, George Bolln, constructed this building in 1898, when he decided to expand into the retail dry goods business.

Of red brick, and sporting an ornate, cast-iron storefront imported from Saint Louis, it is vastly superior, in materials and workmanship, to the rather ramshackle wood-frame structure he had purchased in 1888, to house his newly-founded grocery. Interestingly, the building he later in turn constructed to replace the original grocery bore virtually no resemblance to this 1898 Dry Goods Store (apart, that is, from the primary material, red brick). Apparently, Bolln was more concerned with maintaining a visual distinction between the two businesses than with establishing a harmonious visual relation between the two buildings.

In distinct contrast, then, to the unremarkable, raised-brick ornament incorporated on the façade of the later Grocery, the Dry Goods Store exhibits an elaborate, Neo-Classical style ceramic cornice and a decorative frieze above the second story windows, upon which is prominently inscribed the date of its construction, “1898.”

Personifying the character of its owner, the dry goods building was not allowed to rest as-built, but was expanded within the decade to fill the entire lot apportioned to it.



Profits from the original, slightly ramshackle Bolln Grocery (at right) financed construction of the infinitely more elaborate Dry Goods Store.



Currently - Rogers Home Entertainment Center
Location - 110 North 2nd Street
Constructed - ca. 1903
Architect - J. Bevan Phillips

The Bolln Grocery Store, as a building, is infinitely less interesting than the history of the individual behind it.

George Bolln, born in 1847 in Hamburg, Germany, tried at least six different careers before establishing his Douglas grocery business, at the age of 41.

Born into a farm family, Bolln trained as a baker in Germany. In 1876, the 29-year-old immigrated to America and crossed half the continent, to the Black Hills of South Dakota, probably to work as a miner. Apparently unsuccessful, Bolln was in Cheyenne, Wyoming within the year, working at a bakery business. Three years later, he purchased 40 head of cattle and drove them to Leadville, Colorado, to try his hand at dairy farming. Four months later, disposing of the dairy, he purchased 200 head of cattle; within a year, all but three had been rustled away, and Bolln returned to Cheyenne, there to work at an established hotel. Within six months, he'd leased the property and assumed control of the business. But after three (apparently successful) years, Bolln sold out of the hotel business, moved to the frontier post of Fort Fetterman, and bought a general merchandise operation. After marrying in 1887, he purchased a wood-frame building in Douglas and moved his business to the new, booming town. By 1898, having made a success of his grocery, he constructed a second building directly adjacent to it and expanded into the dry goods business. And finally, by the turn of the century, the immigrant baker was one of the most prosperous retail merchants in Converse County.

Throughout the 1890's, Bolln engaged in several other entrepreneurial ventures, including sheep ranching and banking. He also served in local politics—as city councilman, county commissioner, and mayor of Douglas.

The one-story, red-brick building visible today was built to replace the original wood-frame structure Bolln had purchased for his fledgling grocery business, in 1888. In its staid, unremarkable simplicity, it bears no resemblance to the man behind it.



The conjoined but mismatched Bolln twins, in 1903, shortly after construction of the Grocery.



Currently - "Old City Hall"
Location - 130 South 3rd Street
Constructed - 1916
Architect - William Norman Bowman



After its founding in 1886, the survival of the city of Douglas was by no means assured. Starting with a population of 1,600, within a year or two, a typhoid epidemic, harsh winter weather, and other uncontrollable crises had reduced the town to a total of less than 300 stalwart survivors.

It was not until 1915, when a population of more than 2,000 was thriving on the local sheep-ranching economy, and irrigation was spurring the growth of an agricultural base, that city officials felt confident enough to undertake some sorely-needed civic improvements. Their first step was to commission a rising star in the Denver architectural firmament, William Norman Bowman, to design for Douglas both a County Courthouse and a new City Hall. Of the two structures, only the City Hall building remains—as a kind of civic monument to the persistence and resolve of those earliest Douglas settlers. And in tribute to the industry that almost single-handedly saved the city from extinction, a ceramic medallion over the main entrance to the building features a ram's head, replete with full, curled horns.

The two-story brick building was designed to serve not only as a workplace for the city administration; it also offered living quarters for the Chief of Police and accommodated both a fire station and a jailhouse. Thus on any given day, while city staff toiled in offices within the north half of the ground floor, fire trucks might be exiting from the oversized doors at the south half, the Good Roads Club might be in session within chambers on the second floor, while a rabble-rouser might be paying dues in one of the two jail cells at the basement level. Later, the staff might notice the fire brigade clambering into the three-story brick tower at the rear of the building—there to drape, for drying, their sodden fabric fire hoses.

The City Hall building remained in use by the local government until another building was obtained, in 1989; the replacement contains no jail, no fire house, and no hose tower.



City Hall, probably in the 1920's; the Model T blocking the station doors must be that of the Fire Chief.



Currently - (law offices)
Location - 115 & 119 South 3rd Street
Constructed - ca. 1900; ca. 1912

This small, elegantly simple complex on South 3rd Street bears an uncanny resemblance to that of the Bolln complex (buildings **21** and **22**) located on North 2nd Street. Although free-standing, whereas the latter complex is attached to adjacent structures, both its overall configuration and the manner in which that configuration materialized is virtually identical to that of the Bolln buildings.

The man behind the 3rd Street complex, C. H. Hofmann, employed the same entrepreneurial strategies as that of his slightly older business neighbor: using the profits from one enterprise to finance the development of another, he built as necessity dictated, and as economics allowed.

However, in contrast to George Bolln's dual focus on two close, commercial relations—groceries and dry goods—Hofmann's twin enterprises were as disparate as can be imagined. The single-story part of the complex, constructed around the turn of the century, was first used to house Hofmann's upholstery and furniture business, which he began shortly after arriving in Douglas in 1905. In the following year, Hofmann purchased a local undertaking practice and apparently worked both businesses out of the same small structure for a time—with, one can safely assume, the utmost attention to detail. By 1912, however, Hofmann had attached to the smaller building a two-story addition for his growing furniture business, which subsequently thrived for another two decades.

Despite some modifications to the ground floor façade of the two-story structure, the complex has, for the most part, retained its historic character across time and is fairly representative of early commercial architecture in Douglas.

One half of Hofmann's professional skill set was also employed in the public sector, where he served as the Converse County Coroner, from 1918 until his retirement in the early 1940's.



At the Douglas Park Cemetery, the Hofmann family plot, stately and serene, is another living testament to one of C.H.'s two life-long professions.

Currently - The Depot
Location - 100 Walnut Street
Constructed - 1915
Architect - (unknown)



The Pacific Northwest was linked by rail to the Gulf of Mexico in 1914, when the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, led by James J. Hill, completed a line from Billings, Montana down to the northern end of the existing Colorado & Southern Railroad. The culminating, historic splice was made near Orin Junction, Wyoming.

At Douglas, ten miles to the northwest, August 13, 1914 was the day the railway came to town, its arrival heralded by local residents as a catalyst to further economic growth. One year later, a new Burlington Railroad Passenger Depot was opened for business in Douglas, conveniently situated near the west edge of the business district, and just one block from the newly-constructed **LaBonte Hotel**. The local press reported that the Depot contained “a handsomely finished office, a commodious general waiting room and separate waiting rooms for men and women, with everything conveniently arranged and finished in the most approved style.” Unlike its spartan counterpart for the FE&MV Railroad, the Burlington Depot reflects the confidence railway officials had in the now relatively well-established town of Douglas.

The Depot soon became a local landmark and locus of activity within the city, and handled daily passenger traffic for several decades. In the mid-1960's, service to Douglas was discontinued, and since then the building has been occupied intermittently by a variety of commercial tenants—and has, accordingly, been subject to a succession of interior remodels. But the exterior of the sturdy masonry and concrete structure has retained its overall physical integrity. Moreover—although windows and doors have been boarded within the west wall adjacent to the tracks, and a large commercial sign affixed to the roof—at the north and south walls, original signboards attached to the eaves still spell out in uppercase, railroad-approved type, the seven letters that were once anticipated by passengers from points northwest, and from points southeast: DOUGLAS.



The Burlington Depot, in service—i.e., before 1970. All things were “conveniently arranged and finished in the most approved style.”



Currently - LaBonte Inn
Location - 206 Walnut Street
Constructed - 1913
Architect - Baerresen Brothers

When the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad was aiming to link the Pacific Northwest to the Gulf of Mexico, a premier turn-of-the-century Douglas hostelry called the “Valley House” was found to stand in its way. In the face of its scheduled removal, a group of Douglas businessmen arranged for a replacement, to be named the “LaBonte” (after the alleged first settler in Converse County). Built at a cost of \$55,000—equal to approximately one million in today’s dollars—the structure was furnished sumptuously throughout for an additional \$15,000 (or about \$270,000, currently).

Within a “u”-shape floor plan, the red-brick LaBonte Hotel offered 54 guest rooms across its two upper floors, while a lobby, kitchen, dining room, barber shop, billiard hall, and bar occupied the ground floor. Guests enjoyed early 20th century state-of-the-art comfort and convenience—afforded by electric lighting, steam heat, in-room telephones, hot running water, and private lavatories. The lobby boasted a marble-top hotel desk and an ornate tile floor; billiard tables and bar fixtures were acquired from the estimable Brunswick-Balke Company. (As part of a remodeling effort, the original bar itself, a massive mahogany piece, was donated in 1968 to the Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum in Douglas.)

The LaBonte was well-patronized from the outset, being proximal to the newly-constructed **Burlington Railroad Passenger Depot** and promoted within the region to motorists traveling the new Yellowstone Highway; the large neon sign high atop the west wing of the structure cast “HOTEL LABONTE” out into the night sky above the Highway route to the south.

The building has been in use as a hotel since its inception, and has undergone periodic remodeling and renovation across the years. The alteration most noticeable from the exterior is the roofed dance pavilion, installed within the original open courtyard in 1982, and thence crowned with a sizeable reproduction of a Douglas “jackalope.”



A view into the original, open courtyard of the LaBonte, about 1950; the dance pavilion was still in the distant future.



Currently - Jenne Building
Location - 310 Center Street
Constructed - 1916
Architect - (unknown)



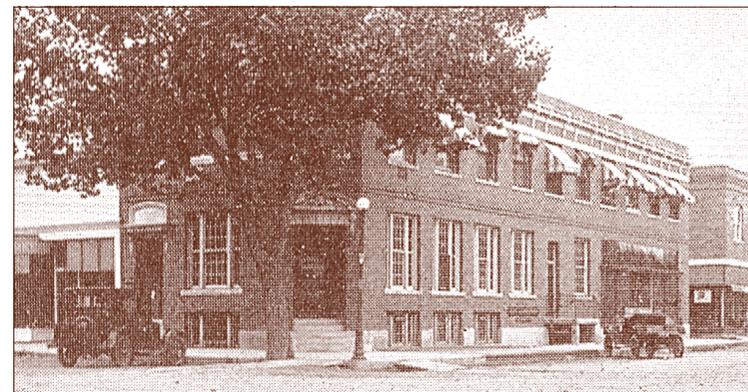
With a small fortune amassed in the sheep-ranching industry, Jacob Jenne (pronounced, “jenny”) financed construction of this early Douglas office building, which remains an essential landmark in the downtown district.

Jenne came to Wyoming in 1891 to assist with the ranching business of his older brother, John. The partnership ultimately prospered, and was known as the Morton-Jenne Sheep Company (“Morton” being the surname adopted by John upon his desertion from the Army).

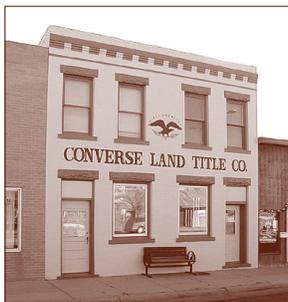
The comparatively sumptuous Jenne Building reflects the success of the brothers’ enterprise. Cream-colored ceramic ornament adorns the north and west façades, in subtle contrast to the orange/black-speckled brick walls. Awnings installed along the second story (originally of retractable canvas but later replaced by fixed assemblies of sheet metal) emphasize the visual rhythm of the second story windows across the west façade of the building. A decorative ceramic shield affixed to the parapet of the canted wall that defines the main entrance features, in stylized letters, the Jenne monogram, “JJ”.

The careful detailing and elaborate ornamentation of the building attracted a series of upscale, professional tenants across the decades. Its earliest occupants included a commercial bank, an electrical supplier and—at the basement level, on specially-reinforced flooring—the printing presses of the Douglas Enterprise newspaper. Later tenants included attorneys, a land title company, and various other professional individuals and organizations. Despite the variety of tenants across time, the exterior of the building remains essentially unchanged, apart from a modern, wood-panel storefront installed at the lower level of the west façade.

Both of the Jenne brothers constructed substantial residences at the east edge of the commercial district; both are extant, including the **Morton Mansion**.



Jacob Jenne’s building, sometime in the 1920’s—with companion tree, undoubtedly preserved by design.



Currently - Converse Land Title Company
Location - 313 Center Street
Constructed - 1908

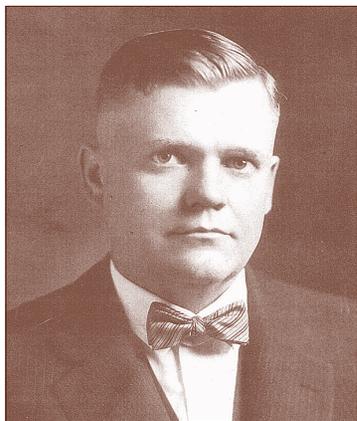
This two-story brick building was constructed to house the medical offices of Dr. Joseph Hylton, an early and highly-esteemed Douglas physician who had come to Wyoming in 1906, shortly after graduating (at the age of 23) from Chicago's Bennett Medical College.

The building still exhibits its original brick façade—albeit from beneath a few layers of paint—and largely retains its early 20th century character. The bricks, originally red, were manufactured locally, at the Douglas Pressed Brick Plant—a facility that supplied masonry materials for numerous early Douglas commercial and residential structures, and served the area for several decades after its founding around the turn of the 19th century. It was sited on (and quarried its raw materials from) the hilly ridge that defines the east edge of the city.

The professional services of Dr. Hylton were in high demand throughout the first half of the century, and he was widely revered for his medical skills. Early on, Hylton's patients periodically included employees of the local madam, one Maggie Wheelock; in these cases—although he was not a practicing psychiatrist—Hylton would sometimes prescribe nothing more than shots of medicinal whiskey.

The doctor also had an avid interest in horse-racing, and is famous for having acquired history's first Triple Crown winner—Sir Barton, who lived out his retirement on the Hylton ranch. (Sir Barton's remains now reside in Douglas's Washington Park, beneath a life-sized replica of the great horse.)

The Hylton building continued in service as a medical clinic for many years after the founding doctor's death, but was later adapted to other uses.



Dr. Hylton was on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and had occasion to perform emergency surgeries atop kitchen tables, beneath a kerosene lamp.



Currently - College Inn Bar
Location - 103 North 2nd Street
Constructed - 1906

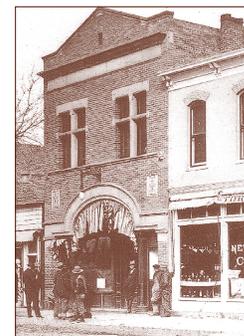


The College Inn Bar holds a distinguished place in the annals of American saloon history. While most drinking establishments along the western reaches of late 19th century America were rather ramshackle affairs—where the liquor was the sole attraction—the founder of the College Inn, one Theodore Pringle, had his building tailor-made to accommodate his customers in style.

Built in 1906, for around \$15,000 (nearly \$300,000 at current prices), Pringle obtained fixtures and furnishings of the highest quality—including an intricately-carved mahogany backbar with a marble slab top, and a Brunswick-Balke drinking bar imported from Chicago. Ornate, free-standing mahogany arches equipped with swinging doors of stained glass defined the front and rear entrances to the barroom. The floor was finished with rugged, decorative tile made from a compound of pure, finely-ground marble. A lounge adjacent to the barroom accommodated ten drinking booths, defined by mahogany dividers six feet tall, sporting heavy draperies suspended from fat brass rods; the booths included "call buttons" recessed into the adjoining wall, which was sheathed with embossed leather. On the second floor were nine sumptuously-furnished sleeping rooms, and a gambling room that was serviced from the bar by a dumbwaiter.

Structurally, the main floor is a precursor to the later invention of reinforced concrete: 16 inches thick, it incorporates a grid of 90-pound track rails bound with three-quarter inch steel cables, and is supported on solid brick columns 20 inches square spaced at ten feet on center across the basement.

The College Inn continues in business to the present day, making it the oldest business in Douglas history to have operated from the same location. Although its sleeping rooms are no longer in use, many of the original fixtures and much of the vintage decor remain in place throughout the ground floor.



The Bar's original front entrance, shown here, was replaced in 1949 after a patron—perhaps parched, maybe sated—drove a Buick through the door.



Currently - Corner Barber Shop
Location - 101 North 2nd Street
Constructed - 1886

Erected during the boom ignited by the founding of the town, the Maverick Bank was the first brick building in Douglas. Unlike its walking tour counterpart, the **Converse County Bank**, very little is recorded

about the history of the Maverick firm. This may be owing to the fact that the bank survived as a bank for only a single year, and the building was subsequently devoted to other, multiple uses, including a post office and a watchmaker's establishment (the latter being combined, oddly enough, with a candy shop). Future tenants included a wall paper supplier, a tobacconist, a paint supplier, an attorney, a restaurateur, a hardware supplier, and an insurance agent.

Judging by the few available historic photos of the original bank, the south façade of the building (facing Center Street) originally terminated after the fifth of the eight windows that are currently evident along the level of the second floor; thus that portion of the building that contains the remaining three windows—and including, of course, the modern storefront along the ground floor beneath those windows—constitutes a later addition to the structure.

Indeed, the entire exterior perimeter of the first floor bears almost no resemblance to the original building. The west façade, along 2nd Street, originally contained large, plate glass windows set within heavy and ornate wooden frames that extended to the ground; identical wood framing defined the main entrance, located within the canted wall that connects the south and west façades. Today, no trace remains of this elaborate, intricately-detailed carpentry, and the original brick exterior has been sheathed by a layer of painted stucco.

Overall, then, the original Maverick building exhibited a character and stylistic integrity that is no longer in evidence—an unfortunate but common, and probably unavoidable, consequence of accommodating multifarious users across a span of more than a century.



On the boardwalk by the bank, pedestrians pose before the then-stylish Maverick building, probably around 1890.



Currently - Christ Episcopal Church
Location - 411 Center Street
Constructed - 1898
Architect - G. W. G. Van Winkle

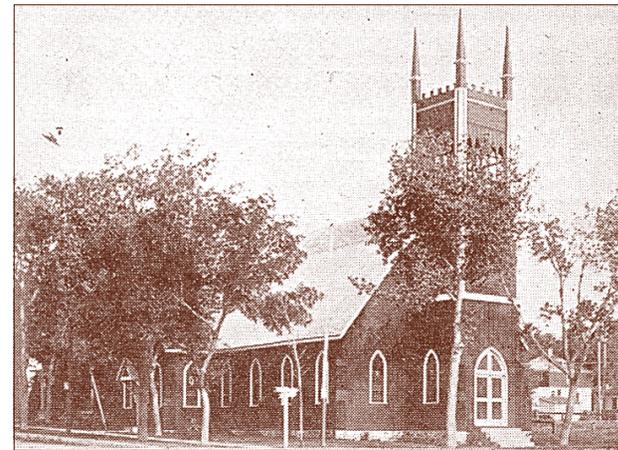


Christ Episcopal is the oldest surviving religious structure in Douglas. With its steeply-pitched roof, lancet windows, and vertical-lined façades, it exemplifies the “Gothic Revival” style, a modern adaptation of medieval esthetics that first took root in England in the 19th century. Transported to America by immigrant Ecclesiastics, the style found wide acceptance amongst religious groups throughout the country, including those formed within the small communities that were springing up along the western frontier.

From the exterior, the wood-frame Christ Episcopal looks today much as it did when first constructed, over a century ago, despite various modifications effected across the decades. White siding now sheathes the façades, whose wooden planks were originally painted a light-green. In 1979, a meeting hall was added to the church, in the form of a gable-roofed extension that projects toward the south. And, although the interior of the church was remodeled in 1981, it was accomplished in a way that preserved and protected the original design.

One of the more prominent features of the complex is the bell tower, whose four corner spires crest at a height of seventy feet above the ground; as such, it was for many decades the tallest man-made point in Douglas. The original bell, donated by early Douglas businessman John T. Williams, suffered a weather-induced fracture very early on and was replaced in 1908. In the face of long-standing concern about the structural integrity of the tower, it was rebuilt in 1952, but in strict esthetic accordance with the original plans.

Christ Episcopal was designed by the colorfully-named G. W. G. Van Winkle, who was an Episcopal rector in Rock Springs, Wyoming.



The Church as it looked before the invention of metal siding, with a darker, indeterminate color here applied over the original light-green paint.



Currently - (private residence)
Location - 425 Center Street
Constructed - 1903
Architect - William Dubois

The old residential area along the east edge of the Douglas business district includes several stately homes built by some of the more ambitious and successful business owners of early Douglas. One of these homes, located within the downtown area, is the mansion built by John Morton.

A German immigrant, Morton made his fortune in sheep-ranching, owning and operating what was once the largest ranch in Converse County. Although Morton died in 1916, his wife Sarah assumed management of the Morton holdings, and resided in the mansion until her own death in 1952. Converse County acquired the building in 1980, and operated it as a youth home until the late 1990's, when it passed again into private hands, was meticulously restored, and operated for a time as a "bed and breakfast" inn.

The three-story wood-frame mansion includes an expansive, fully-roofed, wrap-around porch, attesting to Morton's love of the outdoors, and two chimneys of red brick—attesting to Morton's respect for Wyoming winters. The prominent, varied roof line, asymmetrical floor plan, and projecting window bay on the east wall of the structure are all characteristic of the "Queen Anne" style, a mode of design that was most popular in the 1880's and 1890's, and is manifest, usually in residential architecture, in almost every city of both the United States and Great Britain. The interior included ornate woodwork, hardwood floors, pocket doors, and a dazzling variety of intricate wallpapers. At the exterior, to demarcate the extent of his property, Morton installed an ornate, cast-iron fence, which encompasses an adjoining lot he owned to the immediate west. (A subsequent owner relocated Morton's wood-frame carriage house onto the north portion of this adjoining lot, and fortified its façades with masonry sheathing.)

Morton's residence was the creation of William Dubois, a prolific, early 20th century Wyoming architect who designed many other Douglas structures (most since razed). In Douglas, surviving Dubois works include the **Ashlar Lodge**, and two other mansions, for John T. Williams and J. DeForest Richards.



Sarah Morton in her later years, gracing the tree-lined walk out front, alongside the wrought-iron fence.

Currently - Whistle-Stop Mercantile
Location - 206 Center Street
Constructed - ca. 1920



For well over a century, pharmaceutical goods were available from a store abutting the **College Inn Bar** and the building originally constructed for the **Maverick Bank**; in fact this store was effectively—if not esthetically—a one-story extension of the latter building.

The Steffen Drug Store was founded at this location in 1887, in a modest, single-story wood-frame building. The business changed hands several times across the ensuing decades, and the original structure was eventually replaced by the present, even more unassuming, brick building; but the nature of the business itself remained unchanged until the beginning of the 21st century, making it the second-longest running business, as a type, in Douglas history. (The top spot belongs to The Douglas Budget newspaper, founded as "Bill Barlow's Budget" at Fort Fetterman, in 1886.)

The Drug Store's founder, J. J. Steffen, was born in France in 1855 and immigrated to America as a child. He served as a pharmacist's apprentice, then came to Wyoming in 1886, aiming to capitalize on opportunities afforded by the construction of the new Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad. After establishing a pharmacy at Lusk, Wyoming in 1886, he moved to Douglas and opened a second business on a small parcel of land behind the Maverick Bank.

After Steffen's death in 1914, the business continued to flourish for many decades under the management of his descendants. They opened an underground ice cream parlor called the "Palm Garden" that, bedecked with (presumably artificial) representatives of the tropical plant, was especially popular with younger, socially-aspiring residents of Douglas.

During J.J.'s ownership, the store was also renowned for its "Indian Room," wherein Steffen displayed his extraordinary collection of American Indian artifacts, which he eventually sold, in its entirety, to a Denver museum.



The original wood-frame Steffen Drug Store, about 1910. The College Inn Bar looms behind, while the rear of the Maverick Bank is just visible at the left.



Currently - Douglas Business Center
Location - 100 North 3rd Street
Constructed - (probably 1900)

The masonry building underlying what is seen here today was probably constructed in 1900 by C. H. King, an early Douglas merchant, to replace a smaller wood-frame structure he had built in 1886 to house his new general merchandise store; and that 1886 structure was, after the **FE&MV Depot**, the very first commercial building constructed in Douglas. King also has the distinction of establishing the very first tent business in Antelope, the tent town that proved to be the historical precursor to Douglas.

Since its original construction, King's later, 1900 masonry building has passed through a number of owners and several incarnations. Sometime after 1911, he apparently sold out and transferred ownership of the building to another early Douglas merchant, George W. Metcalf, whose dry goods store occupied this location until 1915. Its subsequent owner, Robert T. Gentle, changed the name of the mercantile operation in the late 1920's to the "Golden Rule," and the business was operated under that moniker for nearly 60 years, becoming in the process a venerable downtown Douglas landmark.

Given the ownership changes, and the local and national economic turns that have come to bear across the century since it was constructed, it is not surprising that the structure today bears almost no resemblance to its original self. At some juncture, the building was widened (toward the north), the original decorative brick parapet was removed, display windows were bricked in, and the front façade was radically altered, to accommodate a massive wooden awning and a modern, prefabricated storefront. And finally, the original brick face of the south façade was concealed beneath the seemingly inevitable layer of painted stucco.

King is also credited with founding "C. H. King and Company of Casper," which later became the Casper National Bank.

C.H.'s personal life proved to have a significant bearing on national history in the late 20th century, when Gerald R. Ford, his paternal grandson, became 37th President of the United States.



C. H. King & Co., shortly after 1900; the wood-frame structures at right were later replaced by masonry buildings, including the Princess Theatre.

Currently - Mr. Surplus
Location - 114 North 4th Street
Constructed - 1909



The Morsch Garage was the very first of a total of six automobile garages that were established in Douglas by the year 1920. Mass production of the auto had commenced in 1903, with the founding of the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn, Michigan. (The first car to appear in Douglas, however, was not a Ford, but a two-cylinder Rambler, owned by one Friday Nelson, and displayed at the first Wyoming State Fair in 1905.)

That a city of less than 2,300 people could support six commercial auto garages attests to the huge demand for this new technology—still unreliable in itself, and intended for use on roadways that were either (a) poorly maintained, or (b) non-existent.

Illinois native William Morsch, born in 1863, emigrated west in 1892 and engaged in sheep ranching in Wyoming and Montana before deciding to settle in Douglas—there to tackle, as it turned out, the noted problems both internal and external to the new technology. The Morsch Garage, established in 1909, specialized in Buick sales and service but soon became a focal point for Converse County auto mavens of every allegiance.

Yet Morsch was not content to focus exclusively on the car itself, apart from the medium it traveled. Thus he founded the "Good Roads Club," a privately-financed organization devoted to developing a road system within Converse County. Funds for the construction, maintenance, and improvement of roads were collected by the Club through voluntary contributions solicited from county residents. (In 1918, Morsch's organization diversified and then metamorphosed into the Douglas Chamber of Commerce.)

The elegant, two-story, red brick Garage accommodated 50 cars and was featured in the 1916 edition of an official guidebook to the new Yellowstone Highway.

In later years, after Morsch's retirement, the structure underwent extensive remodeling for other uses, and today it bears no trace of its original character.



W. J. Morsch and Son, probably around 1920—after enclosure of the originally open (but roofed) front deck, and the addition of a gas pump island.



Currently - Ashlar Lodge No. 10

Location - 138 North 4th Street

Constructed - 1925–1926

Architects - William Dubois & Leon Goodrich

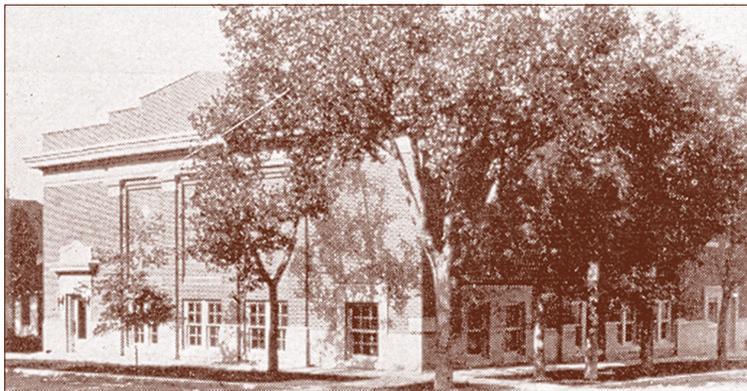
The Freemasons is a fraternal and religious-based philanthropic organization that can claim members all the way back to Colonial America; its early American rosters include George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John Hancock.

Carrying on this tradition, in 1887, pioneer businessman (and future Wyoming governor) DeForest Richards established in Douglas the masonic Ashlar Lodge No. 10, which in time attracted members from all over eastern and central Wyoming. By 1924, the initial membership of 14 had increased to a total of 237—warranting construction of a building, or “masonic temple,” dedicated especially to the local organization.

The Casper-based architectural firm of Dubois and Goodrich was chosen to design the structure. At the time, Dubois was already a known and admired quantity in Douglas, having designed the **Douglas City Hall** and Converse County Courthouse buildings in 1915, as well as residences for Richards’ son, J. Deforest, and for another prominent Douglas businessman, John T. Williams.

With its massive red-brick walls and Neo-Classical pilasters, the resulting building appears weighty, stolid, and anchored in tradition. Originally, a series of large rectangular windows opened directly out onto the surrounding sidewalk; these tended to offset the building’s imposing mass, and established a connection between the private interior and the public exterior. Apparently for economy’s sake, most of these windows have since been sealed under layers of stuccoed paneling.

An entablature above the main entrance, which is located at one end of the main (east) façade, includes a ceramic medallion featuring the masonic symbol and the year in which the cornerstone was laid; the latter, also dated, is set at the opposite end of the same façade.



The Lodge looms through the trees, soon after construction, its first-floor windows opening out onto the surrounding pedestrian walk.

Currently - Mesa Theatre

Location - 104 North 3rd Street

Constructed - 1917

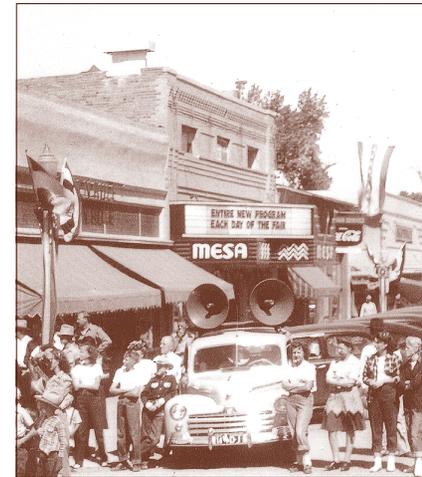


The motion picture theater business developed rapidly within the United States, after an employee of Thomas Edison invented the kinetoscope in 1891. By the second decade of the 20th century, there were already thousands of picture theaters available to movie-goers across the country—including Douglas’s own Princess Theatre, constructed in 1917.

At the time, motion pictures were still in the era of the great silents, with stars such as Lillian Gish, Harold Lloyd, and Charlie Chaplin, and with pioneering directors such as D. W. Griffith and Fritz Lang. In Douglas, musical accompaniment for the silents was provided on an upright piano by various local “lady pianists.”

As was the case with most early theaters, the Princess was simple and straightforward, largely bereft of the amenities taken for granted by modern audiences. At the Princess, the film itself was the thing; the magical experience of seeing moving figures on a two-dimensional screen was sufficient in itself to attract patrons from all over Converse County.

With an original seating capacity of 300, the Princess included a small concessionaire, a news stand, a ticket sales office, and a telegraph office. In 1936, the concessionaire was enlarged, the theater’s “stage” was remodeled and, in the following year, the name was changed to the “Mesa.” Apart from these improvements and periodic restoration of the seating, architecturally, the building has endured and remains today much as it was at the time of its construction. Only the technical apparatus has changed; and the fare.



At a 1950’s street parade associated with the Wyoming State Fair, the Mesa Theatre—in an uncommon role-reversal—plays spectator.



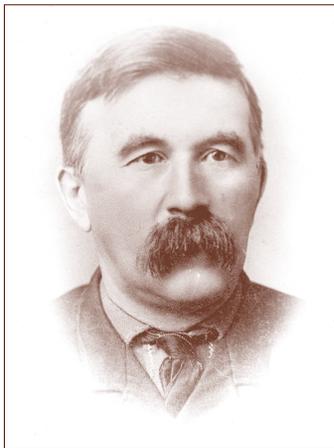
Currently - The Shop
Location - 118 North 3rd Street
Constructed - 1888

As one of the oldest existing structures in Douglas, this little building has a rich history that belies its innocent and essentially nondescript appearance. If, with its gabled roof and squat posture, it seems strangely out of place amongst the commercial buildings around it, it is only because it was originally built for a distinctly non-commercial purpose: it housed, not buyers and sellers, but their nemeses—thieves and murderers—while serving as the Converse County jail from 1888 to 1915.

At a cost of \$4,000 (about \$75,000 in today's dollars), and within a floor plan measuring 22 by 44 feet, it included a sheriff's office and kitchen at the front and two jail cells at the rear, each accommodating four bunks. Cell windows (in the back wall) were barred with iron rods that, fully penetrating the brick walls and bent over at the inside surface, foiled the hopes of potential escapees. The walls themselves were no less unforgiving, being fortified with floor-to-ceiling lengths of 2x6 pine, installed narrow edge-in—yielding, in combination with the exterior brick, 14-inch thick barriers to freedom.

The noted construction was particularly unpopular with combatants during the Johnson County War (of 1892), and with sundry notorious figures of the Old West—including, reportedly, Tom Horn, Ed Ellis, and George W. Pike.

In 1915, the jail was relocated to the new **Douglas City Hall**, and the present building was purchased by Douglas businessman Jacob Jenne (owner of the **Jenne Building**). Its most famous tenant since that time has been Ed Russell, owner of the E. E. Russell Saddle Shop—which, operating on the right side of the law, became one of the longest-held sole proprietorships in Converse County history.



Malcolm Campbell, first sheriff of Converse County, presided at the grand opening festivities for the new jail house, in 1888.



Currently - Douglas Main Post Office
Location - 129 North 3rd Street
Constructed - 1914-1916
Architect - Oscar Wenderoth



Around 1908, a sizeable group of Douglas residents began a long and energetic campaign to secure congressional funding for a U. S. Postal Service building, perceiving it to be a sign of “federal recognition”; in the words of the local press, it was to be an “ornament to the city.” After years of political wrangling, construction finally began in 1914, and was completed in February 1916, for a total reported cost of about \$61,000 (nearly one million, in today's dollars).

The resulting building exemplifies the architectural style, Neo-Classicism. Prominent throughout the United States since the Colonial era, the style has been frequently employed in the design of large government buildings. Symmetry, specific proportions, and prescribed ornamentation are some of Neo-Classicism's more telling hallmarks. Heavily promoted by an influential group of American architects at the end of the 19th century, the Neo-Classical remains influential into the present day. On the current tour, several other buildings evidence strong Neo-Classical influence, including: **Ashlar Lodge**, **Boln Dry Goods**, **Douglas City Hall**, and the **LaBonte Inn**.

The Post Office building is distinguished by exquisitely detailed brick work and an elegant, copper-clad, hipped roof with broad overhangs. The surface ornamentation is tastefully restrained, and adds interest to the perfectly symmetrical façades. The main entry is approached by two flights of granite steps that, connecting dual landings, are flanked by buttresses of granite and concrete.

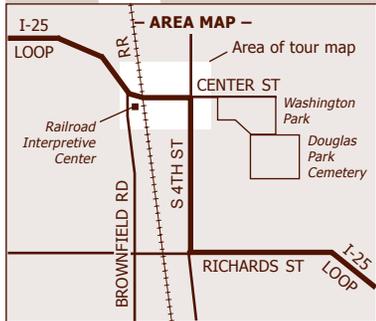
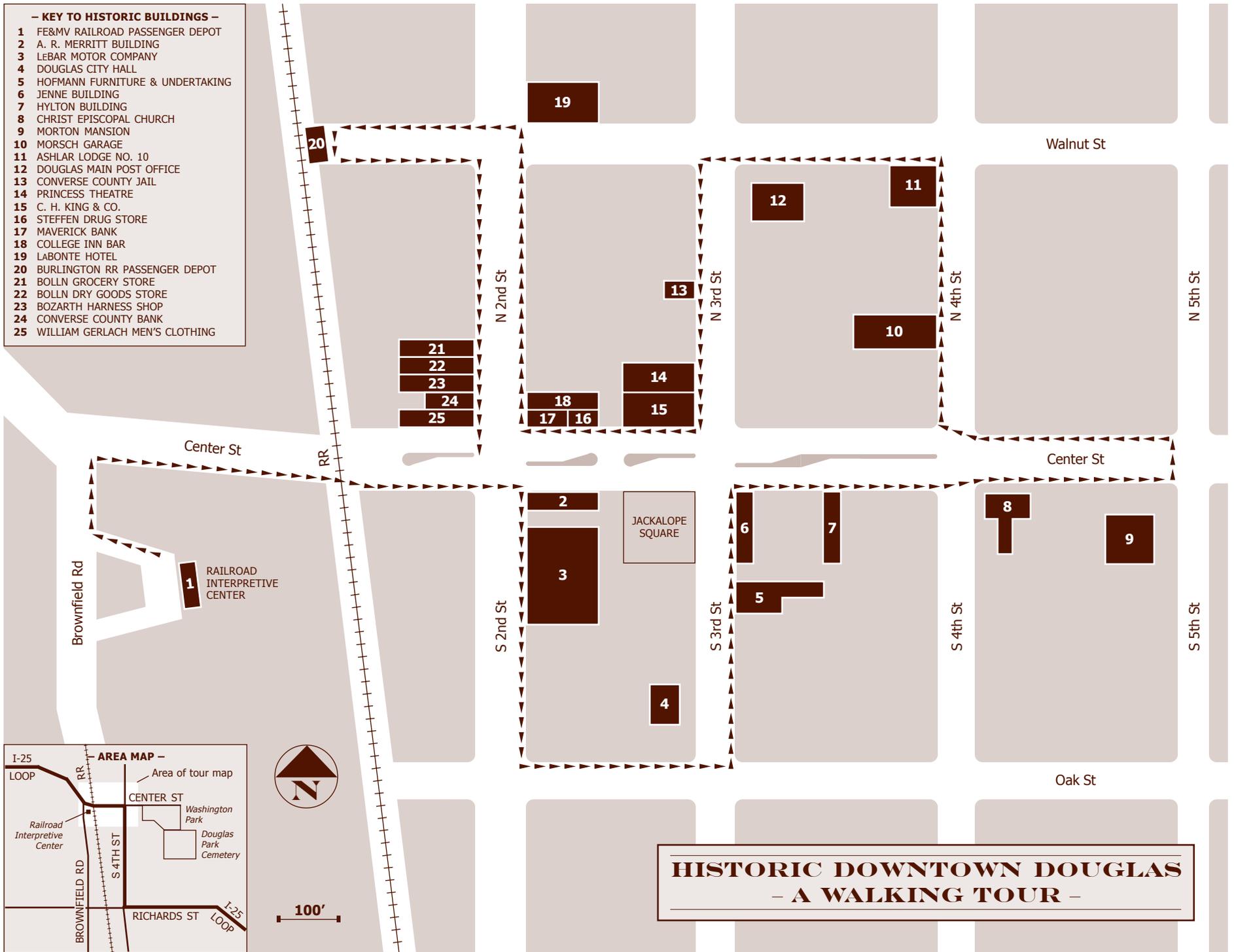
In the 1950's, a one-story addition was constructed at the east end of the original building; in its character, proportions, and materials, it was skillfully integrated with the existing structure and thereby maintains the stylistic integrity of the overall complex.



The Post Office, here under construction ... which dragged along; work commenced in mid-1914 and was not completed until early 1916.

— KEY TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS —

- 1 FE&MV RAILROAD PASSENGER DEPOT
- 2 A. R. MERRITT BUILDING
- 3 LEBAR MOTOR COMPANY
- 4 DOUGLAS CITY HALL
- 5 HOFMANN FURNITURE & UNDERTAKING
- 6 JENNE BUILDING
- 7 HYLTON BUILDING
- 8 CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
- 9 MORTON MANSION
- 10 MORSCH GARAGE
- 11 ASHLAR LODGE NO. 10
- 12 DOUGLAS MAIN POST OFFICE
- 13 CONVERSE COUNTY JAIL
- 14 PRINCESS THEATRE
- 15 C. H. KING & CO.
- 16 STEFFEN DRUG STORE
- 17 MAVERICK BANK
- 18 COLLEGE INN BAR
- 19 LABONTE HOTEL
- 20 BURLINGTON RR PASSENGER DEPOT
- 21 BOLLN GROCERY STORE
- 22 BOLLN DRY GOODS STORE
- 23 BOZARTH HARNESS SHOP
- 24 CONVERSE COUNTY BANK
- 25 WILLIAM GERLACH MEN'S CLOTHING



**HISTORIC DOWNTOWN DOUGLAS
— A WALKING TOUR —**