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F. A Reflection from 1887 Missoula

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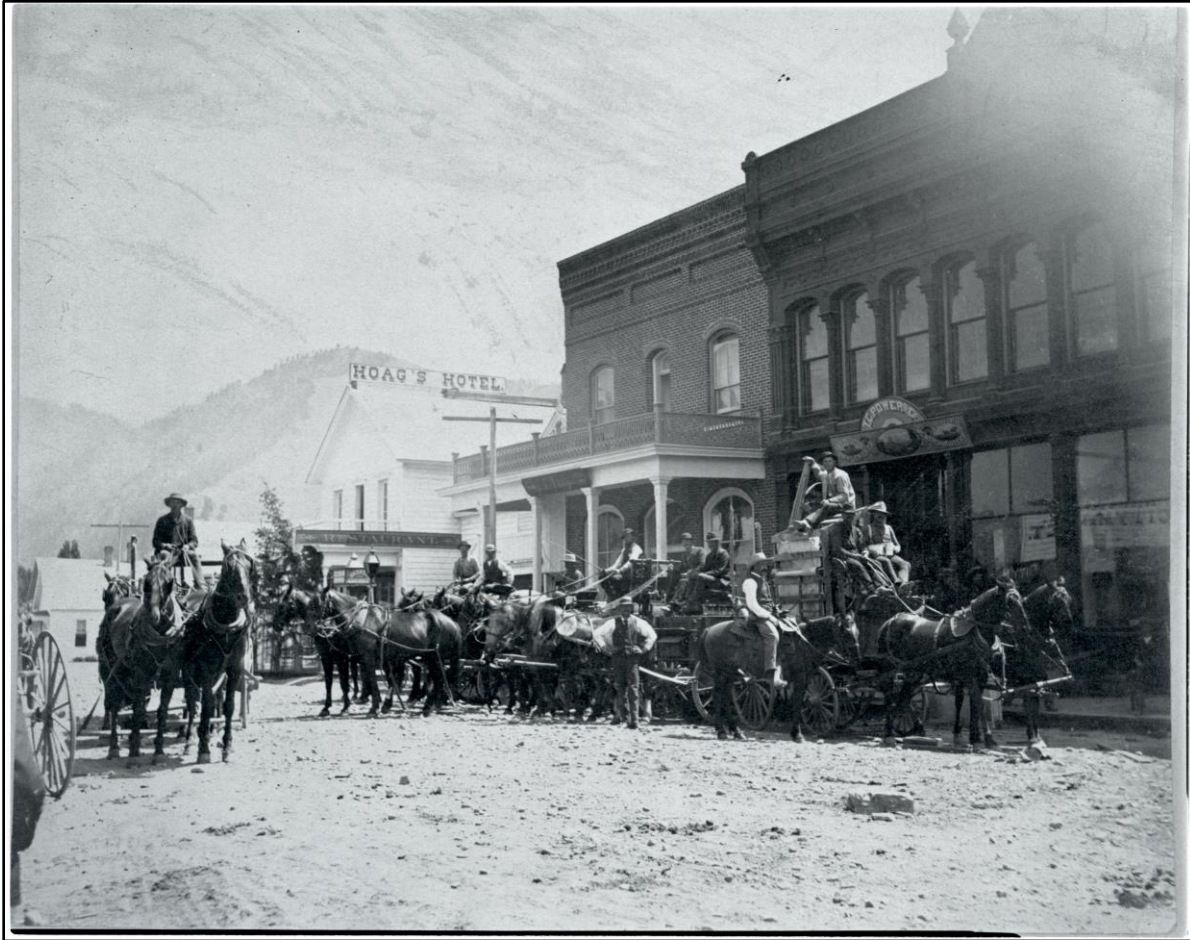
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Montana Memory Project Photo umt011502
Initial Metadata Title: Front Street and Higgins Avenue
Initial Metadata Date: Circa 1887

A Reflection from 1887 Missoula

Generally, I get an explicit request from a University of Montana, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library staff member or volunteer to research one photo or a set of photos in the Montana Memory Project ([MMP](#)) collection. However, this photo ([umt011502](#))¹, (MMP, 2022a), turned up in an MMP search while I was researching MMP photo umt015069, which has its own story. The metadata for the lead photo raised some questions, and I recorded the umt number so that I could return to the photo someday after finishing my research on umt015069.

The Title and Description fields included the phrase “Front Street and Higgins Avenue”. Of course, this is Missoula, Montana. What puzzled me, however, was that the location of the

¹ The photos referenced in this story can be viewed in the University of Montana, Maureen and Mike Mansfield, Archives and Special Collections reading room. The respective Photo Numbers are given in the References section.

actual intersection in the photo was not clear. Front Street runs east-west, more or less, in downtown Missoula, and Higgins Avenue extends south-north. With Mount Sentinel in the background, we can be certain that the view is to the east along Front Street. Still, where is the intersection mentioned in the Title field?

My first thought was that Higgins Avenue could be intersecting Front Street in the area obscured from view by the freight wagons. Perhaps either the two story building with the large porch and balcony or Hoag's Hotel was on the southwest corner of Higgins Avenue and Front Street. To try to help resolve the location, I turned to one of my favorite resources, the online Sanborn Fire Maps of Montana cities. With the Date metadata field indicating circa 1887, I selected the November 1888 online map (Sanborn Maps, 1888). A "circa" date in the MMP metadata indicates a significant uncertainty in the actual date of the photograph. The publication dates for the Sanborn Maps, however, are much more definitive and reflect information that was collected, probably, within a year prior to the publication date.

The 1888 map collection for Missoula is only four sheets with Sheet 1 showing the buildings on Higgins Avenue and Front Street near the intersection of the two streets. I also referred to the single Sanborn Map sheet from October 1884 (Sanborn Maps, 1884), which covers the same area as Sheet 1 from the 1888 set.

The buildings on the southwest corner of the Higgins Avenue and Front Street intersection that were drawn on 1884 and 1888 Sanborn Maps did not match the character of the respective buildings in the photo. However, east of the intersection, the comparison was much better.

Figure 1 is a segment of Sheet 1 in the 1888 collection of maps for Missoula and is the basis for much of what follows. However, I have included the same area from the 1884 map (Sanborn Maps, 1884) (Figure 2) to aid in some of the discussion. For both Figures 1 and 2, I have rotated the screen capture of the original map such that Front Street extends more or less vertically in the view with west at the top of the view and east at the bottom. This makes most of the original Sanborn labels easier to read than if I had rotated the maps such that north was toward the top. I also labeled Higgins Avenue and Front Street because the Sanborn street labels were lost in cropping the images to the area of the 100 block of East Front Street.

Sheet 1 in most Sanborn map suites contains a key to the notations and symbols on the respective maps. Sanborn map keys are also readily found on the internet. In the present case, the Sanborn maps available online through the University of Montana, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections are all black and white though the original maps and keys are in color, i.e., some features of buildings, e.g., brick versus wood frame construction, are harder to resolve in the black and white renderings.

In the following, I will make numerous references to buildings being one or two stories tall. Those heights are noted by a "1" or a "2", respectively, in the corner of the rectangle indicating a building. The 1 or 2 followed by B indicates a basement. This notation is in the key in the Sheet 1 map (Sanborn, 1888). I will introduce some other symbols as we need them below.

"MAGUIRE OPERA HO. 2^D" is an easy to spot label on the left half of the map in Figure 1. This label indicates that an opera house was on the second floor of the two-story building adjacent to the label. In fact, the map even sketches the location of the theatre's stage.

The first floor of the building with the upstairs theatre seems to have a wall separating a furniture store ("Furn'e") from a hardgoods store that sold agricultural implements and buggies

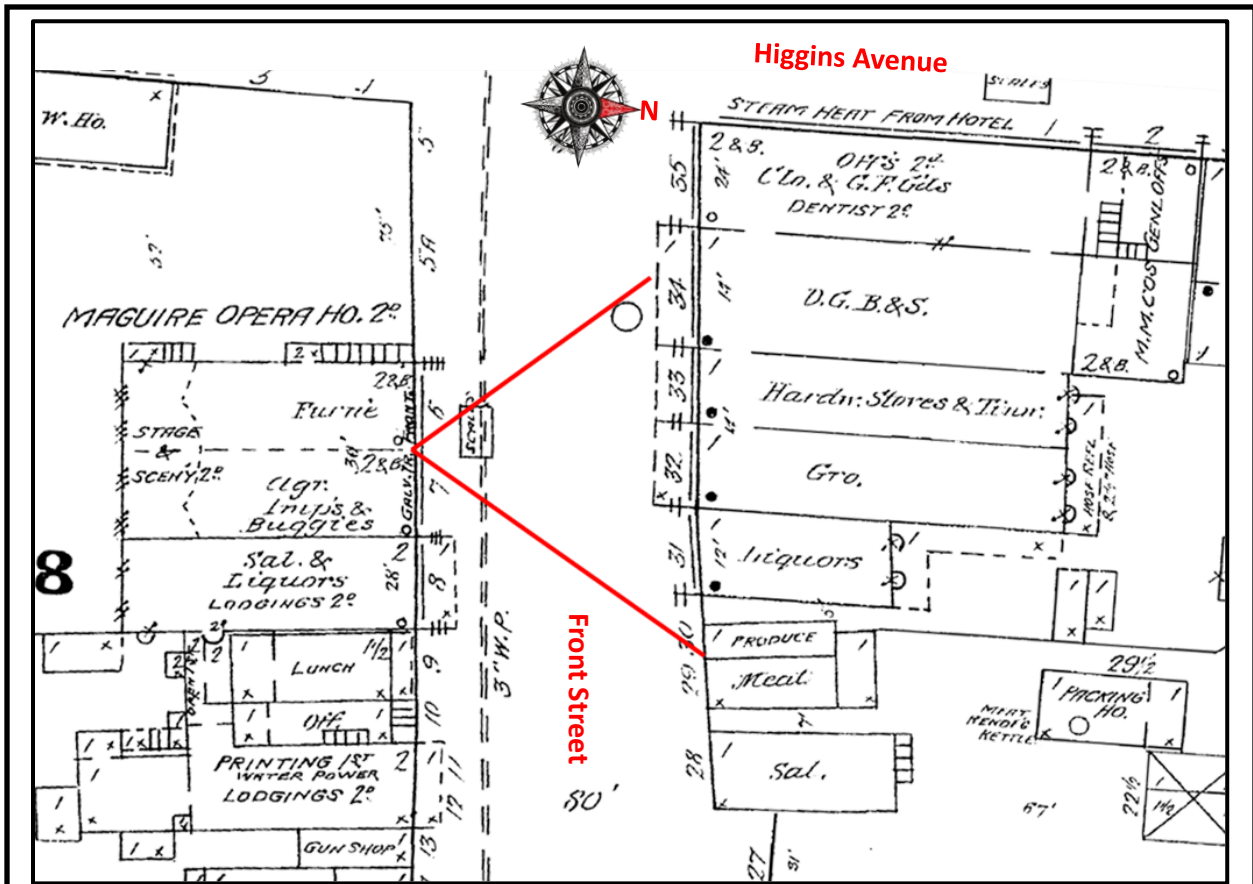


Figure 1. Portion of Sheet 1 (Sanborn Maps, 1888) Showing the 100 block of East Front Street in Missoula, Montana. I added labels for Higgins Avenue and Front Street, the compass rose indicating north, and the red line that indicates the photographer's view of the reflection of the City Market sign in the windows of the store on the south side of Front Street. In the 1884 Sanborn Map of this area, the building complex extending from Higgins Avenue eastward along Front Street and on the north side of Front Street is labeled as the Eddy, Hammond and Company. In this view, the company name has changed to the Missoula Mercantile Company as indicated by the label ("M.M.COS GENL Offs") in the upper right corner of this view.

("Agr. Imp's & Buggies"). Along the front wall of the building is a notation that the building front is galvanized iron ("GALV. IR. FRONT"). The line parallel to the front of the building indicates that the building had a cornice. We can see that cornice in the lead photo. Other details of the building with the second-floor theatre are represented, i.e., stairways, windows, heights for firewalls above the roof, and that the building has a basement. The Sanborn Maps are amazing in the amount of detail that they conveyed in a time long before we had digital geographical information systems (GIS's), 3D computer aided design (CAD) systems, and so forth.

Figure 2, the portion of the 1884 Sanborn Map sheet that covers the same area as Figure 1, notes that a one-story hardware store was, at that time, in the location of the two story, iron façade building, and the Sanborn Map attributes the store to the Bennett Brothers. Small businesses on the Sanborn Maps were not often named, but larger ones were generally named. The merchandise sold in a store was usually noted, e.g., the furniture and implements

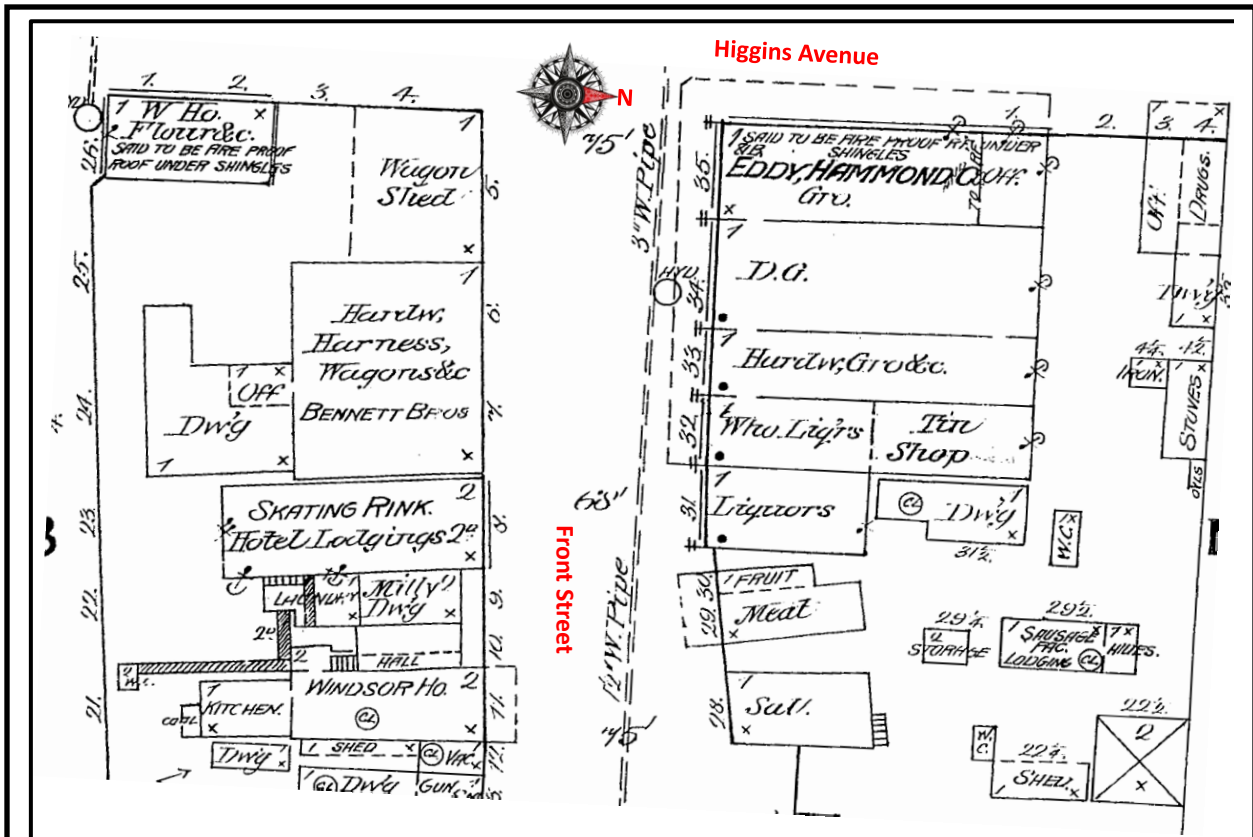


Figure 2. Portion of Sheet 1 (Sanborn Maps, 1884) Showing the 100 block of East Front Street in Missoula, Montana. Rotation, compass, and street names are as in Figure 1. Features mentioned specifically in the text are the Eddy, Hammond and Company store complex and its porch, the one-story Bennett Brothers hardware store, and the porch on the fruit and meat market east of the Eddy, Hammond and Company complex.

mentioned above. On the 1888 map, however, Sanborn Maps did not indicate the name of the business or businesses on the first floor of the building.

One might speculate that the second floor above the 1884 Bennett Brothers store, i.e., the theatre, was added sometime in the four years between preparation of the 1884 and 1888 maps. That expansion was probably the time that the galvanized iron façade was added.

Two stories and the iron front certainly match the building on the right in the lead photograph. The iron facade with cornice deduced from the Sanborn Map (Figure 1) clearly exhibit a different character from that of the brick façade with its cornice on the adjacent two story building with the large porch and balcony. The map in Figure 1 shows the porch on that building. In Sanborn Maps, porches are indicated by extensions from building sides drawn with dashed lines.

As an example, Figure 3 shows a circa 1882 photo of the Eddy, Hammond and Company store, which was on the northeast corner of Front Street and Higgins Avenue. The porches obvious in the Figure 3 photo are all sketched on the buildings on the north side of Front Street in the Figure 1 map. Some differences exist between what can be seen in Figure 3 and what is drawn on the map in Figure 1, and these are discussed in the caption for Figure 3. The Sanborn Maps can be a valuable tool in tracking the evolution of buildings in a town.



Figure 3. Eddy, Hammond and Company Store Circa 1882 (MMP, 2022b). The porch roof and cornice with the darker color matches the porches in the Sanborn map in Figure 1. Past the gray porch roof, the fronts of two, one story businesses can be seen. A small portion of a third business is at the edge of the frame. These three businesses are drawn on the maps in Figures 1 and 2. In this view, one sees the porch over the corner of the sidewalk while Figure 1 does not show a porch there. However, Figure 2 does show the porch extending from the Front Street side of the building around the corner and continuing along the Higgins Avenue side of the building. Moreover, the 1884 map indicates that the second of those two single story stores east of the Eddy, Hammond and Company building has a porch, and that porch can be seen in this image at the right edge of the frame. The company name was changed to the Missoula Mercantile Company. umt010635 (MMP, 2022c) is a view of this corner circa 1885, and the name on the porch fascia reflects the name change. The umt010635 view, unfortunately, does not show the second or third shops east of the Missoula Mercantile building. Mount Jumbo rises above these buildings in the background.

Having established that the view in the lead photo is of the south side of the 100 block of East Front Street, we can correlate other buildings in the photo to those drawn in the map in Figure 1. For example, the two story building with the brick façade and the large porch and balcony was a saloon and liquor store on the ground floor (“Sal. & Liquors”) with lodging on the second floor (“LODGINIGS 2^D”) in 1888 and, presumably, at the time of snapping the picture in the lead image.

The MMP description of the lead photo references Hoag’s Hotel (MMP, 2022a). Hoag’s Hotel correlates to the two-story building that had a print shop on the ground floor (“PRINTING 1ST”) with lodging on the second floor (“LODGINGS 2^D”) (Figure 1).

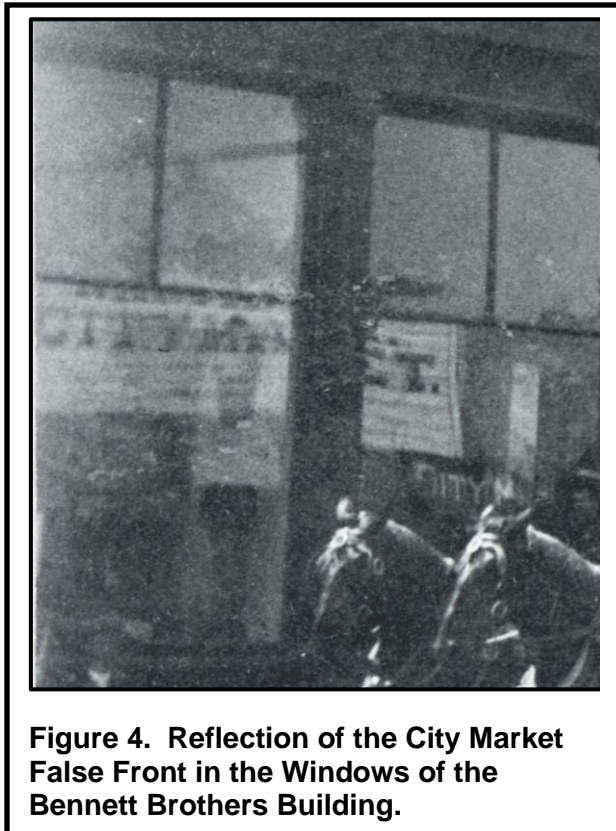


Figure 4. Reflection of the City Market False Front in the Windows of the Bennett Brothers Building.

In studying the lead photo, the bright area in the windows of the Bennett Brothers building caught my eye. I wondered whether that was something inside the store or, maybe, a reflection of something on the north side of Front Street. The idea of a reflection was easy enough to test with image processing software. Figure 4 is a section of the image from the initial 1200 ppi scan of the photo. The MMP (2022a) image is approximately only 100 ppi with the accompanying loss of detail from the original scan. In preparing Figure 4, I have zoomed in on the Bennett Building windows and flipped the image horizontally. The words “CITY MARKET” can be interpreted in the reflection in the windows.

The City Market was, obviously, on the north side of Front Street, but was it part of the Missoula Mercantile complex or another business? Probably being a small business, it did not merit a company name on the Sanborn Map.

In an attempt to determine which building on the north side of Front Street was the City

Market, I applied Snell’s law of angle of incidence equaling angle of reflection, and drew the red lines in Figure 1, with the front of the Bennett Brothers building being the reflecting plane, to suggest how the light from the City Market sign might have traveled from the storefront to the camera. My lines must be considered suggestive of the actual light rays because the windows were not coplanar, as one can see in Figure 4, and distortion in the camera lens could be a factor in estimating the angles.

Nevertheless, my red line in Figure 1 trends from the front of a one story building labeled “PRODUCE” and “Meat” to the front of the Bennett Brothers building and then into Front Street towards the Missoula Mercantile building. While the artwork in the Sanborn Map in Figure 1 does not show a porch on the market building, the 1884 map in Figure 2 does show a porch. Figure 3 shows the second building east of the Missoula Mercantile as having a white front with black lettering and a porch.

Can we be any more precise regarding the position of the photographer? Probably, no. However, I think that we can be certain that the photographer was not in a position to capture any part of the intersection of Higgins Avenue and Front Street as stated in the original Title and Description metadata fields. In the MMP collection, Title fields are rarely changed, even if incorrect. Description fields may be edited, and by the time you read this, some text might indicate that the street intersection is not actually in the frame.

The photographer was probably some distance east of the intersection of Front Street and Higgins Avenue. My red line in Figure 1 trends near an open circle in the Sanborn Map. The open circle is the symbol for a fire hydrant. The circle is not labeled as such in the 1888 map (Figure 1), but it is labeled “HYD” on the 1884 map (Figure 2).

I think that we can see the location of that hydrant in the photograph in Figure 3. The hydrant is where we see two vertical white posts (or pipes) in the street just off of the sidewalk of the Missoula Mercantile building.

In the high resolution initial scan of the physical photograph, I could read that the business in the once Bennett Brothers hardware store was the T. C. Power and Company. One might wonder why all of those wagons, loaded with freight, are sitting, more or less, in front of the Power Company store, or, for that matter, close to the Missoula Mercantile facility across the street. Are we looking at a shipment of goods bound for one store or the other, or are we looking at the delivery services of the day loaded up to deliver goods and machinery to the people in the Missoula area? I do not know.

We have determined the location of the scene and estimated the position of the photographer. We have discovered a reflection in a storefront window that helps to confirm these interpretations. We have speculated on the activity in the scene. What else can we say about this scene? Perhaps, not much. All of these buildings are gone. The south side of the 100 block of East Front Street is now a multistory bank building built around 2010.

The 1884 Sanborn Map of the area names the building on the right in the lead photo as being the Bennett Brothers hardware store. By the time the lead photo was taken, the hardware store seems to have been taken over by the T. C. Power (and Brother) Company based on the sign above the door of the building. I have some material on the T. C. Power and Brother Company steamboat line, the Block P Line, which I will include in another story. As it turns out, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain to many, actually spoke in that theatre on the second floor of the Bennett Brothers building. I will tell that story separately, also.

References

Montana Memory Project, 2022a, Front Street and Higgins Avenue (umt011502), University of Montana, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, Photo Number 70.0032. URL: <https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/14077?keywords=umt011502&type=all&highlights=WyJ1bXQwMTE1MDliXQ==>. Accessed 9/22/2022.

Montana Memory Project, 2022b, Eddy, Hammond & Company store in Missoula, Montana (umt014847), University of Montana, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, Photo Number 70.0111. URL: <https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/17439?keywords=umt014847&highlights=WyJ1bXQwMTQ4NDciXQ==>. Accessed 9/22/2022.

Montana Memory Project, 2022c, Missoula Mercantile Company building (umt010635), University of Montana, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, Photo Number 70.0113 URL: <https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/13343?keywords=umt010635&highlights=WyJ1bXQwMTA2MzUiXQ==> Accessed 9/22/2022.

(The following two URL's require login privileges at the University of Montana, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library for access to the Sanborn maps digital collection.)

Sanborn Maps, 1884, Missoula Oct. 1884, Sheet 1. URL: https://digitalsanbornmaps-proquest-com.weblib.lib.umt.edu:2443/browse_maps/27/5043/24439/25511/327140?accountid=14593 Accessed 9/22/2022.

Sanborn Maps, 1888, Missoula Nov. 1888, Sheet 1. URL: https://digitalsanbornmaps-proquest-com.weblib.lib.umt.edu:2443/browse_maps/27/5043/24440/25512/327141?accountid=14593
Accessed 9/22/2022.

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