

# Missoula County ponders new jail

By MICHAEL MOORE  
Missoulian

How much are Missoula County residents willing to pay — if, in fact, they're willing to pay — for a new jail? How about \$15.8 million? Or will they pay \$17.8 million if the extra money would buy a long-term, regional detention facility for juveniles?

The Missoula County commissioners appeared set to approve a November request for a \$15.8 million bond issue on Monday, but when the county's District Court judges raised questions about a juvenile jail, the commissioners opted to delay their decision.

"I think if we have more time, we should take it," Commissioner Fern Hart said.

Here's the situation. The county's 30-year-old jail is overcrowded. More than 230 people are waiting to serve jail time. More than 7,500 arrest warrants sit unserved. Each weekend, jailers set prisoners free to make room for worse offenders.

For months, the county has been planning for a new jail, mindful that taxpayers have to approve a bond issue to finance the county's part of the project. Jail officials, citizens' committees and architects have labored over siting, design and costs, whittling back a project that at

one time promised to house the county's entire law-enforcement system.

By late last week, most of the numbers were in. Total cost for the facility — which includes cells for federal, state and local prisoners — came to about \$27 million. Of that, the county expects the state to pay \$5.5 million, with the federal government throwing in another \$750,000.

With other reductions — some expected savings and interest earned on the bonds once they're sold — the county's bill was down to about \$17.8 million. Because that figure topped what county officials had hoped to ask from taxpayers, the juvenile wing of

the facility was cut. That cut about \$2 million off the price tag.

For \$15.8 million, the county would have 192 beds for adult prisoners in a new facility on Mullan Road, just off of West Broadway. The state, which is expanding into a series of regional prisons, would have 144 beds.

Juveniles, however, would be housed in the current Missoula County Jail, which would be renovated. Jail Capt. Mike O'Hara said Monday the current jail can be renovated into a suitable long-term youth facility. The county now has to house its long-term juvenile offenders in Kalispell.

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# HELENA

## THE BLUESTONE HOUSE

### Historic home has plenty of legends, secrets

Sometimes Helena does not give up her secrets easily. Sometimes she does not give them up at all.

Consider the Bluestone House, perched silently atop its hill for more than a century. The legends about this magnificent Victorian-era monument are familiar to nearly everyone even remotely interested in the history of our town.

Most Helenans will tell you that architect James F. Stranahan built the beautiful home for his bride, Leona, in 1889, and that he died leaving the house unfinished and his widow bereft. Some might remember the Bluestone House as the family home of James F. McIntosh, while others will swear that the place was once a house of ill repute. It also has long been an accepted fact that the 1935 earthquakes left the building uninhabitable.

The truth is, these may not be the facts. The written record has its own mysteries that are as intriguing as these oral traditions.

D.A. BENTLEY FILED THE first title for this land with the probate judge in 1889. Ownership passed to E.M. Dunphy in 1871 and to Josephine "Chicago Joe" Airey in 1879. By the 1880s, Chicago Joe, along with other up-and-coming Helena madams Belle Cratton (later Mollie Byrnes) and Lillie McGraw, owned considerable property in the immediate neighborhood.

In 1883, the same year that Joe built her notorious establishment on the corner of Joliet and Wood Streets, Lillie acquired title to this lot, which adjoined and lay behind her business properties. On Sept. 9, 1889, Leona Smith Stranahan acquired the title from Lillie, but less than three months later, she passed the title to J.S.M. Neill.

James Stranahan, the acknowledged builder of the Bluestone House, never figures in any of these transactions. If he did build the house, for whom did he really build it?

According to the *Record Herald* of Jan. 1, 1889, James Stranahan had practiced in New York and Minneapolis and was a junior member in partnership with local architect Fisk J. Shaffer. Stranahan resided at 123 Jefferson during the apparently brief time he spent in Helena. It is unclear when he married Leona Smith, but according to the federal census of 1900, she was widowed after one year of marriage. Their child, a daughter named Grace, was born in November 1889 — the same month that Leona sold the property, and perhaps the unfinished Bluestone House, to Neill.

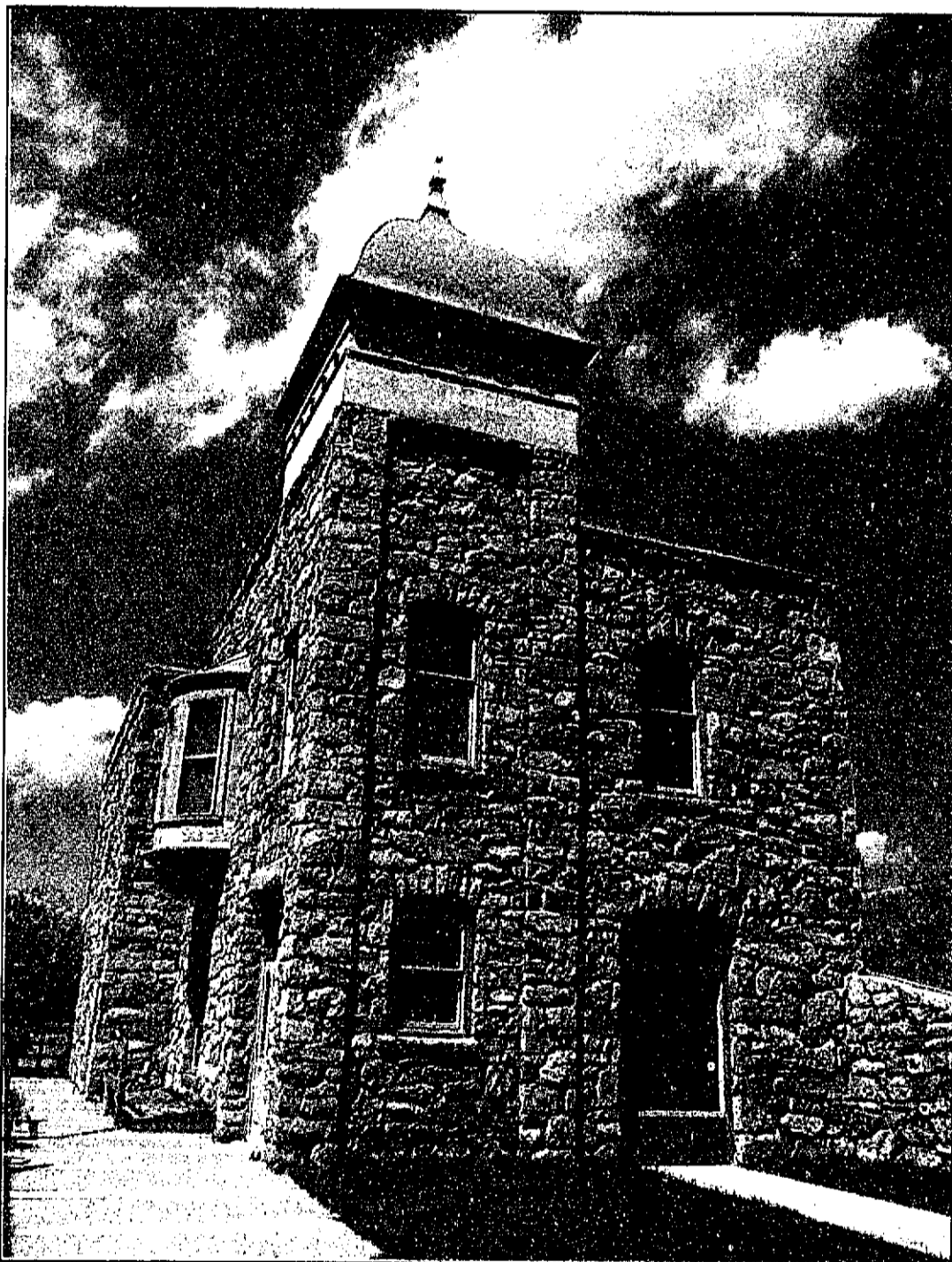
Leona was the daughter of Alexander B. and Corinda Smith. Alexander was a Helena policeman and later night watchman at the assay office. Her brother, Rae Q. Smith, may be remembered as chief deputy in the clerk and recorder's office. It has been said that Leona went to live in the East after Stranahan's death. In fact, she and Grace lived with Alexander and Corinda from 1893 until well after the turn of the century. Leona briefly moved to Butte in 1908 but returned in 1911 and remained with her family in Helena until at least 1920. Records fail to disclose what happened to her after that, or what became of Grace.

AN 1890 MAP OF HELENA clearly shows the Bluestone House still under construction; a second map shows the dwelling completed in 1892. Who completed it?

A steep stairway descends from the hillside to Joliet Street where Lillie McGraw's large establishment (two buildings connected by a covered walkway at 34 Wood Street) extends along the west side of Joliet. Even so, nothing indicates that the Bluestone House was anything other than a private dwelling. It is clearly marked as such, even though "female boarding houses," (the 19th-century euphemism for "brothel," as it is labeled on the map) are its closest neighbors.

Indeed, by 1892, the property owner was artist Ralph DeCamp, whose landscapes would later adorn the state Capitol. At this time, DeCamp was a respectable partner in the Helena Abstract Company and himself newly married. Although DeCamp owned the home until 1896, according to city directories he never lived in the house, nor did he use it as a studio.

Paula Petrik, author of "No Step Backward" and the foremost authority on Helena's red-light district, adamantly maintains that there is no connection between the Bluestone House and Wood Street businesses.



IR photo by George Lane

The Bluestone House has undergone many ownership changes during its history, but strangely, almost none of its owners ever lived in it. In addition, it's unknown exactly for whom the century-old residence was built.

### ELLEN BAUMLER



### MORE FROM THE QUARRIES OF LAST CHANCE GULCH

She would argue that the curious placement of the house is largely due to Stranahan's eccentricity. After all, the Catholic church was party to the same strange juxtaposition, building its St. Aloysius Select Boys School (now Immaculata Hall) in such a way that classrooms overlooked the Wood Street activities.

It seems a reasonable theory, however, that Stranahan likely built the Bluestone House as a private residence, perhaps for Lillie McGraw, who was making tidy sums of money in her Wood Street business. Her contemporary, Mollie Byrnes, had a beautiful new home a few blocks away at 212 State. Perhaps Lillie overextended her finances — records do show she mortgaged her other property at about this time — and could not afford to complete the home. The intended resident, however, remains in question.

CONTINUING THE TRAIL OF ownership,

the property passed from Ralph DeCamp to Louis Curtin in 1896 and through a number of different owners until James McIntosh bought it in 1924. Interestingly, no record could be found of any owner ever living in the house. No census exists for 1890, but records for 1900, 1910 and 1920 never reveal any tenants in the building, or at any corresponding Wood or Joliet Street address.

The McIntoshes are almost always cited as having lived in the Bluestone House. This misconception stems from the fact that the McIntosh home had a street address of 80 S. Warren, which is the present address of the Bluestone House. The family long owned the property, but apparently never lived in the Bluestone House.

When Emma McIntosh died in 1953, her obituary noted that she had lived at 80 S. Warren "since she came there as a bride 62 years ago." Maps of 1927, 1930 and 1953 clearly show that the Bluestone House was not located at 80 S. Warren, but rather at 34½ Wood Street. It was only after the McIntosh home was demolished that the Bluestone House received its present 80 S. Warren address.

The physical appearance of the building has also led to its misidentification. Mollie Byrnes' lucrative business at Joliet and State, diagonally opposite Lillie McGraw's, was called The Castle. The Bluestone House, by virtue of its prominent location and fortress-like appearance, did in truth look more like a castle than Mollie's place did.

Al Gaskill noted on April 5, 1964, in his popular 1960s IR column, "The Man in the Brown Derby," that Chet Huntley did the Bluestone House a disservice in perpetuating one of Helena's deep-seated myths by misidentifying it as The Castle during a local centennial celebration. Gaskill relates that the McIntoshes' daughter (coincidentally also named Leona) was quite upset at the

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## BRIEFS

### Red Cross holding CPR, first aid refresher classes this month

The Lewis and Clark Chapter of the American Red Cross announces the following courses for the month of August 1996:

- Community First Aid and Safety (Adult, Infant, and Child CPR and First Aid) — Aug. 9, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Aug. 27, 28 and 29, 6 to 10 p.m.
- Adult CPR Review — Aug. 13, 6 to 9 p.m.
- Community CPR Review — Aug. 13, 6 to 10:30 p.m.
- Standard First Aid Review — Aug. 15, 6 to 10:30 p.m.

Blood drawings are held every Monday by appointment. Courses are held at the Chapter office, 805 North Main. For more information and registration call 442-0260.

## City tables home-office ordinance

### More research is necessary, commission members say

By EVE BYRON  
IR Staff Writer

Changes to a Helena ordinance that some people fear will limit the ability of people to work out of their homes has been tabled indefinitely.

Helena City Commission members decided this week that more research is needed before altering language in the Home Occupations section of the city zoning ordinance.

"They want a chance to look at it a little closer," City Manager Bill Verwolf said Wednesday. "There was some concern as to whether it limited small businesses too much. They'll have a work session later this fall."

The proposed amendment was supposed to clarify the city zoning rules by defining activities that wouldn't be permitted by employees who didn't reside at the home; by requiring home occupation employers to have a business license rather than a permit (since there is no such thing as a permit in the city); and by allowing revocation of the license if parking for the business users becomes a problem.

Assistant City Planner Allyn Faught said the changes were meant only to clarify the existing ordinance and to lessen the potential impact upon neighbors. The proposal sailed through a zoning board meeting with no opposition last month after she explained that the overall effect of the proposed amendment wouldn't reduce the right of individuals to operate a home occupation.

However, not everyone believes that the changes are merely housekeeping.

"By further restricting home occupied businesses, you may very well be forcing a number of small businesses out of business, and thereby creating more unemployment, and more citizens that have a good reason to hate government," Jerry Spencer, vice chairman of the Helena Citizens Council and a small businessman, wrote in an electronic mail message to the city commission. "Aside from the anti-business attitude expressed by the proposed amendments, there is a definite possibility that the proposed amendments will open the city to the possibility of lawsuits that are based on Montana's very strong restraint of trade laws."

Some of the wording Spencer objects to prohibits a person who doesn't live at the home from regularly reporting to the home at the beginning or conclusion of a working day. He's also concerned that the changes don't make any concessions to existing businesses.

"Consider this scenario: A business has been operating out of their residence for a number of years. They have one employee who works for them (but only shows up in the morning to get their assignments). You pass a law that says this is an illegal home occupancy. Now, that business person is faced with a choice — either relocate to an approved office, terminate the illegal employee, or look at other resolutions, which might include suing the city over an illegal zoning ordinance," Spencer wrote.

That scenario certainly wasn't the intended result of the people proposing the changes, according to Faught.

"This was really meant to keep commercial businesses from encroaching into residential areas," Faught said. "It's not anti-business, but I can see where that interpretation could be made. I don't think that was the intent at all. In our staff report we note the intent was to encourage small businesses while protecting neighborhoods, and if a conflict were to occur there's more clarity (in the ordinance)."

### DPHHS hosting electronic records management fair in September

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) will host an electronic records management and imaging systems vendors' fair in Helena on Sept. 4 and 5. The purpose of this event is to allow corporations who are in this field to demonstrate their systems and services directly to end-users.

DPHHS Imaging Planning Project Director Dewey Barnes says his department and many other government agencies are considering the use of such systems. By using this technology, an organization can electronically distribute, process, and store all types of documents, like routine correspondence, critical management information, and permanent historical records. The benefits of system usage include decreased records handling and storage costs and improved organizational efficiency.

The Vendors' Fair will be held at the Colonial Park Hotel from 8 to 5 p.m. daily and will be open at no cost to all city, county, state, and federal government employees, as well as interested individuals from the private sector. Approximately 15 companies, both in-state and out-of-state, will be represented. They will include nearly all major corporations and manufacturers within the industry, such as: IBM, Wang, FileNet, Kodak, Minolta and others. Each vendor will also conduct multiple formal presentations over the two-day period in the hotel's conference rooms.

For more information, call Dewey Barnes at (406) 444-4217. To register, call Cathy Gallo at (406) 444-9366.