

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: LeGrande Cannon Boulevard

other name/site number:

**2. Location**

street and number: LeGrande Cannon Boulevard not for publication: n/a

city/town: Helena vicinity: n/a

state: Montana code: MT county: Lewis and Clark code: 049 zip code: 59601

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property:</b> Public - local	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b> Structure	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> n/a	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

6. Function or Use

<b>Historic Functions:</b> TRANSPORTATION/road-related; pedestrian-related	<b>Current Functions:</b> TRANSPORTATION/road-related; pedestrian-related
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7. Description

<b>Architectural Classification:</b> n/a	<b>Materials:</b>
	foundation: n/a
	walls: n/a
	roof: n/a
	other: EARTH; STONE/gravel

**Narrative Description**  
(see continuation sheet)

LeGrande Cannon Boulevard is a 3.12 mile long roadway constructed in 1907 upon the abandoned right of way of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century ditch that provided water for placer mining enterprises around Helena, Montana. The Boulevard begins on the upper West Side of Helena and skirts the north face of Mount Helena (portions of which comprise the Mount Helena Historic District, listed 1/9/1997), before descending northward toward the site of the long-razed Hotel Broadwater and Natatorium approximately one mile west of the city limits. The eligible portions of the boulevard consist of 2.57 miles of unaltered roadway.

**LeGrande Cannon Boulevard Overview Description**

On Helena's West Side and within city limits, **Segment 1** runs in a general north/south direction from the west end of Holter Street (formerly Spruce Street) and consists of a hardpacked dirt surface; pedestrians and motorized traffic share the roadway; it measures 0.03 miles in distance and ends at a traffic barrier. **Segment 2** commences at the traffic barrier and continues as an unpaved surface, curving gently in an east-west direction and is accessible only to pedestrian or bicycle traffic as barriers at either end prohibit motorized vehicles. It measures 0.19 miles in length and is \*\*'-feet in width. **Segment 3** begins at the "dead end" of Segment 2's western-most barrier and runs from just east of Grant Street to Mountain View Street, a distance of 0.55 miles. Motor vehicles are permitted on this segment. Because of it's a contemporary paved surface and reconfiguration to incorporate a broad sidewalk separate from the roadbed this segment does not contribute to the historic district. **Segment 4** is open to motorized and pedestrian traffic but resumes the unpaved surface is \*\*'-feet wide and runs 0.63 miles from near Mountain View Street to a traffic barrier just west of Silverette Street. Adjacent to the Helena National Forest, **Segment 5** starts at the traffic barrier near Silverette and is accessible only to pedestrians and bicycles, it retains the unpaved surface for a distance of 0.87 miles and is \*\*'-feet in width. The road winds through the forested hillsides and gullies contractors Bert Coty and Luis Coty were instructed to preserve in 1907 when constructing the Boulevard [this sentence seems a little too long and convoluted to me]. A simple iron latticework bridge, spanning a gully, with some of the original stone footings and concrete updates is located 0.15 miles from the eastern entrance to this segment. [See separate bridge description below.] This segment terminates at the roadway's western-most traffic barrier. **Segment 6**, the Boulevard's final stretch, is configured as a V with its apex

8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria:** A

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):** n/a

**Significant Person(s):** n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:** n/a

**Areas of Significance:** COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT; ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

**Period(s) of Significance:** 1907-1941

**Significant Dates:** 1907, 1935, 1941

**Architect/Builder:** Henry Turner Bailey, designer

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

LeGrande Cannon Boulevard is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the tenets of the “City Beautiful” movement developed in the United States during the late 19th Century. A significant portion of the Boulevard is in its original state and embodies still the aesthetic and social values promoted by the movement. [Book review by Stewart Meck, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*, by Jon A. Peterson. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004 in web version, *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, Volume 2, Number 2, Summer 2005]

Conceived and constructed primarily between 1906 and 1908, LeGrande Cannon Boulevard manifests the convergence of two historic forces: Helena’s efforts to elevate itself from a scruffy mining camp to one of the preeminent urban centers of the American West, and social progressivism which posited the importance of beautiful and inspirational physical settings for the improvement of urban life and elevation of civic morals. When Henry Turner Bailey, noted art educator and progressive thinker, enthusiastically presented his idea for a grand boulevard encircling Helena in 1906, the area’s wealthy elite and civic-minded citizens were stirred to bring his scheme to reality. The Helena Improvement Society, lauded by national “City Beautiful” proponents for its efforts and projects, made the Boulevard the focus of its work in 1906-1907. Progressive photographer/journalist Jacob Riis visited the roadway shortly after its completion and pronounced it “the most beautiful and picturesque driveway in America.” [25 Oct 1907, Semi-Wkly Independent]

Although the full scope of Bailey’s vision was not realized, the Boulevard’s bucolic surroundings, ever-changing prospects and popular route from Helena’s West Side to the Hotel Broadwater and Natatorium on Ten Mile Creek, confirmed its recreational popularity and role in the betterment of the area’s citizens. Today, much of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard retains its historical integrity in its materials, configuration and recreational use .

9. Major Bibliographic References

(see continuation sheet)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**  
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** approximately 11.35 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	419678	5160131
B	12	419446	5160357
C	12	418687	5160776
D	12	417894	5160890
E	12	416814	5161416

**Legal Location (Township, Range and Section(s)):** Township 10 North, Range 4 West, in sections 22, 25, 26, and 27

**Verbal Boundary Description**

LeGrande Cannon Boulevard consists of the road's right of way, commencing at its intersection with the west end of Holter Street, and continuing to its intersection with Euclid Avenue (Highway 12). The structure runs 3.12 miles in length and is approximately 30 feet in width.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is drawn to include the right of way historically associated with the structure.

11. Form Prepared By

**name/title:** Helen L. Rietz and Patty Dean  
**organization:** \_\_\_\_\_ **date:** May 2008  
**street and number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**city or town:** Helena **state:** Montana **zip code:** \_\_\_\_\_

Property Owner

**name/title:** City of Helena  
**street and number:** 316 N. Park **telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**city or town:** Helena **state:** MT **zip code:** 59623

**name/title:** Lewis and Clark County  
**street and number:** 316 N. Park **telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**city or town:** Helena **state:** MT **zip code:** 59623

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pointing southward and continues its unpaved dirt/hardpack surface measuring 0.85 miles in length and \*\*-feet in width; it terminates at the south side of U.S. Highway 12/Euclid Avenue (formerly Hot Springs Avenue or Helena-Rimini County Road) and is a short distance from the Williams Street Bridge (listed 11-29-2006) and the Charles A. Broadwater House (listed xx-xx- 2008)

Segments 1-2 and 4-6 as described above retain their original sinuous contours, hardpacked dirt surface, and easy grade. No buildings or other structures have been added, and includes only a few user courtesy trail signs. A comparison of photographs of the road published a year after its construction with its contemporary appearance, it is clear that the historic elements of the original roadway are essentially unchanged since its construction over a century ago.

**Bridge (*one contributing structure*)**

A single-span steel stringer bridge crosses a dry coulee about XX-feet from the east end of Section XX. It was likely constructed in 1907, possibly by the King Bridge Company. The bridge rests on concrete abutments with extended wingwalls. The bridge is 17' 9" in length and 16' 4" wide with a roadway width of 15' 1½". Eight lines of steel I-beam stringers support the concrete deck. Corrugated steel pipe halves have been placed between the stringers on the underside of the deck. They do not appear to function in any structural capacity and may have been use to support the form for the concrete deck. The deck is badly deteriorated with sections of the concrete curbs missing (they aren't attached to the deck). The deck is flanked by decorative steel lattice-type guardrails that are similar to those on the Williams Street Bridge (24LC128). Three of the wingwall panels are 10' 2" in length while the panels on the main span are 17'9" in length. The guardrails are anchored to the deck and the wingwalls by angle sections bolted to the outsides of the deck. There are two panels on the north side of the bridge and three panels on the south side of the bridge; a panel on the north side east wing wall has been stolen along with the angle iron post and cast iron newel post. The frames are comprised of two steel angle sections with the lattices bolted in between the section. The lattices have plain motif buttons at the midpoints. The guardrails are anchored at the ends by decorative cast iron newel posts; the decorative finials on each of the three remaining newel posts have been broken off. The iron and steel components of the bridge are heavily corroded.

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**Statement of Significance**

**The Context: Helena in the Early Days**

In July 1864, four miners from the Alder Gulch strike, discouraged in their prospecting efforts about 100 miles northwest of Virginia City, resolved to make one final attempt before abandoning their dream of wealth. Their desperate “Last Chance” effort struck gold. Miners and merchants streamed to the site of the “Last Chance” strike, now a mining camp of canvas and log buildings, with the name of Helena. Within easy reach of other mining camps dotting the territory, and a nascent transportation network, Helena emerged as a regional financial and political center in the following decade and was capital of Montana Territory by 1875.

The former mining camp attained a more cosmopolitan mien with the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883, the installation of streetlights in 1885, the Helena Street Railway’s founding in 1886 and, in 1889, the construction of the Hotel Broadwater and Natatorium built by railroad magnate Charles Arthur Broadwater adjacent to Ten Mile Creek. Leading citizens dreamed that their city could rival other urban centers in prominence and grandeur: “The railroad...brought in the Eastern drummer and the Eastern fashions, set people to traveling, made them ambitious for big houses and fine furniture...” [Petrik, p. 17 quoting NP publicist E.V. Smalley]

By 1890, deposits in the city’s four national banks and savings bank exceeded those of Portland, Seattle, Spokane, Salt Lake City and Tacoma. [Helena City Directory, 1890 p. 53 ½] Such economic headiness was not to last however as the Panic of 1893 and the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act drove silver prices to the cellar and banks throughout the West—and Helena—began to fail.

While Helena was never to recover its previous economic momentum, its residents’ confidence in their city’s future took expression in “a thoroughly civic enterprise” [undated, ca. 1906 scrapbook clipping, SC1712], the Helena Improvement Society. Founded only five years after the Panic of 1893, the Society was dedicated to “...the betterment of Helena, especially in its external aspects, by encouraging and aiding both private and public enterprise in the erection of good buildings and sidewalks, pretty lawns bordered with street trees, general neatness and cleanliness, and whatever will tend to make the place a more attractive, beautiful and desirable city of homes. It strengthens public sentiment in this direction,, sustains public officials by influential support assists them by reporting nuisances, and suggesting improvements...” [p. xx, HCD, 1899] Their accomplishments included new plantings at the library and court-house grounds, the building of footpaths on Mount Helena, portions of which were now a 160-acre forested city park. [listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Mount Helena Historic District, 1997.] By 1906, the Society boasted more than 500 regular members and 100 lifetime members.

**Henry Turner Bailey Visits Helena**

In early 1906, Professor Henry Turner Bailey, a noted art educator and director of the Chautauqua School of Arts and Crafts in Boston, lectured in Helena and toured the city and its surroundings. There is no clear historical record of how Bailey came to Helena but as clippings documenting his visit appear in the Helena Improvement Society’s scrapbook, it may well have been the Society. Apparently the organization’s earlier civic improvement efforts had gained national attention for, in 1903, Charles Mulford Robinson, described as the City Beautiful movement’s “best spokesman” [Peterson essay, Shumsky anthology, p. 123] and author of the well-regarded *The Improvement of Towns and Cities*, praised the Society, noting “there are few improvement societies in cities of the size of Helena which do so much and do it so well, and are fortunate enough to have so much money to do it with as you appear to have.” [“Praise for the Society”, Ind Jan 28 1903] It is also possible that Bailey had learned of the Society’s accomplishments from a fellow Bostonian, Warren H. Manning, “...one of the best-known landscape architects in the United States” who urged

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members to "...undertake the study of a city's plan and determine upon public reservations that [which] can be acquired at a small cost now, but that could not be acquired in a few years by reason of a city's growth. [ibid]

Regardless of who sponsored Bailey's visit, such admiring letters primed Society members to be receptive to his vision. Through organizations like the Helena Improvement Society, Helenans were sympathetic to the ideals of the "City Beautiful" movement, a national impulse that originated in the 1890s and sought to ameliorate the declining inner city where lower class citizens subsisted in squalid conditions while the wealthier fled. While social reformers sought to address the problems of the urban poor directly, "City Beautiful" proponents acted on the idea that beauty itself could positively shape human thought and behavior. Beauty could induce order, calm, and propriety, strengthen inhabitants' pride in their city, and stimulate civic loyalty and a sense of community—all values articulated by the Helena Improvement Society. Drawing inspiration from the famous Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where artists and architects were indoctrinated in the importance of order and harmony in their work, America's "City Beautiful" advocates also believed their concepts could bring American cities to parity with the great cities of Europe. Well-traveled Helenans would have been acquainted with the Parisian avenues and boulevards that had inspired the "City Beautiful" movement and recognized the influence of "City Beautiful" proponent/architect Daniel Burnham's 1901 designs for a new Washington, D.C. [WWW site: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/CITYBEAUTIFUL/city.html>]

On January 6, 1906, Bailey outlined his vision in a lecture entitled "A More Beautiful Helena" which was presented to a large audience of notable citizens. Expressing "his unqualified approval of the natural topography of the city's site as an aid and encouragement to the task of improving it....[he] found the curves of the streets an enhancement of the prospects...", and noted that the towering Mount Helena offered a variety of vistas and views that could enhance the lives of city dwellers. [7 Jan 1906, Daily Ind.]

Utilizing maps, diagrams, and stereopticon views, Bailey laid out his view of what Helena could look like forty-four years hence—1950--proposing "a girdle of boulevards" that would begin and end in the city but encompass its outlying areas. Bailey envisioned a boulevard starting at the State Capitol, running north to the manmade Hauser Lake, west to the Scratch Gravel Hills and Fort Harrison, south to the newly-reopened Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium, up to the obsolete Chessman Ditch which skirted Mount Helena, and finally, through the city via Lawrence Street past the Federal Building to Helena High School, "...thus completing a panoramic drive of 20 miles over a continuous and connected boulevard system..." "He referred to the economy and facility with which the most picturesque and eventful drive in the west could be accomplished by merely widening and smoothing the excavations already made along the level of the abandoned [Chessman Ditch] waterway." [Ind., 7 June 1906]

A local newspaper editorialized: "[Bailey] discussed feasible plans of the commencement of a movement that may not eventuate for many years. His advocacy of a system of boulevards contains nothing significant or even difficult, and it is evident that this undertaking should be the initial step towards the making of a more attractive city...The most attractive and, probably, the most costly feature of Mr. Bailey's boulevard plan is that which contemplates the transformation of the upper [Chessman] Ditch into a wide and smooth road from Broadwater to the head of Lawrence street. It has been estimated that this project would cost not less than \$3,000 nor more than \$5,000 and, in view of the splendid results obtainable, these calculations seem very modest. The few who have walked any distance along the footpath upon the embankment of this old water course are aware of the infinite variety of the scenes presented...and of the kaleidoscopic changes which occur at every curve of the way. A road excavator, a few ploughs and shovels and heavy roller, would make light work of the job of changing this tow-path into the most noble boulevard of its kind in America..." ["Civic Ambitions", Helena Daily Independent, 8 Jan 1906]

Not quite a month later, a petition listing the names of "so many heavy taxpayers" was presented to the county commissioners as "...the direct result of the visit of Prof. Bailey to Helena and his suggestion that steps be taken now to

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create a system of roads that will in the future give a drive into the valley and around the city, unsurpassed in the western country... To lay out a high way 60 feet wide commencing on the old Chessman ditch at its intersection with the Ten Mile road, the city limits and if funds are available to grade the same 40 feet wide from its intersection with the Ten Mile road to the city limits... It was decided that as a commencement, the highway over the Chessman ditch would probably be the most feasible." [8 Feb 1906, Ind.]

By year's end, rights of way had been secured and the county commissioners awarded the contract for \$6,000 for the Boulevard's construction from the Broadwater Hotel to the city limits. [Contract between the County of Lewis and Clark and Bert Coty and Louis [sic] Coty, 4 January 1907, for the construction of Mount Helena Boulevard] Meanwhile the Helena Improvement Society "...has undertaken to build that part in the city around the base of the mountain to Last Chance Gulch..." ["For a Fine Driveway at the Capital City", *Anaconda Standard*, 16 Dec 1906] Interestingly, the newspaper account also noted that some twenty years previous, some of Helena's influential men had promoted a similar idea "of constructing a driveway around Mount Helena, over what is locally known as the Chessman Ditch", had had surveys completed and agreements prepared for the donation of rights of way for the driveway, but "...when [sic] the hard times came, and it was abandoned." [ibid.]

Fortunately, before the end of the year, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Cannon, donated \$5,000 to the Helena Improvement Society to underwrite the construction of the city's portion of the roadway in memory of their son, William LeGrande Cannon. With his brother Henry Cannon, Charles had migrated to Helena in 1865. Failing as prospectors, they used their own provisions to open a grocery business and became successful merchants. Later they became sheep ranchers and developed the region's largest wool growing business. In 1882 Charles began investing in both real estate and mining and become one of the wealthiest of Helena's emerging elite. (The Cannon Carpenter Gothic family home is listed as a contributing element in the NR's Helena South-Central Historic District, listed 7/28/1986.)

On the family front, Charles was less successful. He and his wife Catherine had two children: a daughter, Bernice, who died at age 18, and then a son, William LeGrande Cannon. Their son and heir was groomed to assume his father's role, given a superior education and the opportunity to travel in Europe. Yet he too died young, falling victim to tuberculosis in 1902 at the age of 23 in San Diego.

Not only did the driveway memorialize the Cannons' son but the gift's purpose was especially appropriate given the Charles' travels: "He knows the boulevards of Paris and the scenic driveways of all the continent of Europe. For more than a decade, he has known that the boulevard which he has now endorsed and made certain would give to Helena, the most eventful, the most spectacular and the most unique highway in the world...he provided in his will [written before LeGrande Cannon's death], a noble bequest to be applied for the consummation of that same boulevard plan..." ["Rich Gift for Boulevard from Old Time Citizens", *Daily Independent*, 14 Dec 1906] The county commissioners agreed that bestowing the boulevard with a name of local significance and rather than naming it after Henry Turner Bailey as was initially suggested, "...we will name the boulevard the Le Grand [sic] Cannon and the creation of the high-way will be so designated upon our records..." [ibid]

Buoyed by the Cannons' generosity, the Helena Improvement Society revised Bailey's plan, changing the course of the boulevard somewhat so that "...the Le Grand [sic] Cannon drive [would follow a route] from its present established terminus in the count[r]y up Nelson gulch and by its natural contour back into Grizzly gulch ... where it will arrive at the site of the 'Old Quarry' where the wooden viaduct spanned the draw." [ibid] This plan, the Society maintained, would return the boulevard "by a more eventful route into Helena" and would result in a scheme that would be "shorter, more ornate, and ... less costly to both county and city than the old plan considered." [ibid] Their vision also included "a number of ornate bridges" to span existing streets and other obstacles. These "artistic bridges of stone or brick or steel" were to bear the names of the "hardy and successful pioneers and business factors who founded the fortunes of the young



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men who are now the foremost and the wealthiest citizens of Helena.” [ibid] At some point, however, this revision was amended, omitting the Grizzly Gulch/Nelson Gulch loop entirely and changing its eastern terminus to Spruce [Holter] Street and its western terminus to an entrance on the grounds of the Broadwater Natatorium.

Much was made of the generosity of property owners “whose land is traversed or fronted by the Le Grand [sic] Cannon Boulevard. Yesterday, the last deed of transfer of land in the county line of the new high-way was filed by Mr. Muth with the county commissioners. Yesterday, Mr. Wilson agreed to dedicate the front forty feet of all his lots in Mound Street so that the Boulevard would have a normal and easy right of way within the city. Every land owner whose property is traversed by the proposed line of the Le Grand Cannon high-way has willingly, cheerfully and wisely expressed and performed his desire to donate land to the proposed enterprise.” [ibid]

**Western Portion of Boulevard Is Built**

On January 7, 1907 – one year and a day after Henry Turner Bailey presented his vision of “A More Beautiful Helena” -- Lewis and Clark County let a contract for construction of the county portion of the Boulevard to Bert Coty and Luis Coty, recent French-Canadian immigrants who farmed in Baxendale. [US Census, 1910] The contract stipulated that the new roadway was to follow the route of the Chessman Ditch following Mount Helena’s natural contours. The ditch’s naturalistic course and gentle grade embodied the aesthetic values embraced by progressive landscape architects. Additionally, constructing the Boulevard on top of the ditch lowered costs and enabled the western portion of the boulevard to be built economically.

The eponymous ditch was constructed by William A. Chessman, a ‘49er who had come to Helena in 1865, and acquired claims in Last Chance Gulch where gold had been discovered just one year earlier. He worked these claims until 1872 and then turned his attention to providing a supply of steady water, necessary for placer mining and for the city’s growing population. The series of ditches Chessman constructed to convey water from the hills and mountains west of Helena became the nucleus of the Helena Consolidated Water Company, which formed in 1889 with Chessman as president. A prominent and wealthy citizen, Chessman had leadership roles in various Helena institutions, served in five sessions of the Territorial Legislature, and built a mansion that ultimately became the Original Governor’s Mansion of the state of Montana. [Listed 1970 as the “Former Montana Executive Mansion”].

The contract signed by Lewis and Clark County and the Coty brothers on January 4, 1907 specified that the county portion of the Boulevard (approximately segments 4-6 as described above) “...is to begin where what is locally known as the ‘CHESSMAN DITCH’ intersects with the west boundary line of the CITY LIMITS of the City of Helena, Montana; thence westerly along said CHESSMAN DITCH’ and turning in a northerly direction said road is to follow approximately the old road as now traveled to and intersecting with the southerly terminus of ‘PARK LANE’ in Hotel Park Addition; thence following said PARK LANE in a northerly direction to its intersection with the county road as now traveled, known as ‘HELENA AND RIMINI COUNTY ROAD,’ the definite location however, together with the survey plat and filed notes of the road to be constructed between said CHESSMAN DITCH, near county road rock 44 and said southerly terminus of said PARK LANE is to be furnished to the parties of the second part, not later than June 1, 1907, by the said party of the first part.” [Contract for the construction of Mount Helena Blvd, 4 Jan 1907 between the County of Lewis and Clark and Bert Coty and Louis [sic] Coty.]

The determination of the “definite location” of the roadway’s south terminus appears to have changed for the Boulevard as constructed extended into Perry Lane which also intersected at the Helena and Rimini County Road and paralleled Park Lane to the west. [for endnotes: A map of Helena copyrighted in 1909 shows the Boulevard as continuing westward nearly to the State Nursery grounds and bisecting Hot Springs Avenue/Helena and Rimini County

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Road, terminating at an oblique angle between Sanford Place and Evans Place, streets that may have been platted but were never built?]

The contract stated that “the grade of that certain ditch, known as the ‘Chessman Ditch’ is to be the grade of said boulevard.” This was important because the Chessman Ditch, dug in the early days of placer mining for the purpose of bringing the waters of Ten Mile Creek into Last Chance Gulch, fell about three feet to the mile. As a Helena newspaper noted, “The even grade that it offers – a lesser grade than any railroad in the west – is unique in the history of road-making and is not the least of its superb advantages as a driveway.” [15 May 1910, Daily Independent]

Furthermore, the contract specified that “where the said Chessman Ditch was built in flumes across gulches that the said boulevard shall not cross such gulches by means of fills or otherwise, but that the boulevard shall be constructed along the natural contour of the ground and so that the said boulevard, at the points of contact with said fluming, shall be of the same grade as the said ditch...said [the county’s portion of the] boulevard shall be constructed of a width of twenty feet alongside the course of said Chessman Ditch, with ample turn-outs at all sharp turns in said boulevard” and that “no trees growing upon the right of way of said road, owned by the party of the first part, shall be cut down, except such trees as are growing and standing in the immediate course and line of said boulevard.” [contract]

Construction of the county’s portion of the Boulevard began in mid-March 1907 with much rock-blasting taking place on the driveway’s western end. Ice in the Chessman ditch postponed its grading but “...as soon as the ground thaws out a large outfit of teams and scrapers will be put to work.” [“Work on Driveway”, Independent, 25 March 1907]

The county’s contract with the Coty brothers specified that work was to be “completed not later than July 15, 1907,” and this deadline appears to have been met.

The city’s progress on their portion of the Boulevard was initially hampered by the city attorney’s tardiness in enacting the city council’s authorization to condemn property belonging to Mr. Mauldin. [“No Action Taken”, Independent, 22 Feb 1907] Hopes for the Boulevard’s completion by the summer were dwindling as an *Independent* editorial exclaimed, “The county authorities have done well in the work of constructing their portion of the Le Grand Cannon boulevard. What has the city done? Nothing at all. Much money, effort and attention have been expended upon the portion of the mountain boulevard which commences at the city limits and terminates near the Broadwater. The section of the driveway is ready, but it is inaccessible from Helena because the city section for the highway has not yet been made...most of the deeds for the right of way have been made and recorded, indeed there is but one small tract which has not been made over...The money is ready; the grade is ready; the contractors are ready; the people are ready. What’s the matter with Mayor [Frank S.P.] Lindsay and his board of aldermen?...” [“Build the Boulevard”, Independent, 21 June 1907] Whatever the cause of the delay, it is probable that the \$1,000 donated by the mayor “to purchase the connection between the boulevard and its Spruce Street [now Holter Street] entrance” enabled the city to proceed with the construction of its section. [Daily Independent, 5 Sept 1909]

Delays or no, the construction of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard was viewed by Helenans as yet another harbinger of better times for local businesses and residents in 1906-1907. Contemporary newspaper accounts cited numerous signs of progress for the Helena area: Catholic Bishop John P. Carroll’s acquisition of land on which to build a cathedral and college, Montana Wesleyan University’s purchase of property for its campus the arrival of the Milwaukee Railway to Helena, an expanding electric railway system throughout the city and valley, the establishment of a city park on Mount Helena and the Broadwater Hotel’s re-opening. [Anaconda Standard, 16 Dec 1906],

One of the casualties of the Panic of 1893, the Hotel Broadwater had closed in 1894, with only the “plunge” or Natatorium continuing to operate. In the winter of 1906-1907, F. Augustus Heinze, the Butte copper magnate and New York City financier, purchased the natatorium and dilapidated hotel and set about repainting buildings, refurbishing

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sidewalks, replanting the grounds, and restoring fountains. [Dean, pp.83-84] The timing of the Boulevard's construction was especially propitious: "The county end of the LeGrande Cannon boulevard connects with the Hauser Boulevard just east of the natatorium. A new entrance flanked by an ornate gate and handsome driveway will be constructed, so that vehicles may pass directly from the LeGrand Cannon boulevard into the Broadwater grounds." [Independent, 8 April 1907, p. 8]

Spring gave way to summer and finally, in mid-August 1907, the city began work on its portion of the Boulevard, planning to have it completed in time for the pleasure of Montana State Fair attendees. A newspaper article headlined "Begin To-Day on Boulevard", detailed the specifications of the city's section: "The road will be virtually thirty-five feet in width, but five feet will be devoted to a large ditch on the side of the road next to the mountain. This ditch will catch all the waters that run down the mountain, and there will be 10-inch pipes placed under the road connected with the ditch every 20 or 30 feet. These pipes will drain the ditch and will empty below the road. The boulevard will be well graded and surfaced up with gravel, which it is claimed makes a very firm and lasting bed." ["Begin To-Day on Boulevard", Semi-Wkly Independent, 16 Aug 1907]

Two bid specifications for the city's portion of the boulevard are extant. The first was for the grading and construction of a segment of 1,471 feet length of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard "from the present terminus at the south side of Mauldin Street to the intersection of the north side of Spruce [Holter] Street." [LG1, Helena City Clerk, 10/18, MHS] and was estimated to cost \$2,847.10, for 3,420 cubic yards of excavation, one box culvert at Mauldin Street and 110 linear feet of 10" pipe. The second bid specification described the grading and construction of the Boulevard "from the city limits on the west to the south side of Itasca [Mauldin] Street" estimated to cost approximately \$4,680.00 for 5,500 cubic yards excavation; 8,000 feet of lumber in place in culverts and draw boxes, 10" pipe was to be used for drainage under the roadway. Both contracts specified a gravel covering of six inch depth and a roadway 30 feet wide in the clear. [ibid]

Lacking a site plan, the as-built details of the Boulevard are somewhat unclear but a 1910 article noted: "Inside the city limits, from the head of Lawrence [sic] Street to a point near Kenwood a distance of 2 miles, the boulevard is 35 feet in width. Beyond this point, the width of the road is 20 feet, which was secured by merely leveling out from the bottom of the long abandoned ditch. For practically its entire length, the boulevard is just a few feet down the hill from the conduit which brings Helena's water supply into the city..." [Daily Independent, 15 May 1910.]

Even in its incomplete state, the Boulevard exerted an appeal as described by a local newspaper: "Until the city's portion of the boulevard is completed, it will not be easily accessible from town, but there are many ways of approaching it in its present incomplete condition. Once upon the broad roadway, the most splendid drive in the state, perhaps in the world, stretches away for 3 miles, clinging to the ever-changing contour of the mountain, level as a floor, skirting the cliffs, winding around sudden curves or stretching straight forward in long reaches of mountain-shadowed speedways, and always with ever-changing kaleidoscopic views of the valley far below and the distant mountains opening at each change of the road..." ["Le Grand Cannon Boulevard", 17 Aug 1907, Independent]. Even Mayor Lindsay could not resist displaying its splendid views and "3-team abreast" width to "eastern visitors". ["Mayor's Guests Are Delighted", 20 Aug 1907, Independent].

Once completed, the wonders of the Boulevard continued to attract important visitors including railroad baron James J. Hill, accompanied by a J.P. Morgan and Co. partner, and the president of the First National Bank of New York who pronounced the Boulevard, "...the greatest scenic driveway I have ever seen. In no place that I have ever visited are there such possibilities for a magnificent roadway." [Daily Ind. 15 May 1910]. Montana politicians former Territorial Governor Samuel T. Hauser and U.S. Senator Thomas Carter exclaimed at length over the Boulevard's beauty and economy ["Finest Drive in the World", 31 Aug 1907, Independent and "Good Roads for Helena", 23 Aug 1907, Independent].

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But perhaps the Boulevard's most consequential admirer was journalist/photographer Jacob Riis whose social reform interests had formed the foundation of the "City Beautiful" movement and who drove over LeGrande Cannon Boulevard accompanied by Mayor Lindsay and Charles Cannon in the autumn of 1907. [WWW site and "Helena Ideal City, He [Riis] Says", Semi-Weekly Independent, 25 Oct 1907]. The renowned crusader recounted his tour of the Broadwater, State Fairgrounds, racetrack, Fort Harrison in positively terms but "...the drive itself was the greatest of all. Where do you find a view like that over the sunlit valley, a huge amphitheater set about with hills upon which the light is forever changing, and over against it all Mount Helena's craggy heights with the city at its base?...The lines of the boulevard skirting its base, and preserving the natural contour of the hills without any effort to torture a straight line anywhere, are a constant delight. As it follows, from one end to the other, the line of the old mine ditch that brought water to the placer miners, it is nearly as level as the water itself and this adds to its exceeding picturesqueness....on your left Mount Helena rises now in gently sloping ascent to a forest-crowned top, now in sudden steep toward beetling crags unsuspected before, but always the driveway winds about its side, above the sounds and the stir of the valley....Truly you have in your great driveway a priceless possession and the men whose foresight and public spirit have given it to Helena deserve its gratitude..." [ibid.]

**Greater Boulevard Scheme Encounters Obstacles**

A 1908 article on the Boulevard referred to its "partial construction" but sadly, work on the grander boulevard scheme did not continue due to funding shortages and political squabbles. ["Le Grand [sic] Cannon Boulevard Greatest Pleasure Drive in the West", New Helena Edition Montana Daily Record, 1908] At the outset, all had been confident that donors would step up to the challenge. During his 1906 visit, Henry Turner Bailey had remarked on "...the generosity and public spirit of those who made Mount Helena forest park a fact by giving freely of their land to the city," concluding that a community with the unselfishness and the courage to do what had already been done here would find no difficulty in realizing most, if not all, of the plans which he had outlined. In the same spirit, the Helena Improvement Society was persuaded that financial support would be forthcoming: "There are in Helena rich men who are old; rich men who love the city; rich men who are childless and who must know that their best service must lie now in the direction of communal benefaction." [Helena Daily Independent, Dec 14, 1906, "Rich Gift for Blvd from Old Time Citizens"]

Local politics also played a role. A scathing 1910 newspaper account spoke of the active opposition of County Commissioner T. Wesley Richardson of East Helena, who "is said to be unalterably opposed to the improvement," and added that "the two other members of the board hesitate to antagonize him for fear of engendering his opposition to other matters which they desire to carry out during his incumbency on the board." [Helena Daily Ind., 15 May 1910"]

Citizens exerted as much pressure as they could. Shortly after completion of the initial construction by the Coty brothers, the Helena Commercial Club circulated a petition asking that the road be continued to Colorado Gulch approximately seven miles west of the city. This petition, "the most generally signed of the many petitions ever drafted in Helena," included the signatures of some of the most wealthy and powerful individuals and businesses in the city and surrounding areas. Proponents of the boulevard also put forward lengthy arguments as to why the extension would cost much less than the county commissioners were estimating. How, they asked, could the extension to Colorado Gulch, a distance of approximately seven miles, possibly cost \$30,000, as the Commissioners were estimating, when the two-mile stretch built by the Coty brothers had been completed for \$3,446? Such efforts were to no avail, however, and the remaining portions of the boulevard were never constructed. [Daily Ind., 15 May 1910]

It also appears that the driving force behind the Boulevard, the Helena Improvement Society, had expired by 1910-1911. A scrapbook compiled by the organization ends with 1906 newspaper clippings and its annual listings in the *Helena City Directory* cease with the 1911 edition. Perhaps the Society traversed the same route as did like organizations across the nation who found their efforts coalescing into an embryonic discipline, city planning. "City Beautiful" scholar

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Jon A. Peterson writes: “[The movement] was never a static idea. From its outset in 1905, its practitioners moved toward a deeper, more complex fulfillment of the new ideal of comprehensive planning, in effect preparing the way for ‘city planning’ as a cause in its own right. By embracing planning, the beautification movement took hold of a protean and permissive concept capable of serving purposes beyond beautification and of perpetuation itself. As early as 1908, the term ‘city planning’, came into public use...Once the idea of planning for beauty had given way to the concept of planning the city itself, in the years 1909-1910, American city planning had been born.” [Peterson, Birth of City Planning in the US, p. 199]

Nevertheless, a key section of the boulevard encircling the Mount Helena had been completed, confirming Helena’s acceptance of the “City Beautiful” tenet that the beauty of nature would lead to an “improved” citizenry and city. Equally important, the rustic, naturalistic boulevard constructed for pleasure and signifying Helena’s acceptance of early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban values, was built directly atop an abandoned water ditch, a remnant of the city’s rough mining origins, literally supplanting the old with the new.

**Source of Civic Pride and Urban Pleasure**

Just as its early champions had believed, LeGrande Cannon Boulevard became a source of civic pride and a facet of the city’s claim as a premier urban center. Not only did the driveway attract riders and horse-drawn vehicles upon its completion, it was popular with local “automobilists”, too. In about 1908, Helena lawmakers sought to preserve the driveway’s pastoral atmosphere and restricted motorized vehicles’ access to the Boulevard, “No automobile or other motor vehicle shall be run on LeGrande Cannon Boulevard of the City of Helena except of Tuesdays and Fridays of each week.” [Independent Record, 8 Apr 1973] However, automobile traffic on the roadway continued to be an issue as the president of the Helena Commercial Club suggested in 1920 that the city council permit only one-way, east-bound traffic given his perspective that the prospects from that direction were more scenic than those viewed driving west. The roadway’s sinuosity and blind curves combined with drivers’ reluctance to sound their auto horns had led to a number of “narrow escapes” but no fatal accidents to date. [“One Way or Sound Horn”, 25 July 1920, Independent]

Despite such concerns, LeGrande Cannon Boulevard continued to play an important role in the recreational history of the city, providing a bucolic route between the city and the Broadwater Hotel and Natatorium. In 1920, Charles B. Power purchased the hotel and natatorium intending to capitalize on Helena’s convenient location between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks and the popularity of auto-tourism. Unfortunately, the hundreds of earthquakes—large and small—that centered around Helena in October-November 1935 so severely damaged the Natatorium that it was closed and then razed in 1946. A statewide gambling crackdown in 1941 shuttered the hotel for good. (Dean, p. 85?) With the demise of the Broadwater and the natatorium, the Boulevard lacked its pleasurable western terminus and its period of significance had come to an end.

**Development of Eastern End of the Boulevard**

Over the following four decades or so, little changed along the boulevard with its -rural ambience providing the setting for nocturnal recreation by Helena youth, functioning as a lover’s lane and kegger location. [personal knowledge, “End-of-school celebrations start early for some youths”, 1 June 1975, Independent Record]. In the summer of 1973 a two-lot subdivision was approved on Mount Helena’s north face above the Boulevard, near Grant Street. [8 Aug 1973, Independent Record]. Larger subdivisions on the Boulevard’s south side followed in the mid 1970s with the Forrest Estates subdivision near Garrison Street and the H.T. O’Reilly subdivision near Mountain View **CHK name**. [17 Nov 1975, 8 Sept 1976, 28 Sept 1976, 12 June 1977, 7 July 1977, Independent Record].

In the spring of 1977, city, state and federal officials seeking to update the Helena Urban Transportation Study considered building a 4-lane south “by-pass, or urban beltway, that would link Helena’s east and west sides via LeGrande

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Cannon Boulevard and a number of other streets to Helena's south and southeast neighborhoods." [18 May 1977, IR] Dozens of LeGrand Cannon Boulevard area residents met in early May 1977 to organize the Westside Citizens' Association to oppose the proposal, "...concerned that a federally intruded multimillion dollar speedway would endanger their children, cut through their properties, cut off free access to Mount Helena City Park and its hiking trails...and generally forever rip the quiet neighborhood's quiet ways with stepped-up 24-hour fast traffic pressures and noise." [12 May 1977, IR]. City government's "heavy-handed" handling of the bypass alternative created a negative impression with the public it was unable to overcome. Combined with nearly unanimous citizen protest, the LeGrande Cannon Boulevard/South by-pass was never built. [Dennis McCahon interview, 21 May 2008 and 5 May 1977, IR]

But the construction of new residences along the Boulevard's eastern end led to increased traffic and plans were made for this section to be paved over and reconfigured to separate pedestrians from motor traffic to accommodate its long-time use by runners, walkers and bicyclists due to public outcry. In addition, the eastern end of the Boulevard was closed to through traffic and a portion of the western end was closed to all vehicular traffic.

Much of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard today exists as it was conceived by Henry Turner Bailey, retaining its historic sinuosity as it winds its way through mid-and late 20<sup>th</sup> century dwellings, public access trailheads, stands of conifers, and grassy gullies. Some of its segments, particularly the unpaved sections closed to vehicles, carry the pedestrian or bicyclist through thickly forested glades that obscure the recently built suburban landscape below. Consider this description of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard, written in 1908:

Today residents and visitors have the opportunity to enjoy a drive or walk such as no other city in the United States can afford. Nature has been kind to the capital city of Montana, but in nothing has she been more so than in the opportunity she has afforded for the creation of this pleasure drive around the mountain. Easy of access by a dozen different routes, once on the driveway a view is afforded that cannot be duplicated anywhere. Winding around a mountain which affords the changeable and inspiring scenery that can be found only in the Rocky mountains, there stretches out at one's feet a magnificent panorama, a view of plain and mountains in the distance which pen cannot describe nor artist depict. A glimpse of the city one moment, then a turn hides the town from view, and miles away, there is seen a silvery sheen. That is an arm of Lake Hauser reaching into the valley, then another turn and all the town is in full view, and beyond it the smoke, slowly rising from the great stacks at East Helena, six miles away. Again the scene changes and there lies before one the greatest covered natatorium in the world, then the Broadwater hotel with its beautiful groves, then comes Fort Harrison, and still beyond, the mines in plain view. Another sharp turn and city, fort, valley and mines are all lost to view – on one side looms the mountains of granite, and on the other a dense growth of pines almost overshadowing the road. ["Le Grand [sic] Cannon Boulevard Greatest Pleasure Drive in the West", New Helena Edition Montana Daily Record, 1908]

One hundred years later, in 2008, the great stacks at East Helena are slated for demolition, the Broadwater Hotel and natatorium are long-raised, and the mines abandoned and inactive. Citizens and visitors take pleasure in the Boulevard today in the manner Henry Turner Bailey envisioned and early 20<sup>th</sup> century philanthropists dreamt. Some come in informal groups, to chat and form friendships as they walk. Parents push children in strollers. Residents bring their dogs for their daily walks. Cyclists and joggers exercise. Others come to simply admire the splendid scenery and lighting which changes hourly as the sun moves east to west.

The history of LeGrande Cannon Boulevard is inextricably linked to the natural features that make it beautiful, accessible and peaceful and contributes to the unique resources that characterize Helena and made its history. It is also

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about the citizens of our community, from the late 1800s to the present day, who have strived to maintain this tangible link to Helena's past, its heritage of natural beauty and open lands.

**The Boulevard Gets Its Name**

In initial newspaper accounts, the proposed roadway was called "Henry Turner Bailey Boulevard" after the man whose endorsement inspired its construction. [From a newspaper clipping "Proposals for the Construction of the Henry Turner Bailey Boulevard." This clipping was pasted into the journals of the County Commissioners of Lewis and Clark County, Journal #10, p. 69, as part of the minutes for the November 22, 1907 Commission meeting, with the notation that it was to be published in "the Daily Independent Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> to and including December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1906." ]

By the time a construction contract was issued to the Coty Brothers in 1907, however, the name had been changed to "Mount Helena Boulevard." <sup>1</sup> The contract signed with the Coty brothers Jan. 4, 1907 contains the wording "to construct that certain boulevard to be known as the 'Mount Helena Boulevard' being the same boulevard mentioned in certain proposals for the construction of the 'Henry Turner Bailey Boulevard' published in the Helena Daily Independent and mentioned in the bid of the parties of the second part, bearing date of December 10, 1906."

That name remained in play until name LeGrande Cannon Boulevard was adopted to commemorate the financial contribution of the Charles W. Cannon family, prominent in local history. Thus, the name of the Boulevard also ties it to Helena's evolution from gold town to maturing urban center. [<sup>1</sup> Helena Daily Independent, Dec. 14, 1906, "Rich Gift for Boulevard from Old Time Citizens". This article quoted one (unnamed) county commissioner as saying "The idea of naming it the Henry Turner Bailey boulevard was optional and in no sense binding ... it will be far better to give it a name of local significance ..."]

Over the years, though, there has been ongoing confusion about the name of the Boulevard. The Cannon gift was accepted by county commissioners in December of 1906, at which time newspapers reported that "a majority of the county commissioners then agreed to name the boulevard as it shall be constructed in Helena and in the county Le Grand Cannon Boulevard in honor of the Cannon son." Nevertheless, the Lewis and Clark County contract issued to the Coty Brothers on January 4, 1907 refers to "Mount Helena Boulevard," as do the minutes of the county commission meetings through June of 1907. (This may be because the Cannon contribution seems to have been applied to the construction of that portion of the Boulevard lying within city limits). Sometimes, the roadway was often referred to more informally as "The Grand Boulevard," and printed sources have incorporated the alternative spelling of "Le Grand Cannon Boulevard." Mapmakers unaware of the city's history have also "corrected" the name to a more logical "LeGrande *Canyon* Boulevard" or some such variation. Today, city and county sources have aligned and confirmed the spelling "LeGrande Cannon Boulevard."

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**Bibliography**

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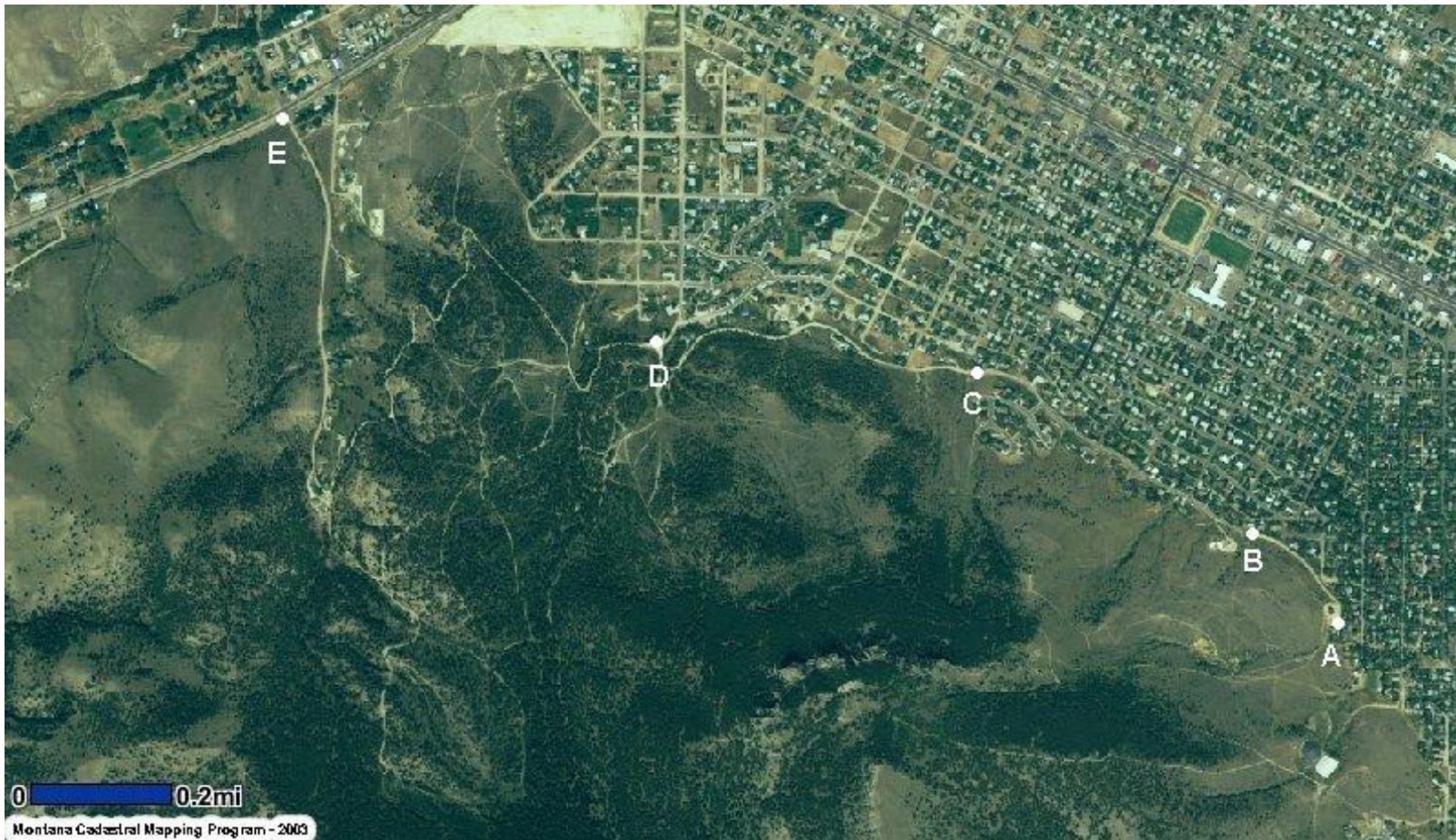
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## Aerial View





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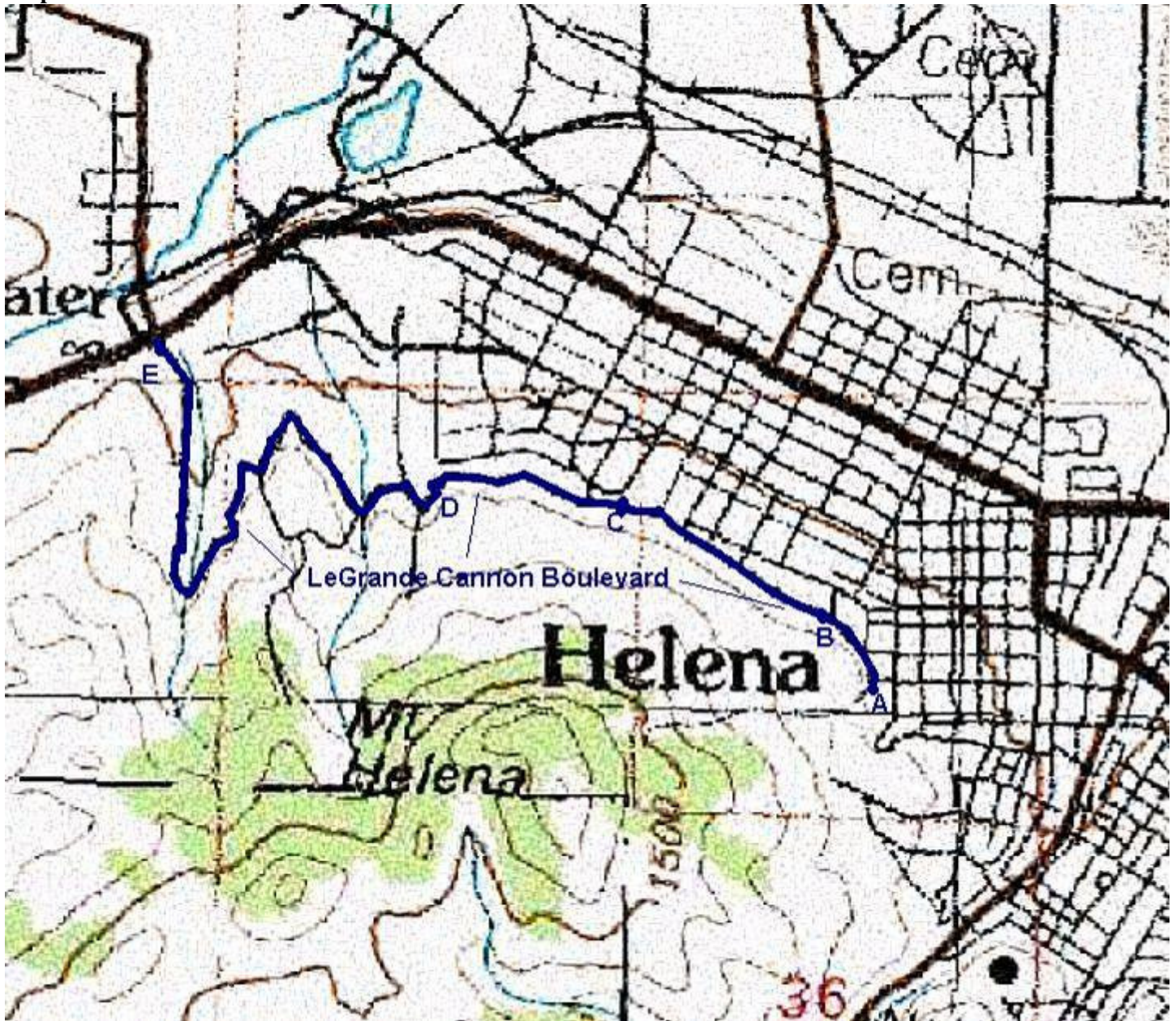
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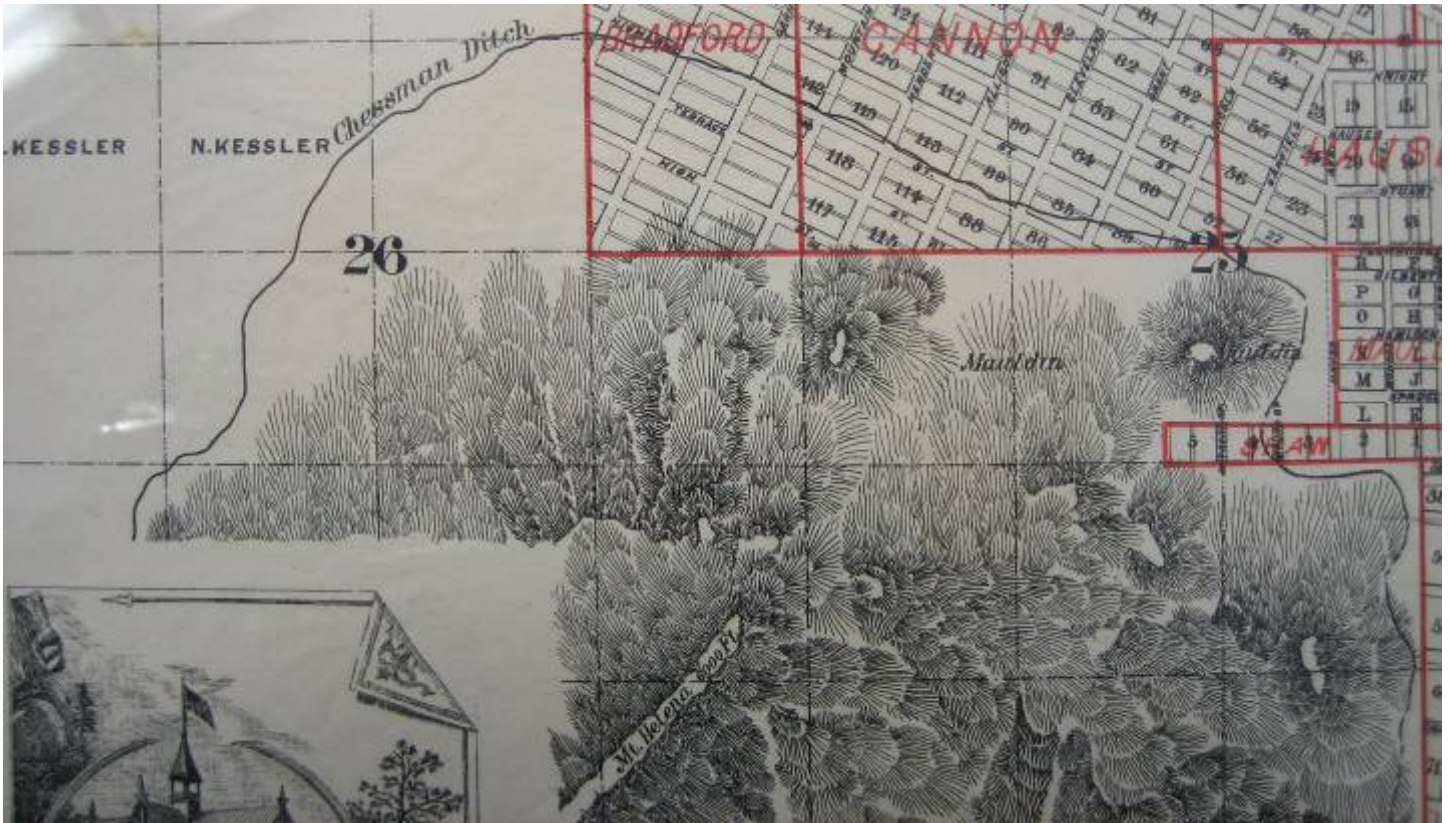
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1887 Chessman Ditch detail Helena & L&C Co. by H.M. Smyth, S

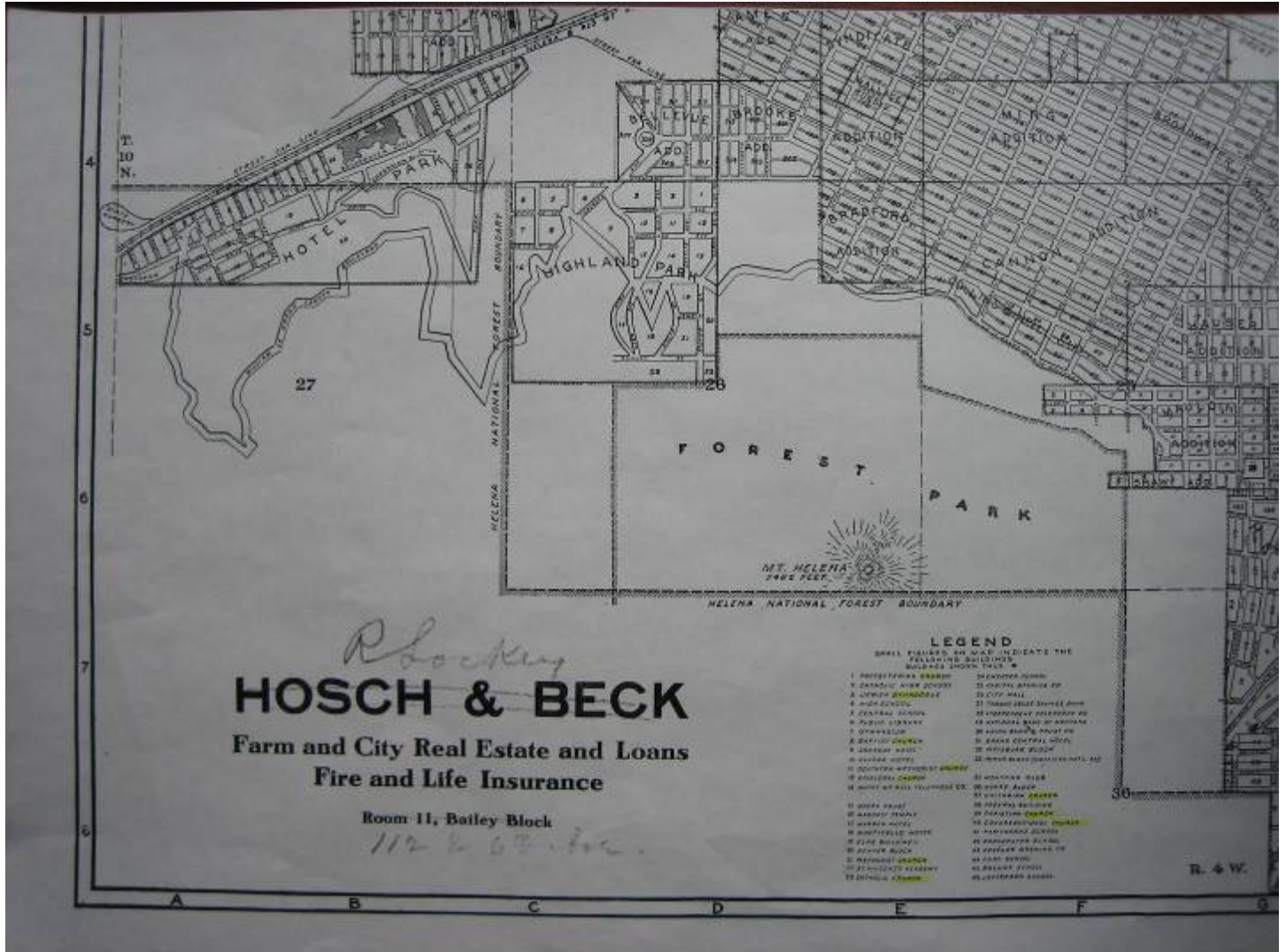
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1909 Clason Map Company

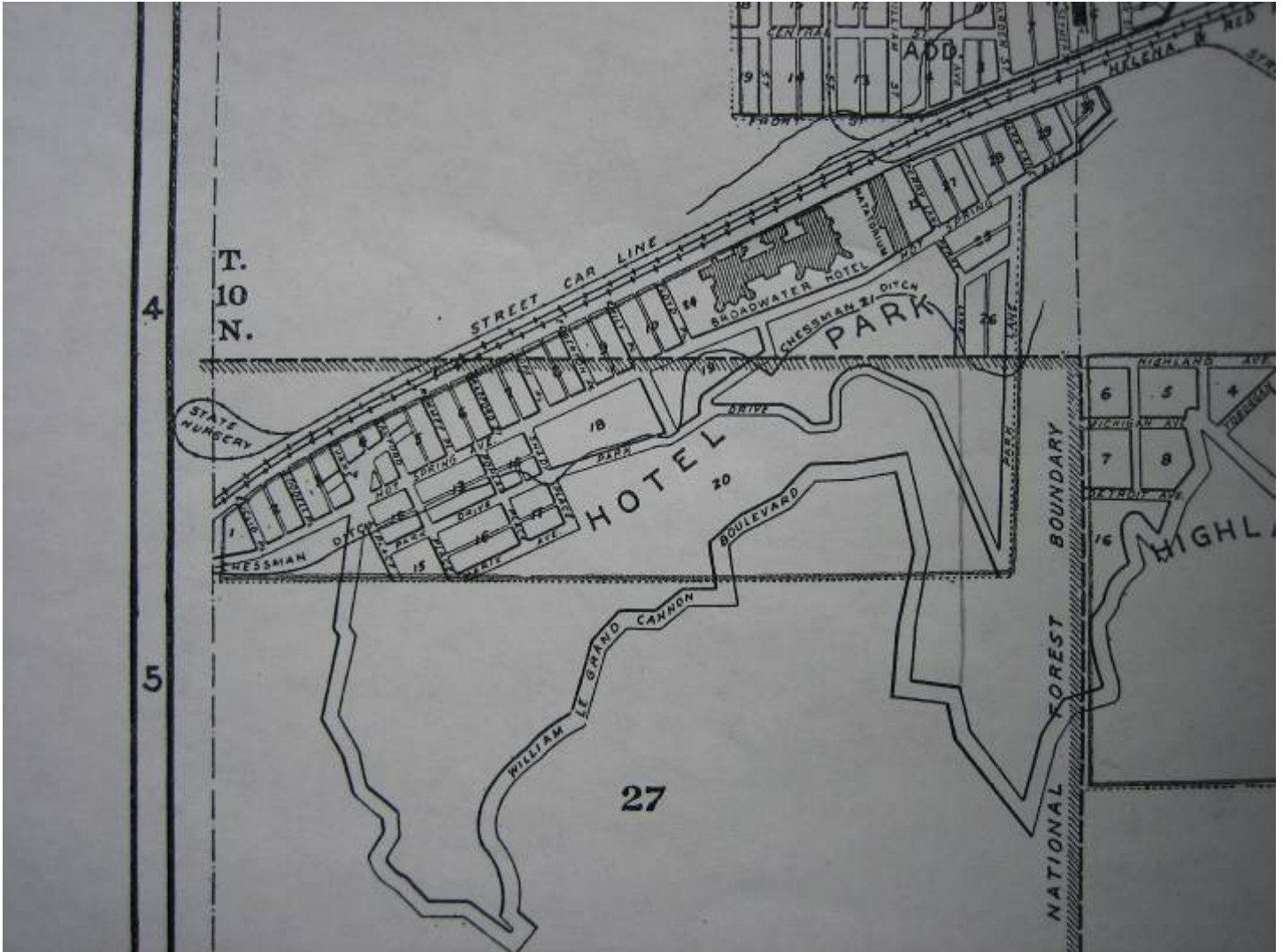
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1909 Clason Map Company – detail of extreme west end of LeGrande Cannon as envisioned by the designers to terminate in the Hotel Park addition. This portion of the road was never built. Instead, LeGrande cannon connects with what was “Park Lane” on the map above.



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1995 Aerial photo from Terraviva.

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LeGrande Cannon Boulevard, looking south east from west side of road, c. 1930s.

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LeGrande Cannon Boulevard, looking south east from west side of road, c. 1930s.



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AN ELEVATED POINT ON THE BOULEVARD.

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LeGrande Cannon Boulevard west end segment showing contiguity with Mount Helena contours (2007)



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V-shaped segment at west end terminating in "crude wagon road" which terminates at US Highway 12 (2007)



Circa 1910 one-lane lattice bridge on non-vehicular segment (2007)

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Bridge, May 2008



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Pedestrian/bicyclist-only segment starting at Boulevard/Silverette St. intersection, west view (2007)

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LeGrande Cannon Boulevard from Panhandler Trailhead, north view (2007)



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West stretch of LeGrande Cannon to US Hwy12 terminus

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Sinuous curve looking east.