

FORT PECK INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL, PRINCIPAL'S
COTTAGE
(Building No. 41)
Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Northeast corner of Assiniboine Avenue and Federal Street
Poplar vicinity
Roosevelt County
Montana

HABS MT-70-C
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

FORT PECK INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL, PRINCIPAL'S COTTAGE (Fort Peck Indian Boarding School, Building No. 41)

HABS No. MT-70-C

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Building No. 41 is on the northeast corner of Assiniboine Avenue and Federal Street within the proposed Fort Peck Indian Boarding School Historic District at Fort Peck Agency. Fort Peck Agency is located in the town of Poplar in Roosevelt County on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana. The community is situated directly north of the Missouri River and bounded by Poplar River to the north and west.

Quad: Poplar, MT

UTM: Zone: 13; Easting 485564; Northing 5328774

Present Owners: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Building No. 41 is a contributing building to the significance of the proposed Fort Peck Indian Boarding School Historic District. Completed in 1914, Building No. 41 is one of several extant buildings constructed in the early twentieth century to improve employee housing at the boarding school. Building No. 41 is also one of the earliest known buildings within the historic district built under standardized plans from the Bureau of Indian Affairs construction section in Washington, DC.

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II. HISTORY

Building 41 is a historic government dwelling located within the boundaries of the proposed Fort Peck Indian Boarding School Historic District in Poplar, MT on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana (Figure 1). From the establishment of the government boarding school in 1882 at Fort Peck Agency, school employees lived in sub-standard housing. Throughout most of the existence of the Fort Peck Indian Boarding School, it appears the majority of school employees lived in renovated one-story abandoned military log buildings. Poor living conditions for most employees, especially Indian employees, continued into the late 1920s and 1930s.

By 1900, school attendance reached over 180 pupils with two new brick dormitories. However, the balance of the school occupied old military post log buildings which were in horrible condition. The construction of Building 41 in 1914 is an early attempt to improve living conditions for at least one non-Indian school employee, the boarding school principal. The position of principal at the Fort Peck Indian Boarding School was not created until around 1905.

On his arrival, the new principal shared the same fate as other school employees and was housed in an old army hospital building. By 1909, R. M. Pringle, a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) inspector, described the principal's cottage as

an old building and has had much work done on it in the way of repairs during recent years, but it is yet in a poor condition. Complaint is made that it is very cold in winter so much so that it is almost impossible to occupy it with any degree of comfort. Rather than to attempt any further repairs on this building, I recommend that a modest new cottage, say of about six rooms and bath, be provided as a home for the principal.¹

The following year, Superintendent Charles B. Lohmiller, the Fort Peck Indian Agent, called for a new principal's cottage, mentioning it had been the subject of considerable correspondence during the past year.²

In 1911, Robert B. Demaree, the boarding school principal, reemphasized the deplorable condition of the principal's residence with its failing foundation and walls. Principal Demaree was forced to move out of the building during the winter since his residence was not habitable in cold weather. He moved into poor quarters but "it was better than freezing." He hoped for quarters with a bath and office space.³

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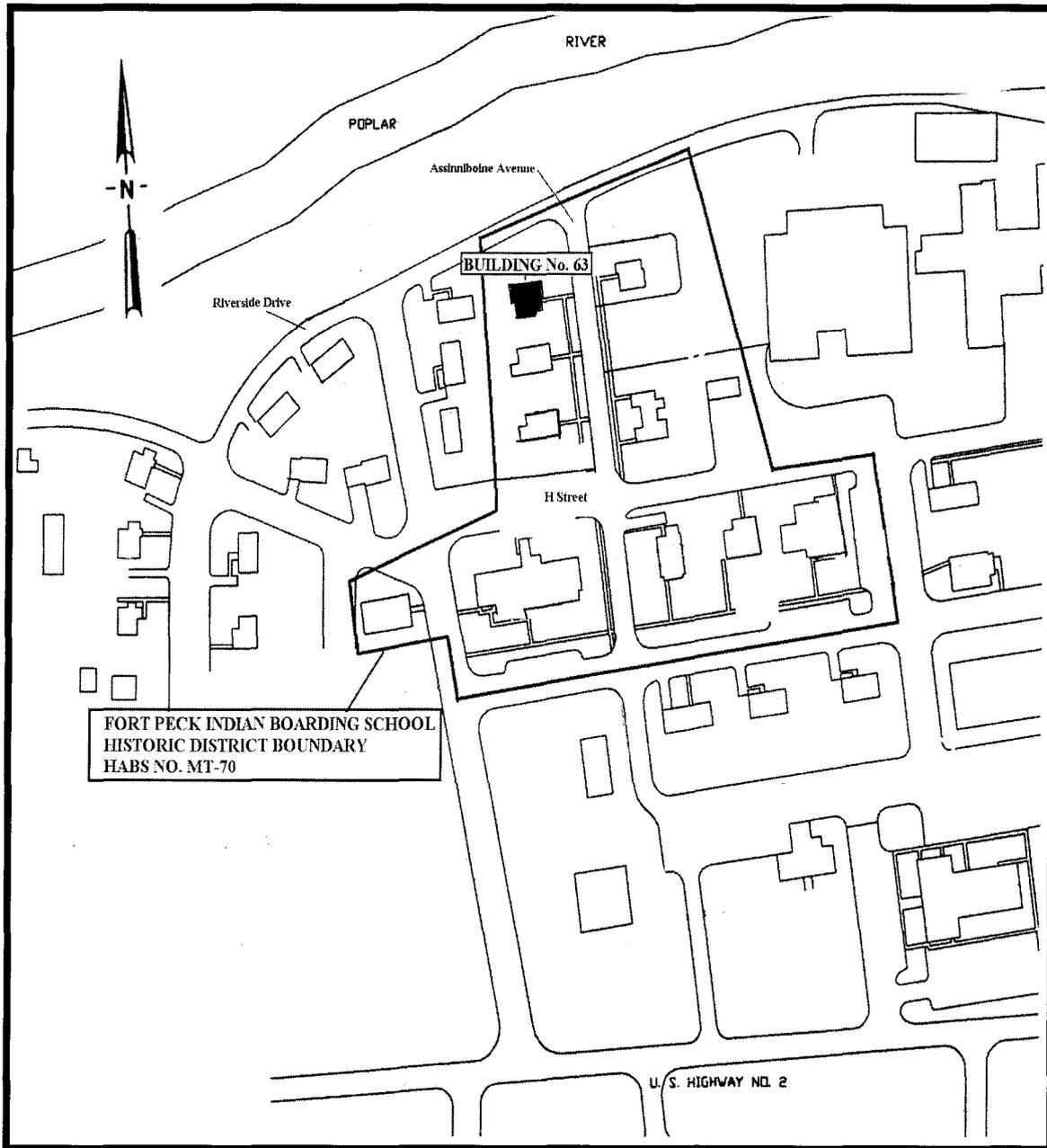


Figure 1. Location Map of Building No. 41 (map courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs).

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That same year, Superintendent Lohmiller once again recommended the need for a new principal's cottage which he understood was to be authorized soon. Unfortunately, no further discussion pertaining to the principal's cottage is available in subsequent Superintendents' reports. According to Indian Health Service (IHS) records, Building 41 was built in 1914 under Plan A-66 with an original cost of \$3450.00. After about 1908, plans and specifications for most small buildings at Indian agencies, like Building 41, were prepared at a centralized construction section at the BIA's Washington, DC headquarters.⁴

In the late 1920s, C. R. Trowbridge, a BIA inspector, described the principal's cottage (Building 41) as an old frame building in fair condition but with a leaky roof. Interestingly, he questioned its construction date of 1914, suggesting the cottage possibly had just been remodeled at that time. Trowbridge found that the principal's cottage appearance in 1927 was not "in keeping with the permanent school buildings in proximity and should be replaced in the near future."⁵

Two years later in 1930, BIA Inspector of Construction H. R. Stamm reported the principal's quarters and office (Building 41) in "very" satisfactory condition and in "very" good repair with good floors, walls and ceiling. Noticeable improvements included a newly shingled roof and newly shingled and screened porch.⁶

A 1935 BIA map identifies Building 41 as an employee's quarters. Building 41 apparently housed government employees or served as a rental unit until recently (2007). A 1943 BIA building report describes Building 41 as a two bedroom dwelling with lap siding, wood shingles, plaster walls and ceiling, and pine and maple flooring.⁷ Between 1943 and 1955, Building 41 was converted into a duplex with three rooms to each unit. In 1955, Bureau of Indian Affairs transferred Indian medical facilities, including Building 41, to the Public Health Service. In the early 1970s, IHS renovated Building 41 into a three-bedroom dwelling.

III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Indian Health Service Building 41 is within the boundaries of proposed Fort Peck Indian Boarding School Historic District in the town of Poplar, located on northeastern Montana's Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Building 41 is one of three core historic government buildings that line the north side of east/west trending Federal Street within the Fort Peck Indian Boarding School historic complex.

Building 41 occupies a rectangular lot at the northeast corner of Federal Street and Assiniboine Street. The former boarding school hospital (now the Fort Peck Tribes Head Start Center) is situated west of Building 41 across Assiniboine Street. Building 41 faces south toward Federal Street and is approached from the street by a concrete walk. The building yard is bounded on three sides by a chain link fence and wood fences on the north. Building 41 is presently unoccupied.

Building 41 is a one-story dwelling of wood frame construction (Figure 2). Its main mass consists of a 42-foot by 28-foot rectangular block covered with a gable on hipped roof. The roof has 2 x 6 rafters covered by 1 x 8 board decking and asphalt shingles. Open wide eaves were enclosed in 1985 but original curved rafter tails are intact beneath the soffit. The original chimney has been removed. The apex of each gable end exhibits metal louvered vents. The building rests on poured aggregate concrete foundation walls. The foundation walls enclose a partial basement at the rear (north) portion of the dwelling with a crawl space elsewhere.

The dwelling's wood frame is constructed of 2 x 4's. White vinyl 6" lap siding sheaths the building. While windows retain their original arrangement, all openings were reduced in size and fitted with replacement one-over-one double-hung vinyl units in 1985. Four windows cross the east wall, three on the west wall and one on the north wall.

An entry porch (20' by 8') is centered on the facade (south) wall. It has a shed roof that projects off the south slope of the main roof. The original porch was screened from floor to ceiling but has since been enclosed. Historic photographs reveal the low porch wall was installed between 1943 and 1956 while storm windows replaced screens in 1985. A concrete pad and steps with metal hand rails lead to an off-center front entry. The entry contains a metal screen door. The interior of the porch retains original wood lap siding on its wall and beadboard ceiling. The interior porch door displays historic simple wood molding while interior porch windows holds a row of three metal storms and vinyl window units.

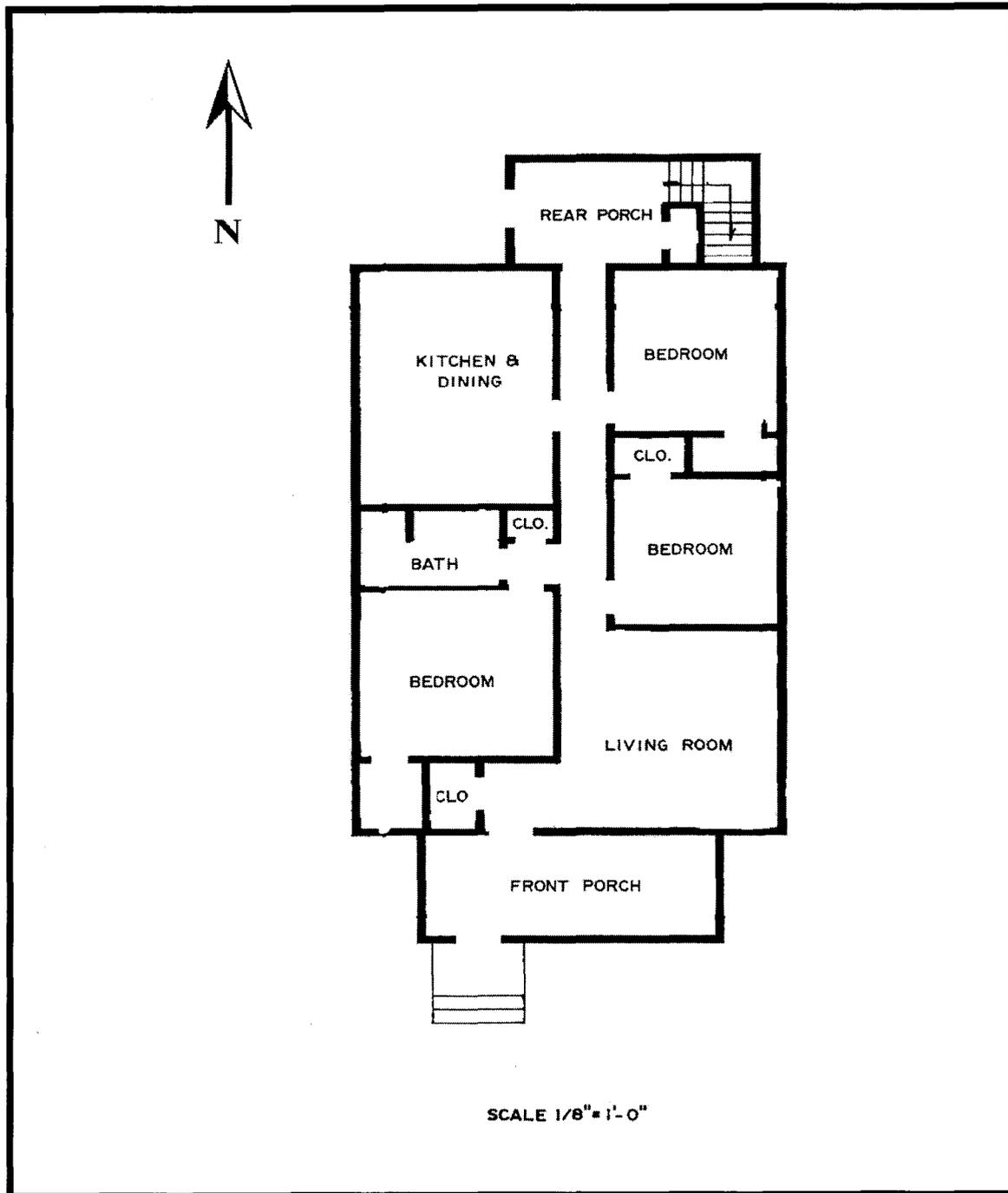


Figure 2. Building No. 41 Floor Plan.

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A shed roofed wing (10' by 8') covers the east half of the north (rear) wall. All original openings have been sided over. Originally entered from the north, a vinyl door with an upper square light now provides entry on the wing's west wall. A one-over one double-hung vinyl window sits on its north wall.

Built initially as a two-bedroom dwelling, Building 41 had a living room, kitchen, bath and two bedrooms. A 1943 floor plan shows Building 41 had been converted into a duplex, each with three rooms each. In the early 1970s, Building 41 was renovated into a three bedroom dwelling. Today the completely remodeled interior retains no historic finishing materials.

IV. ENDNOTES

1. R. M Pringle to Commission of Indian Affairs, "Report on Fort Peck School and Agency," May 25, 1909, Entry 953 Fort Peck Agency, Record Group 75 (RG75), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Washington, DC, copy on file, Renewable Technologies, Inc. (RTI), Butte, MT (hereinafter referred to as RTI archives). Fort Peck Agency records utilized in Fred L. Quivik and Mark T. Fiege, "The Historic Architecture of Six Montana Indian Agencies: A Determination of Eligibility For the National Register of Historic Places," (Butte, MT, Renewable Technologies, Inc., 1987) are now housed at the National Archives-Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, CO and have been reprocessed].
2. United States (U.S.) Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Superintendents' annual narrative and statistical reports from field jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907-1934*, Fort Peck Agency 1910, Roll 52, Microfilm 1011, Montana State University Libraries – Bozeman, Bozeman, MT (hereinafter referred to as *Superintendents' Report*). The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was formerly called Office of Indian Affairs or Indian Office but for the purpose of this report will be referred to as BIA.
3. Robert B. Demaree to Superintendent C. B. Lohmiller, May 8, 1911, Series 8, Alphabetical File of Miscellaneous Letter Received, Box 67, Folder D, Fort Peck Agency, RG75, National Archives-Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, CO.
4. *Superintendents' Reports* 1911; Quivik and Fiege, "The Historic Architecture of Six Montana Indian Agencies," 24-25.
5. C.R. Trowbridge to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "Report on Inspection of Fort Peck Indian Reservation – Montana," November 3, 1927, Entry 953, Fort Peck Agency, RG 75, RTI archives
6. H. R. Stamm to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "Report of Inspection of the Fort Peck Agency, May 1930," Entry 121 Fort Peck, File 410 folder 24306-1930, RG 75, RTI Archives.
7. United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Building No. 41" Fort Peck Agency, August, 1943, *Individual Building Report*, on file, Indian Health Service-Billings Area Office, Billings, MT.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Quivik, Fred L. and Mark T. Fiege. "The Historic Architecture of Six Montana Indian Agencies: A Determination of Eligibility For the National Register of Historic Places." Butte, MT: Renewable Technologies, Inc., 1987.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. *Individual Building Reports*. Fort Peck Agency, September 1943, Indian Health Service-Billings Area Office, Billings, MT.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. Records of Fort Peck Agency, MT, Record Group 75 (RG75), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives-Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, CO.
- U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Superintendents' annual narrative and statistical reports from field jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907-1934*. Fort Peck Agency, Rolls 52-53, Microfilm 1011, Bozeman, MT: Montana State University Libraries – Bozeman.