

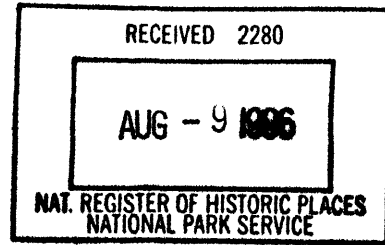
USDI/NPS NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form
Name of Multiple Property Listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of Nyssa, Oregon

NPS Form 10-900-b (March 1992)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form



This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

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A. Name of Multiple Property Listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of Nyssa, OR

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B. Associated Historic Contexts

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(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Commercial and Industrial Growth of Nyssa, Malheur County, Oregon, 1883 -1945

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C. Form Prepared by

=====

name/title: Donna Hartmans

organization: Arrow Rock Architects

street & number: 711 Wyndemere Drive

city or town: Boise

state: Idaho

telephone: 208-344-3722

zip code: 83702

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (X See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James Hamich

August 5, 1996

Signature and title of certifying official Deputy SHPO

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

[Signature]

8/28/96

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (national Register Bulletin 16B). Fill page numbers for each section in the space below.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

G. Geographical Data

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Nyssa Historical Society, PO Box 2303, Nyssa OR 97913

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF NYSSA (1883-1945)
MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION
Nyssa, Malheur County, Oregon**

COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Application Processing

This multiple property submission stems from efforts of the Nyssa Historical Society to promote awareness of community history. In 1993, the group opened the Oregon Trail Agricultural Museum in a former feed mill and sought help in registering the historic buildings of the town center. At the height of promotional activities relating to observance of the sesquicentennial of overland migration, a walking tour brochure was produced that identified Nyssa as the "Gate City of Oregon and the Oregon Trail," even though the town of just under 3,000 population lies three and a half miles north of the place where the trail crossed the Snake River from the Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post, Fort Boise, on the east bank.

The four properties proposed for nomination under the context in the initial submission are those which meet the registration requirements and for which owner consent was forthcoming. Documentation was prepared under auspices of the Nyssa Historical Society with a modest 50/50 matching grant from the Historic Preservation Fund. The application was prepared by Donna Hartmans, a Boise, Idaho architect and consultant, a graduate of the University of Oregon program in historic preservation.

The application was first presented to the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation for review during the meeting of February 15, 1996. On May 16, 1996, at the second hearing required for compound nominations under the State's rules, an application slightly revised on the basis of review board comments was unanimously approved as meeting criteria of the National Register.

Premise of the Nomination

This multiple property nomination is predicated on Nyssa's development as an inland agricultural trading center accessible to railroad shipping on the Oregon Short Line Railroad beginning in 1883. Of the initial building phase, 1883 to 1902, there are no representative examples in the

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Original Townsite. Instead, the proposal represents the second and third major period of upbuilding following the town's incorporation in 1903. In the second phase, which lasted through the 1910s, development of more permanent masonry construction emerged in a shift to the west side of the railroad tracks, along the nexus of Main and First Streets. Between the time of the First World War and the beginning of the Great Depression, development was arrested by economic doldrums. A third period of historic development is marked from 1935 to the end of the Second World War. In this decade, local economy was revived by the Owyhee Dam construction project and the introduction of sugar beets as a base industry and stabilizing factor in the economy.

Summary of Historical Development

Nyssa is situated in the Owyhee River drainage on Oregon's eastern borderland, which is joined to the Snake River Plain. Settlement of this arid region had its beginnings in gold excitement of the 1860s, when livestock was raised in the Snake River Valley to serve the needs of miners. Dry land farming in the area was furthered by projects to divert irrigation water from the Owyhee from the 1880s onward.

In 1884, the Oregon Short Line Railroad was completed to link the Union Pacific's transcontinental line to the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company's line constructed from Portland east along the Columbia River. This railroad development prompted a settlement to gather at a service point near the railroad's Snake River crossing in to Oregon. Original commercial development spread along the north-south axis of the railroad tracks which, on entering Oregon, paralleled the north-flowing Snake. The principal east-west cross street was Main Street.

The town of Nyssa was incorporated in 1903 with a population of no more than 100 in order to obtain a tax base for municipal improvements. Main Street and the railroad tracks continued as the defining axes of the developed townsite until 1909, when four additions to the plat were made. These were followed by two additional enlargements, the last of the historic period. Steady growth of agricultural economy brought a population of 500 by 1911, and balloon frame buildings and board walks which characterized the earliest development gave way to masonry buildings, a few of which were two stories in height. Railroad service facilities expanded to include a passenger and freight station. A steel bridge for wagons and automobiles superseded the ferry and gave Nyssa status on the state highway system as a gateway town on the Oregon-Idaho border.

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The Owyhee Irrigation District was formed in 1912, and in due course was authorized to improve the system of open ditches and laterals that distributed water. In 1928, the United States Reclamation Service approved a site for a dam on the Owyhee River, major tributary to the Snake. The project was completed in 1932, and by 1935 the associated works were in place.

In 1934, a strain of sugar beet resistant to whitefly infestation which had plagued the susceptible variety that had been planted experimentally in Oregon's Malheur County as early as 1897 was developed by the Ogden, Utah-based Amalgamated Sugar Company. This break-through, coupled with the Owyhee Dam and reservoir project, resulted in an agricultural boom for Nyssa and environs that reached into the 1940s, bringing with it increased mechanization and enlarged scale of operations. It also brought an increase of agricultural workers displaced from the Plains States during the Depression. In 1938, a sugar beet processing plant was erected in Nyssa which eliminated the oldest commercial area on the east side of the tracks. Industrial expansion resulted in relocation of the old railroad depot and construction of a new passenger station. Pivotal developments of the 1930s thus ushered in a third phase of upbuilding extending from 1935 to 1945.

Development in Nyssa since the Second World War, which is to say after the historic period, has taken its toll in demolition and alteration of early Nyssa building stock. Since the core of the Original Townsite of Nyssa is no longer a place of general commerce, but is instead an industrial corridor along the tracks, town residents seek goods and services in nearby Ontario, the Interstate Freeway border town 13 miles to the north, or 50 miles to the east in metropolitan Boise, Idaho. Nyssa makes a classic study of the decline of a small town commercial center in the post-War era.

Registration Requirements

Properties individually eligible for listing under Criterion C in this context are good, intact, representative examples of vernacular commercial or industrial buildings remaining in the Original Townsite of Nyssa, an area of 22 blocks bounded by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the east, Third Street on the west, Emison Street on the north, and King Street on the south.

To be eligible under Criterion A, a property must represent a contribution to the pattern of commerce or industry in Nyssa in one of the distinct phases which make up the town's overall historic period of significance, 1883-1945. Since no buildings remain from the earliest development phase in the Original Townsite, the applicable phases are 1903, date of the town's

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incorporation, through 1919. The second phase begins in 1935, when--notwithstanding the Depression--a period of stagnation ended with construction of the federally-assisted Owyhee Irrigation Project. The historic period of significance closes in 1945, the conclusion of the Second World War.

Individual Resources of the Proposal

Four buildings have been singled out for nomination in this proposal. They are concentrated in a two-block area of the Original Townsite of Nyssa, mostly on Good Avenue between First and Second Streets.

The two-story **Hotel Western** faces north on the southeast corner of Good Avenue and First Street. It is of brick bearing wall construction above a cast-in-place concrete ground story. Its mass, having a footprint of 60 x 70 feet, and high parapet wall make it a substantial presence on the street corner. The hotel was erected in 1904 in the second phase of town development for investor John F. Reece. It was located at a convenient distance of two blocks from the original rail passenger station. After the station of 1939 superseded the old, the hotel was within a block of passenger trade. It is the best representative of its functional type and vernacular architectural style in the Original Townsite.

Street elevations of the **Hotel Western** reflect a vernacular Commercial-style scheme in which pilaster strips mark the division of two structural bays and windows have segmental arch heads beneath a corbeled denticular cornice. So conservative is the scheme, it harks back to the Italianate style. Wooden storefronts are intact with minor modification of entry placements. Brick stove flues are in place along the parapet wall. A painted sign on the upper facade of the hotel is original. The graphic which adorned the spandrel of the street corner storefront has been effaced. Hotel guest rooms occupied the entire second floor in an H-shaped corridor configuration. There were 14 single rooms and four large suites. Fire damage in the northwest corner called for replacement of lath and plaster with gypsum wall board. The office, dining room and kitchen occupied the east ground story, and the west ground floor traditionally had a mercantile use.

The single-story blacksmith shop commonly known today as the **Green Lantern Saloon** occupies a 35 x 55 foot lot adjacent to an alleyway on the west side of First Street, in the block at cater corners to the Hotel Western. The building's footprint is 30 x 53 feet. It was built about 1906 and remodeled by George Strode as a saloon and restaurant in 1916, at which time the

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original gable roof was removed and a brick parapet was added to increase the height of the interior. The east facade was remodeled in the vernacular commercial tradition with wood storefront having a central recessed entry and full width transom. The building is constructed of brick on top of cast-in-place concrete to a height of nine feet. It best reflects its reconfiguration late in Nyssa's second phase of upbuilding. An Eastlake-style back bar and adjoining cabinet are furnishings dating to this period. Prohibition in 1919 undoubtedly prompted temporary adaptive use, since the building was leased then as a mercantile store. Both as a smithy and saloon, it served basic commerce. The building is a good example of an evolved functional type.

The complex known as **Al Thompson and Son Feed and Seed Company** overspreads five lots, a total area of 150 x 120 feet, in Block 14 of the Original Townsite. The grain-grinding and seed cleaning complex fronts on Good Avenue at Second Street. It is a good representative of the third phase of historical town development inspired by a locally prospering agricultural industry. The historic component of the complex is a one and a half story mill, warehouse and retail store of 1938 which makes up the north front section. This section, recently adapted as the Oregon Trail Agricultural Museum, is of wood post and beam construction, with roof trusses supported wood columns. It was extended at its east end by single bay in 1949. The core component has a stucco and metal exterior. A pellet mill of concrete construction was added at the south end in 1955. Further modification of space came in 1968 with insertion of a batch mixer.

The property's industrial function is announced on the east margin by a file of cylindrical corrugated metal feed bins dating from the 1970s and by elevated hoppers and superstructures of the pellet mill and batch mixer. A concrete ramp and loading dock extends the length of the west elevation, where truck scales are located at the north end. Non-historic, non-contributing features are those freestanding features which post-date 1945, namely the hoppers and storage bins. The contiguous building footprint of 70 x 100 feet cannot be separated by boundaries of a nominated area. This property's significance under the context is that the facility catered to Nyssa's agricultural economy at the time of the boom. Milling of grains locally reaches back to 1917. Only one other mill of earlier date now stands in Nyssa. The Colorado Milling and Elevator Company plant of 1928 has been abandoned. The business entity represented by the nominated facility was founded at a location adjoining the railroad about 1935, but was relocated to make way for the new railroad depot. It operated under various names to 1991. It typifies an industrial plant which grows and evolves as new technologies are introduced.

Vinsonhaler Blacksmith Shop occupies a 45 x 120 foot lot at the northeast corner of Good Avenue at Second Street, facing south onto Good opposite the Thompson Feed and Seed

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Company complex. Built between 1911 and 1938, it best conveys the later part of the third development phase because of its modified street front and an associated feature, a detached garage and sometime dwelling for the shop owner. The 20 x 20-foot garage of brick construction at the rear of the lot dates from the late 1930s or early 1940s and is counted a separately contributing feature of the property. The shop is a single-story longitudinal, gable-roofed volume having a footprint of 30 x 50 feet. Rafter ends of unenclosed eaves are exposed. Walls are cast-in-place concrete construction to the window sills. Upper walls are of brick. The rear gable end is enclosed with shiplap. A stepped false front of wood covers the front gable. Two and three-part double-hung window assemblies have six over six lights and concrete lintels. The business entrance is offset from swinging shop doors ten feet high and covered with corrugated metal. The doors originally appeared as wood panel doors with cross bracing. Their counterparts on the rear face, which facilitate drive-through for vehicles, are intact.

The building has been unused for its original purpose since the mid 1960s. All tools and equipment have been removed along with the forge and its metal flue. This was a general metal working shop for welding and repair of vehicles and farm equipment. Though not actually owned by Bryan Vinsonhaler until 1944, the building is noteworthy for the specialty he developed while working in the shop. He fabricated fold-down attachments for truck beds which were used to the 1970s as a device for unloading beets. The building meets registration requirements as one which catered to the agricultural industry in the historic period.

Potential for Subsequent Listings

This multiple property submission project established a lack of historic district potential in Nyssa's old downtown. Today, the original core conveys layers of development rather than a cohesive, clear-cut period of upbuilding. While, here and there, an unaltered building is seen, the overall feeling is one of disparity in form and scale between commercial and industrial buildings.

Nevertheless, as this project demonstrates, individual properties are evocative of the town's historical development. The multiple property submission identifies, in addition to those four proposed in the initial component, eight properties which potentially meet the registration requirements for the historic period ending in 1945. They are as follows.

The **Malheur County Bank** of c. 1900 at the northwest corner of First and Good Avenue.

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The **Union Pacific Railroad Passenger Station** of 1938 at the foot of Good Avenue.

Nyssa Fire Station at the southwest corner of Good Avenue and Second Street, immediately west of and across Second Street from Al Thompson and Sons Feed and Seed complex.

At the west boundary of the Original Townsite, **Nyssa City Hall**, located on Third Street near the intersection with Good Avenue.

The building occupied by **Farm Services, Inc.** at the southwest corner of the intersection of Good Avenue and First Street, opposite the bank and across First Street from the Hotel Western.

The **Colorado Milling and Elevator Company's Nyssa Elevator** of 1928, which rises at the southwest corner of the intersection of Ehrgood Avenue with the Union Pacific Railroad.

The **warehouse** south of the Nyssa Elevator, on the west side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks.

An **oil warehouse** standing at the northwest corner of the intersection of Ehrgood Avenue with the Union Pacific Railroad.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

The basis for the multiple property nomination for Historic and Architectural Resources of Nyssa, Oregon is the development of the town as a commercial center located on a rail line serving the surrounding agricultural areas. The establishment of the community along the east side of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in 1883 and the early wood frame structures that paralleled the tracks represent the first building phase of Nyssa until 1902. The second building phase is represented by the incorporation of the town in 1903 and the movement of the commercial district to larger masonry structures west of the railroad tracks along Main and First Streets. This phase extended into the 1910s followed by a decline in the area's economy from the late teens until 1935. The third phase of building is represented by the industrial growth of the late 1930s and early 1940s after the construction of the Owyhee Dam (1935) and the successful cultivation of sugar beets for the agricultural economy.

Historic and Architectural resources are eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the context of commerce, agriculture, or industry and under Criterion C as represented the Commercial Style or vernacular architecture. All properties within this multiple property nomination are located in the Original Townsite of Nyssa, Oregon.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING / NATIVE AMERICANS / FUR TRADING - PRE-1840

Nyssa is geographically located on the western Snake River plain which includes the Owyhee River and Boise River drainages. This plain is defined as the ancient lake bed of Lake Idaho consisting of lava and sediments through which millions of years of sinking and filling created a fertile valley floor. About a million years ago, Lake Idaho drained through Hells Canyon to the north creating the plain and deep river canyons.¹ This area is in the rain shadow of the mountains of Eastern Oregon producing an arid climate with 8" - 9" of rain per year, but boasts 142 day long mild growing season.² As the Snake meanders in a northward direction, two other rivers join it about five miles south of Nyssa. From the east, the Boise River which drains the western slopes of the Sawtooth Mountains in south central Idaho, and from the west, the Owyhee River which drains the Owyhee Mountains of southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho.

This area along the Snake River was used traditionally by Native Americans for

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hunting and foraging. The Snakes or Northern Shoshone Peoples fished for salmon along the banks of the river and other Native Americans - Nez Perce and Paiutes - congregated here for trading festivals.³

The Hudson's Bay Company, a British fur trading enterprise, established a fort in 1834 on the east bank of the Snake River 3.5 miles south of the present site of Nyssa and about one mile north of the mouth of the Boise River. Fort Boise served not only as a fur trading center, but to provide a point of contact with Native Americans, and the location of a ferry crossing on the Snake River. The operation of a ferry became an important reference point less than a decade later for migration of emigrants crossing the continent along the Oregon Trail en route to the Willamette Valley of Western Oregon.

OREGON TRAIL / PRE RAILROAD - 1841 - 1883

The Oregon Trail is not a singular route of travel, but rather a corridor of travel consisting of many routes formerly used by Native Americans, early explorers, fur trappers, and missionaries. Many economic and social forces pushed a migration of Americans from the eastern, southern and midwestern parts of the country westward en mass beginning in 1841. Religious fervor, nationalism, and a restlessness for new beginnings in a new land lured an estimated 300,000 emigrants to California and Oregon by the mid 1860s.⁴ Beginning in Independence, Missouri, the primary overland route to the Willamette Valley of Western Oregon brought the emigrants 1,500 miles across the plains and mountains to the east bank of the Snake River at Fort Boise. The ferry crossing of the river marked the beginning of the end of the final 400 miles of the journey across Oregon.⁵ From this river crossing, 3.5 miles south of present day Nyssa, the emigrants pushed northwestward over the rugged mountains leaving the fertile Snake River valley behind.

In 1862 gold was discovered in the Boise Basin 100 miles northeast of Fort Boise and in 1863 in the Owyhee Mountains fifty miles to the south. The excitement over gold not only brought miners, but a supporting cast of suppliers with herds of livestock to serve the miners' needs. The fertile areas along the Snake River valley encouraged ranching efforts. The earliest herds of sheep, cattle, horses, mules, and oxen were grazed in the bottom lands along the Snake, Boise, and Owyhee Rivers in the 1860s and 70s.⁶

Wintering livestock in the Snake River Valley created the need for agricultural endeavors; cultivation of hay being of utmost importance. With the sparse rainfall in the

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area, the first attempts to divert water from small streams to irrigate farmland began in the early 1880s. Efforts to divert water from the Owyhee River began in 1883 with the establishment of the Owyhee Ditch Company. By 1888 a canal and diversion dam were operating. In 1890 the various irrigation districts in Malheur County boasted 22,000 acres under cultivation. The Carey Act of 1894 gave federal land to the states to establish irrigation systems. By the turn of the century the agricultural economy of Malheur County had a base of 49,000 acres of irrigated land.⁷ The cultivation of hay and grains for livestock had also expanded in the 1890s to include orchards and vegetables.

By 1869 the Union Pacific Railroad had established its transcontinental route with the nearest railhead for Eastern Oregon and Southern Idaho at Winnemucca, Nevada. To fulfill the need for an route to connect the Columbia waterway with the Pacific Ocean was the next mission of the U.P. A route had been surveyed following the Oregon Trail beginning in Granger, Wyoming through 600 miles of Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon. These tracks were to link with the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company which was building tracks eastward from Portland, Oregon. By mid October 1884 the line was complete and was called the Oregon Short Line Railroad linking Portland, Oregon and Omaha, Nebraska a distance of 1,820 miles.⁸

RAILROAD ERA 1884 - 1902

In 1883 as the U.P.R.R. was building westward through Southern Idaho into Eastern Oregon, Lennox B. Boyle a supplier for railroad crews, established a homestead site and opened a store near the railroad tracks about three quarters of a mile from the Snake River crossing of the railroad into Oregon. The steam engines, requiring water, made this location along the Snake a good site for water tanks and a section house. The railroad's construction proselytized the ability to make the desert bloom with irrigated farmland. Promotional efforts in Europe and the United States increased the settlement of Malheur County with a growing farm and ranch population. The location of Boyle's store attracted more settlers along the river and within a few years this settlement had acquired a name. An 1887 map of Oregon indicates that the location had been named Nyssa.⁹ Theories as to the source of the name vary. The initials for the New York Stock Sales Association create the name Nyssa. Some attribute the name to the Native American's word for sage brush or

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a Native American female name. The botanical name for the tupelo tree, not native to the area's desert climate, is Nyssa. But the leading theory is that the name was derived from Nyssa, an ancient town in Asia Minor and was so named by the Oregon Short Line Railroad Company.¹⁰

By 1889 Boyle had included a post office in his store to serve the early community and surrounding rural population. The development of the town was focused along the railroad tracks. The tracks run north - south parallel to the Snake River which is one quarter mile to the east. Front Street paralleled the tracks at the east also and it is along this axis that the original commercial district developed. The defining east - west axis of the town was Main Street which crossed the tracks and ended at a ferry point on the west bank of the river. A 1904 photo from the east side of the river shows a stock corral at the terminus of Main Street at the ferry crossing to transport livestock across the river as well.

INCORPORATION AND THE AUTOMOBILE ERA 1903 - 1923

By 1903 the population of Nyssa was 100. The community oriented itself along the railroad tracks and the town's agricultural economy facilitated its incorporation in February 1903.¹¹ Plat maps of Nyssa indicate the Original Townsite encompassed an area of twenty-one blocks: beginning at the northeast at the O.S.L.R.R. tracks and Emison Ave., south seven blocks to King Ave. then west to Third Street, north seven blocks to Emison and east to the tracks. Front Street was not included in the Original Townsite, instead Main Street and the railroad were the distinguishing axes of the incorporated town. An August 1909 revised map of Nyssa indicates four additions were made to the plat of the Original Townsite. Taylor's Addition includes three blocks immediately north of the Original Townsite. Green's Addition consisted of twenty-two blocks located north of Taylor's Addition. Teutsch's Addition expanded the town westward with thirty-two blocks. And the Park Addition at the northwest added twenty-four more blocks. Less than a month and a half later Nyssa platted the Westfield Addition in September 23, 1909 to the west of Teutsch's and the Park Additions. It was not until February 6, 1911 that Ward's Addition was platted east of the O.S.L.R.R. extending six blocks along East Main Street to the Snake River and northward two blocks to Ehrgood Ave. Additional enlargements of the city did not occur until 1945, 1959, and 1960.¹²

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As an agricultural center located along the rail line, Nyssa's economy was linked to other farming communities as well. The railroad extended spur lines to Homedale, Idaho, twenty-five miles south, in 1913 and to Marsing, Idaho, forty miles southeast in 1922.¹³ As Nyssa's economy expanded so did its population. By 1911, 500 people resided in Nyssa. The original wood frame structures that developed and defined the commercial district of the town east of the tracks along Front Street in the late 1800s had been superseded by masonry buildings along the first two blocks of Main Street west of the tracks and along four blocks of First Street between Ehrgood Ave. and Reece Ave. Evident upon the 1911 Sanborn Insurance Map of Nyssa and within the 1911 Malheur and Harney County Directory, a variety of businesses served the needs of the growing community: a railroad depot, two lumber yards, hardware stores, livery stables, blacksmith shops, drug stores, two telephone companies, two banks, insurance offices, general stores, a billiard hall, saloons, hotels, an opera house, a meat market, a barber shop, a cobbler shop, confectioneries, and restaurants.¹⁴

The incorporation of Nyssa provided a tax base for improvements that further defined this desert town. By 1906 street lights were being installed, concrete sidewalks were replacing boardwalks by 1909, and street trees were planted along Main and First Streets by 1910. The Wilson Ditch meandered in a northeasterly direction through town crossing Main Street at Second Street. It was the primary feeder ditch with laterals that provided water to yards and gardens in residential areas. As the use of automobiles increased, the need to bridge the many ditches at street intersections became necessary. The increased use of autos also dictated the demise of the ferry crossing of the Snake River at the end of Main Street. A steel wagon bridge was completed in 1912 which facilitated Main Street in becoming a state highway seven years later.¹⁵ This link to Idaho across the river gave Nyssa a focus not only as an agricultural and rail center, but an aspiring border town that surpassed the other communities on the Snake River along the Idaho - Oregon state line.

AUTOMOBILE ERA / INDUSTRIAL GROWTH 1924 - 45

As Nyssa heralded the completion of the bridge to Idaho, the town embraced other necessary improvements to create a community out of the desert dust. The distribution of water was an evolving enterprise that affected Nyssa's function, appearance, and status as a blossoming town in the Eastern Oregon landscape. As people began to settle the

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residential areas around Nyssa, it was obvious that water service would enhance the attraction of more people. In 1913 an eight inch diameter well, brick pump house, cistern and 50,000 gallon elevated water tank were constructed in the Original Townsite on the northeast corner of South Second Street and Reece Avenue. Water distribution was handled in 8,000 feet of pipe throughout the town. A 10,000 foot expansion of the system occurred in 1921. To further demonstrate Nyssa's commitment to presenting a streetscape that would delight visitors and citizens alike, a water fountain was donated by the Nyssa Civic Improvement Club and was installed at the southwest corner of Main and First Street in 1915.¹⁶

The web of ditches and laterals that provided water to yards became an increasing nuisance with the auto traffic through town. These open ditches also served as a source of communicable diseases coupled with the allowance of livestock within the city limits. As the city water system expanded, efforts were initiated by the late teens to infill the ditches and rely upon the city system for all water needs. Eliminating the ditches eased the street maintenance efforts and allowed for grading and graveling of roads to create a uniform street system. In 1917 a paving district was formed by the City Council to pave sections of Main Street, First Street, Third Street, and Park Avenue. For the remaining dirt streets, a sprinkler wagon was used to control dust during the dry season.¹⁷ The improvements of Nyssa's infrastructure throughout the teens transformed the city from the dusty frontier town of the late 1800s into a proud commercial center.

Nyssa's commercial center was supported by agricultural improvements in the rural desert setting surrounding it. In 1902 the Reclamation Act provided funding for irrigation efforts on private lands. In 1912 the Owyhee Irrigation District was formed, but confusion between public and private interests produced years of stalled attempts to improve the irrigated lands of Malheur County. In 1924 federal authorization was given for improvements of irrigation systems associated with the Malheur and Owyhee Rivers. This employed many local people as the agricultural economy of the area had declined.¹⁸ In 1928 the Reclamation Service approved a site for a dam on the Owyhee River. Construction began and the dam was completed in 1932. By 1935 the associated tunnels, canals and laterals were finished and the fifty mile long reservoir was in service.¹⁹

In 1897 an experimental crop of sugar beets was cultivated in the area to ascertain the potential sugar content of the tubers. A whitefly infestation ruined the crop's production for years until a resistant strain was developed in 1934. The Ogden, Utah

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based sugar company - Amalgamated Sugar - sponsored test plots in 1935 in Malheur County. The great success of the sugar beets coupled with the Owyhee Dam project culminated in an agricultural boom for Nyssa that extended into the early 1940s. Nyssa witnessed the transformation of its agricultural economy and its rural landscape. Small scale farms became larger operations dependent upon the improved network of irrigation, increased mechanization of equipment, and the boom of the sugar beet crop. The area attracted a migration of people in search of better economic opportunities from the severely depressed Great Plains states during the late 1930s. From an industrial perspective, Nyssa itself prospered with the construction of a sugar beet processing plant adjacent to the railroad tracks and its commercial district in 1938.²⁰ The factory became an instant source of employment and an important link in the agriculture cycle of Malheur County.

In contrast to the small towns studied in Barbara Bailey's Main Street, Nyssa does not fit the typical evolution and decline of many northeastern Oregon communities portrayed in the book. Bailey's study notes a decline in prosperity of these towns beginning in the mid-1920s. "By the mid-1930s the economic and social roles of many of the region's main streets were drastically reduced."²¹ The decline of many of the towns in Bailey's study was due to an inadequate economic base, rural depopulation, and increased mobility with the arrival of the automobile.²² Conversely, Nyssa's economic development and increased agricultural opportunities of the mid-1930s far surpassed the communities of Northeastern Oregon of the same time period.

The agricultural boom of 1935 through the early 1940s produced a third phase of construction which redefined the town's built environment again. A 1946 Chamber of Commerce brochure claims that the number of farms tripled in Malheur County between 1935 and 1945 making Nyssa the fastest growing town in Eastern Oregon.²³ As evinced on the 1949 Sanborn Insurance Map, Main Street and First Street define the commercial center. The railroad tracks define a greater industrial core through Nyssa that developed with the agricultural boom of the late 1930s. Front Street, the original commercial area east of the tracks in the late 1800s, no longer exists. The sugar beet processing complex, the Amalgamated Sugar Company, displaced the original Front Street wood frame structures. Main Street, a state highway, no longer has traffic rumbling over the railroad tracks, but through an underpass. The original train depot has been moved to the southeast corner of South Second Street and Reece Avenue for use as a city equipment garage and a new

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streamlined Art Deco style passenger station has been located at the end of Good Avenue. The railroad tracks are lined with warehouses and shipping offices for agricultural products with a host of supporting businesses.²⁴

CONCLUSION

Since the mid 1940s, Nyssa has boasted a new industrial facade created by its third building boom. Its economy has been centered around agricultural products and refining and shipping of those products since then. The commercial district along South First Street has declined with many of its 1903 - 1910s era structures having been demolished. Main Street has retained many of its commercial buildings of the same era, though alterations in recent years have redefined the facades and some demolition has occurred. As a whole, the Original Townsite of Nyssa now focuses on the industrial corridor of the railroad tracks. Commercial enterprises have grown along the highways west and north of town. Nyssa's population of approximately 3,000 now seeks its services in Ontario, Oregon thirteen miles north, and Boise, Idaho, fifty miles east, which diminishes the need for a quality downtown that flourished fifty years ago.

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Description

This multiple property nomination, Historic and Architectural Resources of Nyssa, Oregon, represents properties of significance associated with the commerce, agriculture, and industry of Nyssa. Buildings presented within this historic context are individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and are distinctive examples of the Commercial Style or vernacular architecture that remains in Nyssa. The historic context of this nomination discusses three phases of construction. The first represents the pioneer era, 1883 - 1902; wood frame structures along the east side of the railroad tracks of which there are no remaining examples. The second phase occurred in the Original Townsite of Nyssa, 1903 - the late 1910s. These masonry structures were built in the west side of the tracks along Main and First Streets which became the commercial streets of Nyssa. The third phase of construction is represented by the industrial growth of the late 1930s and early 1940s that occurred in the Original Townsite and in the industrial corridor along the railroad tracks at the east boundary of the Original Townsite.

The architectural character of phase two structures, 1903 - late 1910s, found in the Original Townsite is predominately the Commercial Style or vernacular derivations of the style or simply vernacular buildings. These buildings are one to two stories in height, load bearing masonry, with wood storefronts. The materials used are brick, cast-in-place concrete, structural clay tile, and pressed block or a combination of these. The street facades of the brick buildings typically have a better grade, lighter colored brick with more detailing. The side and alley facades are of lesser grade red brick with no details, except for an occasional faded advertisement painted on the brick. Roof lines are defined by corbeled parapets and side walls step as the roof slopes towards the alley. A few structures retain the wood frame false front at the roof line concealing a gable roof beyond.

The phase two cast-in-place concrete structures of Nyssa, the extant structures being the Hotel Western, the Blacksmith Shop/Green Lantern Saloon, and Vinsonhaler Blacksmith Shop, define a very early use of the material for construction beyond the typical application as used in foundations. In the early 1900s cement was obtained from eastern manufacturing sources, typically the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania and upstate New York. Cement was shipped in sacks to be mixed at the job site. One-yard hand mixers were not in use until the teens. Consequently for the buildings in Nyssa, this meant that

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preparation and placement of concrete was done in troughs and wheelbarrows and raised to the height of the formed walls in buckets. Bulk production of concrete did not occur until the 1940s when large scale processing operations provided ready-mix concrete transported to job sites in trucks.²⁵

Lime production for concrete did occur prior to 1927 near Lime, Oregon about forty-five miles northwest of Nyssa. Lime kilns were located in the area to produce quicklime for concrete on a small scale basis. In 1927 the Ash Grove Cement Company began quarrying limestone at a more intensive level near Lime, Oregon and in 1929 at Inkom, Idaho in the southeastern corner of the state.²⁶

The third phase of construction within the Original Townsite, 1935 - 1945 is represented by larger commercial and industrial scale buildings. The buildings have concrete or steel frameworks spanning greater distances allowing for larger spaces with roof shapes defined by truss systems. These third phase buildings are constructed of concrete block, reinforced concrete, or framing with metal siding.

Significance

The buildings included in this property type are significant under Criterion A for association with the contribution to the patterns of commercial and industrial development of Nyssa, Oregon's agricultural economy. These buildings also are architecturally significant under Criterion C as embodying the styles and characteristics of construction for the defined periods of building that occurred in Nyssa from 1903 - late 1910s and from 1935 - 1945.

Registration Requirements

1. Buildings must be associated with the themes of commercial and industrial growth in Nyssa, Oregon, 1903 - 1945.
2. Buildings must retain sufficient integrity of period, style, and/or construction methods which reflect the significant building phases of Nyssa, Oregon.
3. Buildings shall be a good example of type or style that epitomizes the period.
4. Buildings shall be located in the Original Townsite of Nyssa, Oregon.

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The buildings shall retain strong physical features and be good examples of the style to evoke the historic character of the Original Townsite of Nyssa. As an assemblage of buildings within the Original Townsite, the buildings shall represent one of the two phases of construction that occurred as defined by the historic context period of 1883 - 1945. As there are no extant structures from the first building phase 1883 - 1902, the representative examples shall be from the second building phase, 1903 - late 1910s, and the third building phase, 1935 - 1945. Many of the buildings of these two phases have been altered.

The following list identifies the most intact buildings remaining within the Original Townsite of Nyssa which may qualify for this multiple property nomination in the future. The two blocks of Main Street between First and Third Streets include buildings mainly from the phase two construction period, however, these typically have altered facades which detract from the original design.

<u>BUILDING</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
1. Bank	NW corner of Good Ave. & South First St.
2. Passenger Depot	East end of Good Ave. @ railroad tracks
3. Fire Station	SW corner of Good Ave. & South Second St.
4. City Hall	NE corner of Good Ave. & South Third St.
5. Farm Services Inc.	SW corner Good Ave. & South First St.
6. Colorado Milling & Elevator Co.	East end of Ehrgood Ave. @ railroad tracks
7. Warehouse	East end of Bower Ave. @ railroad tracks
8. Oil warehouse	Between Emison & Ehrgood Avenues @ railroad tracks

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¹ Todd Shallat, Editor, Snake, The Plain and Its People (Boise, ID: Boise State University, 1994), 37.

² Malheur Country History, Volume II. (Malheur County,OR: Malheur Country Historical Society, 1988), 7-8.

³ Ibid

⁴ Judy Fanselow, The Traveler's Guide to the Oregon Trail (Helena, MT: Falcon Press, 1992), 4.

⁵ Ibid., 1-4.

⁶ Malheur Country History, Volume I ,(Malheur County, OR: Malheur Country Historical Society, 1988), 10-11.

⁷ Malheur Country History Volume II , 128.

⁸ Robert G. Athearn, "The Oregon Short Line", Idaho Yesterdays, Vol 13, No. 4 (1969-70), 2-18.

⁹ R.N. Preston, compiler, (Corvallis, OR: Western Guide Publishers, 1972)

¹⁰ Henry Schneider, "Out of the Past," Gate City Journal. While Mr. Schneider was City Manager of Nyssa, he researched the City Council Minutes and wrote a series of articles celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the incorporation of Nyssa. The weekly column began 5 January 1978 and ran for forty consecutive weeks.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Plat Maps, on file at Nyssa City Hall, Nyssa, OR.

¹³ Malheur Country History, Volume I, 22.

¹⁴ 1911 Sanborn Insurance Map, located at Oregon State University, Kerr Library, Corvallis, OR.

¹⁵ Schneider, "Out of the Past", Gate City Journal.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Malheur Country History, Volume I, 37.

¹⁹ Malheur Country History, Volume II, 128.

²⁰ Ibid., 136.

²¹ Barbara Ruth Bailey, Main Street, Northeastern Oregon, The Founding and Development of Small Towns (Portland, Oregon: The Oregon Historical Society, 1982), 155.

²² Ibid.

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²³ Nyssa Chamber of Commerce, Nyssa, Fastest Growing Town in Eastern Oregon. On file the Malheur County Library, 1946.

²⁴ 1949 Sanborn Insurance Map, located at the Oregon State University, Kerr Library, Corvallis, OR.

²⁵ Leonard Bitz, representative of the Ash Grove Cement Company, Boise, ID. The Ash Grove Cement Company originated in 1882 in Kansas City, Missouri. Later facilities were located in Lime, Oregon in 1927 and Inkom, Idaho in 1929. Telephone conversation by author March 25, 1996.

²⁶ Leonard Bitz, representative of the Ash Grove Cement Company, Boise, ID. The Ash Grove Cement Company originated in 1882 in Kansas City, Missouri. Later facilities were located in Lime, Oregon in 1927 and Inkom, Idaho in 1929. Telephone conversation by author March 25, 1996.

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The boundaries for this multiple property submission are defined by the Original Townsite Plat of City of Nyssa, Oregon as incorporated on 24 February 1903. The Original Townsite comprises approximately twenty-one blocks. This area is defined by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks at the east, Third Street at the west, Emison Avenue at the north, and King Avenue at the south. See existing map of Nyssa with outline of Original Townsite.

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This multiple property submission is based on no known surveys conducted in Nyssa, Oregon. The Nyssa Historical Society began this multiple nomination process in 1994 with the mission of nominating six buildings in the Original Townsite of Nyssa Oregon. The concern of the Nyssa Historical Society is to document, nominate, and preserve the history and development of its commercial, agricultural, and industrial heritage. The Historic Context is based on local, state, regional, and national influences. Nyssa, located on the eastern border of Oregon, can be said to be a geographic part of southwestern Idaho; its agriculture and industrial economy are also related to the fertile Snake River Plain which defines a broad area of this neighboring state.

The time frame of the multiple property nomination, 1883 - 1945, is defined by the initial settlement of the site of Nyssa along the newly laid tracks of the Oregon Short Line Railroad (later the Union Pacific Railroad) in 1883. The ending date is subject to the fifty year guideline of the National Register of Historic Places. Significant property types are based upon their function related to the commercial, agricultural, and industrial development of Nyssa. There are no extant resources of the first building phase of Nyssa, 1883 -1902. Styles of the significant properties span two later building periods, 1903 - late 1910s and 1935 - 1945. Integrity of the significant properties was derived from the condition of existing buildings.

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