

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES  
HISTORIC SIGN ON LAVINA STATE BANK  
LAVINA-TEMPLE LODGE NO. 101

The arrival of the Milwaukee Railroad in 1908 established Lavina as an important regional center. D.W. Slayton's Mercantile and L.C. Lehfeldt's Adams Hotel were the cornerstone businesses of the bustling community. Slayton and Lehfeldt, along with Arthur C. Bayers, H.J. Ries, and L. Sandsmark, established a bank to serve the growing region. This two-story frames building, built in 1908, suited the new financial institution. In April of 1908, the bank moved its furniture in, installed the safe, and distributed shares. Chartered in 1911, the bank opened at branch in Ryegate and through the first half of the prosperous 1910's aided homesteaders and ranchers. When the first drought descended on the region in 1918, the bank pulled most homesteaders through. Slayton noted in his diary that the bank "charged off a lot of bad notes." As drought and depression took its toll, the bank-like hundreds of others across the Montana closed in 1923. The sturdy two-story building, however, continued to serve as the post office. As a natural social center, it became the heart of the community where neighbor met neighbor. In 1930, the Freemasons purchased the building and added onto the bank, converting the upstairs space to accommodate their lodge meetings. Lavina Lodge #107, founded in 1916, met on the second floor, and until 1960, the post office occupied the storefront. The Ryegate Temple Lodge #101 and Lavina Lodges combined in 1995 to form Lavina-Temple Lodge #101 and careful restoration of this community treasure. The building today, crisp and clean on the streetscape, evokes the ambiance of another era.