South Side Stories Walking Route

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Route is 1 mile
1 Grain Craft Mill
As you start the route, you will notice the large round metal structures to the north. Opened in 1910, the Russell Miller Milling Co. manufactured 500 barrels of flour a day. Today, Grain Craft continues to mill flour in Billings. Many people on the South Side came for the agricultural opportunities surrounding the area.

"Some districts are well adapted to producing milling varieties of wheat...individual farmers can assemble their crops into large shipments."
- J.D. O'Donnell, former resident

2 King’s Hat/Food
From this corner, you can see the King's Hat sign. Formerly called “Big Boy Drive-Inn”, this local fast food favorite has been in operation since 1951. They are famous for their flying burgers and bee-bop drinks. Food was an integral part of the South Side’s history, and continues to shape its culture.

3 The Railroad Tracks
Without the railroad, there would be no Billings. The tracks provided work, goods, and even entertainment for South Side communities.

"The trains [came] through and they would throw ice off. My mother would send us over... We’d take a bucket or a tub and go get the ice, bring it home, and she would put it in the freezer and make ice cream. Word would go round the neighborhood - Bertha’s making ice cream. We’d have more company than you knew for a while, because she was really good."
- Nellie Foster, resident

4 Little Flower Church & Daycare
In 1948, Little Flower Catholic Church established a parish school. Built by J.G. Link, a prominent Montana architect, the building then served South Side children as a daycare for a number of years.

5 Garfield School
In 1901, Garfield School, across the way, became the 4th school built in Billings. After serving students for 100 years, it was closed in 2001. Today, it houses several community organizations.

"The teachers were very nice. I was kind of young when I went there, not quite eighteen, and so I think that some of those teachers kind of raised me a little bit. We had wonderful teachers."
- Ruth Pfaff, former Garfield School employee

6 South Side Churches
As you walk back down 3rd Ave S., you will see many of the churches which once served mostly German immigrants from Russia. Mexican immigrants and the African-American community had their own congregations on the South Side.

"To carry on our [German] heritage, on Christmas Eve since the beginning of this church, we have a candlelight service. At that candlelight service, we end it with singing Silent Night in German. I know my dialect can’t [be understood] but I think I’m doing it right. (laughs)"
- Leatha Rush, Pilgrim Church member

7 Mary’s Grocery Store
Local grocery stores were vital to early community development, as residents had to walk to purchase their food. At one time, there was a grocery store every five blocks on the South Side. One store was here on the corner of S. 34th and 3rd Ave S.

"We always called it Mary’s...They carried the usual grocery store items...and they had penny candy for kids...that was always one of the places that you could spend an hour of their time picking out something. [They had] malted milk balls two for a penny."
- Tim Ennis, former resident

8 Yegen Houses
Look north to see the historic Yegen houses. Facing each other, the large homes of brothers Peter and Christian Yegen, prominent Billings businessmen, are the only two residences on the National Register of Historic Places on the South Side.

"You have a really incredible mix of industrial buildings, some really interesting multi-family housing units, and some really beautiful old homes. I love the color that people paint their houses and their doors on the South Side..."
- Sidney Ausen, resident

9 Community Diversity
Historically, cultural groups settled together, such as German immigrants from Russia and immigrants from China and Mexico, creating cultural centers within the South Side. These tight-knit communities fostered neighborhood relations that continue today.

"[There is] a lot of culture, a lot of diversity, and a lot of different incomes. I don’t think that it’s just lower income. It’s a range of diversity and culture."
- Solana Pine, resident

10 Highland Park
You are almost back to the starting point at Highland Park! Parks serve a vital function to the South Side community. Families and neighbors often gather to play and strengthen neighborhood relationships.

"We go to [Highland Park] a lot...People are picnicking and then there are kids are all around."
- Cecelia Gavinsky, resident

The South Side Stories Walking Routes are part of the Healthy Neighborhood Project, in partnership with Western Heritage Center.

To find out more, visit the project website:
www.healthybydesignyellowstone.org/healthy-neighborhood-project