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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printers in 12 pitch. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name: M L Ranch
other names/site number: Mason-Lovell Ranch

2. Location

street & number: ( ) not for publication
city, town: thirteen miles east of Lovell ( ) vicinity
state: Wyoming code: WY county: Big Horn code: 003 zip code: 82431

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
( ) private	(X) building(s)	4	0	buildings
( ) public-local	( ) district			sites
( ) public-State	( ) site			structures
(X) public-Federal	( ) structure			objects
	( ) object	4	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this (X) 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. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date: 6/2/92

National Park Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ( ) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official — Date: 5-18-92

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

(X) entered in the National Register. ( ) See continuation sheet — Entered in the National Register — 7/15/92
( ) determined eligible for the National Register. ( ) See continuation sheet
( ) determined not eligible for the National Register.
( ) removed from the National Register.
( ) other, (explain:) _____

for Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic/Multiple Dwelling (Bunkhouse)
Domestic/Single Family Dwelling (Cabins)
Agriculture/Outbuilding (Blacksmith's shop)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Other: vacant; used for interpretation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation Stone; earth
walls Log
roof Wood; asphalt; earth
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary

The ML Ranch consists of four buildings, a bunkhouse, two cabins, and a blacksmith shop located on the original site of the Mason-Lovell Ranch, established in 1883. The ranch site is currently within the boundaries of the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, located at the southern end of the park just east of Bighorn Lake. The buildings are located on a parcel of land that is 5.7 acres in size enclosed by a post and barbed wire fence. All buildings are single-story, gable roofed, and are constructed of cottonwood and pine logs with varied corner notching treatments. The buildings are vernacular in architectural style, each constructed of local materials using local craftsmanship. While a number of other buildings once shared this site, the remaining resources still possess sufficient integrity to convey a strong sense of time and place associated with the early open range cattle ranching industry that once flourished in Big Horn Basin.

Current and Historic Setting of the ML Ranch

The ML Ranch is located thirteen miles east of Lovell, Wyoming on an unimproved dirt road, one-fourth mile east of U.S. 14 Alternate, south of Willow Creek. The four historic ranch buildings are situated at the edge of the foothills leading up to the Bighorn Mountains. The foothills are to the east of the ranch, while the shores of Bighorn Lake flank its western side. The Willow Creek Ditch abuts the fence line to the west of the buildings. On the northern end of the site, the north cabin is situated among the remains of a grove of mature cottonwoods. These trees cluster around the site of Lovell's frame ranch house, no longer standing. A second lane of cottonwoods stands north of the bunkhouse. South of the bunkhouse and blacksmith shop, and in the vicinity of south cabin, are the remains of an apple orchard. The orchard and cottonwoods are believed to have been planted after the ranch established its headquarters there in 1884. The waters of Willow Creek and a natural spring once provided the ranch with abundant water. However in the last few years, all the apple trees and a number of the cottonwoods at the site have died due to insufficient water.

The historic setting of the ranch was also altered by the completion in 1968 of Yellowtail Dam near Ft. Smith, Montana. With the creation of the dam, waters of Bighorn Lake (Reservoir) has at times risen to within three hundred yards west of the buildings; lands to the east of the ML Ranch remains in private ownership. These lands are used for grazing and thus are visually compatible with the early setting of the ranch. The small acreage of the nominated site results from these two factors. While changes resulting from the construction of the dam, reduction of ranch size, and the recent decline of trees has an impact on the post-historic landscape, they do not adversely affect the buildings' overall integrity of location, immediate setting, feeling and association. The general character and feeling of the site is still strongly rural and isolated in quality.

A number of original ranch buildings and structures no longer exist at the ranch site. Missing is a one-and-one-half story frame ranch house constructed by 1900, a 1930s ranch house, an ice house, a windmill, a frame barn (built after 1909), and a log barn. When the original frame ranch house was destroyed by fire in the 1930s, another house was constructed. The 1930s ranch house was subsequently removed in the 1960s by the landowner upon sale of the land to the Bureau of Reclamation.

The barns and pole corrals located south of the bunkhouse no longer stand. A network of fences and gates delineating a horse corral, cattle pens and a loading chute, remained at the ranch until the 1970s when they were removed. These dated from various periods in the ranch's history and undoubtedly included post-historic period construction.

(X) See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
( ) nationally (X) statewide ( ) locally

Applicable National Register Criteria (X) A (X) B ( ) C ( ) D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ( ) A ( ) B ( ) C ( ) D ( ) E ( ) F ( ) G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Agriculture: cattle ranching	1880-1903	1883

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
Henry Clay Lovell	Henry Clay Lovell

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The ML Ranch is significant in the area of agriculture, for its association with the growth of the open range cattle ranching industry in Big Horn Basin during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The four ranch buildings are eligible for the National Register under criterion A, for their association with the establishment and development of open range cattle ranching operations in northern Wyoming. They are also eligible under criterion B, for their association with Henry Clay Lovell, important for his contributions to Wyoming's early cattle ranching industry in the Big Horn Basin. The period of significance dates from 1880, when Lovell established his first camps in the Basin, to 1903, the date of Lovell's death. The year 1883 is listed as a significant date as that is when the ML Ranch site was established as a line camp. The following year it became headquarters for ranch operations.

Cattle Ranching on the High Plains, 1870-1900

The growth of the cattle industry on the Great Plains began in the American Southwest after the Civil War when Texas cowboys began driving large herds along the Chisholm Trail to Abilene, Kansas, the Western Trail to Dodge City, Kansas and the Sedalia Trail to Sedalia, Missouri. Each was the site of a railroad terminus. There the rancher could fetch $35. a head, compared to their market value in Texas of $3. or $4. a head. From those towns, cattle were transported to the stock yards of the Midwest.

Ranching spread from Kansas to Colorado, where 1,000,000 head of longhorns grazed within the borders of the territory by 1869. The cattle frontier advanced to Wyoming in 1868 when a Colorado rancher, J. W. Iliff, drove one of his herds to the plains near Cheyenne. The beef was then sold (at exorbitant profit) to construction crews on the Union Pacific Railroad and to miners prospecting the South Pass region. By 1871 100,000 cattle pastured there, most owned by small ranchers possessing several hundred head. The Panic of 1873 encouraged the stocking of the northern range by lowering the price of Texan cattle. The initial center of the cattle industry in Wyoming was Laramie Valley and in the plateau country just west of the Laramie Mountains. When those areas filled up, ranchers spread herds over most of the territory.

It soon became apparent to cattlemen on the High Plains that the greatest profits to be made were not from local markets, but from those outside their territories. Only two things were needed to expand the cattle industry: adequate markets and improved steers. Both were provided in the 1870s when railroads (complete with refrigerated cars) began to transverse the West, when improvements in meat handling and slaughtering widened the market for beef, and when new breeds of cattle were developed. During the 1870s cattlemen in Montana began driving their stock to southern Wyoming to be shipped by Union Pacific Railroad to eastern buyers. By 1883 600,000 cattle, an equal number of sheep, and a large number of horses filled the territorial range of eastern and central Montana to capacity. Meanwhile, during the 1870s, cattle ranching expanded into the Dakota Territory.

(X) See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bearss, Edwin C. Historic Resources Study, Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area. National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 1970.

Bearss, Edwin C. Historic Structure Report, Historic Data Section and Historic Resource Study, Ewing (Snell) and ML Ranches, and Hillsboro, Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, March, 1974.

(x) See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR 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:
(X) State historic preservation office
( ) Other State agency
(X) Federal agency
( ) Local government
( ) University
( ) Other
Specify Repository:
Rocky Mountain Regional Office; Bighorn Canyon Nat. Recreation Area

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: 5.7 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	724680	4967830
B			
C			
D			

( ) See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the ML Ranch is marked by the fence line (shown on the accompanying site sketch map) that surrounds the ranch buildings. It also corresponds with the UTM reference point A12/724680/4967830, shown on the accompanying USGS map.

(x) See site sketch map and USGS map

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of the buildings historically associated with the operations of the ML Ranch and their immediate surroundings. While the original homestead was 160 acres, this area was the central location where ranching operations were headquartered. Land to the east is privately held; lands to the west were inundated when Yellowtail Dam was built.

( ) See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Gordon, Chief of Interpretation, Bighorn Canyon National Recreation
Kathy McCraney, Historian, Rocky Mountain Regional Office
organization National Park Service date March 5, 1992
street & number Post Office Box 458 telephone (406) 666-2412
city or town Fort Smith state Montana zip code 59035

Description of Individual Buildings
The accompanying site map illustrates the orientation of the extant resources at the ML Ranch and shows the site of Lovell's frame house. Architectural drawings of the four buildings are also included as additional documentation.

The Bunkhouse (Bldg. #12, HS006) is the main resource at the ML Ranch. Constructed between 1883 and 1895, this building was built in three distinct sections, the earliest probably erected in 1883 as a line camp (a shelter used by ranch hands). After Lovell relocated ranch operations to this site in 1884, the building was enlarged and other support buildings were constructed. The last cabin section was completed before 1895. The bunkhouse is a single-story, gabled roofed structure. The three cabins are joined by breezeways or "dogtrots" to form one continuous building, 88 feet long by 19 feet wide. Examples of other historic ranch buildings employing this type of construction are the bunkhouse at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, and the Cunningham Cabin in Grand Teton National Park, both listed on the National Register of Historic places.

The roof of the bunkhouse is now board and batten, supported by five log purlins. The present roof was installed in 1977, when the building was stabilized. Sections of the roof still retain remnants of butting poles which, along with its low pitch, indicates that at least two of the cabins (east and center) were originally roofed with sod. Logs are hewn with half-dovetailed corners in the west section, round and saddle-notched in the east and center sections, indicating through variation in techniques that different workmen may have constructed the building's three components. The bunkhouse has sill log foundations with dirt and framed rough sawn board planking on grade (floors date from 1977).

The east portion of the building was the original line camp; the middle cabin served as the kitchen and mess hall; the west portion of the building was Henry Lovell's office and personal quarters. He continued to live here even after the frame ranch house was built. Both breezeways, once enclosed, were used as drafty additional rooms in the bunkhouse "row", serving as living quarters in fair weather. The bunkhouse served multiple and varied uses during its later years: as a garage, granary, chicken coop, smokehouse, stable, and barn. As a consequence, the interior walls have been heavily modified.

A description of each of the three cabins that form the bunkhouse follows:
The east cabin was used as quarters for cowboys; they slept in double-pole bunks built against the north and south walls. The east cabin's interior measures about 18 feet by 17 1/2 feet. The walls are cottonwood log, with saddle notched corners (intermixed with some V-notching). The exterior was daubed with mud. The north wall has a window opening which had a single multiple pane sash. The opening has been boarded up. The east wall has a sawn opening for a "Willow chimney" or "cat-and-daub chimney", the first few feet of which was a saddle notched log firebox. All mud and stick construction has "melted" away. This opening was covered over in 1977. The hearth for the fireplace still remains. The south wall has one long low window opening that once held several sliding sash. In the west wall, there is an opening for a door that leads onto the covered east breezeway.

The original door was installed with wood pegs. This doorway was widened at some point in the building's history to allow passage of cattle when the structure was used as a barn. In 1977 a board door was constructed to close the opening. Tacks and leather washers remain on the ceiling, evidence of a cloth ceiling once tacked to the beams. Hooks in the rafters probably date to the period in the building's history when it was used as a smokehouse.

(X) See continuation sheet

A plank floor of random width rough sawn pine lumber was laid in 1977, although a 1975 structure report states that the floor had probably remained earthen during the cabin's history. Interior walls, chinked with quarter-split poles, show remnants of faded newspaper and evidence of whitewash.

The east breezeway is open on both the north and south sides. It is 13 feet wide, and is unfloored. Both walls of this open ended area show evidence of nails and screw-in hooks having been placed in the walls for hanging tack and other items.

The center cabin's interior measures about 21 feet by 17 1/2 feet, and is separated by a 6" log partition, creating two rooms. The east section is 14 feet wide, and the west one is 7 feet 6 inches. The walls and roof of the cabin are similar in construction to the east cabin. During the historic period of the ranch, the east room was the location of the cookstove and mess hall, while the west room served as a storage area. One-inch holes in the walls of the storage room probably once supported shelves used to hold utensils and supplies. The east wall has a doorway that has been widened to accommodate cattle. The south wall had a single window that matched the window opening in the north wall. Sometime after 1930 this window was enlarged into a doorway and another window was cut into the western wall. In the west wall, like the east, the south facing doorway was enlarged to accommodate cattle. The 1975 structure report noted evidence of a cloth ceiling along with traces of interior whitewash. While the eastern portion probably always had a dirt floor, there is evidence of old board flooring in the west room. The center cabin now has a random width, rough sawn pine floor in both rooms.

The west breezeway is open on the north and south ends. It is unfloored, and 12 feet wide. Like the other breezeway, the walls show where nails and hooks were in place for hanging items. During the 1977 stabilization, several of the sill logs in the flanking walls of this part of the bunkhouse were replaced.

The west cabin was, until Lovell's death, his office and sleeping quarters. This section of the bunkhouse is thought to be the last addition to the bunkhouse, except for the breezeways. Its inside dimensions are 17 1/2 feet square. The logs are hewn and laid up in 4 inch walls with half-dovetail notching. It shows different and more sophisticated workmanship than the other two cabins of the bunkhouse, in that their logs are round and have saddle notched corners. The practice of building with hewn logs and half-dovetail notching was introduced by Mormons who started to immigrate to the area during the 1880s, later resulting in the establishment of the town of Lovell. The workmanship on this cabin hints that Lovell may have hired this emigrant labor for this cabin's construction. The cabin sets on four cornerstones at grade, while the rest of the walls rest on sill logs. The bottom logs in the north and south walls are notched for floor joists, and the cabin is floored with rough sawn, random width pine. (This cabin is the only one of the three that appears to have had a floor during the historic period.) The north wall has a single window opening with evidence of a single-hinged sash. The east wall has the only door that has not been widened after construction. This door opens onto the west breezeway. The south wall had a single window opening enlarged to a 6'8" x 6' door at some time when it was used as a farm building.

The walls of the cabin have had whitewash, newsprint and colored whitewashes used on them over time. Leather washers and tacks still hold remants of muslin in place, evidence that the west cabin once had a muslin ceiling.

(X) See continuation sheet

The Blacksmith Shop (Bldg. #13, HS437) was constructed about 1883 and measures approximately 17 feet by 17 1/2 feet. This is a square, single story, one room, gable roofed building built on earth. Of all the buildings at ML Ranch, this building was in the poorest condition when ownership was transferred to the National Park Service. The roof had collapsed except for the cottonwood log ridgepole, four lodgepole pine rafters, and remnants of pole and split pole ribbing. Stabilized in 1977, the low pitched roof was rebuilt and covered with sod. The walls are of lodgepole and ponderosa pine, with saddle notched corners. Exterior walls are daubed with clay. Interior chinking of 1/4 split poles is pegged in place with small wood wedges. There are no windows in the building. The north wall has a door which was boarded over prior to 1977. The north wall has a centered doorway that may be original. The east and west walls have no openings. The south wall has had most of the wall removed and thus evidence of its original appearance has been lost. While no floor now remains, a partial floor once existed at the northwest corner of the cabin. The interior of the building is heavily smoked. Frank Smith, who began working for the ML Ranch in 1900, reported that this structure was the blacksmithy.

The North Cabin (Bldg. #14, HS5438) was constructed about 1895 and measures about 15 feet by 17 feet. The single story, one room, gabled roofed log building has square notched (lap joint) corners. Chinking between the logs is mortar. While the exterior log walls are round, they are hewn on the interior. The cabin is supported by corner stones and sill logs at grade. The 1975 structure report says that the roof is not original to the cabin, and probably replaces an earlier sod over pole roof. Presently the roof is rolled asphalt over plywood, installed in 1977 when the building was stabilized. The gable is vertical board and batten. The north wall has no openings; the east and west walls each have one window without sash. The south wall has a doorway which now has a rough sawn, random width pine door. The cabin has a dirt floor.

During the 1920s and 1930s the building was used as a kitchen by Mexican farm workers harvesting sugar beets destined for a refinery in nearby Lovell. Both north and south cabins are constructed in a manner in which they could be easily moved, and no documentation is available to prove they are on their original locations.

South Cabin (Bldg. #15, HS439) is also believed to have been constructed about 1895. It housed married employees of the ranch. Due to its proximity to the old apple orchard, it has also been called the "orchard cabin". Its dimensions are approximately 17 feet by 16 1/2 feet. This is a square, single story, one room, gable roofed building. Walls are log with square notched corners, chinked with mortar, resting on corner stones at grade with sill logs. The roofed was reconstructed in 1977 and is rolled asphalt over boards; like the north cabin, may have once been sod over poles. The roof gable is board and batten. The north and south elevations each have a single window opening; both are enlarged top and bottom to hold a much larger sash, now missing. The west wall has no openings. The east wall has a single doorway which has been reduced in height and may have held a transom window at some period. The interior is a single room with a board floor. Interior chinking is cement plaster. The walls show evidence of whitewash, newsprint, and green, then tan limewash paint. Window and door openings have trim and there are baseboards along the floor.

(X) See continuation sheet

Integrity of ML Ranch Buildings
The buildings have been subjected to numerous uses and modifications during their long history. While the interiors (particularly the bunkhouse) retain some important clues to the history of the buildings, they are otherwise not considered to be significant. Most of the alterations to structures are confined to interiors, and to changes in size and shape of windows and doors (one exception being that the north and south cabins roof construction may be different from the original). Original windows, doors and floors are missing from the buildings. New (but compatible) materials have used since 1977 for facing gables on the north and south cabins, and for rebuilding windows, doors, and floors. For these reasons, these buildings lack sufficient integrity of materials to qualify for nomination to the National Register under criterion C. The qualities of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association are still inherent in these buildings however, and their ability to evoke the past is strong. They retain sufficient integrity to meet the requirements for registration under criterion A and B.

The western cattle industry depended almost entirely on the free use of government land for grazing. While a five-thousand acre unit of land might be adequate, a homestead of 160 acres was hopelessly insufficient. Many cattlemen on the High Plains first acquired title to small amounts of land along streams where they established their headquarters. The principal acts under which these lands were obtained were the Pre-emption Act, Homestead Act, Timber Culture Act, and the Desert Land Act.

By 1885 cattle raising was the largest and most important industry on the High Plains, with foreign investors and eastern speculators eager to profit from it. Conditions seemed to promise fabulous profits to cattlemen. The land was free, carpeted with grass, and far from meddlesome government agents. Plenty of young men scraped together the necessary capital, bought stock at $7 or $8 a head, and searched for a homestead. Sites along the bank of a stream were preferred, since water and grass were essential. A healthy steer would fetch between $50. and $60. at the nearest railroad, thus after three or four years, ranchers could expect to be making a tidy profit.

Cattle grazed the open range, later to be restored to their rightful owners during the "roundup", held twice a year to separate mixed herds and identify new-born calves. The roundup, and life of the cowboy, became heavily romanticized by the Eastern imagination, later glamorized in literature and movies. In reality, the cowboy (and the rancher) lived a life of dull routine, doctoring sick animals, moving herds from one pasturage to another, and "line-riding" - an attempt at keeping one ranch's herds from another's.

Most ranchers and cowboys hailed from the same eastern and midwestern states as immigrant farmers. In Wyoming, the Census of 1880 listed 311 "stock growers" and "ranchmen", the majority having been born in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Missouri and Illinois. Most of the 101 foreign born cattlemen came from England, Canada, Ireland, Germany and Scotland. Of the 669 cowboys listed, most came from Ohio, Illinois, New York, Missouri, Iowa and Pennsylvania. Many cattlemen lived in cities or towns, rarely having contact with their hired hands.

Stock-breeders associations were co-operative enterprises designed to protect the interests of the cattlemen. They reflected both the cattleman's tendency toward self-government and his fear of range overstocking. They functioned to keep intruders out of stocked ranges, supervise roundups, run down "rustlers", fight prairie fires, offer bounties for wolves, and protect members' brands. Local organizations spawned territorial Live-Stock Associations which eventually spread throughout the Great Plains by 1885.

Between 1880 and 1885 the cattle industry experienced a boom period, due in part to expanding markets and to propaganda that urged easterners and Europeans to seek their fortunes in ranching. During 1883 twenty stock-raising corporations were formed in Wyoming, representing capital of $12,000,000. Most consolidated existing smaller ranches. The Scottish-owned Swan Land and Cattle Company used cash raised by sale of stocks to Eastern investors to combine three ranches in eastern Wyoming into a hundred-mile estate with 100,000 cattle. English and Scottish investors poured money into corporations that competed with American companies for range rights and cattle. More public land was filed for in Wyoming in 1884 than in all the previous fourteen years put together.

The result of this boom was overstocking of the range, spelling imminent disaster for the cattle industry. The cattle population in Wyoming went from 450,000 in 1879 to 1,500,000

(X) See continuation sheet

in 1885. Experienced cattlemen recognized the arid plains could only support large herds when weather conditions were exceptionally good. Pasturage wore thinner each year, and all the Plains were by now pre-empted. Some fenced the range to protect their own pastures from intruding cattle. Few bothered to purchase the fenced land; they simply enclosed part of the public domain. Some Wyoming ranchers bought additional land from the Union Pacific or from speculating pre-emptioners. Others tried to circumvent laws by getting cowboys to claim a homestead whose title was later transferred to their employers.

The prosperity came to an abrupt halt in 1886-1887 after a hot, dry summer followed by a bitterly cold winter ruined most cattlemen of the Northern Plains. Those who were able to sell their weakened stock before the onset of winter were lucky. It is estimated that one-third of all northern range cattle died that winter. Montana and Dakota were hardest hit. The cattle industry faced another catastrophe in the spring when cattlemen of the Northern Plains attempted to sell stock that had survived the brutal winter. Drought had also plagued the cattle ranches of the Southwest and Midwest causing the market to be flooded with thin cattle. Prices dropped to record lows.

Losses of cattle during winter of 1886-1887 in Wyoming were about 15 per cent. The huge Swan Land and Cattle Company in Wyoming went bankrupt in 1887, followed by the Union Cattle Company in 1888. Banks in Cheyenne, Douglas and Rawlins, Wyoming closed. Membership in the Wyoming Stock Growers Association (organized in 1873) went from 443 in 1886 to only 68 in 1890. Wyoming's Governor Moonlight reported to the Secretary of the Interior in 1888 on the economic disaster: "This was the turning point in the history of Wyoming." Those who survived the disaster usually had diversified business interests to sustain them through it, enabling them to rebuild their herds. While the cattle industry continued to play a major role in the economy of several western states, the glory days of the Cattle Kingdom and their barons were over. Thereafter, greater care was taken to provide cattle with water, feed and shelter, and management of the herds improved.

Cattle Ranching in Big Horn Basin and the Role of Henry Clay Lovell - 1879-1902
Cattle ranching developed in the Big Horn Basin a decade later than in the southern part of Wyoming. Surrounded by high mountains, far removed from railway connections, and under threat of Indian uprisings, its relative isolation discouraged earlier settlement. After the U.S. military confined the Sioux and Cheyenne to reservations (with the help of Crow allies), herds of cattle were quickly pushed by cattlemen into the northeastern part of the territory. Ranching first came to Big Horn Basin in 1879 when Charles Carter brought an estimated three thousand Oregon cattle to the junction of the North and South forks of the Stinking Water. In 1880 three other men trailed large herds into the Basin: Captain Henry Belknap, an Englishman, brought a herd from Montana to the South Fork of the Stinking Water; a German named Otto Franc brought a herd from Montana to the Greybull River; and Henry C. Lovell trailed his first herds into the Basin from Kansas.

Henry Clay Lovell was born on December 4, 1838 at Climax, Michigan. His father, Enoch, was a farmer. At the age of 14 Henry left home and headed for the southwest. Lovell worked his way to Texas, for a time conducting government mail wagon trains from Fort Dodge, Kansas to Mexico City. This job left him with three bullet wounds and a knife wound, the result of attacks on mail wagons by outlaws and Indians. He entered the cattle business in north Texas, the Indian Territory, and Kansas. There he formed a partnership with Anthony L. Mason, who provided the capital for their cattle operation. Lovell is reported to have scouted out the Big Horn Basin in 1878. The following year, he trailed a herd from

(X) See continuation sheet

his Crooked Creek camp in southern Kansas to Wyoming. In 1880, he and his drovers trailed two large herds of Texas cattle from Kansas, locating them on the west side of the Bighorn River. There he established a ranch three miles above the mouth of Nowood Creek known as Lovell's home ranch. In 1882, Lovell trailed in three more herds from Oregon, totalling 12,000 head. That year he established a second ranch on Shell Creek, at the mouth of Trapper Creek. The combined Texas and Oregon herds totalled an estimated 25,000 head. In 1883 Lovell selected a third ranch site at Five Springs, on the east side of the Bighorn River. Operations at the home ranch above Nowood Creek were soon removed to this site. The Trapper Creek ranch was retained for wintering horses. The ranch at Five Springs soon became the base of operations for the ranch and was known as the ML Ranch, after the brand used on Mason's and Lovell's cattle. It was not until 1888 that Mason and Lovell secured legal title to the land on Willow and Five Springs Creeks. At that time, Mason deposited a desert land certificate of registration for 400 acres. Additional acreage was purchase by the ML Ranch in later years.

The ML Ranch was typical of the large cattle outfits of the 1870s and 1880s. The ranch headquarters was located on a small tract of deeded land which had a good source of water. The cattle grazed on the public domain and on lands leased on the Crow Reservation. From the ranch headquarters, cowhands rode out on roundups that lasted many weeks. Lovell's early outfit included Riley Kane, and a foreman, "Mexican" Johnnie Goodall. Lovell furnished his workers their horses, but they had to provide their own saddles, bridles, and blankets. The cattle were trailed to Billings across the Crow reservation, a trip that took ten days from the Lovell range east of the Bighorn. At Billings they were either sold to buyers or shipped to commission houses at Omaha or other midwestern markets.

In 1883, Lovell made a trip to St. Louis, Missouri where he met and married Miss Bertha Clara Collins, a school teacher from Potosi. Lovell, at age 45, was reportedly old enough to be her father. (Anthony L. Mason was also twenty years his wife's senior.) Rather than ask his new bride to live in the primitive conditions of the camps in the Basin, Lovell purchased several lots in Block 58 on North 27th Street in Billings, Montana where he built a frame house. Their only child, Willard Tatum Lovell, was born on July 7, 1885. Bertha's health failed after the birth and she died on March 5, 1888. Willard was soon sent away to be raised by his father's two sisters, Susie and Hattie Lovell of Topeka, Kansas and other family friends. In the 1890s Willard lived for a time with the H. W. Mund family of Billings. When making visits home, the boy stayed with Lovell's cook and housekeeper, Lettie Ruble, in the frame ranch house, constructed by 1900.

Many others rushed to establish choice locations in the Big Horn Basin, so that the area was fully stocked with cattle by 1884. Prior to the completion in 1883 of the Northern Pacific Railroad to the more northern shipping point at Custer Junction, cattle being shipped to eastern markets from the Big Horn Basin had to be trailed 200 miles south to the Union Pacific. The first shipment from Big Horn Basin over the Northern Pacific was made by Henry C. Lovell during the autumn of 1883. He rounded up 3,200 head, trailed them across the Crow Reservation to Custer Junction, where they were allowed to graze and put on weight. At the end of September, a thousand of the fattest steers were shipped east. A month later, Lovell shipped another thousand, and by November, the remainder were loaded into cattle-cars headed eastward. Lovell is reported to have received $45. a head for his steers from the buyer, the Marquis de Mores. After 1883, Custer Junction, Huntley, and Billings became the most important shipping points for Big Horn Basin cattle.

(X) See continuation sheet

The harsh winter of 1886-1887 exacted a terrible toll on the range industry in the Big Horn Basin, as it did the rest of the High Plains. Lovell estimated that one-half of his herd died of exposure and starvation. Nonetheless, the herds in the Basin recovered, and by the early 1890s the cattle population outnumbered that of the 1880s. Herds were rehabilitated by the importation of thoroughbred cattle, by adopting summer mountain top grazing, and by cultivating more acreage for winter feed, as ranchers grew increasingly dependant on winter feeding of cattle and less on the open range. Lovell is reported to be the first rancher in the Basin to plant alfalfa crops, irrigating his land with water diverted from Willow Creek and Five Springs Creek after 1886. Lovell began mountain top grazing his cattle in 1888, driving them up into the Bighorn Mountains for the summer, which contributed to the rebuilding of his depleted herds. In 1890, Lovell purchased a few choice Hereford bulls for $450. each, and some Hereford heifers at $300. each. These were some of the first high-grade cattle to appear on the Basin range.

While the winter of 1886-1887 signalled a reversal of fortune for many ranchers in the Basin, three other significant factors led to the decline of open range cattle operations. First, an increasing number of farmers competed for land, significantly reducing the amount of public domain available for open-range grazing. By the 1870s settlements had been made in Johnson and Sheridan Counties, east of the Bighorns. By 1883, a few settlers with small herds of cattle took up land along the upper Greybull and Wood rivers. By 1893 it was obvious that a clash between the interests of farmers and the cattle barons was imminent.

A second factor that threatened cattlemen in Big Horn Basin was sheepmen. They too were attracted to the Basin, which in some ways was better suited to grazing sheep than cattle. Sheep could be raised with half the effort and twice the profit as steers, tempting some cattlemen to make the transition from cattle to sheep. Other cattlemen resisted fiercely, claiming that sheep ruined the land for cattle by close cropping grasses. Otto Franc complained in 1900, "ours used to be a great cattle country, but it is mostly sheep now, and they are driving the cattle out. I used to run 20,000 cattle on my range; now I keep 1,200". By 1897 there were more sheep in the Big Horn Basin than cattle. In 1899 there were only 21,810 cattle in the Basin, while sheep numbered 387,014.

The third factor that led to a decline of the open range cattle industry in the Basin was a prolonged slump in market prices for beef. The price of beef never fully recovered from the disastrous lows of 1887 and prices paid for beef continued to decline during the 1890s. As a result of all these factors, the number of Wyoming cattle decreased from 900,000 to 300,000 between 1886 and 1896. This characteristic pattern of decline of open range ranching due to pressure from settlement, sheepmen, and depressed beef prices was repeated throughout the High Plains, in one ranching community after another.

The ML Ranch was the largest cattle ranch in the eastern part of Big Horn Basin. During the heyday of open range, the ranch ran 25,000 head of cattle, ranging from Thermopolis in the south to Pryor Gap in the north. The ranch typifies many similar profitable unions in which the "know-how" of a cattleman was combined with the assets of a financial investor from the east, in this case Anthony L. Mason. There is no record of Mason ever having visited the ML Ranch. When Mason died in 1892, the big outfit was dissolved, with most of the assets derived from selling all the cattle and horses going to Mason's heirs.

While the ranch never regained its earlier prominence, operations resumed a few years later. In 1894 and 1895 Lovell, along with Riley Kane and Mike Rohan, trailed in several

(X) See continuation sheet

thousand head of cattle from eastern Washington to restock the range. In 1895, Lovell was successful in getting a post office established (named Kane) which operated at the ranch site until 1908. Mike Rohan succeeded Joe Brosius as the ML's foreman, keeping the books while also assisting Lovell in his new role as postmaster.

Lovell was helpful in getting a post office established in 1888 at the ranch of Josiah Cook, which was named after him. When a town was founded in the area in 1901, the community retained the name of Lovell, in honor of the prominent pioneer cattleman. (The town is 15 miles west of the ML Ranch.) Henry Clay Lovell died of chronic heart disease on March 2, 1903 in Portland, Oregon and was buried in Billings, Montana. The ranch was passed on to his son, Willard T. Lovell, then a minor. The ranch holdings at that time comprised 2,273 acres of land, about 1,000 head of cattle and 20 horses. Upon reaching age 21 in 1907, Willard Lovell assumed responsiblity for managing the ranch. He and his new wife Isabel lived in the frame house for a time, then moved to the new town of Lovell. Their first son, named Henry Clay Lovell, was born in 1905; a daughter (Isabel) was born in 1907, a second son (who died in infancy) was born a few years later, and a second daughter (Jane, b. 1914).

Willard and Isabel Lovell sold the ML Ranch in 1909 to Christian and Peter Yagen of Billings, Montana. The Lovell family then moved to Billings where Willard entered the insurance business. Foremen were hired by the Yagen Brothers to continue running the ranch, caring for cattle, and raising alfalfa and hay for winter feed. A new frame barn was constructed near the the earlier log one (both now gone). The Yagens sold the ranch in 1917 to the Willis and Charles Spears of Wyoming who already had large ranch holdings in the Big Horn Basin. After the first year, the new owners turned to raising sheep which soon outnumbered cattle. Heavily encumbered by a mortgage for $60,000, the ranch was sold by the Spear Brothers Company in 1922, thereafter changing hands a number of times before it was purchased by the Bureau of Reclamation in the early 1960s. Lovell's cabin in the bunkhouse was used for a time by the U.S. Forest Service as the Five Springs Ranger Station. In 1966, the ML Ranch buildings and the small parcel of land on which they are sited was acquired by the National Park Service. The ML Ranch is now open to visitors for self-guided tours.

The four ranch buildings are all that remain of the headquarters of one of Big Horn Basin's earliest and the Wyoming Territory's largest cattle ranches. (There is only one other ranch in the area that dates to the Basin's earliest days of ranching, and that is the Pitchfork Ranch, started by Otto Franc and still privately owned and operated.) The ML Ranch resources are intimately connected with the productive life of Henry Clay Lovell as they were constructed and used during the years his prominence as a Wyoming cattleman was at its peak. While Lovell's frame house was built during his ranch tenure, he seldom stayed in the house, preferring to sleep in the west cabin of the bunkhouse. No buildings remain at the site of Mason and Lovell's other two camp sites on Nowood and Trapper creeks. The only other residence associated with Lovell was the one he built in Billings, Montana which no longer stands.

The archeolgical significance of the ML Ranch is not known. An archaeological survey was conducted in 1977 by Midwest Archeological Center in the immediate area of the four remaining buildings, in advance of building stabilization work. Nothing of importance was discovered at that time. Not evaluated to date are the privies that are located in the vicinity of the old frame ranch house, the bunkhouse, and the two cabins.

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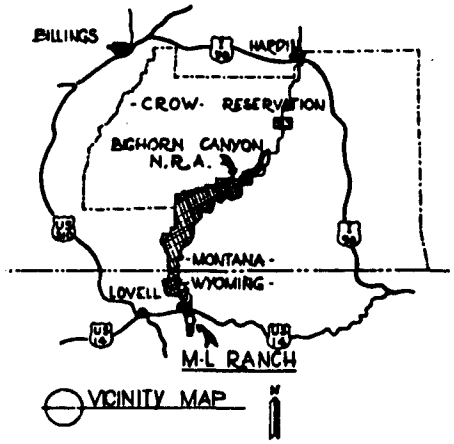


340'
180'
200'
480'
420'
740'
540'
620'

SITE H.C. LOVELL HOUSE

NORTH CABIN #14

SITE OF ICE HOUSE

SOUTH CABIN #15

SITE OF ML CORRALS AND LOG HORSE BARN

BUNKHOUSE #12

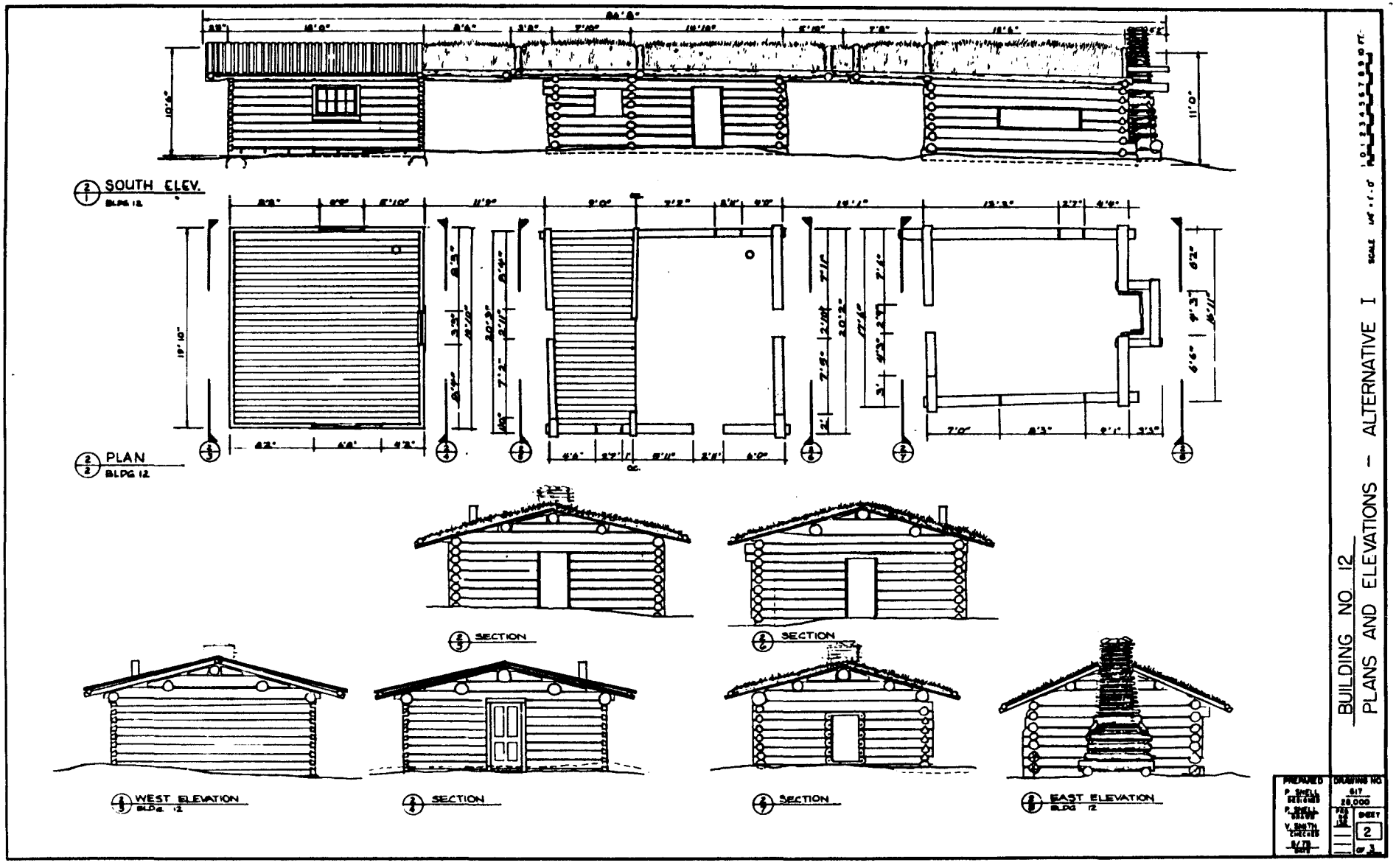
BLACKSMITH SHOP #13

N

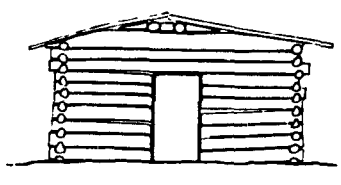
1" = 50'

M - L RANCH SITE

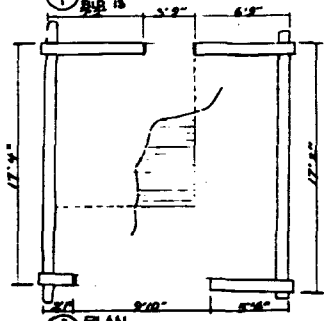
BIGHORN CANYON NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



SOUTH ELEV.
BLDG 12
PLAN
BLDG 12
SECTION
SECTION
WEST ELEVATION
BLDG 12
SECTION
SECTION
EAST ELEVATION
BLDG 12
BUILDING NO. 12
PLANS AND ELEVATIONS - ALTERNATIVE I
PREPARED
DRAWING NO.
617
28,000
SHEET
2
OF 3

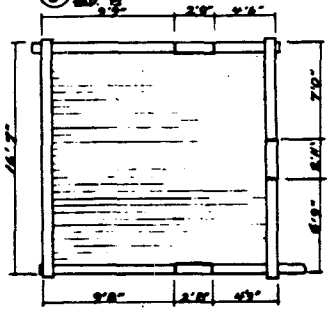


3/1 NORTH ELEV.
BLDG. 13



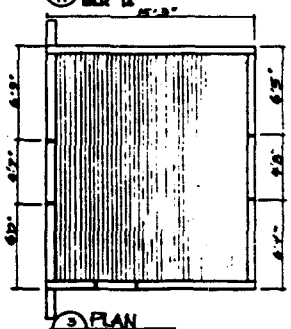
3/2 PLAN
BLDG. 13

5/6 NORTH ELEV.
BLDG. 15

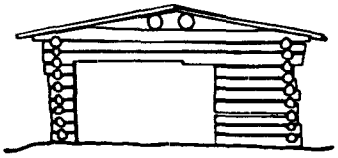


3/7 PLAN
BLDG. 15

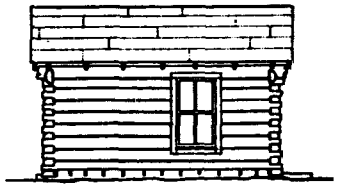
3/11 NORTH ELEV.
BLDG. 14



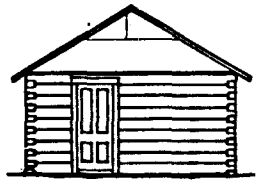
3/12 PLAN
BLDG. 14



3/3 SOUTH ELEV.
BLDG. 13

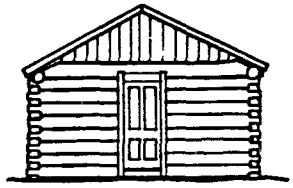


3/8 SOUTH ELEV.
BLDG. 15

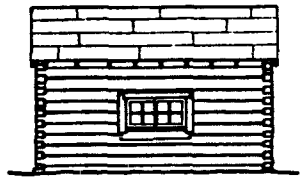


3/13 SOUTH ELEV.
BLDG. 14

3/4 EAST ELEV.
BLDG. 13



3/9 EAST ELEV.
BLDG. 15



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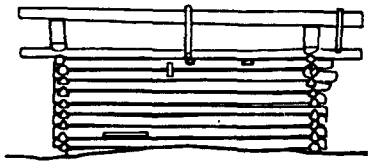

3/5 WEST ELEV.
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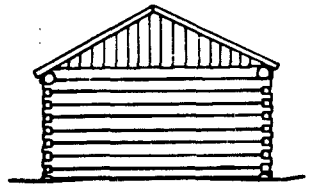
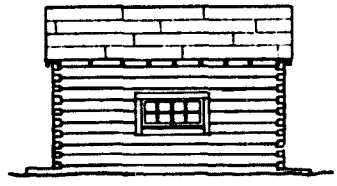


3/10 WEST ELEV.
BLDG. 15



3/15 WEST ELEV.
BLDG. 14

BUILDING NO. 13 BUILDING NO. 15 BUILDING NO. 14

PLANS AND ELEVATIONS – ALTERNATIVE I

SCALE 1/4"-1'-0" 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 FT

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92000836 Date Listed: 7/15/92

M L Ranch
Property Name

Big Horn **WY**
County **State**

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Antoinette J. Lee
for **Signature of the Keeper**

7/16/92
Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

Period of Significance: The Period of Significance is corrected to read: 1883-1903.

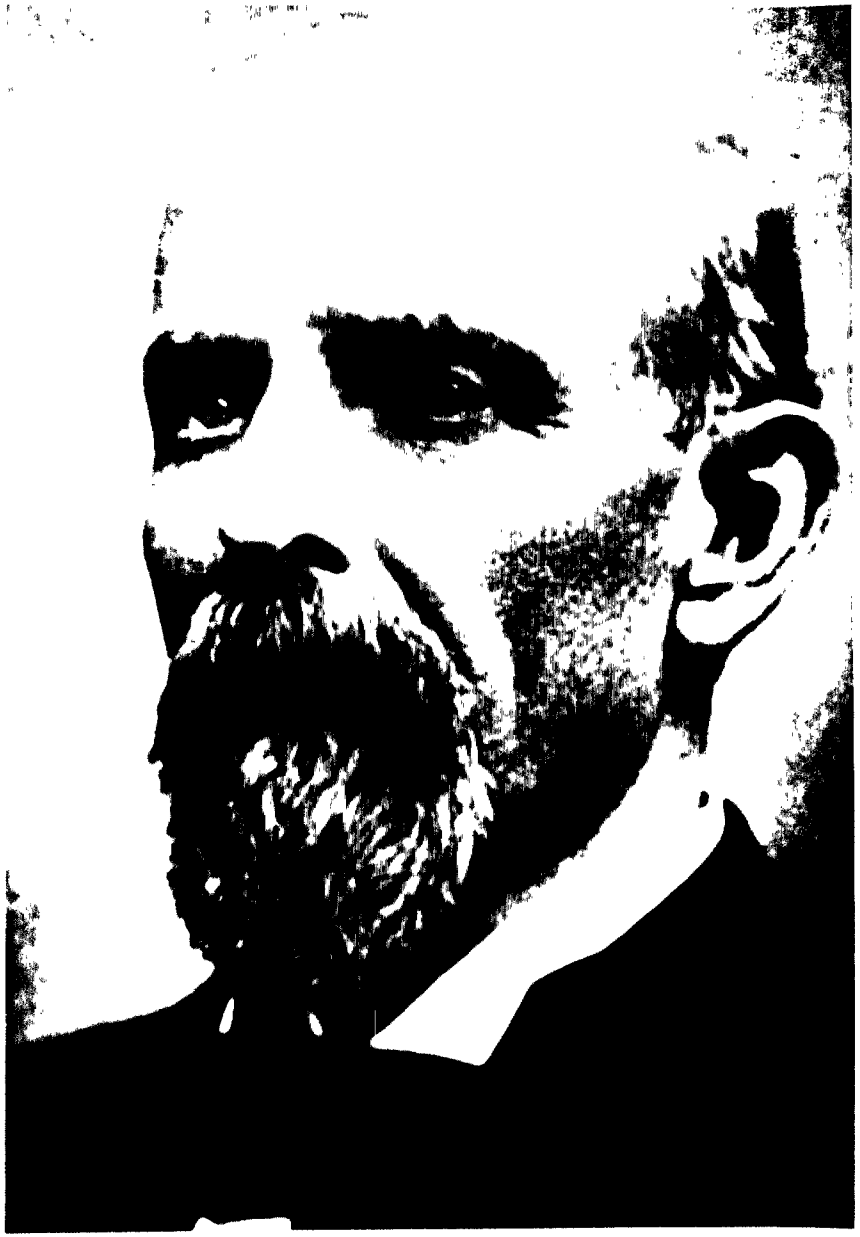
This information was confirmed with Kathy McCraney, Historian, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

18 Lovell frame house, to NW

19 Lovell frame house, to N

20 Bunkhouse with crew, to NE (west and center cabins)



21 Henry Clay Lovell

22 Anthony L. Mason

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number photographs Page 1

ML RANCH LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

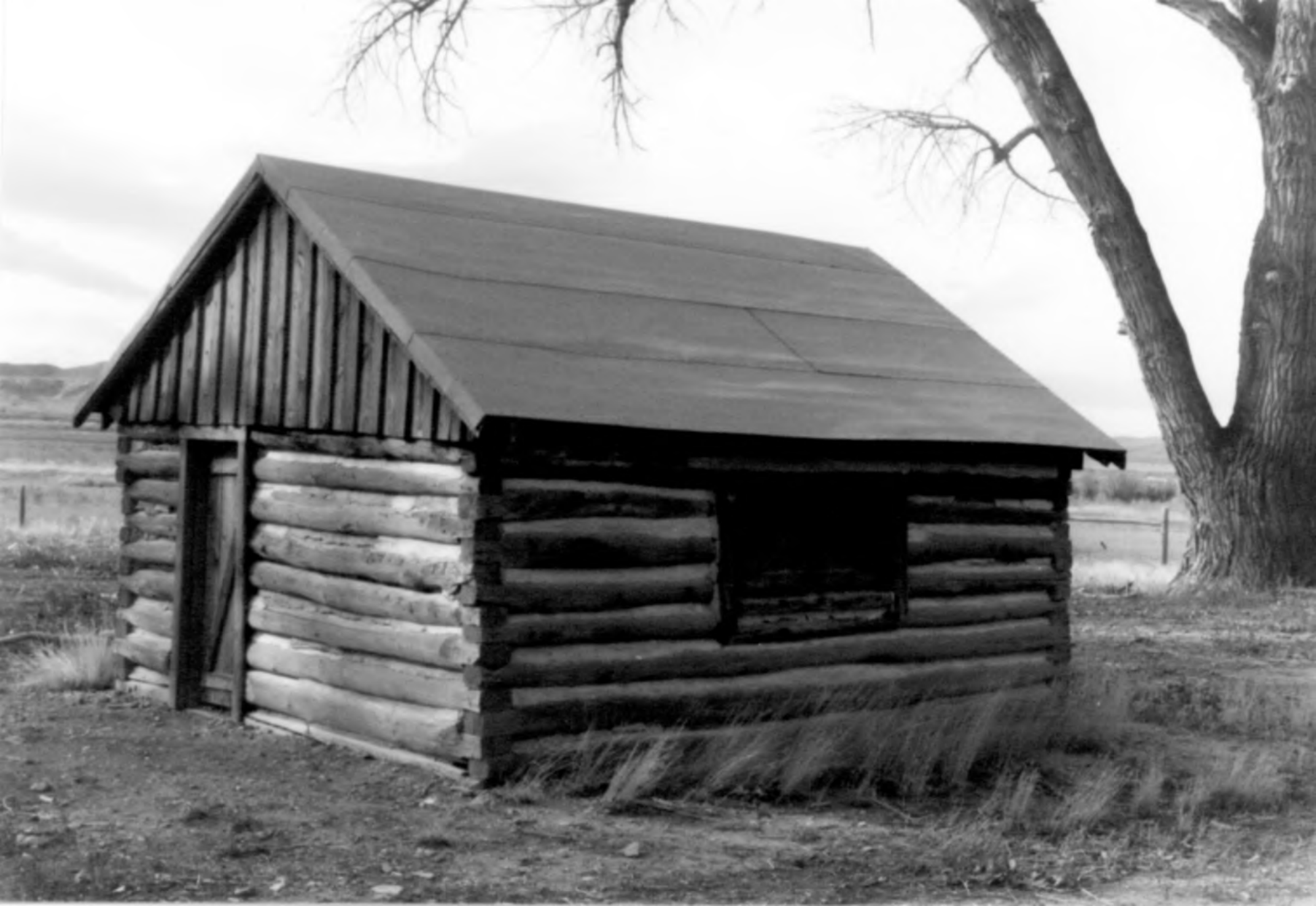
The following information is the same for photographs #1-#17 listed below:

Name of Property: ML Ranch
Location: thirteen miles east of Lovell, Wyoming
Name of Photographer: James Staebler
Date of Photographs: February 29, 1992
Location of Negatives: Bighorn Canyon National Park headquarters, Fort Smith, Montana

Photograph No.	Subject	Direction of View	Other Comments
1	landscape	to E	view to E of ranch, Bighorn Mountains, toward Medicine Mountain
2	landscape	to NW	shows all buildings
3	landscape	to N	view to N of ranch, Pryor Mountains
4	Bunkhouse (#12)	to N	
5	"	to NE	taken from Blacksmith Shop
6	"	to NW	east cabin
7	"	to NW	center cabin
8	"	to NW	west cabin
9	"	to NE	east cabin
10	"	to NE	center cabin
11	"	to NE	west cabin
12	North Cabin (#14)	to NE	
13	"	to NW	
14	"	to SW	bunkhouse, cottonwood stand in background
15	South Cabin (#15)	to N	
16	"	to W	blacksmith shop seen in background
17	Blacksmith Shop (#13)	to NE	bunkhouse, cottonwood stand in background

ML RANCH LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS, CONTINUED

All original historic photographs (#18-#22) belong to the collection of a local historian, Mrs. Frances Burrell of Lovell, Wyoming. The exact dates of historic photographs, names of the photographers, and location of original negatives are unknown. Mrs. Burrell believes photos #18, 19, and 20 to have been taken after Lovell's death (1903); if that is so, the unidentified child pictured in two of these could not be Willard Lovell. Copies of these photographs are located at the Bighorn Canyon National Park office in Fort Smith, MT.

Photograph No.	Subject	Direction of View	Other Comments
18*	Lovell frame house	to NW	built by 1900; burned in 1930s
19*	Lovell frame house	to N	
20*	Bunkhouse with crew	to NE	The man next to the child is probably George King, ML Ranch cook.
21	Henry Clay Lovell		portrait
22*	Anthony L. Mason		portrait

*These are photocopies.