

CUNNINGHAM HOMESTEAD

STOP 1

A homestead of 160 acres formed the nucleus of J. Pierce Cunningham's Bar Flying U Ranch. Over the years Cunningham and his wife Margaret increased their holdings to 560 acres. Primarily they raised cattle, but Pierce also served as county commissioner, postmaster, justice of the peace, game warden and civic leader during his forty years in Jackson Hole.

STOP 2

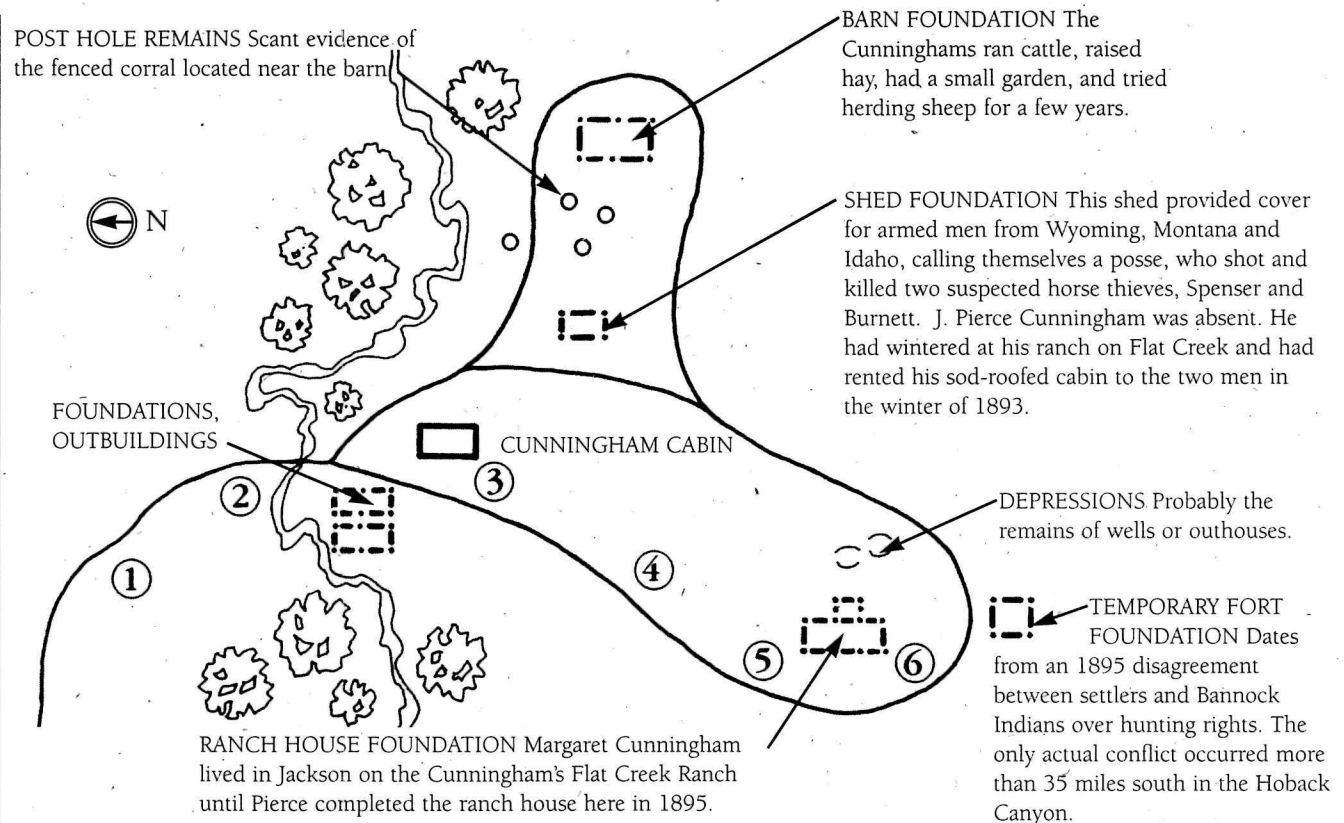
Pierce and Margaret Cunningham arrived in the valley before 1888 and established this homestead in 1890. They were one of the first families to settle in Jackson Hole. The soil probably attracted the Cunninghams to this site. It is a rich, fine-grained mixture of water-deposited silt from the Mount Leidy Highlands, and wind-blown loess deposited before the last glaciers melted. Because of its composition, this soil contains more nutrients and retains more water than the coarse cobbled soils on much of the valley floor, making this site better suited for hay production and pasture.

Some animals also favor fine-grained soil. Numerous burrows indicate badgers and coyotes prefer the area because the soil is easily worked for tunnels and dens. Plentiful water and nutrients create a food supply for Uinta ground squirrels, which in turn are a food for badgers, coyotes and birds of prey.

STOP 3

Cunningham cabin is an architectural form called "dog-trot," an eastern term applied to southern Appalachian cabins by visitors who saw the ever present dogs lounging on the veranda. Successive generations of pioneers used this cabin style as the frontier moved westward across the continent. A "dog-trot" cabin consists of two log boxes, joined and covered by a single gable roof, forming a two-room log cabin with a roofed veranda in the middle.

An open veranda between the two rooms probably resulted from a need for ventilation in the hot summers of the South. In the cold climate of Jackson Hole, one or both ends of the veranda were usually closed off. If the building was used as a house, generally one room



served as a kitchen and the other a bedroom/living room. If it was a barn, it was commonly called a "double crib," with one crib for livestock and the other for feed and implement storage. Pierce used the cabin as a residence until 1895, when he converted it to a barn and smithy.

Log construction techniques were well suited to a forested frontier. A homesteader needed only a broad axe to build a strong and long lasting shelter. It went up fast with a minimum of tools and materials. Cutting or "corner timbering" the notches which hold the cabin together without a nail or peg required great skill. In developing areas a specialist was often available to cut these notches to fit perfectly. Cunningham cabin has a "saddle-V" notching system, also called a "saddle and rider" corner.

In pioneer fashion, Pierce made changes to meet the difficult challenges of frontier life. This cabin depicts a way of life that molded much of America's culture. American homesteaders like Pierce Cunningham were inventive and individualistic. Yet, they recognized the value of traditional methods.

STOP 4

In November of 1928, Margaret Cunningham wrote a letter to her friend and former neighbor, Lucy Shive. Her letter reflects the hardship and frustration the Cunninghams endured just before they sold the ranch and moved to Idaho. Mrs. Cunningham's letter was edited and donated by Francis Judge, granddaughter of Lucy Shive, and wife of a former Chief Ranger in Grand Teton National Park.

My Dear Lucy and Jack and family,

Your letter came some little time ago. I was awfully glad to hear from you and to know that you are all well. You gave me quite a shock in your letter you headed it Moran, Wyoming. I wondered if you were up there but the P(ost) mark was in Nevada. We are having lovely weather so far. The ground is nearly covered with snow but it is warm if it don't snow for another day the ground will be bare.

Poor old Emile was buried Friday at Moran Cemetery. I just happened to think of it. No one asked the Allens if he could be buried there maybe they will make them move him. (Wouldn't that be terrible).

He died at 15 to 9 Wednesday morning. Willie came over and told us. We went over after dinner. Mr. Enyon, Dillard Newland and myself. Pierce could not get the car working good. Willie came over about 11:30 stayed for dinner and well as I said we went over. Went in where he was. They had him all dressed up necktie and all.

Poor old man, it was a good thing for him and I guess maybe for the family for Mrs. Wolf did have a hard time.

He would have been buried without any doings whatever, but Mr. Enyon and myself decided to have a preacher and one song, but there was no preacher in the country. So then I thought I would get a Mormon but no Mormon could I find, so I finally wrote a piece and had Mr. Enyon read it and Mrs. Miller and Kate Taylor sang a song—very nice and I rustled up a firing squad and boy to play taps and everything was I guess fine after all. Mr. R.E.M. said it was a splendid funeral and the way he wanted it when he died. He said the reading was far better than a preacher. He took the piece home to publish it in the paper, so if you take the paper you will see it and if not I will send it to you enough of poor Emile, he is gone.

I am afraid we are not going to get away from here this winter we have all our stuff yet on our hands. Cattle and Horses and Hay. We can sell the cattle but that is about all so we may have to stay here all winter. We have talked of buying the Victor Hotel they are trying to sell it to us. We have got to do something and don't know what.

We may go downtown and get a place and get into something we can't tell yet. Edecks are still in their place and going to stay all winter they don't know what to do.

Dillard Newland was over here yesterday he says they have deeded Fred Topping and George their ranches

back. Erickson bought up the Kuschice Mortgage of Freds and George gave him a quit claim to his so they are just as bad off as they were before. Erickson has notified Newland to move I don't know where they will go. No house around here for them. He says he won't but we will see. If they can make him move he will go.

Rudy bought 3 mink for \$150 two of them have diéd so he has one for \$150. He thought he was going to get rich in the fur business. He went over and persuaded Sebiner to come and share the wealth with them he promised him two months wages. They were going to catch a heap of mink they have traveled now nearly two months and have caught not one thing.

The cattle men in here lost alot of their cattle they was nearly all of them in that blizzard at Green River and Rawlins their cattle was not fed for 48 hours. Si lost quite heavy. They always wait until the last dog is hung before they start over that hill.

Will Delony beat Fessler to the Legislature and guess Charley is sore he thought he had a walk away.

Carpenter is elected assessor. I am trying to fill up the rest of the paper with news but I am afraid I can't about run out.

J.P. don't feel any too good tonight. I think he wants to get out of here. The roads are awfully bad now.

Old Jack Enyon got 7000 instead of 5000 of Johnson if I were in his place I would sell anything loose and vacate.

Dick Ohl had a broken arm but I guess it is allright now I never see them or hardly ever talk to them anymore on the phone.

Now do write soon I will do better next time, I mean in answering promptly not in length.

Give my love to all the family.

Love to All
Margaret and Pierce
Maggie and Jiggs
as the Enyons and Newlands say.

STOP 5

Fences, like buildings and letters, tell stories about the people who built them. They are the product of traditional ideas, available materials and the function they serve. Fences around the Cunningham ranch are locally

called "buck and rail," a name that probably relates to the X shaped supports or crossbucks. Buck and rail fences require no post holes which are difficult to dig in the stony cobble soils of Jackson Hole. Buck and rail fences reflected the resourcefulness of settlers like the Cunninghams who used readily available materials, in this case the abundant lodgepole pines.

STOP 6

Seventy years ago, a living, working cattle ranch operated with people and animals contributing to the bustle of activity around the various buildings. Where is the barn, once filled with the smell of hay and the sound of restless horses stamping in their stalls, the corral where the air rang with shouts of hands breaking horses, the ranch house where Mrs. Cunningham prepared hearty meals? In a sense they are still here, dimly outlined in the grass, marked by a row of foundation stones or broken posts.

Ranchers in this part of Jackson Hole barely made a living in the early 1900s. Long winters with deep snow and difficult marketing conditions created marginal ranch operations. Pierce and Margaret Cunningham were pleased to sell their land in 1928 and move to Idaho.

Difficulties in achieving success led other Jackson Hole ranchers to switch from cows to "dudes." One old timer remarked, "Dudes winter better than cows." Dude ranching brought recognition that scenery and recreation were two of Jackson Hole's greatest resources. Strong support from many local dude ranchers helped establish Grand Teton National Park in 1929, to protect much of the Teton Range. The Jackson Hole portion of the park was added in 1950. Today the "dudes" far outnumber the cows.



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