



Keys' Desert Queen Ranch

Joshua Tree National Monument

PRESERVATION STUDY



Prepared by
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National Park Service
Western Region

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The Desert Queen Ranch (also known as the Bill Key's Ranch) is a complex of 29 structures representing agriculture and mining in the Mojave Desert. The Ranch was entered on the National Register in 1975 at the local level of significance.

Most of the buildings were erected with material scavenged from abandoned mines and shacks and almost all are of very sub-standard structural design, eg. lacking foundations.

In 1975 as a US Bicentennial project it was opened to the public with conducted tours and has been a popular interpretive site since. In 1976 a Curatorial Training Course was held at Keys Ranch which surveyed the numerous artifacts at the ranch and selecting objects to add to the park collections. This year, with assistance of a Structural Engineer and Historical Architect, three structures which had structurally failed (but not fallen) were stabilized for visitor safety.

Major question exists as to the feasibility of preserving the structures of flimsy construction without alternation to structures they never were or permanent structures. This would result in a major change in appearance and intergrity. Visitor interest and interpretation of the complex remains high. We hope to address the issue in a General Management Plan for Joshua Tree which could address all aspects of the complex issue to determine what is prudent and feasible in the public interest.

The difficulties involved in interpretation of Keys' Ranch are no less appalling. Keys' Desert Queen Ranch has been accurately described by one observer as "a magnificent junkpile." If the Ranch were to be cleaned up to the point that it was neat and picturesque, or even to the point where it was safe for visitors, it would not accurately represent the appearance during Keys' occupancy. If it is opened to visitors without being cleaned up, it possesses many safety hazards and "attractive nuisances" aside from the question of the structural integrity of the buildings. If opened to visitors with valuable historic artifacts left unsecured around the property as Keys had them, it would prove difficult to control theft.

Keys' Ranch is unquestionably of local historic significance. If he had been quite typical of the "Desert Rat" sort of itinerant prospector who frequented the mining regions of the Southwest, perhaps a case could be made for expensive preservation of these structures as illustrating the life of a once typical but now vanished type of American. But Keys was not typical--he was in many ways unique, and certainly he was unique in the Joshua Tree region. Consequently, even though Keys' Ranch is of local historical significance, we believe that it is not feasible to preserve the structures due to their original and present flimsy condition.

It is the recommendation of the Historic Preservation Team that no funds be applied to stabilize Keys Ranch buildings, but that the effort instead be directed to documenting the structures by mapping them in detail, by preparing measured drawings of the buildings, and by detailed photography.

In addition, the artifacts and objects of the ranch area represent a unique and important technological resource which requires planned actions. A suitable, professional-level program of collection, preservation, and curatorial care should be designed and funded. During and after these two projects, the Ranch area should be closed to the public and the buildings which present potential hazards removed after study.

The site could then eventually be returned to its natural state, except for the dams whose removal would require further study. Documentation of the site through mapping, measured drawings of the buildings, and detailed photographic coverage would preserve the story of William F. Keys and his ranch and serve at least partially to mitigate the loss of the ranch itself.

Introduction

This study of William F. Keys' Desert Queen Ranch in Joshua Tree National Monument was commenced on September 16, 1974, by the Historic Preservation Team, Western Regional Office, National Park Service, San Francisco, at the request of the Superintendent, Joshua Tree National Monument, for the purpose of recommending stabilization and preservation measures.

The Team visiting Joshua Tree National Monument consisted of Regional Historian Gordon Chappell, Historical Architect Robert Cox and Regional Archeologist Roger Kelly from San Francisco. The Team also studied the Wall Street Mill and the Ryan Ranch, which are the subject of separate reports.

Feasibility of Historic Preservation of Keys' Ranch Buildings

A very basic question regarding the feasibility of historic preservation of the Keys' Ranch buildings needs to be addressed. The Historic Preservation Team is of the opinion that preservation of the Keys' Ranch buildings as an historic site is simply not feasible.

In the first place, this is a group of old, poorly constructed and disintegrating structures, none of them possessing architectural significance. The repairs specified in the report on each building represent only temporary patchwork. The Park will be faced with a continual maintenance problem with these structures. The constant drain of funds for work which is only temporary seems inappropriate.

It is not possible to restore these structures to a satisfactory structural condition because they never existed in such a state. All of these buildings are of patchwork construction and most were probably built of salvaged material. None of them is structurally sound enough to accommodate a steady stream of visitors, and if the Service were to rebuild any of them to the point where they were structurally sound they would be historically inaccurate because they would be more substantial than at any time when Keys used them. Furthermore, they were exposed to varying degrees of weathering and decay before acquisition by the National Park Service, so that stabilization is insufficient to represent the Ranch at the peak of Keys' career there, and even more expensive restoration and reconstruction would be necessary for that purpose.

It is possible to adopt a middle course between stabilization and preservation, that is, taking only steps in stabilization of the buildings which are designed to hold the buildings for several generations, acknowledging that their flimsy character is such that short of complete reconstruction, it is impossible to prevent ultimate loss of the resource.

The problem then is where in terms of both time and money to draw the line on measures designed to accomplish merely a delay in loss of this resource. The ranch is unquestionably of local historical significance, but is this level of significance sufficient to justify any expenditure? We do not believe that in this case it is.

A decision of management is needed regarding the feasibility of preserving Keys' Desert Queen Ranch. If the decision of management is, in accord with the above recommendation, not to preserve Keys' Ranch, full compliance with Executive Order 11593, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Public Law 89-665) of 1966, and the "Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties" of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (as published in the Federal Register, Vol. 39, No. 18, Friday, January 25, 1974, pp. 3366-3370) will be required. Measures mitigating the loss of this resource, such as are outlined in this report and in the above legislation, will be necessary, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation must be afforded an opportunity to comment on the proposed loss of this resource and measures designed to mitigate the loss. These measures would resolve the problems involved and indicate the future direction of management with respect to Keys' Ranch.

Location

Keys' Desert Queen Ranch is located in a tributary valley to the Lost Horse Valley between the "Land of Rocks" and the Little San Bernardino Mountains in San Bernardino County, California, within the boundaries of Joshua Tree National Monument. The ranch buildings lie in the eastern half of the northwest quarter of Section 32, Township 1 North, Range 8 East on the U.S. Geological Survey's 1955 Twentynine Palms 15 minute quadrangle map. The ranch is at an approximate elevation of 4200 feet.

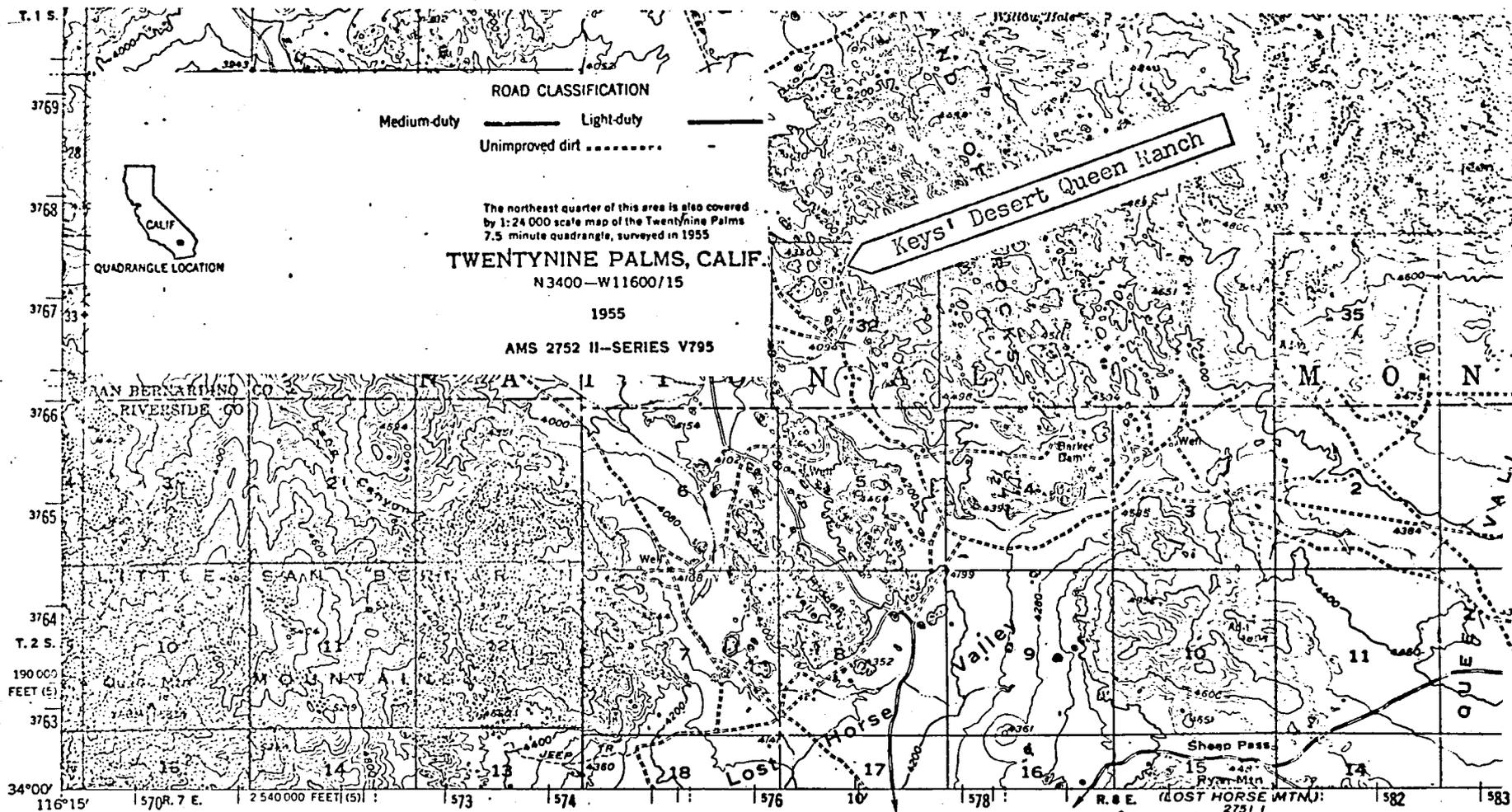
Aboriginal Sites

Aboriginal cultural deposits on the ranch headquarters property include several recorded archeological sites, both open and within natural rock shelters. There is also a segment of an historic native trail, and a "weariness shrine" of rocks near the trail. These resources should remain intact.

William F. Keys and the Desert Queen Ranch

The history of Keys' Desert Queen Ranch began long before William F. Keys came to the Twentynine Palms region. Oliver Smith introduced the first cattle into the area in 1870, running Texas longhorns of mixed origin in the vicinity of Quail Springs until 1876. Three years later, William and James McHaney brought more Texas longhorns into the region, driving them up the Santa Ana River, and down Mission Creek, arriving at the Oasis of Mara (later to be known as Twentynine Palms) in 1879. For awhile, the brothers ran cattle near Cabazon, with winter quarters at Seven Palms in the Coachella Valley. Bill was a gregarious sort, described by those who knew him as a likeable little fellow, courteous, sincere, serious, and well able to take care of himself. He easily befriended the local Indians, some of whom later taught him about the trails in the high desert and showed him the location of springs and water holes. According to local tradition, one chief, Captain Jim Boniface, showed him gold, possibly gold originating from the lode later known as the Desert Queen Mine, although McHaney never played a role in that mine's development. He was especially intrigued by rich gold "float" found in Gold Park, ten miles south of the Oasis of Mara, whose "mother lode" he sought unsuccessfully for the rest of his life.

Jim McHaney, Bill's brother, was not the likeable, easygoing sort, and began shifting from the legitimate cattle trade into a sideline of rustling cattle, a practice of which Bill disapproved, and the two parted company. Jim lived in the area until his death about 1907.



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Medium-duty ——— Light-duty ———

Unimproved dirt - - - - -

The northeast quarter of this area is also covered
by 1:24 000 scale map of the Twentynine Palms
7.5 minute quadrangle, surveyed in 1955

TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIF.

N3400-W11600/15

1955

AMS 2752 II-SERIES V795



T. 1 S.

3769

3768

3767

3766

3765

3764

3763

34°00'

T. 2 S.

190 000

FEET (5)

116°15'

157 R. 7 E.

2 540 000 FEET (5)

573

574

576

578

582

583

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

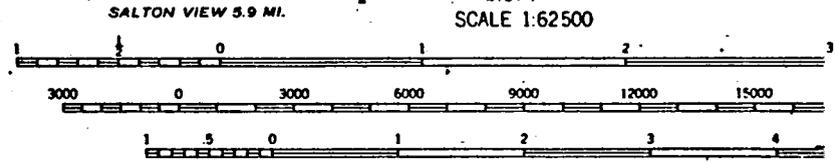
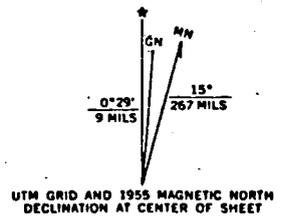
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
and by planetable surveys 1954-55. Aerial photographs taken 1937 and 1952

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000 foot grids based on California coordinate system, zones 5 and 6

Dashed land lines indicate approximate locations

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 11, shown in blue



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 20-FOOT CONTOURS
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

Reproduced by permission of U. S. G. S.

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR WASHIN
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON R

(THOUSAND PALMS)
2752 IV

Bill split his time between running a few Texas longhorn cattle, using the Queen and Lost Horse Valleys as his range, and prospecting, and he established the ranch later owned by Bill Keys. When he settled on this site is a question which requires further research. It may first have served as a supplementary camp for running cattle when McHaney headquartered nearby at Cow Camp. It was apparently McHaney who built an adobe barn, an adobe bunk house and an adobe cookhouse at the location in 1894. Whether there were earlier buildings is not known. Paradoxically, 1894 was about the time Bill McHaney sold his cattle interests to George Meyers, although McHaney apparently maintained ownership of the ranch homestead himself. (Meyers continued in the cattle business until 1905 using the "CH" brand, and that year sold out to C.O. Barker, who used the "CO" brand; Barker merged during the late 1920's with a San Bernardino County Sheriff named E.L. Shay, and they improved their herds with Hereford stock.)

It was in 1910 that Bill Keys first came to the Twentynine Palms region. He was a colorful individual who by then had already spent many years wandering around the Southwest as an itinerant cowhand and prospector. Keys was born on September 27, 1879, at Palisade, Nebraska, the son of Quaker parents who had moved there from Virginia. When he was fifteen, in 1894, he left home, and never saw his family again. He worked for awhile as a ranch hand, then went to the Colorado Rockies, where he was first exposed to mining fever. In 1898, he moved to Phoenix, Arizona.

In Arizona, Keys worked for the C.W. Wimmel cattle ranch for one summer, then went to Prescott and from there to the copper mining town of Jerome, where he was employed in the mine and smelter for the next two years. After 1900, he moved to Needles, California, working again as a cowhand on George Briggs' cattle ranch. Many of Keys' fellow cowhands were Hualpai Indians, and during this employment Keys learned much about Indian ways. He learned their language well enough that many assumed that he was part Indian himself. In 1901 and 1902 Keys worked for the Conrad-Knight Cattle Company near Kingman, Arizona, east of Needles, and served as deputy sheriff for Mojave County Sheriff Henry Loven. Pursuing his duties as deputy, Keys acquired an intimate knowledge of much of northern Arizona and southern Utah.

When Knight sold out his interest in the cattle ranch, Keys hired out at the Gold Roads Mine near Kingman. But after a sedentary year as a mine employee, he decided that life as a wandering prospector was more to his taste. With five men of similar inclinations, he crossed the Colorado at Sheep Trail Mill above Fort Mojave, prospecting the area around Piute Springs and Manvel (Barnwell), and at Piute Springs he developed a small silver mine. At Manvel, they all hired out at the Keystone Mine in order to raise a stake,

and there Keys met Walter Scott, who was headed for Death Valley with a grubstake and seven burros.

After a year at the Keystone, Keys and Matt Amos had sufficient money saved to finance another prospecting trip, and they went to Soda Lake, near which they developed a marginal gold mine called the Gold World.

Goldfield, Nevada, meanwhile, had become a booming gold town in 1904, and the attraction of the new mining region was too much for them to resist. However, finding a population of more than 15,000 people there, most of them prospectors, they headed south towards Rhyolite. Their luck was no better at Rhyolite, and Matt Amos gave up and went back to work for the Keystone at Manvel. Keys then started off by himself as a lone prospector into the inauspiciously named Funeral Mountains. Near Timbowa Springs, south of the Lila C. borax mine, Keys located 12 claims, including the Desert Hound, the Horseshoe, the Gold Bug and the Tally-ho, which he commenced to develop with the aid of two Indians, Panamint Tom (Indian Tom) and an Indian named Bob Belt.

About that time, Walter Scott, better known by his nickname of "Death Valley Scotty," camped at Timbowa Springs, and renewed his acquaintance with Bill Keys. Scotty was a colorful individual whom a wealthy mining financier had backed with money from time to time. In 1905, for example, Scotty had chartered a special train on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and operated a headline-making record-breaking run from Southern California to Chicago. Now, in 1906, Scotty had other plans. He had made the acquaintance of a number of New York men who were inclined to invest in profitable western mines, and Scotty was eager to sell them one. As Keys remembered it, "Scotty had done some big talking about a mine he was supposed to own." The only trouble was that he owned no such mine. But Keys did own a mine, in fact at least a dozen mining claims, even if none was in fact as wealthy as the fictional claim in Scotty's tall tales. Scotty and Keys agreed to show the mining men one of Keys' claims, probably the Desert Hound, representing it as the mine Scotty had been bragging about.

"Scotty kept saying the men were looking for a big mine, a real big proposition worth millions," Keys recalled; "He began to get cold feet on showing them my mine." Scotty thought that he could make more money if he could get some others hooked, and decided to stage a fake holdup of his own party to scare his backers off from visiting the mine while at the same time whetting their appetite to see the mine which someone was supposedly trying to keep them from reaching. Bill Keys, whom Scotty had passed off as a half-Indian guide, then went ahead with a Panamint Indian named Bob Belt and one "Shorty" Smith to stage the ambush. If it failed to scare the easterners off, Scotty would go ahead and show them Keys' mine.

It was hot in the rocks above Wingate Pass. Keys' Indian companion, Bob Belt, took along a jug of whiskey. By the time Scotty's party arrived in the pass, neither Keys nor Belt was very good at aiming a weapon. They were supposed to kill one of the mules in Scotty's party, but one of their shots went wild and hit Warner Scott, Scotty's brother, in the leg. Scotty lost his head, spurred ahead on his mount, and shouted, "Stop shooting. You hit one of my men." The easterners were not so frightened that they failed to realize that Scotty had tried to swindle them. An accomplice named "Shorty" Smith was soon arrested in Barstow, and told all he knew of the affair. In San Bernardino, they swore out warrants for Keys and Scotty. Sheriff John C. Ralphs set out after Keys, and eventually arrested him. Ralphs had lost one of his boots en route and had to wear dress shoes which pained him greatly. All the way back, Keys joked about the sheriff in his "patent leather shoes," humor which Ralphs failed to appreciate. Scotty was in Oregon, but upon his return to San Francisco, was arrested there. But by the time the trial was scheduled, surveys proved that the site of the ambush on Wingate Pass lay in Inyo County, not San Bernardino, and the trial would have to take place in Independence. The easterners, tired of waiting around for the trial, went back east, so that when the case was called in Independence, the prosecution had no witnesses. Charges were dropped.

Keys later managed to sell his Desert Hound claim, and it proved to be a productive mine. Once Keys had done enough "development" work on the Desert Hound--that is, exploration to define the extent and value of the ore--to know that it had potential, he allowed several other claims to lapse, including one which the Ashford brothers filed on and developed as the Ashford Mine. The mining boom in the entire region--Goldfield, Tonopah, Bullfrog, Harrisburg, Skidoo, Furnace, Greenwater and other locations--stimulated much speculation, so that promising mines in the deserts of southern Nevada and California found ready sales. Typically prospectors who discovered mines and developed them had neither the capital nor the inclination to operate them successfully, and sold out to speculators or to financiers. Although at times Keys not only developed but operated mines, in the case of the Desert Hound he was willing to sell. He had sent assays and ore samples to eastern investors. A group of Boston investors together with T.C. DuPont were among those interested in Keys' property. They sent one of their mining engineers, a man named Coffield, out from Lead, South Dakota, to inspect Keys' mine. Coffield and his party arrived at Ludlow on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, transferred to the Tonopah and Tidewater which was then under construction (which places this incident between 1905 and 1907, probably in 1906) and rode to the end of track at Salt Spring, where the T&T was held up by heavy construction in Amargosa Canyon. From there, Coffield headed through Death Valley via Saratoga in a big borax wagon with a 12-mule team, carrying his men and more than ample supplies. Keys

had blazed a very rough trail up Greyhound Canyon, and by the time Coffield reached Keys' camp, he had experienced a very rugged trip, only to be disappointed to find that Keys had very little in the way of amenities. The engineer took one quick look at the even steeper hill and even more rugged trail which led toward the mouth of the Desert Hound. Without bothering to go into the mine he told Keys, "It's too far away. We are not interested."

Keys, incensed at Coffield's failure even to inspect the mine, pulled out a rifle and forced Coffield to unload some supplies, including a 100 pound sack of oatmeal which provided Keys' camp with so much to eat that they even gave some food to the indigent Indians. Then Keys went down to Silver Lake and telegraphed DuPont explaining why he had seized some of the supplies and how Coffield had acted. DuPont wired Keys back approving of his action and saying that he wanted the mine, Coffield or no Coffield.

Keys sent more ore and more assays east, and was invited to come to Boston by the investors. There they wined and dined him, and gave him a tour of Boston historic shrines, the Massachusetts State House, Longfellow's home, and Harvard. "I was taken to see Tom Lawson, the big promoter," Keys recalled. "You had to go through three doors and outside offices before you reached him." Lawson wanted to know all Keys could tell him about Death Valley's gold mines. The Boston group subsequently organized the Keys Gold Mining Company. This firm, with a man named Mellon making the decisions, put up about \$40,000 for development. When profits did not accrue quickly enough for some of the investors, DuPont took over, and placed a Jack Salisbury in charge. Keys remained with the firm for awhile. He claimed that the mine had already run continuously from 1904 to 1907, and operated successfully for another seven years, much of the ore running \$500 per ton.

Keys soon went back to Los Angeles, where he stayed at Lucky Baldwin's place until the fall of 1907, when he moved to Goldfield, Nevada, again. By that time, "Death Valley Scotty" had obtained the financial backing of A.M. Johnson to build the so-called "castle" in Death Valley, and Keys and Scotty met and the latter talked Keys into letting bygones be bygones. Bill went to the "castle" to spend the winter, and from that time on the two were close friends.

In the spring of 1908, Keys outfitted at the China Ranch on the Amargosa River near Tacopa Hot Springs and set out on another prospecting expedition, this time to the Redrock Canyon Placer Mining District. At a remote location in the hills he struck a small rich claim, which he worked until the beginning of summer. With profits from that claim providing a "grubstake," Bill set out on a tour of California and Nevada, visiting Madera, Stockton,

Sacramento, Grass Valley, Nevada City, Weber Lake, Hobart Mills, Reno, Virginia City, Carson City, Bodie, Yerington, Shurz, Bishop and the Owens Valley. He visited mines and mills and learned much. Returning to Redrock, that fall, he worked his claim again, shipping small amounts of gold out through the Post Office at the little settlement of Cinco. Bill recalled that the postmaster "kind of turned up her nose" at the small size of his shipments, yet by winter he had accumulated \$3,000, an amazing sum for several months' work at that time and place. When the townspeople learned of his accumulating wealth, Keys became the social lion of Cinco, the big fish in a very small pond. "I was getting invites and cards to everyone's places; pink teas, they called them, I was the most popular man in the place all of a sudden," Keys recalled.

In September 1910, Keys moved on to Surprise Springs where he stayed three days. With water from the springs, he commenced prospecting the north end of the Bullion Mountains north of Twentynine Palms. When he ran out of water he headed back to Surprise Springs to fill up, then set off into the Bullions again. It rained three days straight in October, Keys recalled, and turned the desert growth beautifully green. Bill's prospecting, unfortunately, produced no results, so he went on to Twentynine Palms where he met "Cowboy Joe" Reynolds, who hired him to assist with the spring roundup of 1911. During the roundup, the cattlemen camped at Twentynine Palms, and many evenings Keys hiked south eight miles to the Desert Queen Mine to talk with the watchman, a man named Ferguson. When the 1911 roundup was finished, Keys had enough money to lease the "Crown Prince Mine," located just south of the Desert Queen, from Joe Reynolds, although he continued to work for Reynolds as a cowhand to help meet his expenses.

Keys hauled the gold ore from the Crown Prince by burro to the Bryant Roller Mill in Twentynine Palms. The ore was rich, values running as high as \$190 per ton, and caused quite some excitement in Twentynine Palms, although Keys had apparently only hit a rich pocket which soon played out. Keys also hauled ore for a man named Roach who operated the Desert Queen that summer, either as an employee or under lease from its owner, a wealthy Pasadenan named William Morgan. Roach finally gave up the mining business and moved to Los Angeles, and Bill Keys became watchman at the Queen. He also leased the Tully Mine in the spring of 1911 and operated it for awhile.

The sequence of events is not clear, but Bill Keys and Bill McHaney had apparently become friends. The present main ranch house on the old McHaney property may have been started in 1913 with a shack hauled from the Tully Mine forming the first section (the chimney carries a November 1917 date, but may have been a later addition). Whether it was built by Keys or by McHaney is unclear, and the nature of the property relationship between the two men is unclear. But in 1916, McHaney vacated ownership of the homestead, and Keys filed on it. McHaney apparently continued to live there. Whether he had sold out to Keys is not known. About that time, William Morgan, owner of the Desert Queen Mine, passed away, and his attorney gave Keys, who had been acting as watchman at the time, the right to locate the Desert Queen for himself, which he did in 1917. Keys also filed upon a "mill site" which he located at the ranch, subsequently erecting a small stamp mill there to process his ore. (It is about six miles as a crow would fly from the Desert Queen mine to the ranch, longer by wagon road.)

Rain was plentiful in the Joshua Tree region at that time, and Keys' Ranch, which he eventually dubbed the "Desert Queen Ranch," was a success. Keys not only raised cattle, but planted an orchard east of the house and successfully raised oats, barley, corn and vegetables.

On October 8, 1918, Bill Keys married in San Bernardino 31-year old Francis M. Lawton, a telegrapher from Los Angeles, and brought her to his desert ranch in an automobile. Their first of seven children, William F. Keys, Junior, was born in September 1919, and died five days later. (Keys lost two other sons, David Lynn, who was born in August 1924 and like the first one, lived only five days, and Ellsworth George Keys, born August 31, 1926, who died on November 25, 1937, at the age of eleven. Four other children survived: Willis, Patricia, Phyllis, and Virginia.) Keys continually expanded his property, extending the original homestead with additions until it grew from 80 to 240 acres. McHaney had built a dam to form a "tank" or reservoir on the ravine above the ranch house, to supply water for cattle, and Keys expanded the reservoir, systematically raising the height of the dam and adding two additional dams to prevent impounded water from escaping by other avenues. At the ranch he purchased more cattle and horses, raised mules and burros, and even goats. The main source of income remained Bill's mining ventures, and the Desert Queen continued to produce paying ore.

When, during the 1920's, Keys' oldest child was ready for school, Bill hired a schoolteacher and housed him in a shack on the ranch. Keys' son Willis and daughter Virginia were the first students. Later students included not only Ellsworth but children of nearby homesteaders and miners. As the student body expanded, Keys built a small wooden shack especially designed to serve as a schoolhouse and purchased some small school desks to furnish it. The county officially declared the school on Keys' Ranch an emergency school, and provided a teacher for it. A couple of missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Dudley, retired after thirty years in Burma, came to teach school, and Keys built a house for them near the second dam. The school continued until 1942, by which time the surviving Keys children had gone on to high school and college, and other children had either graduated or moved away.

During the 1930's Bill Keys continued prospecting, mining, and running cattle. He raised enough vegetables to sell to the store in Yucca Valley.

In 1936, Keys found what he claimed was a tin mine in the Santa Maria Mountains, overlooking the Colorado River between Rice and Blythe. This was a placer deposit which reportedly also contained gold. Interviewed at the time, Bill explained his philosophy of mining:

I'm different than most prospectors. . . If I have a claim with \$50,000 in ore on it, I'll take \$3,000 or \$4,000 for my end because long ago I learned that it takes money to operate mines. I've never had enough to install machinery and work big properties. And that's not my business anyway. I've always made a pretty good living prospecting. But this tin, why, man, anybody can work that claim.

Keys also continued to operate the Desert Queen mine, milling his ore at a two-stamp mill called Wall Street erected about 1928-1929 and taken over by Keys on July 8, 1930.

The western frontier may have died with the Census of 1890, but the type of lawless violence which typified that frontier did not. Not only was Keys himself by his own accounts at times a lawless character, occasionally he was the victim of cattle rustlers, claim jumpers and others. Once while working the Desert Queen a stranger tried to shoot him, but Keys drew a Luger pistol, wounded the stranger instead, and drove him off. On another occasion thirteen head of Keys' cattle were rustled, a significant blow to a small cattleman like Keys.

But the worst trouble involved a neighbor named Worth Bagley who settled near Keys during the late 1930's. Bagley was a former deputy sheriff from Los Angeles whom the other deputies feared and who had been charged with brutality to prisoners; the charges were dropped when Bagley agreed to retire.

Bagley, who may have suffered from a brain tumor or lesion, had settled on a piece of land which lay athwart the road from Keys' Ranch to the Desert Queen Mine--to avoid crossing the land would involve a ten-mile detour, over an exceedingly rough road and Keys had legal right to use the shorter road. But Bagley had developed a hatred for Keys and persisted in tormenting his neighbor. He stole or killed cattle belonging to Keys, and shot at Keys when he thought he could get away with it. In 1940, he married Isabelle Clark, who although she knew Bagley had been married before, did not know this was the ninth time he had married. While she lived with him in Joshua Tree National Monument, she witnessed many of his illegal actions against Keys. One day before they were married he had shot one of Keys' burros, and when a San Bernardino sheriff's deputy named Hair came out to get Bagley's gun to run a ballistics check to determine whether or not that gun had killed the burro, Bagley gave the deputy a gun belonging to his new wife, representing it as his own. Bagley told his wife to keep quiet about it. On the basis of that evidence, Bagley was cleared of shooting the burro, although in fact he had done it, with a different gun.

On various occasions, Bagley would lie in wait for Keys along that road, hoping to ambush him. "If I ever catch him alone without any witnesses, I will get rid of the old goat," he told his wife. Bagley posted signs around his property which said "Beware of Gun Traps," intended to intimidate Keys but which instead scared all of his wife's friends away from visiting. There were no such traps, or at least his wife saw none of them, and Bagley apparently believed the signs would give him a legal escape from punishment if he killed Keys.

Keys believed, and there is some evidence to support it, that San Bernardino cattlemen, including at least one officer in the sheriff's department, encouraged Bagley's feud with Keys in order to drive Keys off valuable range land which they wished for their own cattle. But when Bagley complained to Keys about Keys' cattle ranging over Bagley land, Keys promptly put up a barbed wire fence to prevent it. Subsequently, Bagley repeatedly cut the fence to allow Keys' cattle to stray onto his land so he could shoot them. On another occasion,

Bagley set up what he claimed was a firing range located across the short stretch of road on Bagley's property which Keys had to cross to reach the Desert Queen. Again, Bagley hoped this subterfuge would give him a legal excuse for killing Keys "accidentally." Bagley's wife eventually divorced him, in a case involving cross filings, and in her divorce complaint she stated that Bagley was going to kill Keys.

On the moonlit night of May 11, 1943, Bagley went out again as he had in the past to lie in wait along the road for Keys. That night Keys came, and Bagley shot at him, hitting the side of his auto. This time Keys fired back just as Bagley had turned and was trying to work around to another angle for a better shot at Keys. A bullet entered Bagley's side above the hip, penetrated his abdomen, and killed him. Keys turned himself in at Twentynine Palms and was tried in Riverside County for murder. He was convicted in August 1943 by a jury predominately of women of the lesser charge of manslaughter, sentenced to one to ten years imprisonment, and sent to San Quentin prison where he became prisoner 71407. Keys reportedly declined several offers of parole which entailed his defacto confession that he was in the wrong; he maintained that he had shot in self defense, and wanted to be exonerated completely. He used his time in prison well, studying in the prison library. "I didn't regret San Quentin 'cause that was my college" he recalled.

In 1927, Keys had made the acquaintance of Earl Stanley Gardner, author of the series of detective novels featuring Perry Mason, and Gardner, through Argosy Magazine's "Court of Last Resort" undertook to assist Keys' efforts to obtain a pardon. In October 1948, after four years and seven months in prison, Keys finally accepted parole, and returned to his ranch. He had sold all of his cattle in 1943 to pay the defense costs at his trial, and had to begin again. But he went to work with his typical energy, raising the dams which impounded water, increasing the size of his reservoirs, cultivating his trees. After another year and four months, he was discharged from parole on February 28, 1950.

Throughout, Keys maintained his innocence--that he had fired in self defense. After Keys' release Gardner continued his efforts to obtain a complete pardon for him. He was aided in this by State Assemblyman Vernon Kilpatrick, a State Senate Interim Committee, and others. In the summer of 1948, they located Bagley's ex-wife, who had resumed her maiden name of Clark, and whom the defense had apparently been unable to find at the time of Keys' trial. Kilpatrick interviewed her on July 19, 1948, at Eagle Rock, and took down her statement concerning the feud between Bagley and Keys, a statement which went far towards exonerating Keys. Further-

more, Keys' friends learned of the divorce complaint which prior to the shooting had stated that Bagley intended to kill Keys. Other evidence tended to support Keys' story: Bagley was found lying in soft sand, which indicated that Keys had not approached him; Keys explained that he feared Bagley might be playing possum. Thus while Keys had done nothing to aid the injured man, neither had he tampered with the evidence. That evidence included the fact that Bagley was armed with a rifle and holding a pistol from which one shot had been fired, and spectroscopic analysis proved the bullet in Keys' vehicle had come from Bagley's gun.

On July 12, 1956, the California Adult Authority recommended that Keys' application for a pardon be granted, although the Adult Authority insisted that the records failed fully to substantiate clemency on the ground of Keys' claim of innocence through self defense, and recommended granting the pardon instead in view of Keys' "adjustment during the past eight years, his age, and the added fact that he has a worthy motive in desiring to again vote as a citizen and to re-establish his family's name in society."

Earl Stanley Gardner wrote the office of the Governor on July 16, 1956, to support the Adult Authority recommendation, and in his brief review of the case, said:

There is very persuasive evidence indicating that persons who knew of Bagley's mental condition, persuaded him to settle in the desert adjacent to Keys. Bagley's mind was then inflamed against Keys and a classic situation developed where a gun fight was inevitable, the theory being that, if Bagley killed Keys, Keys would be out of the way; if Keys killed Bagley, he could be put out of the way by being sent to prison.

If true, the rival cattlemen who wanted Keys' land did not get it, but they did get the range cleared of Keys' cattle, since he had to sell them to pay court costs.

On July 26, 1956, Governor Goodwin J. Knight granted Keys a pardon. The pardon arrived in Joshua Tree on August 1, and was delivered to his ranch. Keys and his wife Francis were sitting in chairs beneath the pine tree in the front yard of the ranch when the tube containing the pardon arrived. Bill handed the package to Francis and said, "Here, mother." She opened it and drew out the pardon and the Governor's accompanying letter. Mrs. Keys adjusted her glasses and read the letter to Bill, and handed them to him

saying, "There it is, Dad!" Thus ended an episode which was reminiscent of a Luke Short western novel set in the late 19th Century, yet it happened in the mid-20th Century.

Bill Keys continued ranching and prospecting, although he was by no means any longer the typical itinerant "desert rat" sort of prospector. Once he had married Francis he had settled down to raise a family and developed his property into a cattle ranch, with his cattle ranging through the Lost Horse Valley. He had planted vegetable gardens which supplied enough not only to feed his family but to provide a surplus for sale. He developed an orchard of fruit trees which similarly supplied his family--Francis put up preserves using the fruit he grew--and they may also have sold fruit or preserves. He built and later raised three dams to impound a reservoir behind his ranch (although the first dam may have been started by Bill McHaney). He reportedly raised Barker Dam to expand its reservoir, and may have done the same at Cow Tanks.

Keys maintained his interest in mining. After 1916 he operated a Chilean rotary mill at the millsite near his ranch house, processing not only ore from his own Desert Queen Mine but, for a fee, ore brought in by other prospectors who did not own their own milling equipment. Beginning in 1930 he intermittently operated the two-stamp Wall Street Mill, and finally in 1963 dismantled the Chilean mill at his ranch. During the Depression years of the 1930's, Keys reduced his rate for milling ore for others from \$10 per ton to \$5 per ton. He was generally able to crush three tons of ore in 15 hours, and it cost five gallons of gasoline for the engine per ton. Keys would send the gold obtained from the ore through a bank in Banning to the mint in San Francisco, generally in little gold bricks worth about \$1,000 each, that being the maximum he could melt and cast in his little assay furnace.

In later years, Keys salvaged materials, machinery and tools from abandoned desert mines and shacks. He collected and preserved archeological, historical and mineralogical artifacts--everything from metates and old bottles and wagons and machinery to mineral specimens. He built a small building next to his ranch house to serve as his "museum." He occasionally rented shacks on his ranch to tourists who came there and built a "guest house" for that purpose. He provided a rendezvous for group tours which included "Rockhounds" and boy scouts.

Thus William F. Keys managed to scratch much more of a living out of the desert than the usual itinerant prospector or cowhand. Isabelle Clark recalled:

Mr. Keys was the only man out there. . . who made a living off of his land and who improved his land. He had cows, chickens, he raised a garden, and he had fruit trees. . . He made a living off of his land. He was the only one out there that ever did. The other people at that time were living on the County or they had small pensions. . . He is the only one out there who has improved that land. He has tried to preserve the natural beauty, which is more than outsiders have done.

Thus Keys, rather than remaining as he had once been a typical desert prospector became something of a unique individual who carved a life style of his own out of the desert and who was active in many areas of endeavor, and his ranch and its buildings represent this later, atypical, phase of his life.

On January 9, 1963, Francis Keys died, and was buried in the Twentynine Palms Cemetery, Bill being too ill at the time to protest burial at that location. When later he recovered, he obtained the permission of the County supervisors to reinter her body in the little cemetery on his ranch alongside their three young children who had died many years before. "I built up tombstones inlaid with turquoise," he recalled. A year and a half later, in the fall of 1964, at the age of 85, Keys sold his ranch, by then a total of 240 acres, to Henry E. Tubman of Los Angeles for a sum reportedly in excess of \$131,000. He retained the right of life tenancy on the ranch and adjoining orchard. At that time, Tubman announced plans to trade this Ranch, within Joshua Tree National Monument boundaries, for surplus Federal land elsewhere.

In 1967, the town of Joshua Tree honored Keys by making him the Grand Marshall of the Turtle Races Parade. By that time he was well-known, the subject of a number of historical sketches by L. Burr Belden published in the San Bernardino Sun-Telegram as well as of articles in the Morongo Valley Desert Journal by one of his daughters, an article in Roundhound's Journal by another daughter, and other articles in Desert Magazine and elsewhere.

In the summer of 1969, Keys fell ill; according to one local resident, he ate little besides baked beans, which caused an intestinal stoppage. He was taken to the Hi-Desert Memorial Hospital, and died there on June 29, 1969, two months short

of his 90th birthday. He was interred in the little cemetery at his ranch alongside Francis and their three sons in a ceremony presided over by Reverend Paul L. Hudson of the Community United Methodist Church of Joshua Tree. About 150 friends and neighbors attended the funeral. His ranch was already the property of the National Park Service and a part of Joshua Tree National Monument.

A Note on the Preceding Biography of William F. Keys

Published and unpublished material containing information regarding the life of William F. Keys is full of contradictions. Unfortunately, no historian sought to iron out these discrepancies prior to Keys' death. It may still be possible to resolve some of the conflicts through interviews with Keys' descendents and other old-time residents of the Twentynine Palms area. Some answers may be found in an examination of federal, state, county and local records of land ownership, homesteads, mining claims, mill site claims, reservoir claims, etc. Still other material may be found in a thorough search of local libraries, historical societies and museums throughout southern California. The foregoing account is based upon the most readily available material and represents an effort of the Regional Historian to negotiate a safe path through the minefields of contradictions. Unquestionably, further research into historical resources of a more primary nature will illuminate many errors and oversimplifications, and such research is sorely needed to resolve the contradictions before they become even more entrenched in the record and before possible means of solution vanish with the death of other old-timers.

Historical Significance

Keys' Desert Queen Ranch is unquestionably of local historical significance, and has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places on that basis. Consequently, the National Park Service faces the question of whether or not to preserve it, and if the decision is to preserve it, how. The following pages will deal with each of the 27 buildings and structures individually, with a recommendation from the historical architect for temporary steps which are needed towards preservation.

PRESERVATION STUDY - JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

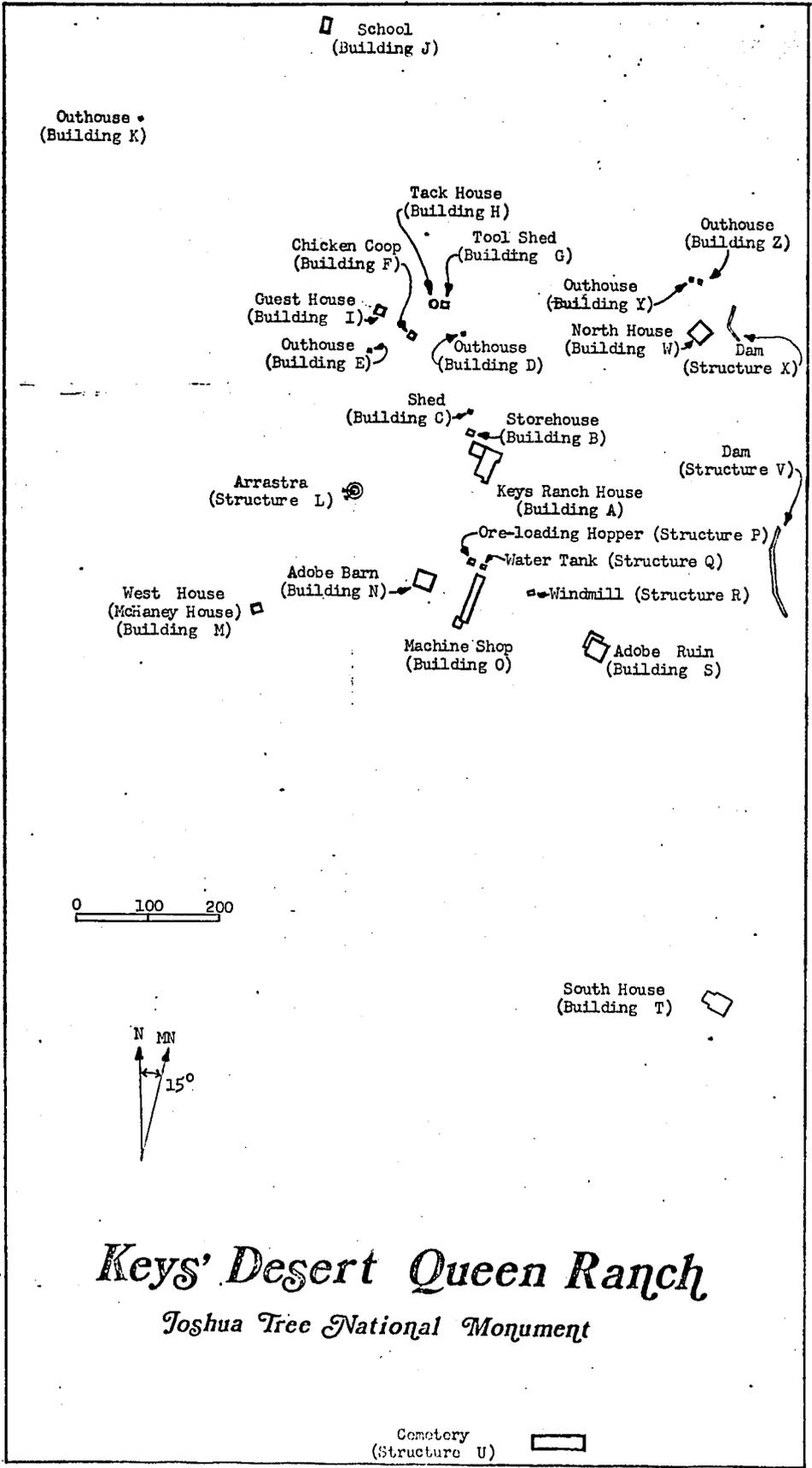
BUILDING A - KEYS' RANCH HOUSE - c. 1913-1917

The main house on the Keys Ranch is little more than a two story shack. According to one source it was built in 1913; that may or may not be accurate. The chimney was built in 1917, but may be a later addition. The first part of the structure according to one source was a wooden shack moved from the Tully Mine. Its construction was crude, and the materials were probably largely salvage from mine structures in the vicinity, although it is possible that Keys brought some lumber in.

Preservation would require extensive rebuilding of the structure. Basically, the structure was not built to last. In many places the wood sills of the building rest directly on earth; preservation would require lifting the building and a stone or concrete foundation would then be built beneath it--something the structure never had. Elsewhere, earth would have to be moved away from wooden members to protect them from dry rot or other decay. The base of the structure would have to be sealed with stone or other material to exclude rodents.

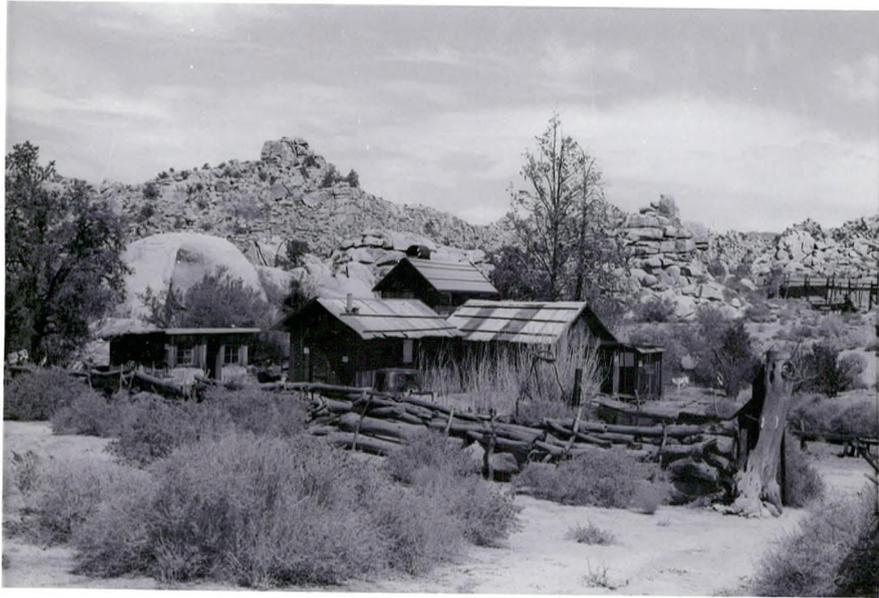
On the south side of the house, the porch and the entrance door would require rebuilding. Above the window near the door is a gap which should be closed, using salvaged wood to match adjacent wood. On the north side of the house, the wall beside the fireplace was left unfinished and has a tar-paper surface; preservation would require finishing this area with salvaged wood to complete the surface, although Keys never did this himself. The screen door beside the fireplace has a cloth covering, which should be filled in with salvaged wood to complete the surface. On the north side, the outside stairway to the second floor bedroom as well as the short second-floor level bridge to the adjacent boulders require rebuilding and replacement of the handrails to make them firm. The roof over the second floor bedroom has leaked and the interior shows evidence of much water damage; the roof would have to be resurfaced to match the existing roof surface. The door and screen door at the second floor bedroom both require rehung so they will not stick. Doors and windows should all be repaired to keep weather out and glass reputted. Where glass is missing it should be replaced. All exposed wood surfaces need treatment with a wood preservative such as Thompson's Water Seal or a similar product after repairs have been completed.

In the interior, there is much evidence of rodents in the living room. Trash, papers, and torn up furniture stuffing which provide animal nests need to be cleared out of the building and the entire space treated by fumigation. The "lean-to" addition to the house

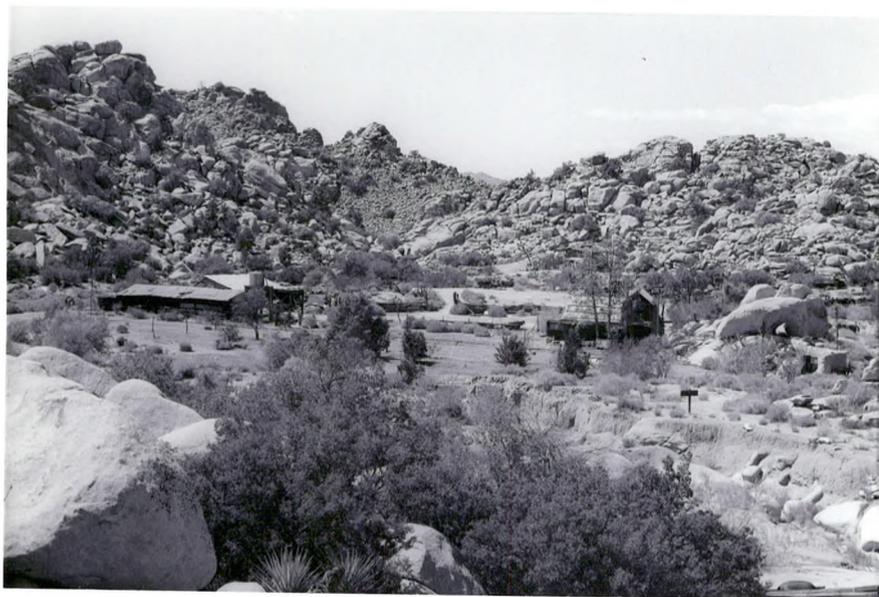


Keys' Desert Queen Ranch
Joshua Tree National Monument

Cemetery (Structure U) 



(Keys Ranch from the east)



(Building A - Keys Ranch House
Keys Desert Queen Ranch)

which contains a storage room and bathroom adjacent to the living room has a broad crack in the ceiling which is evidence of settlement of its outside wall. Work on foundations might diminish the crack--if not, it needs to be closed with flashing or other means to keep the weather out.

Celotex wall and ceiling material which has torn loose or sagged needs to be re-nailed using existing battens, or, if the celotex is too damaged, it should be replaced with similar new material. The ground-floor bedroom off the living room shows signs of the roof leaking, a problem to be solved by repair of the roof.

The park maintenance staff has installed temporary supports because of the sagging of the roof and walls of the enclosed porch on the south side. The walls need to be rebuilt as required to carry the roof load and the temporary supports should then be removed.

BUILDING B - MUSEUM/STORE HOUSE - c. 1950's-1960's (?)

Building B is a small building probably erected in the 1950's or 1960's by which time Keys' Ranch had become sort of a local tourist attraction, in essence an outdoor museum of old pioneer artifacts. The building consists of a stone wall below the windowsill line, with natural unfinished vertical wood siding above. It has a shed roof sheathed with light gray mineral surface roofing on random width one-inch boards, and has a dirt floor.

For preservation, the broken windows need to be replaced and all sash reputtied as required. Vertical siding that has come loose needs to be re-nailed. Interior celotex wall covering on the north wall is falling down, and should be re-nailed, or, if the existing material is in too poor condition for further use, it must be replaced. The exterior exposed wood surfaces need treatment with a wood preservative once repairs have been made.

BUILDING C - SHED - DATE UNKNOWN

This structure is a wood frame on wood foundation with walls and roof made of corrugated sheet metal, badly rusted and in an advanced state of decay. The historical architect recommends that this building be demolished and removed, and that any usable materials be stockpiled for re-use in the repair of other structures. Debris around the building should be cleared away, as it would pose a safety hazard to visitors.



(Building A - Main Ranch House
South Side)



(Building B - "Museum")



(Building C - Shed)



(Building D)

BUILDING D - OUTHOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

This building is composed of a board frame and vertical board siding with a rusty corrugated metal gable roof. It was a two-hole outhouse, and it is on skids for the purpose of being moved.

The warped and loose boards all need to be re-nailed. The door is at present lying on the ground in front of the outhouse and should be rehung if determined to be in a still-usable condition, or replaced if not. The skids need to be reinforced by the addition of new 4 x 4 redwood skids under the existing skids. All exposed exterior wood to be treated with a wood preservative once repairs are completed. If the building is not to be used as a "working" outhouse, the door should be kept locked and the building posted as "not for use."

BUILDING E - OUTHOUSE - c. 1950's-1960's

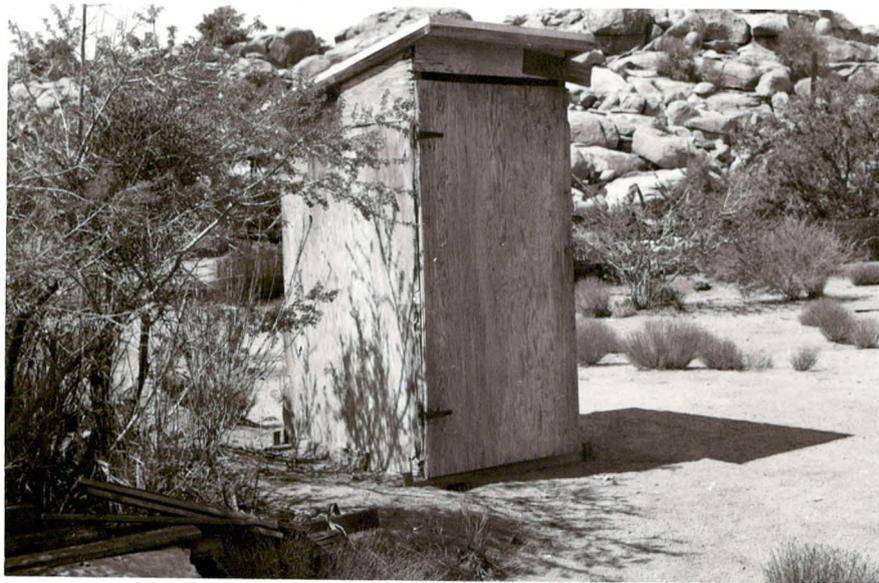
This building is a plywood outhouse with a shed roof sheathed in metal. It was probably built at the time a motion picture entitled "Wild Burro of the West" was filmed at Joshua Tree National Monument, and was probably built or brought in by the film company. For preservation, the building needs to be picked up and placed on a rock foundation, or to have new 4 x 4 inch redwood sleepers added to keep the main structure off the soil and prevent dry rot. All exposed exterior wood surfaces need treatment with a wood preservative after other preservation work has been completed. If the building is not to be used as an outhouse, the door should be locked and the building posted as "not for use."

BUILDING F - CHICKEN COOP - DATE UNKNOWN

This building is a decayed plywood structure with a shed roof of corrugated metal, wood frame resting on the soil, screen door, and horizontal walls of unfinished wood on a wood frame. The structure should be jacked up and rock or concrete foundation blocks inserted to keep the wood off the soil. A hinged portion of one wall which was used to allow light and air into the interior is now covered with celotex or wall-board and cloth. Both are in bad condition and should be replaced with similar materials. Dry palm fronds cover the roof of the building as well as part of the chicken yard. These and tumbleweeds in and around the yard hide the building and create a fire hazard, and should be removed. Part of an old automobile in the yard may have served as a chicken roost. If it is not a part of the chicken coop, it should be moved to that part of the ranch where other old cars rest.



(Building D)



(Building E - Outhouse)

BUILDING G - TOOL HOUSE and SHED - 1950's or 1960's

This is a wood-frame plywood building which was built for use by the crew filming "Wild Burro of the West" in the 1950's or 1960's. It has a shed roof covered with light-gray mineral composition roofing. The structure has a wood floor which rests on grade. The shed should be jacked up and rock or concrete foundation blocks inserted beneath it to prevent dry rot. The shed roof needs a gutter or drip mold on the low side at the back, because water dripping there is causing deterioration of the plywood wall. All exposed exterior wood surfaces require treatment with wood preservative after other repairs are completed.

BUILDING H - TACK HOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

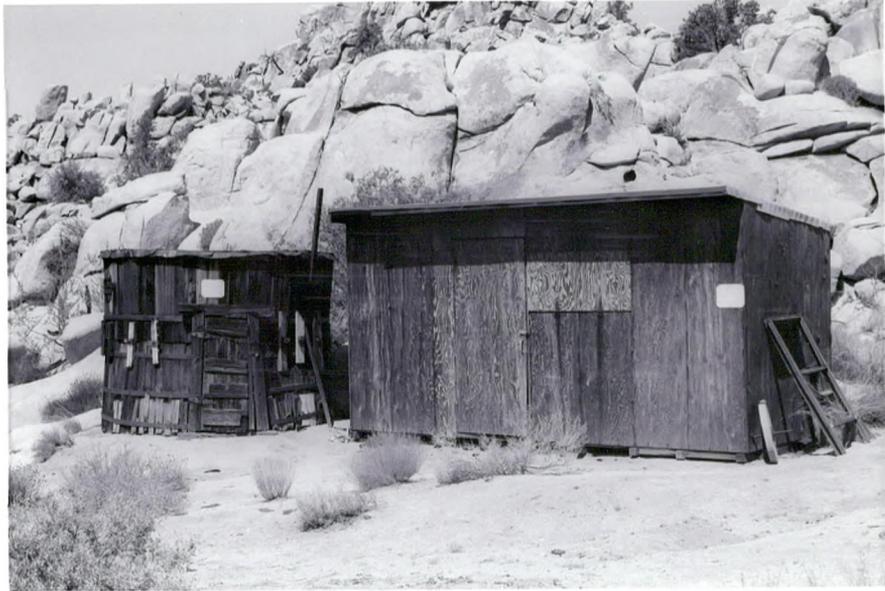
The "tack house" or "tack room" that is a place for storage of horse equipment such as saddles, bridles, etc., was constructed of two circular wooden cyanide tanks salvaged from a gold ore processing mill with one placed upside down on top of the other, with a door then cut through the side of the tanks. The result is a vertical wooden cylinder. The cyanide tanks were built of upright wooden staves secured by three metal bands, and two of the three bands are missing from the upper half. As the tanks were of slightly smaller diameter at the top than at the bottom, the resulting cylindrical structure has a pinched-in or slightly hour-glass profile at the center. This odd structure rests on grade with no foundation, a condition which may promote dry rot or other decay. Preservation would require that the building be jacked up and placed on a rock or concrete foundation which historically it never had. All the exposed exterior wood surfaces are unfinished and require treatment with a wood preservative. Whether or not the wood of this building is impregnated with a cyanide chemical and thus potentially dangerous needs to be determined.

BUILDING I - GUEST HOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

The "Guest House" at Keys Ranch is a wood frame building with walls of horizontal unfinished natural wood boards. The building has a gable roof with purlins over a single centered truss. It has a rock foundation, and inside the frame is exposed. The small two-by-three foot porch at the entrance has nearly disintegrated and should be rebuilt. Sleepers for reconstruction of the porch should be of redwood. The roof of the building is in bad condition; it consists of small fiberglass-like squares called "V2 Velite Firestone Aircraft" and rolled mineral roofing. It should be resurfaced with rolled

(Building F - Chicken Coop)





(Building G
Tool Shed - right)

(Building H
Tack House - left)



(Building I - Guest House)

mineral surface roofing material. The window in the front is falling out and should be replaced and reglazed as required. The entrance door which is only partly glazed should be reglazed. Inside walls are covered with paper which is torn and falling down and needs to be replaced.

There is much debris around this building, including several metal bedsteads. Such items as lumber and rolls of chicken wire and other usable items should be salvaged and stockpiled. All exterior exposed wood surfaces require treatment with a wood preservative upon completion of other repairs to the building.

BUILDING J - SCHOOL - 1920's or 1930's

The school is a wooden frame covered with horizontal siding with battens at the north end, with horizontal siding below the window sills on the other three sides and below the gable ends. Between and along the line of the windows, the siding is vertical board and batten. There are two windows at the south end and a centered door on the north end with a window to the right. Inside walls were covered with oilcloth. The roof apparently originally had rafters covered with shingles, but now the shingles are covered with corrugated sheet metal.

The school now sits directly on earth and should be jacked up and rock or concrete foundation blocks inserted under the building. The windows are in need of repair. The door should be rehung, as it now drags. The screen door needs to be rebuilt or replaced. The roof of the building is in bad condition--the corrugated metal is deteriorated. This should be removed and the building re-roofed with similar material to match the present method of application. The small front porch is in bad condition and should be rebuilt. Redwood should be used for the plates of the new porch.

Hinged, screened panels along both sides of the building have been nailed shut. These should be freed in order to operate. Their purpose was to let air and light into the school room. Hinges and screen may require replacement. The wood then needs treatment with a preservative.

BUILDING K - OUTHOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

This small wood structure is in an advanced stage of disintegration. It should be removed and the wood members salvaged and stockpiled for repair of other structures. The pit beneath the building to be filled in, all surface debris carried away, and the site restored to nature.

(Building J - School)



STRUCTURE L - ARRASTRA - DATE UNKNOWN

This arrastra is a device which Keys allegedly used for crushing ore. It is in good condition, and requires only to be kept free of tumbleweeds and drifting dirt and sand.

BUILDING M - WEST HOUSE ("McHANEY HOUSE") - DATE UNKNOWN

This badly decayed structure was supposedly used by Bill McHaney in his declining years; he apparently continued to live on the ranch, even though Bill Keys owned it, at least part of the time until his death in 1937. This house consists of horizontal wood siding below the windowsills, vertical board and batten siding above, and has side wall panels missing on one side, a wooden porch which is more than half gone, and a corrugated metal roof. It has no foundation and rests on grade. The stovepipe has fallen over. The building is so far gone that its demolition is recommended. Any usable material from it should be cleaned up and markers should be installed to delineate the outline of the building after it is removed.

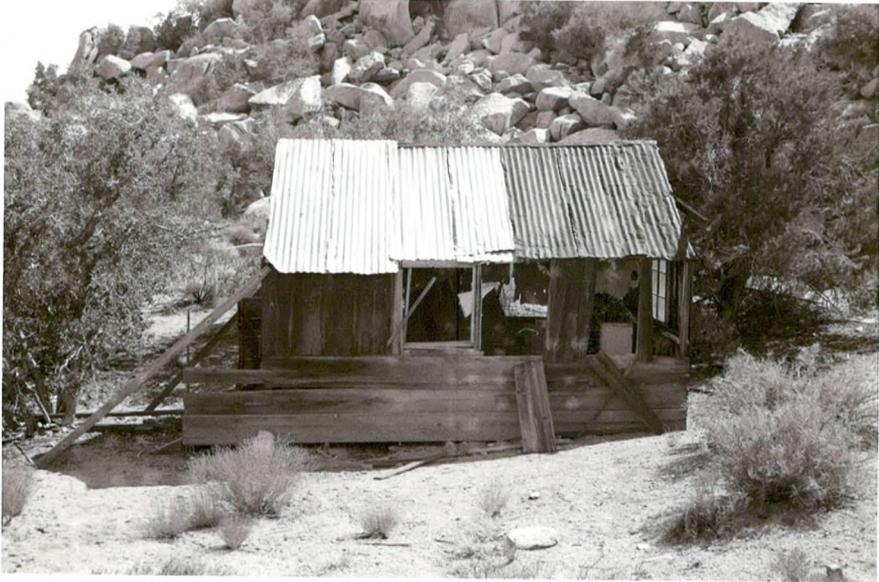


(Building K - Outhouse)



(Structure L - Arrastra)

(Building M)



BUILDING N - ADOBE BARN - 1894

This adobe barn was built in 1894 by Bill McHaney along with an adobe cookhouse and an adobe bunk house, both of which were demolished probably about 1920. This is the only documented structure surviving from the McHaney cattle operation.

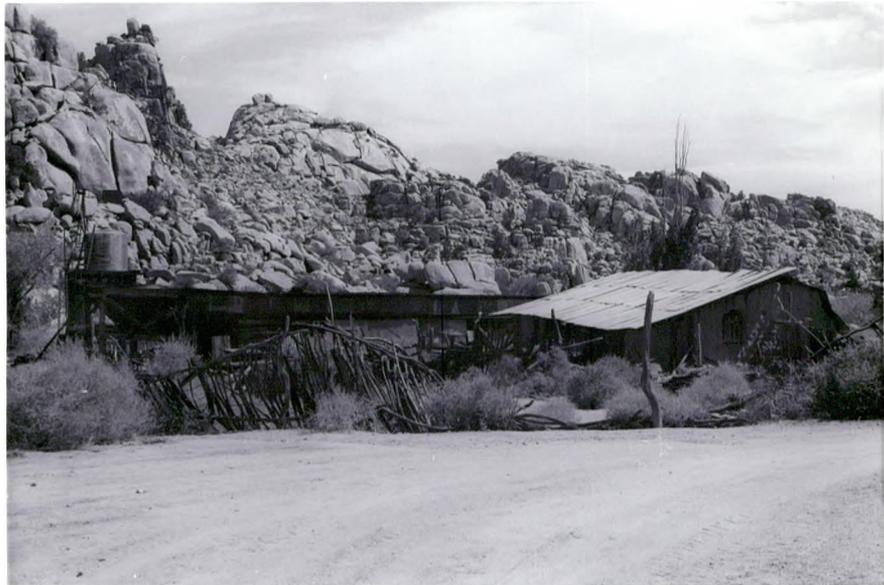
The building is a near ruin. It may be possible to preserve and protect the remains, stabilizing what is there now, but there is probably insufficient data now existing to justify reconstruction of those adobe walls which have fallen or been dissolved by rains nearly back to grade. The north wall is propped with wooden braces and should be stabilized to the extent that the wooden braces can be removed. This may require demolition of the wall and its complete reconstruction with new adobes, since the wall leans badly and an effort to jack it back to the vertical may destroy it. The other walls which are undercut should be re-built at those locations with new adobe. Of greatest importance, a new roof with broad overhanging eaves should be constructed for protection of the remaining adobe. The new roof should be of corrugated sheet metal as is the existing roof. Holes in the adobe walls should be plugged, and if required to strengthen and preserve the walls, wood window frames may be replaced.

At present the roof is of two principal parts which form an eccentric gable over the rectangular remains of the building. The roof structure should be rebuilt after the walls are stable and offer structural support, with such added wood members as may be required to hold the roof up. The long slope of the roof is now resting partially on adobe and partially on wood frame. The shorter slope is carried on long wood members which rest on grade at their low end. This part of the roof frame should be rebuilt. Triangular brackets should form the support as the best means of carrying the roof. The dissolved and missing walls could be represented by low capped adobe walls two or three feet high to define their earlier shape.

The existing adobe south wall is largely intact, but the upper two to four courses of adobe are badly eroded and need to be replaced.



(Building N - Adobe Barn)



(Building N - right)

(Building O - left)

BUILDING O - MACHINE SHED - DATE UNKNOWN

This structure consists of a wooden frame covered with corrugated sheet metal siding placed horizontally and a corrugated sheet metal roof. The frame sits on grade without benefit of a foundation, and should be jacked up and rock or concrete foundation blocks inserted. The corrugated sheet-metal roofing needs to be renailed. The rear wall, which supports the low side of the shed roof, requires reinforcement to give more support to the roof. New studs should be added to accomplish this. At the south end of the building is a lean-to addition now filled with used tires. This portion of the building is near collapse, and both it and its contents should be removed. Any salvagable building materials should be stockpiled for use in other structures. Where new members are called for, old stock salvaged elsewhere would be preferable to the use of new lumber, providing such old lumber is sound and will do the job required. Debris around the machine shed should be removed.

STRUCTURE P - ORE LOADING HOPPER - DATE UNKNOWN

This wooden ore bin or loading hopper was designed for funneling ore into a wagon or truck for movement elsewhere. It is basically a heavy square wooden funnel mounted on heavy beam supports. Ore was fed into it by a conveyor belt now in fragments on the ground alongside. Some of the wooden 2 x 10 inch beams supporting the lower portion of the hopper have failed. They are cracked and sag and require replacement with members of similar size. Some warped boards around the top edge of the hopper should be renailed. All wood portions of the structure require treatment with a wood preservative once other repair work is finished. If possible, salvaged and weathered replacement beams should be used in repairs, the better to blend with existing structures and avoid the harsh appearance of new and unweathered materials.

STRUCTURE Q - WATER TANK - DATE UNKNOWN

This metal tank, sitting on a wooden frame, is in good condition. Exposed wooden portions require treatment with a wood preservative, however.

(Structure Q - Water Tank)

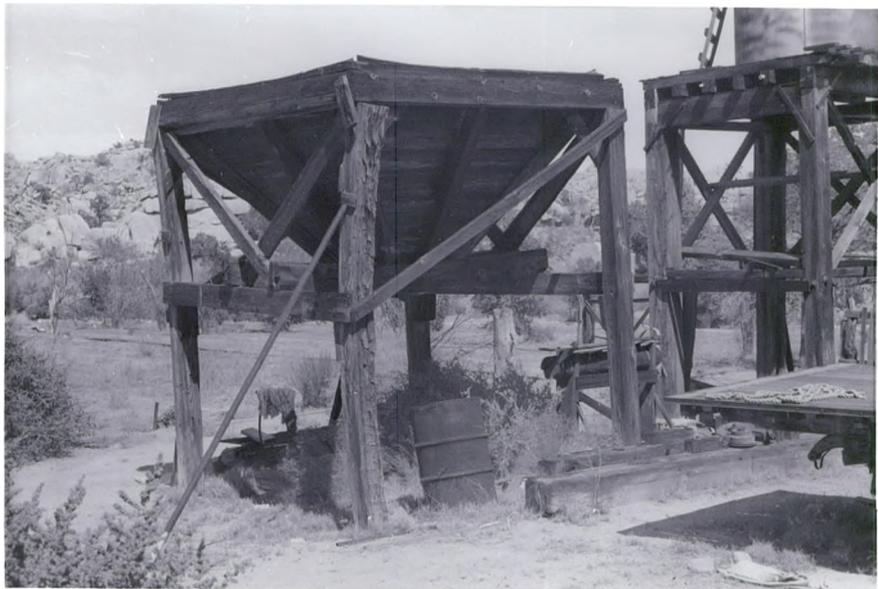


(Structure R - Windmill)





(Building O - Machine Shop)



(Structure P - Ore-loading Hopper)

STRUCTURE R - WINDMILL - DATE UNKNOWN

This is a metal windmill on a metal tower. The galvanized steel tower should be left in its present condition. Some of the blades on the wheel are missing, others are bent and twisted. Unless the windmill is to be restored to use, it can be left "as is." There is an unusual amount of trash on the surrounding ground which should be collected and removed.

BUILDING S - ADOBE RUIN - DATE UNKNOWN

This adobe ruin is the remains of one of two adobe buildings known to have stood on the east side of the dry streambed running through the ranch area. According to local tradition, this adobe was built by Bill McHaney for his sister. Certainly the fireplace suggests a use as a residence. If this is true, this adobe may have been built in 1894 contemporaneously with the adobe barn and two other structures, now no longer existing, near the barn. Another adobe structure, a short distance south of Building S, may also date from 1894. This latter structure has no standing walls and is represented by melted adobe material. Building S, as a ruin, would be stabilized by capping the walls and replacing adobe in eroded areas.

Adjacent to this structure are the remains of a small ore crushing mill which would only need application of preservatives to wood and metal parts.

BUILDING T - SOUTH HOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

This building, probably dating from the 1930's, is a wood structure with an exterior exposed frame. It has a gable roof, and an added room on the west side also with a gable roof. The interior of the main building has horizontal wood siding and the addition has exterior siding, horizontal below the windowsills, vertical board and batten siding on a level with the window and at the gable end. The roof is of six inch board decking with sheet composition roofing. The windows are casement type. The structure has a good stone foundation.

The roof of the main part of this building needs to be resurfaced with rolled mineral surface roofing. Foundation stones which are loose and have fallen out should be replaced to exclude vermin from beneath the building. The casement windows require repair or replacement. The door needs to be repaired or replaced.

The smaller wing is in poor condition, except for its corrugated metal roof. The foundation should be enclosed with rock to exclude vermin. Poorly nailed or loose boards should be renailed. The open framework at the end of the building should be removed. All exposed exterior wood surfaces should be treated with wood preservative after other repair work is complete.

A trailer residence has been installed close to this building. The trailer is an intrusion and its modern presence detracts from the historic scene. If Keys' Ranch is to be maintained as an historic complex, some other solution to the problem of stationing an employee or volunteer in the vicinity is required than placing modern house trailers on the property.



(Building S - Adobe Ruin)



(Building T - South House)

STRUCTURE U - RANCH CEMETERY - 1919 to present

The cemetery contains five known graves, bearing headstones which read as follows (slash marks indicate new line of wording):

1. "Wm. F. Keys Jr / Born Sept. / 1919. Lived 5 / days and / died"
2. "Keys / David.Lynn. / Born. Aug. / 1924. Lived / 5. Days. and / died"
3. "Elsworth / George Keys / Born Aug. 31st, / 1926. Lived. 11. years / 2 Mon. 24 Days / Died Nov. 25. 1937
4. "Francis May / Lawton Keys / Born. Sept. 24 / 1887. Died / Jan. 9. 1963 / Rock of Ages"

The tombstones are all handmade, chiseled crudely on a slab of native granitic rock. Bill Keys undoubtedly did the work. The first two have a five pointed star at the bottom. Elsworth's tombstone has a five pointed star at top bracketed with ornamental crescents, shaped like parenthesis marks. The grave of Keys' wife is the most decorated, with an intricate design at both top and between the date of death and the words "Rock of Ages." Keys filled in the indentations of some of the decorations and words by cementing in place small bits of turquoise and possibly chryscolla. Many of the small fragments of turquoise have come loose and fallen, and need to be replaced.

The fifth grave, presumably that of Bill Keys himself, is unmarked, save by some weathered plastic flowers. Keys was sufficiently important to the history of the Joshua Tree region that his grave deserves to be marked, and if the family chooses for whatever reason not to do it, the NPS should.

STRUCTURE V - DAM

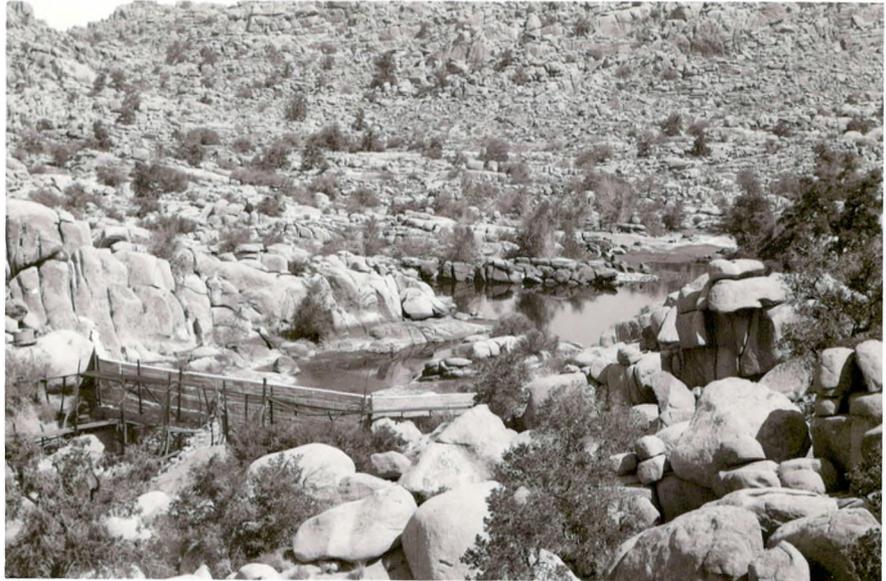
Built at an unknown date, this is the largest of the three concrete dams which impound the reservoir on Keys' Ranch. One of the dams-- either this one or Structure AA, which does not appear on the map, may have been started by Bill McHaney in the 1890's or early 1900's. In either case, the dams were raised to increasingly higher levels as time passed, impounding more and more water. This was especially necessary in view of the fact that rainfall in the region declined markedly from the 1930's, and the Joshua Tree area entered a dry cycle. This angular dam is faced with a wooden catwalk in very decayed condition which undoubtedly should be removed. Reconstruction is not recommended as even if rendered structurally sound, it is without guard rails, and a careless person could fall from it. It thus is an "attractive nuisance" and a safety hazard.

BUILDING W - NORTH HOUSE - 1920's or 1930's

The "North House" was probably built for the schoolteacher assigned by the county to teach the school at Keys' Ranch, and was probably the residence of the retired Burma missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Dudley. The building is of wood frame, with a gable roof over the main structure, covered with wood decking, and a shed roof over the lean-to kitchen addition and the other addition. The walls are vertical board and batten, of natural unfinished wood. The building rests on a stone and mortar foundation, and the roof is finished with a rolled mineral roofing.

The building foundation has some openings which should be closed with rocks to match the existing foundation to keep out vermin. Roof material should be removed over the whole building, and it should be re-roofed with rolled mineral surface roofing, and long wood battens such as were used originally replaced to give the roof the same appearance. New metal flashing should be installed around all roof openings and where lean-to additions join the main structure. A new screen should be added to the food cooler at the rear of the house. All exposed exterior wood surfaces should be treated with a wood preservative when other repair work has been completed.

There is an excess of debris inside and outside of this building. It should be cleaned up and carried away as a first measure toward the preservation of the structure. Any salvageable material should be stockpiled for future repair of other structures.



(Structure V - Dam and Reservoir)



(Structure V - Dam, Downstream Side)



(Structure V - Dam, Upstream Side)



(Reservoir behind Dam Structure V)

(Building W)



(North House)



STRUCTURE X - DAM - DATE UNKNOWN

This dam is a small angular structure of concrete which serves to prevent water escaping the reservoir behind the other dams from a "side door." As the other dams were gradually raised in height as the years passed, water in the reservoir, on those occasions when the reservoir was full, found an escape at this location. It is not clear whether this dam preceded the construction of the North House, which stands immediately downhill, or whether the dam was built to protect the North House after it was built. The latter seems likely.

Immediately in front of this dam was a wooden catwalk which passed beside the North House (Structure W). The supports of this catwalk have collapsed, and the walk has fallen over and leans against the side of North House. The walk should be removed, as it provides the same sort of safety hazard as the walk in front of the dam designated Structure V.

BUILDING Y - OUTHOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

This building is a two-room wood frame outhouse in quite good condition. The path to the building should be cleared and weeds in the vicinity removed. Wood surfaces require treatment with a wood preservative. If not to be used, the doors should be locked and posted "not in use."

BUILDING Z - OUTHOUSE - DATE UNKNOWN

Building Z is a wood frame outhouse covered with very rusty corrugated sheet metal. This building should be demolished and any usable material salvaged and stockpiled for future use in preservation at the ranch.

BUILDING AA - DAM - DATE UNKNOWN

This curved concrete dam has the appearance of a miniature Boulder Dam, and appears to be a taller, although much narrower, dam than Structure V. It is thus not quite clear which is the principal dam impounding the reservoir. This dam is located to the north of the others, and is not on the map of Keys' Ranch accompanying this report. It has no wooden catwalk on its face.



(Structure X - Dam)



(Buildings Y and Z (left) - Outhouses)

(Keys Ranch House from Southeast)



(Dam - not on map of Ranch)



Historic Artifacts at Keys Ranch

The staff of Joshua Tree National Monument has accomplished some grid recording and emergency recovery of some technological items to prevent theft, which is an appropriate beginning. Much yet needs to be done.

Suggestions for Maintenance of In-place Materials

Larger technological items and facilities related to mining (rails, ore cars, stamp mill, "Chilean" mill, arrastra, timbers, crushers, ore chute, etc.) should remain stockpiled or in-place for interpretative uses, and both metal and non-metal parts of these items treated to impede weathering. Smaller items such as picks, shovels, belts, gold pans, assaying equipment or drill bits might be preserved within a secure stabilized building.

Technology related to ranch water supplies and control (in-place pipes, diversion walls, and storage dams), should be stabilized and cleaned up, but not restored to functional capability. Some facilities such as the dams may require maintenance since their functions will continue.

Transportation technology ranges from trucks to harness and tack. Automotive vehicles might remain in-place with some stabilization and preservation, but without restoration.

Technology pertinent to general construction other than hand tools (for example: lumber, fencing, wire, brick, adobe machine, molds, and other materials), should be consolidated in-place or kept as found.

Facilities pertinent to manufacturing and maintenance of ranch technology (workshop areas, forges, anvils, crane lift) should remain in-place, although some clean-up and stabilization may be needed.

Description and recording of these features and their components should include photography, measurements, inventory of extant parts or pieces, and recording of trademarks or identifying marks.

Suggestions for Cataloging and Removal of Items for Preservation and Protection

Since some of the movable small items have been collected for protective storage at Pinto Wye or consolidated within a small building at the ranch, these artifacts should be examined and selections for cataloging made. Some items could be returned to the Ranch to their original proveniences for interpretative purposes.

Amounts of small tools and supplies--such as hardware, auto parts, or unusable materials--could be collected and transferred to the existing ranch machine shop for inclusion there.

Bottles and glassware collected from ground surfaces should be cleaned and recorded for evaluation. Selection for cataloging should provide a permanent sample which could be removed for protective storage and the remaining examples kept at the ranch.

Aboriginal artifacts without meaningful provenience could be collected, removed, and mass-cataloged for training, interpretative or display uses. A few examples might remain in place.

Harness, tack, and other organic artifacts (except deteriorated newspapers, magazines, and cardboard cartons) should be inventoried, examples selected and removed for protective storage, and remaining items consolidated at the ranch.

Horse-drawn wagons should be placed under protective cover--perhaps in a stabilized building--which has security as well as exhibit characteristics. Whether or not these vehicles are historically accurate for the ranch operation does not preclude their protection.

Household furnishings within the main house and elsewhere need to be inventoried for retention; many of these items are deteriorated beyond value as useful elements. Furnishing content of rooms should be recorded by photographic and other means prior to disposal or retention.

Identification of In-Place Deposits for Potential Research

It is recognized that the unique and varied historic technological components at Keys Ranch are constituted of subsurface and surface deposits which could be useful to various researchers interested in human use and adaption to western desert environments. Certain of these materials need identification and in-place preservation.

Major historical deposits of refuse exist along the western edge of the entrance road and as fill behind a masonry retaining wall paralleling a seasonal stream. Other scattered historic deposits are near various outbuildings. These resources need to be monitored for natural and human disturbance.

Subsurface deposits within a collapsing adobe barn and a one-room adobe structure east of the barn will need to be examined prior to stabilization of these buildings. Materials relative to the age, function, construction methods, and modification of these buildings are likely beneath present surfaces.

Keys is known to have cached many miscellaneous artifacts in caves in the hills on the periphery of the main ranch site. One such cave served as his assay lab. A careful search of the adjacent hillsides needs to be made, discoveries photographed and documented, and any valuable historical material discovered which is liable to be subject to theft should be removed and protected.

As suggested general principles, collections from historic sites should be cataloged if the following criteria are present: (1) Wholly or partially handmade artifacts, particularly if an industrially produced item has been modified for secondary functions or "recycled"; (2) Items with identifying trademarks, numbers, or symbols. If an item occurs in numerous quantity and all are similar, selection should be based on degree of preservation of these identifying features. Fragmentary specimens with marks, if identifiable, are useful also; (3) Items showing a size, color, capacity, brand-name, stylistic or functional range should be selected as type specimens of the class (embodying most of the class characteristics) as well as marginal specimens of the observed class; (4) One-of-a-kind specimens may represent highly individualized human behavior and should compose a special class of objects; (5) Perishable specimens require different storage environments but should be in high priority for selection and cataloging.

It is recognized that present storage space for various collections is limited. Perhaps rented warehouse space in nearby towns or cities, movement to the outside of some supplies capable of withstanding weather, and construction of additional temporary shelving might be stop-gap measures. A minimum of \$3,000 per year should be budgeted for preservation of artifacts, and even this sum is likely to prove inadequate.

Future Research Actions

Current recording of petroglyphs and other archeological site data by a skilled Park Technician is a positive step in this area. An archeological overview in compliance with Executive Order 11593 might emphasize those geographic localities not investigated intensively and should include aboriginal as well as non-aboriginal materials and sites. Clearances for terrain segments to be altered during various development projects has been done and should continue to be timely. Additional nominations to the National Register of Historic Places might include the Pinto Basin Archeological Site Area, a terminal Pleistocene system of terraces, artifacts, and remains of extinct fauna northwest of Eagle Mountain Lava Flow, Pinto Basin.

An Historic Resource Study of Joshua Tree National Monument needs to be done. Such a study should have been done while William Keys was still alive, in order to resolve some of the many contradictions in published accounts dealing with his life. Now, without Keys as an informant, these questions cannot be resolved with the same degree of certainty. Although Keys was interviewed with tape recorder by Park personnel on a number of occasions, and such interviews are extant, none of those participating was a trained historian and the right questions simply were not asked. It may be possible to retrieve some of this data through interviews with Keys' descendents, but much of it is gone forever. It will be necessary for an historian assigned to an Historic Resource Study to examine land ownership records, mining claims, millsite claims, reservoir site claims, and the like very carefully in order to resolve some of the existing conflicts in dates.

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Oral History

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