

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL
REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: El Capitan Lodge

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: Access Road 1111

not for publication: n/a
vicinity: X

city/town: Hamilton

state: Montana code: MT county: Ravalli code: 081 zip code: 59840

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private
Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building(s)

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	_____ building(s)
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u> 1 </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

4. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Maureen DePa
Signature of certifying official

8-24-90
Date

MT SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

 See continuation sheet.

Edward J. DeBlois
Signature of commenting or other official

10-17-90
Date

USDA Forest Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

Alma Byan 11/29/90

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

fr
Signature of Keeper Date

6. Function or Use

Historic: Domestic/camp

Current: Domestic/camp

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Other: Rustic

Materials: foundation: stone
 roof: asphalt
 walls: wood, log

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Situated on the shore of scenic Lake Como, El Capitan Lodge was built in 1935-36 by volunteer labor and exists today as one of only two buildings located on or near the lake. The setting is an open ponderosa pine forest and dramatic views from the lodge extend beyond the lake to the Como Peaks in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

El Capitan Lodge is a single-story, wood frame and log building, measuring approximately 60' x 24' with a projecting, central, front-facing, gable-roofed portion to the south (front). A 22' x 12' deck, supported by log posts, extends from the south elevation and has a log railing and symmetric steps that descend at the east and west ends. The floor plan of the lodge building is in the shape of a flattened and nearly symmetrical "T".

The lodge rests on short foundation posts set on natural stone supports. A large open crawlspace exists underneath the entire building. The ground surface slopes slightly to the south towards the lake. The roof is a "T"-shaped gable design with wide overhanging eaves and exposed log rafter tails. The roof is sheathed with green asphalt shingles. A large river stone chimney rises above the roof on the north side.

The frame portion at the center and to the west end was constructed during the summers of 1935 and 1936. This part of the lodge is sided with "log" siding, which is a milled product that is flat on the inside with a log curvature and shiplap on the exterior. The siding was produced at a sawmill located about 20 miles from the lodge. When replacement siding was needed in 1961, the same mill produced identical siding using the original knives. The east end of the building is of log construction, and was added on to the frame portion in 1938. One of the Hikers' Club members donated the logs that were used for the construction of this section.

Fenestration is nearly a continuous band at eye level on the south side and consists of inward opening, double-hinged, 6-light and 9-light, wooden casement windows. Other windows on the east, west and north elevations are either 6-light or 4-light, wooden casements set singly and in pairs. The primary entrance on the south elevation is centrally placed and has a 15-light wooden French door. On the north elevation, a solid wooden door provides access to the kitchen on the west end and another French door accesses the east room.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

El Capitan Lodge

Page 1

The interior of the lodge consists of three rooms: a kitchen on the west, a large bedroom on the east, and a very large main hall with a centrally-placed, massive open stone fireplace on the north wall. Double French doors open from the main hall to the east bedroom. The fireplace is of traditional design and is the focal point of the main hall. Although constructed without a damper, the tremendous mass of the fireplace works to retain a fair amount of heat through the nights. The walls are finished with the same imitation log siding that was used on the exterior. The log rafters are exposed and the ceilings are finished with 8" pine planking. The floors throughout the lodge are 6" tongue and groove pine. The kitchen is equipped with a wood stove and hand water pump. Kerosene lamps light the building, as the lodge is beyond the reach of commercial power lines. These facilities are in keeping with the traditional use of the lodge.

El Capitan Lodge was designed by N.J. Kramis and other charter members of the Hamilton Hikers' Club. The Hamilton Hikers' Club still owns, maintains and regularly uses the lodge and, for this reason, the building is in excellent condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Recreation, Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1935-1940

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1935, 1938

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: N. J. Kramis

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

Designed and built by volunteers during the Great Depression, El Capitan Lodge is a fine example of the vernacular Rustic style architecture of the period in the form of a traditional hunting or guest lodge. The lodge represents the resourcefulness, ingenuity and community cooperation of the charter members of the Hamilton Hikers' Club who built the lodge at a cost of \$550 in 1935-6 and maintained the building for over fifty-five years. Their strong conservation ethic is evidenced by the minimal disturbance of the natural site during and since construction, the use of local wood and stone, the choice of setting and the simple clean lines of the building.

The Hamilton Hikers' Club was formed in the early 1930s by individuals who identified themselves as "outdoor people," and the lodge was constructed as an adjunct to their hiking, skiing, camping and other activities in the local mountains. The simple Rustic style design, wood heat, and excellent view of the lake and mountains found in the lodge was complementary to the lifestyle of Club members and representative of the local culture, which emphasizes self-reliance and respect for the natural environment.

According to some of the older members of the Hamilton Hikers' Club, the lodge was named after one of the highest peaks in the Bitterroot Range, El Capitan. The mountain lies directly southwest of the lodge in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. El Capitan was a popular early destination for charter Hikers' Club members.

Many of the early Club members were workers at the Rocky Mountain Laboratory in Hamilton, Montana, historically noted for developing the cure for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, a dread disease of early settlers. These and other ties to the community allowed El Capitan Lodge to become, over the years, a comfortable community institution widely used by the Girl Scouts, local photo clubs, scientific groups, and many other organizations for rest, relaxation, and recreation.

Lake Como, the setting for the lodge, is itself an historic area. The lake was a major hunting camp for Native American peoples and numerous artifacts have been found in the area. The area has always been a significant wildlife area and corridor, and the lodge is very near an ancient (and still used) natural salt lick. Lake Como was the site of early logging during the late 1800s and was one of the first areas used by settlers for recreation--several pleasure yachts as well as an amusement resort (now gone) were present before 1900. Lake Como was and is a gateway to the Clearwater Mountains and to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

9. References

Ravalli Republic, Hamilton, Montana, November 19, 1975; February 23, 1987.
Western News, Hamilton, Montana, June 23, 1976.

Letter from N. J. Kramis to the U.S.F.S., March 7, 1935.
Letter from G. M. Brandborg to N. J. Kramis, April 17, 1935.
Minutes of the Hamilton Hikers' Club, January 28, 1975.
Interviews with members of the Hamilton Hikers' Club: Mrs. Milton D. Byrd (8-15-88); Mr. Richard Kennedy (8-15-88); Dr. William Jellison (8-3-85); Mrs. Gretchen Jellison (8-3-85); N. J. Kramis (various dates between 1985-1987).

Letters, minutes, and interviews are in possession of Bob Scott, Hamilton Hikers' Club, 102 Geneva, Hamilton, Montana 59840

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Records of Hamilton Hikers' Club, c/o Bob Scott, 102 Geneva, Hamilton, Montana 59840

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	11	713080	5104815

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property lies in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 31 of Township 4 North, Range 21 West. To locate the NE corner of the nominated property (demarked by an iron bar), from the NW corner of Section 31 proceed west 198 feet. From that point on the section line, the NE corner of the property lies 219.72 feet, S72° W. From the NE corner (see enclosed survey map), the property boundary runs 132 feet west; 264 feet south; 132 feet east; and 264 feet north.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary for El Capitan Lodge corresponds to the land area that has been leased to the Hamilton Hikers' Club for the past 55 years from the U.S. Forest Service.

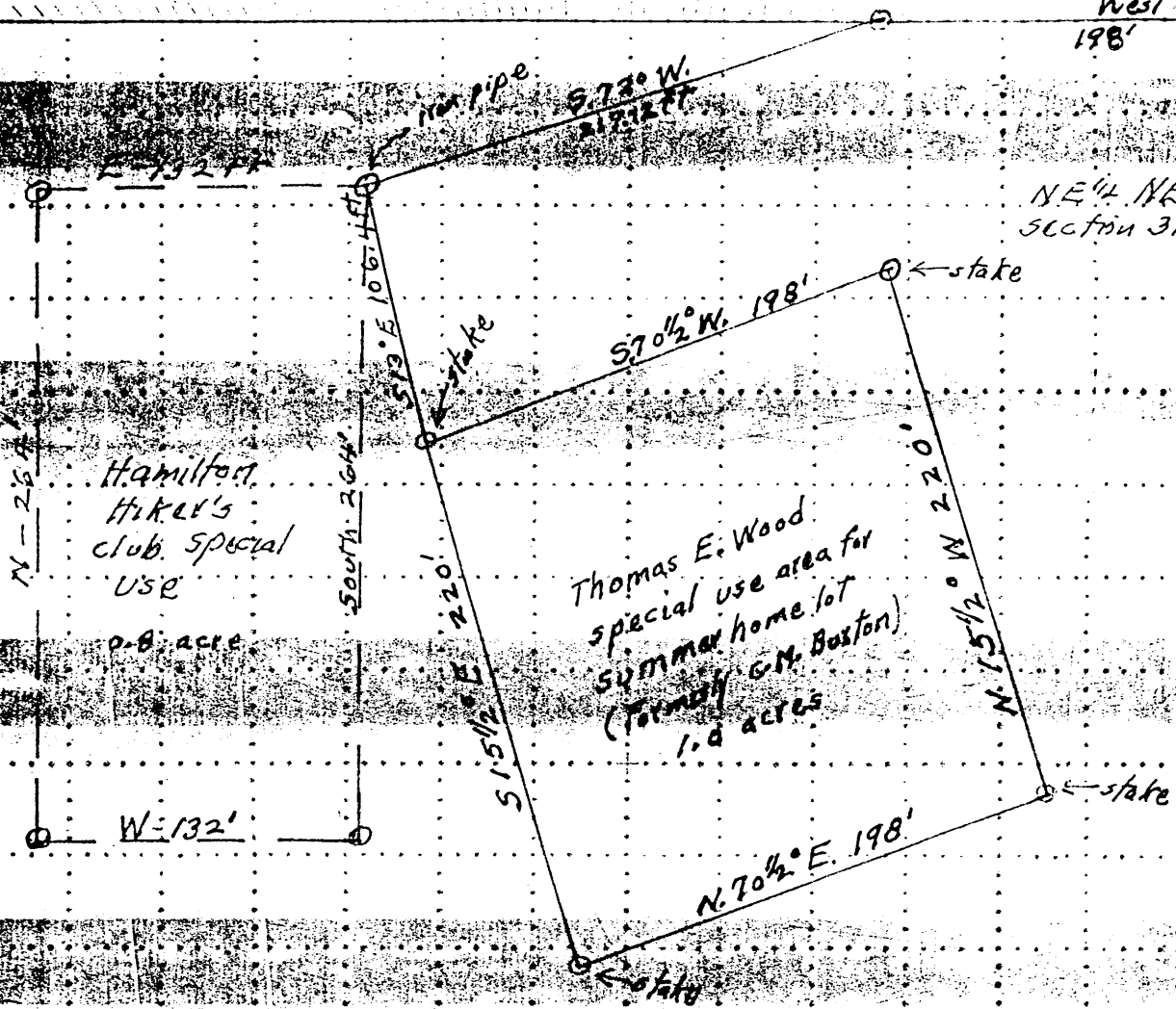
11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Bob Scott	
Organization: Hamilton Hikers' Club	Date: January 1990
Street & Number: 102 Geneva	Telephone: 406/363-5067
City or Town: Hamilton	State: Montana
	Zip: 59840

Wood, Thomas E.
Residence (Case designation)
12-20-58

Unit Darby Range District

West (in section)
198' 1/4 31

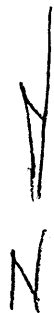
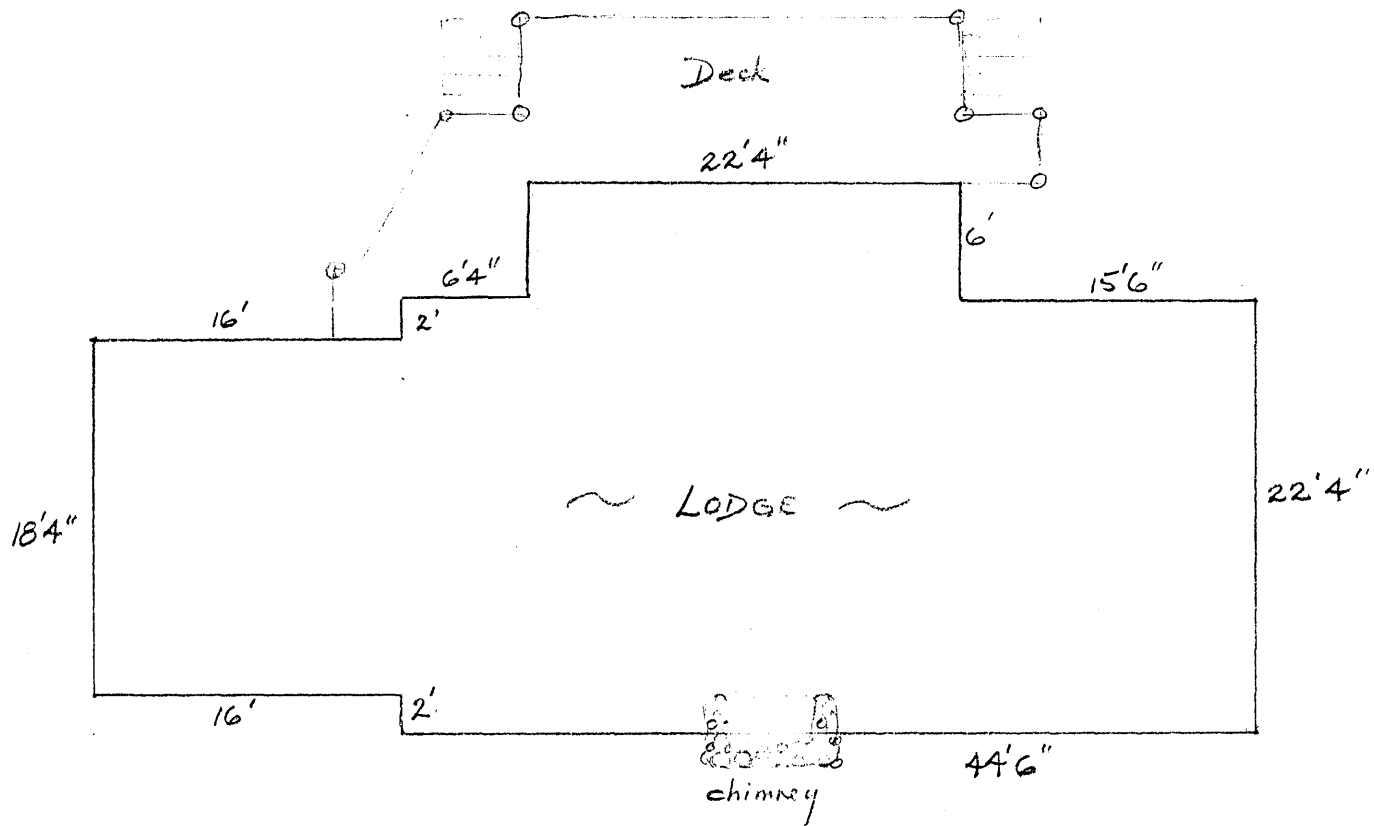


NE 1/4 NE 1/4
Section 31

El Capitan Lodge
NE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 31, Township 4 North; Range 21 West.
Special Use Permit map
Original in the possession of the U.S. Forest Service
Bitterroot National Forest, 316 N. 3rd St., Hamilton, MT

Field work by *John Callentine* Date *OCT. 1958*

Plotted by *J.C. O.F.S.*
Traced by *O.F.S. 12-18-58*



EL CAPITAN LODGE
 HAMILTON VICINITY
 RAVALLI CO, MT

RBW
 8/90