

JUN 13 1988

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Settlement on the North Fork of the Flathead River, Glacier National Park

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Glacier National Park

CITY, TOWN

Big Prairie

☒ VICINITY OF

STATE

Montana

CODE

MT

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

COUNTY

Flathead

CODE

029

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT☒ Thematic  
Group

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☒ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☒ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 AGENCY**

See Continuation Sheet for Additional Private Owners

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

655 Parfet

P.O. Box 25287

CITY, TOWN

Denver

VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado 80225

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Flathead County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Kalispell

STATE

Montana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

See Continuation Sheet

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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Property Ownership:

National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Denver, Colorado  
(Margaret McCarthy Homestead, J.K. Miller Homestead, William Raftery Homestead, Anton Schoenberger Homestead, and Johnnie Walsh Homestead)

William Cusick, Route 6, Box # 365-A-2, Port Orchard, Washington  
(Charlie Schoenberger Homestead)

Dick Walsh, 901 Walsh Road, Columbia Falls, Montana  
(Johnnie Walsh Guest Lodge)

Representation in Existing Surveys:

Historical Resource Study, Glacier National Park, and  
Historic Structures Report, Historical Research Associates,  
August 1980.

National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office,  
Denver, Colorado.

Jeremiah McCarthy Homestead was determined eligible for listing in  
the National Register on May 1984, by consensus between the  
National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, and the  
Montana State Historic Preservation Office.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☒ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☒ MOVED

DATE 1963  
(Johnnie Walsh)

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

(Great Lodge)

The seven historic homesteads that comprise this thematic group nomination represent the homesteading community established along the east side of the Flathead River between 1907-1910. Of the 35 original homestead complexes erected within Glacier National Park along the North Fork of the Flathead River, only these seven retain sufficient historic architectural integrity to be included in this thematic nomination. The seven nominated homesteads are located in a open meadow called Big Prairie. During the historic period, 16 homestead complexes stood in this meadow, located from 1/4 to 1/2 mile apart. Each complex consisted of a series of log buildings, including a one- or two-story residence, one or two hay barns, a few animal shelters, a root cellar, a privy, and occasionally a springhouse. All buildings were constructed in proximity, i.e., within a 4- to 5-acre area. The remaining nine historic homestead complexes within Big Prairie have been demolished or exist as severely deteriorated ruins.

The North Fork homesteaders did not undertake intensive agricultural development, but grazed livestock on their claims and raised gardens of 1 to 5 acres. Subtle changes in vegetation recall these historic agricultural practices. The meadow grasses are a combination of natural grasses with a high incidence of timothy, which had been planted as a hay crop by settlers. Sagebrush has invaded areas of intensive grazing and today marks the extent of the settlers' historic pastures. Domestic flowers, including Sweet William, oriental poppy, irises, rhubarb, and lilac bushes still grow at the doorsteps of the homestead residences, even where all buildings and structures have been removed.

The finite period of settlement and the land use limitations imposed by Glacier National Park created distinctive patterns of homestead site development. Settlement on the North Fork was essentially a one-generation phenomenon. The Federal government began purchasing privately owned tracts along the North Fork during the 1930s, and a large number of homesteaders were ready to sell out by that time. Few standing structures remain on the

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original 35 patented homestead claims. However, National Park Service fire control practices since 1910, and more recent limitations on new construction, worked to preserve a relatively intact historic setting.

The rationale for homestead site selection and the disperse pattern of settlement dictated by the homesteading laws are clearly evident. Homesteaders on the North Fork of the Flathead River in Glacier National Park without exception chose mixed forest and prairie land for settlement, assuring for themselves accessible timber for construction and fuel and open land for grazing and cultivation, without the back-breaking chore of forest clearance. Big Prairie, a large natural meadow about 2 miles north of Polebridge, attracted the greatest concentration of settlers. This prairie land extends approximately 3 miles along the bank of the North Fork and is about 1/2 mile wide. All of the properties included in this nomination are located in the vicinity of Big Prairie, along the river's edge or the prairie bench against the timbered foothills of the Livingston Range and Indian Ridge. The homestead sites were established from 1/4 to 1/2 mile apart.

The North Fork remains a beautiful, rugged, and remote region. Although telephone lines were up by 1912, electric lines have never been strung, and the area is still accessed through the park by an improved wagon road that was built by the Butte Oil Company in 1901. The distance from Belton (West Glacier) to Big Prairie is about 33 miles; it was an arduous 2-day trip on the ungraded road by wagon. Transportation difficulties limited agricultural development to subsistence farming and discouraged tourism.

Due to the relative inaccessibility of the North Fork, virtually all construction materials were locally procured. Harsh winters and heavy snow loads dictated that well chinked, sturdy log buildings prevailed and adaptive measures, such as exaggerated roof overhangs, were commonly employed. The extent to which the log buildings in the North Fork exhibit similar construction characteristics may be attributed to the fact that a half dozen or more of the settlers were experienced builders and most had a hand in the construction of each major building.

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Historical photographs of many of the demolished homesteads exist, which permits an analysis of common construction characteristics. The seven nominated historic homesteads represent the two primary phases of homestead site development: the initial building of rude shelters and functional outbuildings and the second phase of more refined residential construction.

The initial log residences built by the homesteaders were generally one-or two-room cabins with steeply pitched gable roofs and the entrance set in the gable end. Saddle notch or lap notch corner timbering was used almost without exception. Particular attention was afforded to roof construction and log gable ends and continuations of the log walls created sturdier support for the log roof purlins. Long, 2 1/2- to 3-foot split cedar or tamarack shakes, often double-layered, covered the roofs of all buildings. Roof planking was unusual. Entrances set in the gable ends were sheltered by 4- to 6-foot roof extensions. Foundations consisted of sill logs set on rock alignments. Windows, which had to be transported over the rough wagon road, were small, multi-paned casements.

Interior hewn log walls, chinked with quarter sawn poles, were left unfinished. No walls on the North Fork were ever plastered. Sawn lumber, hand-cut with a whipsaw, was used sparingly. Logs were employed extensively for floor joists and framing. Plank flooring predominated, but hewn pole floors were not uncommon. The log residences at the homesteads of Johnnie Walsh (1908), Anton Schoenberger (1908), Margaret McCarthy (1909), and William Raftery (1909) exhibit the characteristics described. Three of these original homestead cabins were enlarged by one-room log additions during the historic period.

Rather than settling for building additions, a few homesteaders constructed new residences as fortunes and transportation routes improved during the late teens and early twenties. The Charlie Schoenberger residence (1916) and Johnnie Walsh Guest Lodge (1922) are two excellent examples. Both are full two-story, rectangular log buildings with overhanging gable roofs. Now covered with metal, both roofs were originally shingled. The Walsh Guest Lodge, with its full basement, was the only building on the North Fork to be constructed on a concrete foundation. Large, multi-paned, double-hung windows were set in a symmetrical pattern and entrances protected by small, gable roofed stoops. Interior walls, again, were hewn, and wall finishes consisted of pine paneling or fiberboard.

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The J.K. Miller residence (1909), although built as the original homestead house, corresponds with the pattern of replacement residential construction. Miller, a judge from Columbia Falls, possessed sufficient capital at the time of settlement to hire local homesteaders to construct his two-story log residence on the bench overlooking Big Prairie. Miller's residence had a number of unique features, such as transom glass set above large windows on the front facade and sawn lumber used for floor joists, floorboards, and roof planking. The sawn lumber was purchased as salvage from the Butte Oil Company's defunct oil rig and sawmill at Kintla Lake.

Log outbuildings also share a number of common characteristics. Each homesteader built a large, double-walled, log root cellar into the side of a small bench or hummock. With a 70-day growing season, root crops were an important component of the North Fork diet. All of the cellars have collapsed due to the weight of the earth-covered roofs and lack of maintenance in this era of refrigeration. Privies needed to withstand frequent relocation, and they were often well-constructed buildings. Dovetail corner timbering was reserved for the privies, and three examples are included in this nomination. Most accommodated two persons and the Walsh Guest Lodge privy (ca. 1924) accommodated four.

Large log hay barns were the rule, as a winter's hay supply needed to be well protected from foraging wildlife. The 24- by 64-foot, four-pen hay barn at the William Raftery Homestead illustrates the common hay barn type. Animal shelters, by comparison, remained small. As most North Fork cattlemen sold off the bulk of their herds in the fall or brought them down to lower elevations for wintering, barns were built primarily to accommodate horse teams. Other animal shelters, such as hog pens, were low and snug, and winterized chicken houses were uncommon. An exception to the rule, again, is the large horse barn (ca. 1912) at the J.K. Miller property. Measuring 32 by 32 feet, this gable roofed log barn with hayloft housed Miller's thoroughbred horses. It demonstrates well the quality of North Fork log craftsmanship, as all stalls, floors, joists, purlins, ladders, feeding bins, etc., were fashioned with logs or poles, and the only sawn lumber used was for the two barn doors.

The J.K. Miller, William Raftery, and Anton Schoenberger properties retain the majority of the primary homestead buildings including the residences, privies, root cellars, animal shelters,

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and hay barns. The hay barns and animal shelters at the Johnnie Walsh and Margaret McCarthy homesteads have been demolished. Only the second residence and the horse barn at the Charlie Schoenberger homestead remain standing. Johnnie Walsh's Guest Lodge, which served as his second residence, and the 16- by 10-foot log privy were moved across the meadow from their original location on the east bench of Big Prairie to the park road in 1963. Although disassociated from the original homestead complex, the two buildings are now located about 1 mile to the east in a compatible setting at the opposite edge of the meadow.

Of the 35 patented homestead claims along the east side of the North Fork settled prior to 1910, 22 fell victim to complete natural deterioration or demolition and six others exist as ruins. The seven properties included in this nomination are the finest surviving representative examples of the North Fork homesteading community.

METHODOLOGY

The survey of homestead properties on the North Fork River in Glacier National Park was conducted by Patricia Bick, Historian, for the National Park Service during September and October, 1986. The historic homestead settlement in the North Fork Valley within Glacier National Park extended from the north edge of Big Prairie south to the Howe Ridge. Each patented homestead claim within the study area was visited, and all apparent above-ground remains were inventoried. No subsurface archeological testing was carried out. Site boundaries are drawn so as to include historic domestic dumps which exist within proximity to the homestead residences. Time limitations precluded the walking of systematic transections on all patented land; bushwhacking along forest margins, historic roads, and trails revealed all known standing historic structures. Research on the homestead claimants and local area history was completed at the Glacier National Park Archives, West Glacier, Montana; the Flathead Community College Library, Kalispell, Montana; the Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, Montana; and the National Archives, Washington, D.C., and Suitland, Maryland.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1906-1922

BUILDER/ARCHITECT (See Inventory Forms)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Homesteaders on the North Fork within Glacier National Park faced natural and governmental limitations that worked to discourage long-term settlement and inhibit economic prosperity. The representative historic homestead properties presented in this nomination are of local historical significance under criteria A and C and reflect the subsistence economy, social patterns, and life-ways of a small community of settlers that existed in this remote region during the first two decades of the park's existence. Attracted by the abundant wildlife, virgin timber, optimistic prospects for coal and oil development, and expansive natural meadows for stock grazing, these early settlers began to file homestead claims on newly opened Blackfeet National Forest lands in 1907. Congress designated the east side of the North Fork as part of Glacier National Park on May 11, 1910, and further claims on the public domain were prohibited. Thirty-five of the 44 homestead claimants who filed during this brief period obtained patents to their land. A few of these early claimants chose to relocate on the Forest Service side of the river. Living within the legal constraints of a public park forced the eastside settlers to come to terms with Park officials regarding basic differences in perception of land use and value. The seven extant homestead complexes in the vicinity of Big Prairie on the east bank of the North Fork provide an unusually clear illustration of the disperse settlement patterns created by the homesteading laws, the kind and quality of regional log craftsmanship, innovative adaptations to the northern climate, and the distinctive social and economic fabric of the community of homesteaders that endured for only one generation.

The Forest Homestead Act of 1906 opened extensive acreage in northwestern Montana to homestead entry. A common pattern of settlement and subsistence living can be seen in some of the other mountain drainages, such as the Yaak and Stillwater River Valleys. No great land rush occurred in any of these areas, due



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in large measure to the marginal agricultural potential and distances from markets of these remote valleys. But trickles of people in search of a livelihood based upon hunting, trapping, seasonal wage labor, and modest agricultural development did settle these valleys during the 1908-1925 period, as occurred in the North Fork of the Flathead River Valley. The patterns of subsistence living of settlers in the mountain valleys differed in most ways from those of the high plains of eastern Montana except for one reality: the high incidence of homestead failure. Whereas the failure of a large percentage of eastern Montana homesteads may be attributed to inadequate rainfall, low crop prices, and insect infestation following the First World War, the mountain homesteaders never attempted to make their living exclusively from agricultural production. The homesteaders on the North Fork tended to abandon their mountain properties during the 1920s in their search of full-time wage employment.

The homesteads along the North Fork of the Flathead River differ in other important ways from contemporaneous homesteads within eastern Montana. The homesteaders of eastern Montana were more closely tied to the national economy in terms of their reliance upon the transcontinental rail network for the delivery of essential goods, such as building materials and equipment, as well as for the marketing of their agricultural products. The relative isolation of the North Fork Valley forced homesteaders to supplement their agricultural income through outside employment, often by the National Park Service. Because the amount of rainfall in eastern Montana averages 12-16 inches, as opposed to 22+ inches in the North Fork region, grain was the primary economic crop and homesteaders relied upon the exchange of their harvest for cash to purchase essential commodities to a far greater extent than did the North Fork homesteaders.

The North Fork homesteaders, for the most part, earned their expendable cash through wage labor rather than from surplus agricultural production. On the other hand, the eastern Montana homesteaders were immediately affected by national and international market fluctuations, such as the precipitous drop in grain prices immediately following the First World War. On the other hand, the lifestyle of the North Fork settlers remained essentially unchanged throughout this period of severe agricultural depression in the northern plains.

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Architectural Significance

Skilled workmanship is exhibited by the log buildings and structures erected by the North Fork homesteaders. Local homesteaders Ben Maes, George Grubb, Charlie Schoenberger, Austin Wiekert, Ed Peterson, Jean Sullivan, and Charlie Buhler were noted for their log construction abilities. These men were busily employed during the early years of settlement, as each homesteader within 5 years had constructed on his property an average of five substantial log structures as well as miles of pole or log snake fencing. Remnants of the historic fencing remain, such as the remarkable seven-log-high snake fence through the timber at the Ben Maes homestead. A sufficient number of buildings and historical photographs exist to ascertain the common construction techniques and ingenious use of local materials.

Regional modification to the ubiquitous, gable roofed, log structural form included log gable end infill, extended upper wall logs for support of the side roof overhangs, 4- to 6-foot extensions of the roof purlins over the gable end entrances, and the consistent use of long split-shakes for roofing. The replacement dwellings and agricultural outbuildings were commonly of considerable size and remarkably sturdy construction, withstanding the blows of crashing deadfall timber. The use of the long, split shake roofing was a regional preference in northwestern Montana. The thick, long shakes add textural interest and compatible scale to the roofs of the larger buildings. The J.K. Miller, Charlie Schoenberger, and Johnnie Walsh properties are of architectural merit and embody the distinctive characteristics of North Fork regional styling and detailing.

The Walsh Guest Lodge, brought to the park road from its original location on the east bench of Big Prairie in 1963, is included in this National Register nomination as an exception to the criteria exempting moved buildings from Register listing because it is one of only two surviving replacement residences on the east side of the North Fork. Nine of the original 35 homesteaders are known to have constructed high quality second residences to replace their initial homestead cabins. Only one of these buildings, constructed in 1922 by Jean Sullivan, was of frame construction. Historical photographs exist for seven of these replacement dwellings. The Johnnie Walsh Guest Lodge exhibits the large scale, massing, refined detailing, and quality of craftsmanship

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common to the type and is worthy of preservation. Although removed from the historic homestead complex, the building remains an integral component of the historical landscape and evokes an appropriate sense of time and place in its new setting at the opposite side of Big Prairie.

The primary environmental factors that influenced homestead site selection were the presence of natural meadowland and the proximity to potable water. The early North Fork homesteaders, preferring mixed prairie and timbered lands, claimed meadow over forest on an average of a 2:1 ratio. Before homesteading was closed to new claimants in 1910, virtually all of the small North Fork prairie grasslands were taken up, leaving only the meadows on school indemnity land at the south end of Big Prairie, Lone Pine Prairie, and small portions along Logging and Anaconda Creeks, which various homesteaders leased from the State of Montana. Those homesteaders who filed on land in the lower elevations most often chose building sites near the creeks or the river and dug shallow wells. Those located on the prairie benches or the upper ridge meadows situated adjacent to free flowing springs. Many built log springhouses to keep fresh milk, cream, and butter, such as the one at the Johnnie Walsh homestead on the Big Prairie bench. Properly constructed springhouses maintained constant, cool temperatures and did not freeze during the -20 or -30-degree winter weather. The spring house at Anton Schoenberger's homestead was swept away by the 1964 flood.

Scenic views appeared to have been considered in the selection of homestead sites, by married couples especially. In the majority of cases, homesteading families located their residences at the edge of the meadows, generally on small benches, to take maximum advantage of the broad mountain vistas. The Walshes, McCarthys, Schoenbergers, and Millers followed this pattern. A propensity for bachelors to locate their residences within the timbered margin of the prairies or in small forest clearings was observed during the site survey. The Anton Schoenberger and William Raftery Homestead sites illustrate this tendency.

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Settlement Patterns

The settlers on the east and west sides of the North Fork of the Flathead River, which bisects the North Fork Valley and forms the western boundary for Glacier National Park, comprised a single homesteading community. The entire valley floor was opened for homestead settlement as a result of the Forest Homestead Act of June 16, 1906. However, the circumstances of settlement and patterns of development on the two sides of the river differed in some important ways. The first wagon road up the North Fork, built in 1901 by the Butte Oil Company, was cut through the forest on the east side from Belton (West Glacier) to the oil fields at Kintla Lake. Construction did not begin on the west side road from Columbia Falls to the Canadian border until 1912. This early transportation advantage encouraged earlier settlement on the east side. By 1910, only 14 homestead claims had been filed on the west side, compared to 44 on the park side. However, approximately 100 additional homestead claims were taken up on the west side after 1910, one-third of these after the First World War. In short, settlement of the west side of the North Fork was both later and more extensive. The fact that William Adair chose to move his store, the primary commercial enterprise on the North Fork, from Sullivan Meadow on the east side to Polebridge in 1913 reflects this shift in the concentration of settlers.

Separate Federal agencies with quite different management objectives, rules, and regulations claimed jurisdiction to either side of the valley. The U.S. Forest Service fostered stable settlement on the west side, assisting in road and bridge construction and permitting timber harvests, hunting and trapping during designated seasons, and stock grazing on public lands. Private property "inholdings" within the park on the east side were perceived as a management problem from the very beginning by the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. Glacier National Park was dedicated and set aside as a natural reserve. As a consequence, private enterprise as envisioned by some of the early homestead settlers at times contradicted the park's mission to preserve wildlife and scenic values.

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Subsistence Patterns

Well over half of the eastside North Fork homesteaders listed their occupation as "hunter and trapper" on the U.S. Census of 1910, which was atypical for northwestern Montana homestead settlers. Venison remained the homesteaders' primary source of meat even after the park was established. Early park policy allowed the settlers to hunt on their own land for their own use. And, with a limited crew of rangers policing the park and the furs still bringing a good price, poaching on park land proved to be one of the liveliest management issues over the years. Not until 1929 was the prohibition against hunting on private lands within the park enforced, and then only at the explicit direction of the Secretary of the Interior.

Agricultural pursuits did not provide a comfortable livelihood for settlers in this isolated region of northwestern Montana. With about 20-25 inches of precipitation and a 70-day growing season, production on the North Fork was largely limited to root vegetables and gardens for personal use. The natural meadows planted in timothy hay provided a cash crop when sold to the National Park Service or tourists and allowed for limited cattle raising. The distance from markets precluded dairying, except for local consumption. For most homesteaders, a subsistence on the North Fork could be achieved only through a combination of wage employment and limited farming and stock raising. Seasonal jobs with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, on road and trail crews, as cooks and lookouts, freighters and packers, helped make ends meet. Forest fires provided welcome temporary employment and guiding tourist parties a profitable diversion. Although the oil fields of the North Fork, which had inspired so much early speculation, proved commercially worthless, the coal fields just over the Canada border attracted some homesteaders for periodic and occasionally steady work.

The passage of the Volstead Act encouraged the development of a much-needed and unexpected cottage industry on the North Fork. Local moonshiners took advantage of their relative isolation, and sugar sales at Adair's store soared during the 1920s. Tolerance of moonshining was not official National Park Service policy, as demonstrated by the arrest on bootlegging charges of a westside homesteader who was at the time employed as a ranger by the park. He was immediately fired and attempts were made to banish him from park lands. However, practices on the North Fork did

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not always follow stated park policies. The park rangers stationed on the North Fork knew the location of most of the stills operated by the settlers but refrained from assisting the Federal Revenue agents. The Federal agents found no hidden stills during the entire Prohibition period, even though dozens of people kept stills working in their root cellars or backwoods for grocery money.

Social Life

During the early years, when the east side of the North Fork supported the largest concentration of settlers and oil prospecting near the Canada border remained brisk, Big Prairie presided as the social center of the North Fork community. The post office, informally established at the Charlie Schoenberger homestead in 1914, was the place where east- and westside settlers met often, exchanged news, and visited. Eighty families got their mail at the Schoenbergers in 1914. The U.S. Postal Service designated Mary Schoenberger as the official postmistress on January 16, 1916, and Charlie Schoenberger built a one-room addition onto the front of their one-story cabin to house the Kintla Post Office. The post office was moved across Big Prairie to the Johnnie Walsh homestead in 1918, and a similar one-room addition was constructed onto the front of the Walsh cabin. Harriet Walsh remained the Kintla postmistress until 1925 when the eastside mail was sent to Hensen's Store at Polebridge. The post office boxes of the Kintla Post Office still exist in the front room addition to the Walsh's original homestead residence.

The first North Fork school, open only during the summer months, was established in a tent brought down from the coal mines in Canada in 1912 by Charlie Schoenberger and erected at the south end of Big Prairie near Akakola (Indian) Creek. With foresight, homesteaders built a log schoolhouse on skids on the prairie bench in 1915. Because there were more children on the west side the next year, a new schoolhouse was built on Red Meadow across the river, and the Big Prairie school was sold to the Fintons, new arrivals in 1917 from California. Attempts to organize a Sunday school on Big Prairie in the old school tent were sustained for only a few months in 1917.

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Communication between the east and west sides of the river was afforded by boats, rafts, and zip wire "flying machines" until the pole bridge was built by the settlers approximately 2 miles south of Big Prairie in 1913, the year Adair opened his new store across the river. This bridge held for only one season, and the county finally hired the Minneapolis Bridge Company to rebuild in 1916.

East- and westside homesteaders socialized regularly. Popular entertainments included fishing trips and Fourth of July picnics at Bowman Lake and all-night dances hosted by the settlers with larger houses or William Adair at his store. Forty or fifty settlers would gather for the dancing parties, held once or twice each month during the winter. The Schoenbergers second residence, completed in 1917, was the scene of many of these events, beginning with a dinner before sundown, as it was dangerous to travel the rough roads after dark. Local fiddlers provided the music and homemade rhubarb wine was served. The dancing would break for lunch at midnight and continue again until daybreak. After breakfast, the revelers hitched up their sleighs and headed home.

Community Dissipation

By the 1920s the social and commercial center of the North Fork homesteading community had moved to the west side of the river, where homestead claims were yet being taken up in large numbers. The improved road from Columbia Falls came up on the west side to the Canada border. Two competing mercantiles vied for business in Polebridge. The eastside settlement within the park was showing signs of early dissipation. A few bachelor homesteaders who were drawn into the First World War sold their places and never returned. A couple of others traded out their properties for more promising agricultural tracts elsewhere. Some left in search of permanent employment, and a few who worked as packers and guides relocated to Lake McDonald.

The National Park Service began to purchase private land along the North Fork in 1930. As properties were acquired, a few homestead dwellings were used as patrol cabins for a while, but the majority were bulldozed and burned. Those homestead properties that were retained by the children or relatives of the

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early settlers until recent years, sometimes as summer homes, are the only ones with historic buildings still standing. The seven homestead sites included in this nomination are a small, yet representative, sampling of the early 20th-century settlement of this still remote region.





## 9



**See Continuation Sheet**

## 10

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

## UTM REFERENCES

A  B 

C  D 

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

**See Continuation Sheet**

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

N/A

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

## 11

NAME / TITLE

Patricia L. Bick, Historian

ORGANIZATION National Park Service, RMRO

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Division of Cultural Resources

September 1986

STREET & NUMBER 655 Parfet  
P.O. Box 25287

**TELEPHONE**

(303) 236-8675

CITY OR TOWN **Denver**

STATE  
Colorado 80225

## 12

### STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ✓

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

NONE\_\_\_\_\_

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is      National   ✓   State      Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *Ed. M. ...*

TITLE Chag History  
NPS USE ONLY

DATE June 6, 1988

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

**I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**ATTEST:**

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic GroupSettlement on the North Fork of the Flathead River,  
Name Glacier National Park TR  
State Flathead County, MONTANA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

1. McCarthy, Margaret, Homestead

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

2. Miller, J.K., Homestead

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

3. Raftery, William, Homestead

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

4. Schoenberger, Anton, Homestead

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5. Schoenberger, Charlie, Homestead

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6. Walsh's, Johnnie, Guest Lodge

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

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7. Walsh, Johnnie, Homestead

~~Substantive Review~~for Keeper Patrick Andrews 7/21/88

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Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

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Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

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Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

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