

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DIVISION OF
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAM
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

1. Name of Property

historic name A.T. Ranch Headquarters
other names/site number The Headquarters; (WH00-19)

2. Location

street & number Star Route 1 na not for publication
city, town Bartlett x vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Wheeler code 183 zip code 68622

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
na

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

James G. Johnson 02/20/90
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

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.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Entered in the
National Register

Alma Syer

5/2/90

fu Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single dwelling
Domestic/Multiple dwelling
Agriculture/Agricultural Outbuildings

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Not in Use/Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Renaissance Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof metal

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Headquarters, a large two-story former ranch house with full attic story, is located in Wheeler County in the north central Nebraska sandhills. Built in 1906 from concrete blocks mixed and formed on the site, the house exhibits outstanding craftsmanship and design. An example of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture, the house is especially unusual for its scale, materials, and isolated rural setting. The building's integrity is good, although some interior alterations and moderate exterior deterioration has occurred through time. The nomination consists of two contributing buildings: the house; a combination bunkhouse/icehouse; and one contributing structure, a small spring house. The outbuildings, located on the north side of the house, include two non-contributing buildings, a small bunkhouse (c. 1960) and a frame garage/storage shed.

The Headquarters is a large two-story, with full attic story Renaissance Revival style house located approximately five miles from Barlett, a small town (1980 population: 144) in the north central Nebraska sandhills. At the time of its completion in 1906, the Headquarters represented the culmination of prosperity for a large ranch which encompassed over 40,000 acres.

Due to its centralized location in the vast holdings of the Allerton-Thompson Land and Livestock Company, or A.T. Ranch, the house, which was the focal point of ranch operations, became commonly known as the "Headquarters." The A.T. Ranch had been established by Chicago millionaire Samuel W. Allerton and his nephews, Nels and A.C. Thompson. Although newspaper accounts and other historical sources are not available from the time of its construction, secondary sources maintain that the house was built by the Thompsons, who resided there and oversaw the Ranch operations until the land was sold in 1916-1917.

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The large rusticated concrete block two-story house with full attic story, exhibits an overall symmetry, fenestration and architectural details characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style. The main portion of the house, which measures 40 x 40 feet, has a one-story full frontal porch with a simple balustrade on the main (south) facade. The balustrade is repeated on the porch roof, which extends the full length of the main facade. The house has a hipped roof with flared eaves, clad with metal interlocking shingles, which give the appearance of clay tiles characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style. The attic story features gabled pedimented dormer windows on each facade, bracketed eaves, and tall corbelled brick chimneys.

According to available descriptions, the formation of a solid footing for the massive house necessitated the construction of a six-foot thick piling. Due to the unstable quality of the area soil, scrap iron was reportedly gathered from the region, including machinery, and placed in the foundation (Wheeler County Independent, Feb. 24, 1944). Perhaps due to the difficulty of ensuring a solid foundation for the house, it rests on a slight base measuring approximately three feet; it is only suggestive of the raised basement characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style.

The symmetry of the main facade is strongly reinforced through the fenestration and columns. The first-floor open front porch features eight columns, formed from the large rusticated concrete blocks used in the walls. A simple low balustrade also features stacked concrete blocks, and extends the length of the main facade. The main entrance, with a transom window and sidelights, is flanked by Tuscan style columns with acanthus leaf patterned capitals. The shafts of the main entrance columns are smooth concrete blocks, molded into rounded forms. Corner pilasters on the main facade also feature smooth concrete.

Divided into three bays, the main facade features two large windows on the first floor; identical windows are repeated on the second floor. A more narrow window, located directly above the main entrance, provides access to the balcony. Window surrounds on all facades feature flat concrete lintels supported by engaged

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Tuscan columns. The pedimented dormers on the north and south facades have triple windows; the east and west dormers have double windows. The main facade dormer, with gable returns, features a centered, elliptical fanlight. A one-story wing on the north facade of the house, also constructed of concrete blocks, measures 29 x 18 feet. The wing originally featured a molded concrete balustrade, identical to that found on the main facade which was destroyed during a severe storm in the 1930's; at that time, the chimney was also damaged. Access to the roof of the one story wing is gained by a centrally placed second story door surrounded by transoms and fanlights similar to those of the main entrance.

The interior retains most of its original spaces and features including a central staircase, oak woodwork, and massive, detailed fireplaces which were also created from molded concrete blocks. Two fireplaces on the main floor are located in the rooms on each side of the main hallway. The two rooms on the west side of the house, however, were opened into one large room during a c.1950 remodeling. The former butler's pantry and original kitchen were also remodeled and the servant's staircase was removed at that time.

The main staircase leading to the second floor was originally open; enclosed during the c.1950 remodeling, the alteration is reversible. The second floor contains four large bedrooms, two on each side of the hallway connected by dressing rooms which originally included bathroom facilities. The two south bedrooms contain massive molded concrete block fireplaces identical to those on the first floor. The attic floor, accessed by the main staircase, was originally used for dances and entertaining.

Historic photographs and available descriptions indicate that the Headquarters was surrounded by large cottonwoods and a mulberry hedge which encircled the grounds. Several large trees remain but only two portions of the mulberry hedge are evident on the east side of the house.

Several associated outbuildings are located on the north side of the house across the gravel driveway. One, the former combination bunkhouse/icehouse, is a 9 x 26 foot frame, gable roofed

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structure with a rusticated concrete block raised foundation. The bunkhouse was accessed by a wooden platform (non-extant) with steps on the north side of the building. West of the bunkhouse is a small spring house, measuring 8 x 10 feet. The structure retains its wood shingles and dirt floor; concrete blocks were also used in the construction of its banked walls. Two non-contributing buildings, a c.1960 frame garage measuring 26 x 70 feet, are located immediately east of the bunkhouse. The other non-contributing structure, a small, c.1960 frame bunkhouse is located approximately 15 feet east of the springhouse.

Following the sale of the A.T. holdings in 1916-1917, the Headquarters continued to be used as a dwelling but it passed through several owners and at times stood vacant. The current owners plan to undertake a certified restoration to rent the house as a single family dwelling.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

APR 23 1980

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1906-1917

Significant Dates

1906

Cultural Affiliation

na

Significant Person

na

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

The Headquarters, located in Wheeler County in the north central Nebraska sandhills, is significant on a statewide basis under Criterion C. The large two-story concrete block house with a full attic floor is significant for its method of construction and as an excellent example of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture in an isolated rural setting. Completed in 1906, the house is also the best remaining structure associated with what had once been a vast ranch which encompassed over 40,000 acres. The period of significance, 1906-1917, includes the date of construction through 1917 when the ranch land was divided and sold.

In 1899, Samuel W. Allerton, a Chicago millionaire, began to purchase land in Wheeler County. The intent was to establish a ranch that could provide cattle for his extensive stockyard holdings in Chicago and cities further east. By 1890, Allerton, Charles N. Thompson, and others incorporated and formed the Allerton-Thompson Land and Livestock Company, commonly known as the A.T. Ranch. The newly formed company continued purchasing land along the Beaver Creek in Wheeler County until the landholdings grew to over 35,000 acres by 1902.

To oversee this large operation, Allerton's two nephews, A.C. and Charles Thompson, moved into a one-and-one-half-story frame house (non-extant) which served as the A.T.'s headquarters, located directly west of the present concrete block house. It is not clear when Allerton turned over the day-to-day management of the ranch to his two nephews; but it seems almost certain that by the time the large concrete block house was built in 1906, Allerton was no longer involved in the daily affairs and probably was not even

9. Major Bibliographical References

Grand Island Independent, July 12, July 18, 1960.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses,
(NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS). "Reconnaissance Survey
Final Reports": Blaine, Boone, Boyd, Cherry, Grant, Hooker, Keya Paha,
Loup, Rock, Thomas, and Wheeler Counties, Lincoln, NE, State Historical
Society, 1988-1989.

Wheeler County Independent, May 18, 1916; February 24, 1944.

See continuation sheet

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2.1 acres

UTM References

A 14 541520 4643900
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as a rectangular tract of land commencing at the point marked "X" on the site plan, thence commencing north 294 feet, thence east 308 feet, thence south 294 feet, thence west 308 feet to the point of beginning, in the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of the southeast quarter, section 20, Township 23 North, Range 10 West, a rural legal description in Wheeler County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that parcel of land that has historically been associated with the property and which contains all architecturally significant buildings and structures in the ranch complex.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian/Greg Miller, Preservation Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date November, 1989

street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4787

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501

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living on the ranch. Due to its centralized location, and the brief location of a post-office in the original ranch house, the massive new dwelling became commonly known as "The Headquarters". At some point after the house was finished, the name Headquarters was also used in reference to the A.T. Ranch.

The large amount of land once owned by the A.T. Ranch indicates its prosperity and provides some idea of the influence it necessarily had on the region's development. Because of the size of the ranch, good transportation and communication were important to its operation. To alleviate the transportation problem, the owners of the A.T. Ranch built roads which connected their various ranch buildings. They also operated a freighting business between Spalding and the Headquarters.

To improve communication, the A.T. Land and Livestock Company established a telephone line between the Headquarters, Spalding, and Cedar Rapids (Nebraska), in 1900. By 1902, the line extended to Bartlett and then connected to the Nebraska Telephone Company's long-distance line in Omaha, allowing calls to be made throughout the state. A switchboard was then installed at the Headquarters which allowed many of the surrounding families to use the new phone system. The newly constructed concrete block house became the center of another means of communication when a post office was briefly established from 1908 to 1909.

Aside from these types of conveniences, the A.T. Ranch provided a very substantial contribution to the economic growth of the region. As the ranch grew, it became necessary to hire an increasing number of laborers. For the most part, these were local people who were able to use the extra money to help out in meager times. Permanent employees were housed in modest, but adequate dwellings built by the A.T. Ranch. In addition to hiring people, the ranch also bought grain and hay from local farmers. Finally, the county government prospered because of the taxes the A.T. Ranch payed on personal property and real estate.

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Although the impact of the A.T. Land and Livestock Company was felt extensively throughout the county, it was relatively short-lived. Started in 1899 by Samuel Allerton, the A.T. Ranch formally came to an end in 1916 when A.C. Thompson began selling sections of the ranch. According to the Wheeler County Independent the A.T. Ranch encompassed over 40,000 acres. The paper predicted rapid change after the sale of the vast A.T. acreage: "it is now safe to say that within two years, hundreds of farmers will build and maintain homes in that ranch valley." (May 18, 1916).

Significant on a statewide level under Criterion C, the large two-story house with full attic story is an excellent example of the Renaissance Revival style which was popular in Nebraska from approximately the turn of the century through 1920. The Headquarters derives further significance for its isolated rural setting, scale, and construction method which utilized area sand in the formation of molded concrete blocks, including a variety of columns and decorative details.

Perhaps due to the unavailability of written accounts at the time of the Headquarter's construction, local tradition maintains that the house was modeled after Allerton's home in Chicago, Illinois. Although this has not been verified, future research may substantiate a Chicago architectural connection with the Headquarters.

The on-going Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey (NEHBS) has been completed for the following north central sandhills counties: Boyd, Brown, Blaine, Cherry, Grant, Holt, Hooker, Keya Paha, Loup, Rock, Thomas, and Wheeler. During the 1987-1988 reconnaissance level survey when the Headquarters was identified as potentially eligible for the National Register, three additional concrete block buildings were documented in rural Wheeler County: WH00-11, WH00-14, and WH00-20; all are hipped roof, one story buildings in various states of deterioration. Although many ranch complexes were documented throughout the entire sandhills survey area, no associated rural houses were identified that exhibit a scale and design comparable to the Headquarters.

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On a state-wide basis, no comparable property has been identified through survey or inclusion on the National Register. Although other Renaissance Revival dwellings have been listed on the National Register, all are located in urban areas and none were constructed using the distinctive concrete blocks employed on the Headquarters.

HEADQUARTERS RANCH HOUSE
(WH00-19)
RURAL WHEELER COUNTY, NEBRASKA

SITE PLAN - NO SCALE

NOVEMBER 1989

KEY

- 1. HOUSE
- 2. SPRING HOUSE
- 3. BUNKHOUSE / ICE HOUSE

 NON-CONTRIBUTING

